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THE VANISHING OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD

The Vanishing of Jean Baudrillard examines the question of Jean Baudrillard's desire for his own disappearance as theorist. The thesis is an evaluation of the philosophical significance of his work. This is only possible by disengaging his writing from the problematic of 'post-modernism'. The category as applied to his work serves to justify perceived frivolity and aesthetic indulgence.

The age of post-modernity is understood to herald a civilization of the image, or of simulation. Baudrillard's analysis of the simulacrum is often brought to bear as a theoretical justification for this argument. However for Baudrillard the simulacrum is not an image. As he conceives it, the simulacrum has the effect of undermining basic principles of reason and causality. The simulacrum *qua model* has the structure of anterior finality. Ultimately it renders problematic traditional conceptions of theory and its relation to the world.

The transformation of the question of production provides the key to his work. Production as the fundamental logic of political economy and representation is superseded by the process of reproduction and simulation. The scene of the real and representation gives way to the exacerbated representation of the obscenity of the hyperreal - the absolute proximity of the more real than real. The hyperreal is not the simple destruction of causality or the production of ends and values but their excess.

According to Baudrillard all critical discourse is a function of the previous order of representation. It only serves to sustain the myth of the real and the values of subjectivity. Through his elaboration of the processes of *seduction* and the *fatal strategy* Baudrillard attempts to access events which absorb the subject, the real, value and all sense.

In this way the vanishing which Baudrillard aspires to can be perceived, though not as a project. His writing becomes the attempted elucidation of an impossible event, without reason, use or future. It is an event that cannot be reconciled to any form of subjectivity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A</i>	America
<i>AR</i>	Anorexic Ruins
<i>CM</i>	Cool Memories
<i>CPES</i>	For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign
<i>CS</i>	Consumer Society
<i>EC</i>	The Ecstasy of Communication
<i>EDI</i>	The Evil Demon of Images
<i>EP</i>	The End of Production
<i>FB</i>	Forget Baudrillard
<i>FF</i>	Forget Foucault
<i>FS</i>	Fatal Strategies
<i>M</i>	Modernity
<i>MP</i>	The Mirror of Production
<i>ROC</i>	Revenge of the Crystal
<i>SED</i>	Seduction
<i>Sim</i>	Simulations
<i>SO</i>	The System of Objects
<i>SSM</i>	In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities
<i>Year 2000</i>	The Year 2000 has already happened.

Unless otherwise indicated references to *Consumer Society* and *System of Objects* will be found in *Selected Writings*. References to 'The End of Production' will be found in *Revenge of the*

Crystal. All other details are in the
Bibliography. In the Appendix the abbreviation
PEL is used for *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

INTRODUCTION

The work of Jean Baudrillard is one of the most striking and original products of recent continental philosophy. This already makes a claim to the nature or status of his work. Although Baudrillard has gained a certain notoriety in the field of cultural studies my thesis attempts to show that there is an impulse in his work that is fundamentally philosophical. Mike Gane has recently accounted for the sociological import of his work separate from the phenomenon of post-modernism.¹ I also want to detach Baudrillard's writings from the ambit of post-modernism, but in order to argue its philosophical importance.

I will argue that the term post-modernism masks a set of deep rooted questions and issues in Baudrillard's work. These issues, such as the nature of his conception of the simulacrum, escape the seemingly unlimited range of its applicability. One only has to browse through the daily newspapers to apprise the variety of its objects - from politics to literature, to film and TV. To use a soccer analogy, another pre-eminent post-modern trope, the concept of post-modernism is a utility player. If one is stuck for an adjective to fill that critical position post-modernism will plug the gap. It is only when Baudrillard's work is detached from the term that any

reader can begin to see what is at stake in the sometimes dramatic unfolding of his writings.

This dramatic unfolding concerns a range of different but interconnected issues; the problem of production and the utile; the function of the subject in a logic of production; meaning as a function of this utilitarian logic; modern media as a process of non-communication; the phenomenon of the *mass* (as opposed to the social) which absorbs all the emancipatory and rational demands made of it; the eventual *seduction* of the object; his attack on critical inquiry and interpretation; and ultimately the formulation of his *fatal strategy*.

It will become clear that Baudrillard's writing, in its apparently diverse subject matter, can be understood as the working through of the problem of production. This problem at one level concerns the question of value, teleology and ends. For Baudrillard critical analysis and interpretation is utterly compromised by its systematic affinity with the latter. The issue of production appears in his early work in his problematizing of ideological analyses of capital and the form of the subject entailed by such analyses. This subject is essentially the subject of humanism. His theoretical anti-humanism is sustained and transformed throughout his writings to the point where

he will eventually propose taking the side of the object.

All I want to suggest here is that a reading of Baudrillard's work as post-modernist cannot be sustained. However he is not the only victim of this simplification. All of those associated with the equally general term of post-structuralism have at some time or other suffered the same fate. Moreover on the one hand negative accounts launched from such a perspective often bear equal measures of commentary and invective; from Douglas Kellner's increasingly patronising account of Baudrillard's later work as his 'own little thought world',² to Christopher Norris' characterisation of his work as the trickery of a 'post-modernist guru'.³ On the other hand commentators such as Arthur Kroker completely and passionately embrace the conceptual equivalence of Baudrillard and post-modernism. According to Kroker:

Upon the rubble of the classical model of sociology, Baudrillard is a quantum physicist of the processed world of mass communications.⁴

This enthusiasm for Baudrillard is equally fervent as the hostility his work sometimes arouses. I would argue that any thinker who arouses such passion is worthy of attention. In any case, it will also become clear that Baudrillard, at a level that is neither arbitrary nor premeditated, invites and courts dissension. He wants to write theory that is an event

in the world. An event without an origin or without a future.

In what follows I will attempt to show, contrary to the perception of Douglas Kellner, that there is a coherence to Baudrillard's work. Or at least that there is a continual redefinition and redescription of the problems of production and subjectivity. These issues are constantly transformed and displaced onto different terrain, none of which are related in any significant way to the issue of post-modernism. By the end of the thesis I hope the reader will have recognised the perverse logic which leads Baudrillard to aspire to his disappearance as subject and theorist. For this reason along with the growing list of epithets applied to Baudrillard (Walt Disney and Hugh Hefner to name but two) I would like to add another. According to the account of disappearance given by Paul Virilio, Baudrillard would be the *Howard Hughes* of recent continental philosophy. Not because he is the victim of a pathological affliction but because this disappearance can unleash unforeseen forces on the dimensions of time and the real:

...as Balzac has it, " all power will be secret or will not be, since all *visible* strength is threatened"...all techniques meant to unleash forces are techniques of disappearance (the epileptic constitution of the great conquerors, Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal, etc., is well known).⁵

Though Baudrillard's work is often criticised for not having anything to say about the 'real world', or for misdiagnosing it, Baudrillard's writing as disappearance is in the end an attempt to create an event that evades both causal and rational determination, and the production of reference and meaning. In this way it will be a theory without origin or future.

CHAPTER ONE: A NAIVE HISTORY OF POST-MODERNISM.

In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king.

The reading and reception of Jean Baudrillard has largely if not completely taken place through the grid of what is variously called, 'post-modernism' or 'postmodernism'. This term, like its spelling, appears in a variety of different forms. Insofar as the term appears to indicate a particular relationship to the term modernism, itself a highly problematic category or periodisation, minor changes in the spelling can be highly significant. Whereas 'postmodernism' suggests a homogenous well defined and limited area of its functioning (the post is definitely an afterwards), the hyphen in 'post-modernism' defines both a joining and division. Of course the hyphen is not heard and unfortunately this neat method of categorising perspectives on 'postmodernism/post-modernism' is of little use.

However this lack of precision does indicate a tendency to focus on general issues in the debate on postmodernism/post-modernism. It is arguable that it is a consequence of the debate largely taking place within the English speaking world which does not have the same concern with the prepositional that one finds in German and French. I would argue that such concerns are largely philosophical concerns and the debate on

post-modernism has largely occurred on the fringes of philosophy. Even so, debate on the nature of post-modernity cites general shifts in philosophical debate as evidence in support of post-modernism. In considering the question of post-modernism one is tempted by Richard Rorty's attitude towards traditional philosophical speculations - that is, to change the subject. With respect to the work of Jean Baudrillard this is indeed highly desirable. The fundamental features and developments in Baudrillard's work get lost in the miasma that is the debate on 'post-modernism'.

At best the notion of post-modernism is a slippery beast, insistently inchoate. At worst it is journalistic cliché, 'the temptation of a cheap seduction'. Donald Kuspit casts a sceptical eye on the remarkable phenomenon of the term:

The contradictory character of the term expands its meaning; its inflationary character follows from this contradictoriness. That is, the inflation signals that the contradictoriness is unresolvable - an idealistic over-expansion that empties the term of material meaning. The only historical reality "postmodernism" comes to signal is that of its exaggerated significance for theorists, which is one way of understanding how it is that a term can become a signifier without reference.¹

It is arguable whether in this case 'signifier without reference' is a gentle substitution for what used to be called metaphysical speculation. There are also echoes of Derrida's observation at the beginning

of *Of Grammatology* concerning the inflation of language. The relative success of the term does indicate, despite itself, a change in the nature of academic debate. This is worth bearing in mind for, as I will show, Baudrillard is sensitive to this issue. Paradoxically the term post-modernism while having generated much debate is ultimately a conversation stopper. It is the domination of the different by the same - and to no purpose or guided by no other logic than the conventions and topics it has generated for itself. In philosophy for example, to consider Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari as post-modern is to miss or ignore their fundamental intellectual differences on a whole range of basic philosophical issues. For this reason, to take seriously the concept and debate of post-modernism is to implicitly endorse a philosophical perspective. Such a perspective sees the varied projects of recent continental philosophy as homogenous and essentially indifferent. For someone like Habermas this indifferent reading serves his own philosophical agenda. For those who have sympathy with the debates in recent continental philosophy the reduction of Derrida, Foucault and others to the phenomenon of post-modernism does them no favours. In short it is a massive simplification. Baudrillard's writing has suffered more than most in this respect.

Despite these reservations I will attempt to survey some of the least questionable accounts of post-modernism for the term has provided the framework for the reception of Baudrillard. Through the grid of post-modernism his work is reduced to an ill-conceived problematic of language - there is no reference, there are only signifiers of signifiers. The list of works currently available on the topic of 'postmodernism' grows at an exponential rate. Most offer a gloss on Baudrillard as a 'postmodernist' without ceding any analytic space or reading of what is fundamental to his work; his account of the object and the disappearance of the subject and theorist. In some respects Baudrillard's work stands or falls on the success of the latter. To the extent that he does not he could be considered a post-modernist. For in the end the debate on post-modernism excises the truly anti-humanist schemas of recent continental philosophy.

In this opening chapter I will outline some of the essential features of the debate on modernist and post-modernist architecture for if post-modernism has any authentic or indiginous origin it is to be found in architecture. Yet this in itself is the source of confusion in applying the term to philosophy. Baudrillard would resist blanket architectural analogies applied to his work. Particularly insofar as unquestioningly assumes certain characterisations of space - of interiority and exteriority. Nevertheless

it is instructive to see the kind of analogies that are imposed surreptitiously on philosophy from elsewhere. Although of course this is to make too easy a distinction between the two. Conceptualisations of architectural space depend on a certain philosophical schematization - of limits, of inside and outside. With respect to the debate on architecture another classical philosophical issue is at stake. That is, the relationship between the particular and the universal. This issue is played out in different ways. In the end this is possibly the most instructive lesson to be learned from looking at the area of architecture. Various accounts are settled here and are indeed reflected in the non-architectural debate on post-modernism. Moreover, and it cannot be stressed enough, its application to the work of Baudrillard is limited to say the least.

I will draw upon the work of Charles Jencks and David Harvey who are the most informed chroniclers of post-modern geography, though both succumb to the curse of debate on post-modernism when discussing it as a cultural phenomena - generalization. What is interesting in their work is the way it is also informed by particular conceptions of the economic. The difference between their accounts of this and Baudrillard's will eventually be seen to be significant.

I will also focus specifically on two philosophical accounts of post-modernism: those of Richard Rorty and Jean-Francois Lyotard. If there is some philosophical focus to the term post-modernism it is to be found in Rorty and Lyotard. Again the contrast with Baudrillard is informative. For in the end both to a greater or lesser degree (Rorty and Lyotard respectively) are engaged in an attempt to save or redescribe the subject in the face of what they ostensibly regard as positive anti-humanist forces.

With respect to this question of architecture there are a range of different conditions which impose themselves on modernist architecture. Though apparently there is only one contributing to its demise. In architecture the ambition of modernism meets its apotheosis in its failure to meet the needs of people in the late twentieth century. Dysfunctional skyscraper slums and their demolition marked the end of the cult of the modern or the new. In this respect the demise of the functionalist aspect of architectural modernism, and its untidy symbolic links with utopian rationalist progress, was the first concrete symptom of the decay of the project of modernism in general. Here the referents of architectural modernism are understood to be the coming of age of enlightenment reason in modern science and technology, and consequently in urban and social planning. There are however two different moments to architectural modernism. It could

be said that they are divided historically by the second world war. Firstly, there was the corporatist modernism of someone like Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier equated planning with social order and rational order with freedom. He describes the house as a machine for living in. One can say that this kind of architecture contributed to the cult and myth of the new. This in effect is the period of heroic modernism. One cannot overemphasise the purely aesthetic appeal of functionalism. David Harvey cites the refusal of Le Corbusier to allow blinds to be put into one of his buildings and consequently the occupants 'fry' in the summer.

Therefore one can argue that the functionality and rationality of architectural modernism clearly denotes not only the zenith of engineering skills and technique but is emblematic of a rational, scientific destiny of mankind. This double-sided aspect of modernist architecture meant that it could serve as a symbol of different sets of interests. Hence the Nazis while denouncing 'bourgeois decadent modernism' felt ideologically comfortable with the functional aspects of modernist architecture to use it freely in the construction of the concentration camps.

One can therefore identify three common features of 'heroic' architectural modernism;

- 1) rationality, functionality and order
- 2) because of its rationality it represented a universal, necessary destiny of mankind.
- 3) this universal quality meant that modernism could take its place within architectural tradition. Hence the epithet of 'high modernism'.

This last feature suggests that architectural modernism has a paradoxical relation to its cultural counterpart. So for example while glorying in the machine age like the futurists and constructivists, its attentiveness to its own place in tradition, even as the 'new' tradition, links it with the modernist classicism of Eliot. In short, 'high modernism' retains an aura:

A great epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit. Industry, overwhelming us like a flood which rolls on towards its destined ends, has furnished us with new tools adapted to this new epoch, animated by a new spirit. Economic law inevitably governs our acts and our thoughts...We must create the mass production spirit. The spirit of constructing mass-production houses, The spirit of living in mass-production houses...²

It is worth noting the wholly unfunctional tone adopted by Le Corbusier in his celebration of the machine, underlined by the semi-ontological status given to its overwhelming energy which 'floods' irrevocably over this new epoch. Frederic Jameson points to the emblematic aspect of this reverence for

the machine which is also a celebration of speed and energy:

It is appropriate therefore to recall the excitement of machinery in the preceding moment of capital, the exhilaration of futurism most notably, and of Marinetti's celebration of the machine gun and the motor car. These are still visible emblems, sculptural nodes of energy which gave tangibility and figuration to the motive energies of that earlier moment of modernization. The prestige of these great streamlined shapes can be measured by their metaphorical presence in Le Corbusier's buildings, vast utopian structures which ride like so many gigantic steamshipliners upon the urban scenery of an older fallen earth.

One could say therefore that architectural modernism contains different impulses. Functionalism and rationalization are its principles but these are clearly paradigms of a new mythology.

Charles Jencks, while recognising the concrete social effects of modernist architecture largely avoids imputing direct economic motivations for modernism, emphasizing instead its ideological and symbolic functions. Because he undervalues the economic and its literally 'flooding' energy he sees its dominant tone as one of protestantism, not only in the functionalism and that inspires it but also in its severity and total lack of ornamentation. This lack of decoration was in keeping with its functionalist pedagogy. Modernist architecture according to Jencks is the:

universal, international style stemming from the facts of new constructional means, adequate to a new industrial society, and having as its goal the

*transformation of society, both in its sense and its social make-up.*⁴

Before going any further it is worth noting that despite my postulation that post-modernism has a clear focus in the field of architecture, there is already built into any analysis of modernism a set of philosophical and historical positions. The re-territorialisation of space is apparently both a function of, and a necessary condition for the development of capital. This is especially stark in the case of the second wave of modernism.

Post World War II modernism reflects a different set of circumstances. The massive destruction caused by the war provided the perfect opportunity for the kind of schemes and large scale planning fundamental to the modernist project. There are three main features of this development:

- 1) the rationalization of space;
- 2) standardization and regimentation;
- 3) suburbanization.

Each of these features clearly corresponds to the functionalist element of modernism. They were also pragmatic features of the economic response to post-war reconstruction. The rationalization of space was a function of the economic necessity for a mobile labour force. Motorway development enabled easy circulation

of labour and goods. Standardization was possible due to the achievements of Fordist mass-production which came into its own during the war years. Standardisation also responded to a post-war egalitarianism. Suburbanisation was largely an American principle according to Harvey, fulfilling the demand for housing for the mass of returning 'G.I.s'. In Britain planning policy set restrictions on town and country development and the focus was on low cost, high density dwellings:

Under the watchful eye and sometimes strong hand of the state, procedures were devised to eliminate slums, build modular housing, schools, hospitals, factories, etc. through the adoption of the industrialized construction systems and rational planning procedures that modernist architects had long proposed. And all this was framed again and again in legislation, for the rationalization of spatial patterns and of circulation systems so as to promote equality (at least of opportunity), social welfare and economic growth.⁵

The economic form which produced this particular organisation of space was *corporatism* which was of course Le Corbusier's ideal (expressed in part in his attraction towards Mussolini's Italy). The regulation of space reflected the new regulation of the post-war economy. Increased governmental regulation was a direct response to the problem of how to produce effective demand which was the source of the inter-war depression. This rationalization then was largely a function of the demands of Capital and the need to reduce spatial barriers on the one hand and to provide

easy access for labour. David Harvey accounts for this process as follows:

The incentive to create the world market, to reduce spatial barriers, and to annihilate space through time is omnipresent, as is the incentive to rationalize spatial organization into efficient configurations of production (serial organization of the detail division of labour, factory systems, and assembly line, territorial division of labour and agglomeration in large towns), and consumption (household and domestic layout, community organization, and residential differentiation, collective consumption in cities).⁶

In Marxist terms the point of this is to provide the conditions for the acceleration of the turnover time of capital and resolve the tendency towards the overaccumulation of capital which produced the depression. It is clear that this particular organisation of space was not wholly successful. Certainly the ethos of standardization reflected in the practices of the assembly line for example and the consequent deskilling of labour had an important bearing on the demise of corporate or monopoly capitalism. One can recognise therefore that architectural modernism was a feature of a particular post-war configuration of forces.

Post-Modernist architecture was produced in conjunction with an entirely different set of economic conditions. I have mentioned already the perceived failure of modernism in terms of town planning and the high density urban squalor it produced. Charles Jencks cites the symbolic end of modernism (echoing in tone

Virginia Woolf's declaration of the birth of modernism) as on or about 3.32 p.m. on the 15th of July 1972. This moment was the demolition of Le Corbusier's prize winning *Pruitt-Igoe* housing complex in St. Louis, as it was considered uninhabitable:

In 1972, many slab blocks of housing were intentionally blown up at *Pruitt-Igoe* in St. Louis. By the mid 1970's, these explosions were becoming quite a frequent method of dealing with the failures of Modernist building methods: cheap prefabrication, lack of personal 'defensible' space and the alienating housing estate. The 'death' of Modern architecture and its ideology of progress which offered technical solutions to social problems was seen by everyone in a vivid way.

Jencks goes on to point out that the equivalent death of cultural modernism cannot be shown with similar exactitude. The 'spectacular' failure of architectural modernism was therefore part of the decay of a specific form and organisation of capital and had severe social and geographical consequences. Its demise was not the result of a cultural debate between competing value systems. Jencks is careful in apostrophising 'death' for as we shall see, post-modernist architectural style retains certain features of modernism.

The aesthetic of functionalism disappears, replaced by an eclectic range of borrowed styles. Moreover the decline of monopoly capitalism and its mutation into a more flexible mode of capital accumulation renders unnecessary the kind of large

scale planning schemes of modernism. This new situation has various designations; Daniel Bell's 'post-industrial age'; Marshall McLuhan's 'Global Village'; Ernest Mandel's *Late Capitalism*; the information age; or the 'post-modern condition' in which David Harvey recognises a shift in the mode of production from fordism to flexible accumulation (the consequence of which is space-time compression).

As with modernism there are a series of economic factors which motivate the restructuring of geographical space. Charles Jencks cites the development of technology as a fundamental factor in certain features of post-modern architecture. Firstly, space and time are reduced through information technology. This he suggests produces internationalization and diversity in the variety of styles adopted. Secondly, industrial development allows for the mass production of 'customised' individual components:

The shifts are Kaleidoscopic and simultaneous - that from mass production to segmented production; from a relatively integrated mass-culture to many fragmented taste cultures; from centralised control in government and business to peripheral decision making; from repetitive manufacture of identical objects to the fast-changing manufacture of varying objects...⁸

However outside the issue of technology the economic factors are harder to assess because they are more disparate and because classical forms of economic

organization are being replaced. It is with this shift that schematization becomes more problematic and there seem to be three main paradigms which are supposed to account for this shift;

1) Economics. Structural transformation in capital which I have shown can be read in the transformation in architecture. The most ambitious and thorough account is given by David Harvey who, as I have mentioned, charts this shift as a move from *Fordist* organisation to more flexible modes of capital accumulation. Other people identify the change as one from monopoly capitalism to multi-national capitalism.

2) Ideology. The assumption here is either a) nothing has really changed in the way in which capital functions (the position of some Marxists most notably Alex Callinicos)⁹ and post-modernism is merely the new ideology of capital, or b) economic development as the prime mover is rejected and emphasis is given to cultural and technological development. Here the post in post-modernism signifies afterwards and what is focussed on is a rejection of the cultural values of high modernism.

3) This third paradigm is more complex. The key figures are Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze. What is at stake here are readings of the history of western thought. Elements of this kind of thinking are

taken up by the culture critics of the second paradigm but is identified as "post-structuralism". A better epithet might be "Son of Structuralism" and because of this move it is again located as historically recent and an afterwards of an antecedent movement. This line of approach is the basis for regarding post-modernism as firstly and essentially an anti-enlightenment movement. Critics of post-modernism such as Habermas and Callinicos also cite these thinkers as being the fundamental contributors to the irrationalist features of post-modernism. Habermas conceives it as being a conservative anti-modern movement:

On the basis of modernistic attitudes they justify an irreconcilable antimodernism. They remove into the sphere of the far-away and the archaic the spontaneous powers of imagination, self-experience and emotion. To instrumental reason they juxtapose in Manichean fashion a principle only accessible through evocation, be it the will to power or sovereignty, Being or the Dyonisiac of the poetical. In France this line leads from Georges Bataille via Michel Foucault to Jacques Derrida.¹⁰

In much debate on post-modernism what is proposed is often a generalised hybridisation of all three paradigms. Arthur Kroker and David Cook provide a good example of this:

It is our general thesis that the postmodern scene in fact begins in the fourth century with the Augustinian subversion of embodied power, and that everything since the Augustinian refusal has been nothing but a fantastic and grisly implosion of experience as Western culture itself runs under the sign of passive and suicidal nihilism. Or was it not perhaps, even before this, in the Lucretian theory of the physical world that Serres calls the *simulacrum*? Or was it later, in the abandonment

of reason in Kant's aesthetic liberalism of the third critique? And what of late twentieth century experience? Ours is a *fin-de-millennium* consciousness which, existing at the end of history in the twilight time of ultramodernism (of technology)...¹¹

Alex Callinicos' politically engaged polemics is somewhat harsh in his description of Kroker's work as 'parlour nihilism'. However Kroker does pursue his analysis with an uncommon zeal often sacrificing conceptual clarity for rhetorical overkill. Nevertheless in respect to post-modern architecture, it does indeed contain a variety of impulses and elements (though probably not Augustine). I have already noted Jencks' observations concerning building technology. If there has been less formal control of space by capital it nevertheless has left its mark on urban geography. Urban revitalization has replaced urban renewal. This has sometimes appeared through property speculation resulting in gentrification. The other side of this coin is the fact that this can reduce the severe demarcation of functional spaces through urban zoning. In style as well as geography the new sensibility is one of mixture and collage. Lack of an overall planning scheme produces more segmented local styles. Yet the sophistication of communications, "the Global Village", it is argued, results in reference and allusion to a variety of international styles such as Scarlett Place in Baltimore. Hence post-modernism is understood firstly to be eclectic, and secondly this eclecticism is sometimes parodic.

Stylistically, post-modern architecture maintains (or borrows, depending on how you regard its relationship to modernism) many of the features of modernism. According to Jencks because of the element of quotation, late modernism is often mistaken for post-modernism. There are two crucial differences. Firstly, late modernist architecture is still wedded to the idea of the new. Secondly, like modernism it is formalist in the sense that it is concerned with the forms of its own specific art, attentive to its own specific art practices. This is a traditional definition of modernism stemming from Kant and vigorously propounded by Clement Greenberg, the guardian of modernist art.

Jencks suggests that this use and quotation of styles in post-modernism is purely semantic reference. The distinction Jencks makes here could be applied across the range of post-modern cultural practices. Furthermore, one can begin to see the difficulty in categorising philosophers. If one wanted to categorise the philosophers mentioned earlier on, it could be argued that if any term is applicable it would be late-modern given their disinterest in semantics. However in respect to the notion of the *new* they would be post-modern.

One other important issue arises with regard to the function of reference. Is the way in which allusion and reference function in post-modernism less destructive of aura than is often suggested? This question is exemplary of one of the key problem areas in debate on post-modernism. That is the notion of the simulacra. The simulacra in the work of Baudrillard is non-representational. Yet discussion of the characteristics of post-modernism equates simulacrum with images which are the bearer of ideological content. I will discuss this slippage in a later chapter. I will merely note the use of the term, its easy substitution for image, in this quote from David Harvey debating the issue of decentralisation and regionalism in post-modernity:

The assertion of any place-bound identity has to rest at some point on the motivational power of tradition. It is difficult, however, to maintain any sense of historical continuity in the face of all the flux and ephemerality of flexible accumulation. The irony is that tradition is now often preserved by being commodified and marketed as such. The search for roots ends up at worst being produced and marketed as an image, as a simulacrum or pastiche.¹²

For this reason I would argue that quotation, allusion and pastiche, are entirely consistent with the notion of aura which is a symbolic force of an image or object. They depend on and play with an assumed aura. One of the few people to see what is at stake in the simulacrum is Richard Kearney who recognises its threat to the concept of imagination, though he too seems to

equate the simulacrum with the image.¹³ I will give a more detailed account of the simulacrum in a later chapter, in the meantime I would argue that this is another indication of the often analytic laxity of the post-modern debate.

In the end what is of crucial significance, no matter how one attempts to set up a debate on the issues of post-modernism, is its emergence as the result of the perceived empirical and historical failure of modernism. Judgement of modernist architecture in the end is given on pragmatic grounds - it did not work. Its universal functional style was perceived to have failed to meet the needs of particular individuals or communities. For this reason, to use a architectural metaphor, recourse to the analyses of philosophers who account for the *structural* impossibility of the completion of the western ratio is largely *decorative*, or *ornamental*. This, I would argue, is exemplary of the debate on post-modernism in general. Despite its harnessing of various recent philosophers to its orbit, it ignores their fundamental analyses of the structural flaws at the core of western thought. The demise of certain values in the west are understood as an empirical event, and are even given a date by Jencks.

Bearing in mind what has been suggested about post-modernism so far I will now turn to the two most

prominent philosophers who have been sympathetic to the notion of post-modernism - Jean-Francois Lyotard and Richard Rorty. Rorty has accounted for himself as a 'post-modern bourgeois liberal'. Their respective approaches and origins are quite different. Rorty is a pragmatist who developed an interest in continental philosophy while Lyotard is a continental philosopher who became interested in pragmatism. Rorty's style is conversational while Lyotard's is increasingly analytic.

Lyotard's seminal account is given in two essays; *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and *What is Postmodernism?* In the first essay Lyotard attempts to plot the course of the change in the practices, purposes and institutions of knowledge. The description he offers leads him to the central issue of legitimation. He frames his account with the proposition that in this particular epoch, the post-modern, there has undergone a transformation of knowledge. This change occurs for a variety of reasons.

The two key characteristics in the change in the nature of this knowledge is an exponential transformation in technology which has in turn affected dramatically the nature of research and the circulation of knowledge. The organising matrix of this transformation is *information*. Lyotard asserts that

any knowledge that cannot be translated into information will not find a place in the new channels of knowledge circulation. This change has consequences for users of knowledge. He suggests that the relationship increasingly takes the form of that of consumers and producers of any other commodity and is the cornerstone of economic development in the late 20th century:

It is widely accepted that knowledge has become the principle force of production over the last few decades; this has already had a noticeable effect on the composition of the work force of the most highly developed countries and constitutes the major bottleneck for the developing countries. In the postindustrial and postmodern age, science will maintain and no doubt strengthen its preeminence in the arsenal of productive capacities of the nation states.¹⁴

A consequence of this is that the political context in which knowledge as information functions is clearly different to any previous context. Lyotard describes the traditional space of knowledge, research and its legitimation in the university as follows. There was the model of the Napoleonic order in which the transmission of knowledge functioned in order to provide the state with an administrative class. The development of this class would provide stability for the state and in effect would provide the conditions for general progress and liberty for the people. There is, thus, a twofold basis to this demarcation for the proper functioning and legitimation of knowledge, though Lyotard argues that the second

purpose acts as a smokescreen for state control over the institutions of knowledge. The next model was that decided upon by von Humboldt in Germany in the early nineteenth century. Lyotard argues that this model of the university was essentially Hegelian in its relation to the state. Knowledge is no longer, even as an alibi, a resource for the betterment of the state and the people. Nor is knowledge pursued for its own sake:

German idealism has recourse to a metaprinciple that simultaneously grounds the development of learning, of society, and of the State in the realization of the "life" of a Subject called "divine life" by Fichte and "Life of the spirit" by Hegel. In this perspective, knowledge first finds legitimacy within itself, and it is knowledge that is entitled to say what the state and what society are.¹⁵

In this way knowledge is not positive not solely concerned with its referent but is knowledge about that knowledge. It becomes in the Hegelian sense speculative and thereby *legitimises itself*. Positive science is in effect meaningless without its sublation into and by spirit. This form of legitimation he calls modern:

I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a meta-discourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth.¹⁶

In post-industrial culture these *grand narratives* of legitimation are no longer credible. There are a variety of reasons for this. Not least as Lyotard

points out the gnawing nihilism of the idealist and humanist narrative legitimations of Knowledge. Technological development deepens this.

There is the increase in resourcing of research by private capital. During the Keynesian economic order research was conducted through this form of financing in two ways. Direct technological applications producing short-term profit (applied research) and basic research with a return in the future through innovation that would eventually prove decisive in the market place. Clearly however in this case the motive for research is less the pursuit of scientific truth than the securing of market advantage:

The State and/or company must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial bankers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power.¹⁷

It is this direct and functional relationship between knowledge and power that accelerates the problem of delegitimation. The new criteria for what counts as knowledge is a functional one based on efficiency and performativity. It could be said that such an order legitimates itself in circular fashion through the technical means it has at its disposal which decides what counts as knowledge, truth and reality:

Power is not only good performativity, but also effective verification and good verdicts. It legitimates science and the law on the basis of their efficiency, legitimates this efficiency on the basis of science and law. It is self-legitimizing, in the same way a system organized around performance maximization seems to be.¹⁸

The criterion of performativity renders the issue of the legitimation or delegitimation meaningless. Certainly such a question cannot be posed from within the functionalist language game of the system.

However there are two reasons why this system cannot sustain itself under such conditions which have nothing to do with their lack of legitimation. The demands for optimisation of performance produce intolerable strains on the economic order through capital over-accumulation. But Lyotard asserts that because of the post-modern credulity towards grand narratives the marxist narrative of salvation from this 'contradiction' of capital is not credible. Secondly, the imagination necessary for technological development is not possible within the logic of functionalism. So even though a functionalist system may encourage a certain *frisson* or dissension it is done in order to increase performativity and within a certain consensus about possible innovatory moves. If the principle of power is therefore *homeostasis* the real motor of scientific advance according to Lyotard is paralogy - the capacity to make a move which changes the rules of the language game which opens up new possibilities and domains for research.

Hence Lyotard's advocacy of pragmatics and agonistics which he argues is a feature of post-modern science in any case. This is of course what Habermas wants to dispute because, as Lyotard points out, he is wedded to the narrative of emancipation and the teleology of consensus:

Returning to the description of scientific pragmatics, it is now dissension that must be emphasized. Consensus is a horizon that is never reached. Research that takes place under the aegis of a paradigm tends to stabilize; it is like the exploitation of a technological, economic, or artistic "idea". It cannot be discounted. But what is striking is that someone always comes along to disturb the order of "reasons". It is necessary to posit the existence of a power that destabilizes the capacity for explanation, manifested in the promulgation of new forms for understanding or, if one prefers, in a proposal to establish new rules circumscribing a new field of research for the language of science.¹⁹

Universal pragmatics in the service of 'emancipation' regulates movements within the language game. However it is arguable whether Lyotard's description of the experimental moves within the language game is post-modern or whether it in fact conforms to the notion of art-specific practice of modernism.

There are real similarities between the pragmatic agonistics of post-modernism in Lyotard and Richard Rorty's pragmatics of conversation. Rorty in some respects aligns himself more easily with the shorthand account of post-modernism. His work borrows

fragmentarily from Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics. It is this which provides him with a schema for his attack of the enlightenment and of philosophical foundations in general. In effect the issue of foundationalism in Rorty takes the place of legitimation in Lyotard. The key feature of this anti-foundationalism is an affirmation of the historical and cultural contingency of the subject. Translating into Rorty's purposefully coy language, there is no objective world 'out there' for the subject to discover and thereby confirm his/her place in a system of truth:

to put the point in Heidegger's way, "language speaks man," languages change in the course of history, and so human beings cannot escape their historicity. The most they can do is manipulate the tensions within their own epoch in order to produce the beginnings of the next epoch.²⁰

Rorty wants to redescribe philosophical tradition, to *refurnish* it, in order that a *conversation* may take place unrestricted by the mistaken, redundant and unproductive questions and schemas of philosophy. This refurnishing will allow him, he asserts, to avoid accusations of 'irrationalism' or 'relativism'. Moreover this conversation despite the appeal to Heidegger is not a hermeneutic dialogue. As Lyotard points out it has no interest in the pursuit of any type of occulted truth. It is just conversation. "Refurnishing" is a way of keeping the conversation going. This is the mark of the liberal ironist and without

wanting to press the similarities too far it is somewhat analogous to paralogy:

Ironists specialize in redescribing ranges of objects or events in partially neologistic jargon, in the hope of inciting people to adopt and extend the jargon. An ironist hopes that by the time she has finished using old words in new senses, not to mention introducing Brand-New words, people will no longer ask questions in the old words.²¹

Despite admitting to being a "postmodern bourgeois liberal" Rorty wants to redeem the liberal, secular impulse of the enlightenment as a practical project. He argues that the vocabulary whereby it established itself was appropriate for its time but its universalist claims are now destructive of its practical liberalism.

Because he wants to take truth (universal and relativist) off the agenda of any debate concerning how we should conduct ourselves, philosophy becomes a surplus requirement. Truth becomes the pragmatic result of conversations which have taken place by changing the topic - the topic being the questions of philosophy. The conversation is therefore free ranging and without conditions especially the one requiring it to arrive at the truth or consensus. It is this latter point that divides Rorty's liberalism from Habermas'. With Lyotard, Rorty sees that language of emancipation as a redundant narrative. Furthermore, taking a swipe at Plato, his ideal figure in this postmodern liberal society would be the poet. This also separates him

from Habermas for as I have already mentioned Habermas fears the "irrationalism" of any viewpoint that aims at anything other than undistorted communication:

A poeticized culture would be one which would not insist we find the real wall behind the painted ones, the real touchstones of truth as opposed to touchstones which are merely cultural artifacts. It would be a culture which, precisely by appreciating that all touchstones are such artifacts, would take as its goal the creation of ever more various and multicolored artifacts.²²

It is clear then that for Rorty the political liberalism of modernity can only be preserved through a turn to a post-modern ironics that eschews traditional propositional truths in favour of truths that extend the conversation in new directions. Therefore these artifacts are not foundations.

While there are definite similarities between Lyotard and Rorty both recognise the fundamental differences. For example, because Lyotard rejects meta-narratives of subjectivity, he is sceptical of the subject being made the transcendental condition for Rorty's conversation:

It is as if the I/you relationship marked by the exchangeability of letters between persons or empirical individuals were a transcendental condition of philosophy, of history, of progress, of Enlightenment, in short of those things that he is concerned with (and I am certainly not scornful of them). But to accord oneself the privilege of the pragmatic, even under the cloak of the greatest modesty (simple 'solidarity'), is finally to get the essential on the cheap.²³

Rorty on the other hand argues that Lyotard's fundamental commitment to experimentation for its own sake as an interesting but unimportant pursuit unfortunately too reminiscent of traditional utopian leftism:

Those who want sublimity are aiming at a postmodernist form of intellectual life. Those who want beautiful social harmonies want a postmodernist form of social life, in which society as a whole asserts itself without bothering to ground it.²⁴

There are other differences which concern Rorty and Lyotard that could be discussed. For example, while Alex Callinicos criticises the inconsistency of Lyotard's conception of post-modernism he misses the fundamental feature which is its modernist schematization. Post-modernism is the re-writing of modernism and not its citation. This is the key difference between Lyotard and other conceptions of post-modernity, of which Rorty is the most honest and coherent exemplar. The point of Lyotard's language games is that they are irreconcilable. On the other hand I would argue that all affirmative accounts of post-modern practices rest on the *de jure* valorisation of a principle of eclecticism (not only in the harnessing of different theorists to the same end, but also in its generic pick and mix; film, literature, television etc,) which becomes *de facto* synthesis. Hence Rorty too, while having a more differentiated account of recent philosophy, elicits one fundamental

impulse. The problematising of foundations and the consequent issue of legitimation for judgement and critique. In the end therefore I would suggest that the measure of an affirmative account of post-modernism lies in its being motivated by an epistemological anxiety, despite Rorty's belief that it is otherwise. In the end, post-modernism in the area of philosophy and architecture is still motivated by the traditional problem of the universal versus the particular. It seeks a new arrangement between the two. In architecture it is the local and particular which is valorized over the international style and values of modernism. In philosophy universal reason is rejected in favour of the diversity of particular language games.

Symptomatic of this epistemological anxiety at the core of the issue of the post-modern are the 'tonalities' attributed to post-modernist works; irony and parody. Though it is often suggested that irony is a modernist trope Rorty for one replaces angst with irony as a post-modern mode of being-in-the-world. Parody is cited by Kearney among others as uniquely post-modern. In effect it is the post-modern gloss on tradition in the works of Warhol and John Barth for example. In this way the only purpose of much of what passes for post-modernist practice seems to be to provide a kind of intellectual *frisson*.

I would argue that this is one reason why Baudrillard is often misunderstood to be a post-modernist. His well cited observations on Disneyland (that it is there to conceal the fact that it is the real America) for example has become a metonymy of his entire project. What is perceived as *fin-de-siecle* gallows humour, by Kearney and Kellner for example, is in fact Baudrillard playing straight. If there is an element of intellectual conceit in Baudrillard's work it is one that is rigorously and passionately pursued. It is though, a conceit of the *object*. Baudrillard's work is a meditation on the object, from the early analyses of the commodity and symbolic exchange to the later *ironic fascination* of the object, unrelated to the perspective of a subject.

The theoretical question that Baudrillard will eventually pose to himself is how to vanish as a subject and a theorist and reappear as an object, brutally indifferent to the political economy of the subject and the referential truths of theory. To account for this, and the phenomenon which gives rise to it, Baudrillard will invent a whole set of concepts. These concepts are not determined by the rules of the subject. They are not the function of a strategy. Like the secret rule which Baudrillard suggests is the basis for an artwork, his writing refuses the ironic self-reflexivity (and 'knowingness') of post-modernist practices. Baudrillard's theoretical writings are not

primarily concerned with changing the rules of a game, of philosophy or sociology for example. Baudrillard rejects the values of dialogue and conversation. Whether naively, ambitiously or bizarrely, Baudrillard comes to see his theory as an event which, like the object, absorbs all the passions of the subject and all the energy of the real. What follows is an attempt to trace the trajectory of this would-be vanishing. As his work develops, it becomes increasingly hard to make the architectural analogy stick. The static architectural space and its dimensions do not adequately represent Baudrillard's practice of disappearance. A closer analogy is with the speed and light of what Paul Virilio understands as the projectile of the cinema:

...the arts continue to disappear in the intense illumination of projection and diffusion. After the age of architecture-sculpture we are now in the time of cinematographic factitiousness; literally as well as figuratively, from now on *architecture is only a movie...*²⁵

This vanishing of Baudrillard is not a different account of the much heralded death of the author. The architecture of subjectivity, of interiority and exteriority is broken down in his account, through a manoeuvre he calls seduction which is more than a simple absence. This vanishing is a function of a particular theoretical trajectory which I shall begin to elucidate in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATION OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

Know Thyself - Socrates.

Only the Shallow know themselves - Oscar Wilde.

Merely glanced at, Baudrillard's early writings seem to be of a piece with many of the concerns emanating from continental philosophy during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Condensed into a brief *mise-en-scene* the issues addressed, in no particular order of importance would be; language as system or code; the demise of history as a concept which could provide a rigorous foundation for the understanding of how we have arrived at particular philosophical, political or social conjuncture; whither Marx and Freud after their political and psychic domestication (or as one particular strain suggests, after political and psychic Stalinism)?; what to do with the flawed and failed subject of humanism, and of course reason as the subject's passport to freedom; and finally the concept of power (ideology, manipulation, control) insofar as it is deeply affected by the very posing of the other questions, and the various ways in which they would be putatively resolved.

All of these questions impinge to a greater or lesser degree on Baudrillard's starting point, and hence have some bearing on all future modifications and

transformations of his work. This is especially important because Baudrillard's work and intellectual journey has often been regarded as the disappointed and embittered exile of someone who would be at home in some variety of critical philosophy.

There are many reasons for this. A whole generation of French theory is often understood as a reaction to the failure of the promise of revolution, specifically that of May 1968. One might suggest that post-modernism as a concept appears specifically as a result of the widely considered theoretical and political limitations of marxist and psychoanalytic theory. Baudrillard suggests in a interview that the attempt to couple marxism and psychoanalysis was in fact a sign that:

...both had buggered off, and that it was only through their desperate copulation that the knack could be saved, each becoming the other's nagging child ..[it]..really represented the ideological apogee of both of them. (ROC p.27)

This is the demise of the so-called 'grand narratives'. If Baudrillard himself in his early work draws from both psychoanalysis and marxism the relationship is not as intimate as a coupling. It is more of a case of borrowing their clothes. What also developed, and is often associated with post-modernism, was not the idea that the "system" is capable of assimilating all forms of critical opposition but that the system only functioned according to binary

structures - that a system required such opposition for stability. I will show that Baudrillard does at some stage present binary regulation as the self-reproducing matrix of the current system. However it is not language but the genetic code which will provide the model for the commutability of terms.

In the restricted definition of the post-modern as the redundancy of the grand narrative one could argue that the theoretical development of Baudrillard's work fits neatly into such a paradigm. It is manifested by what one could more grandly call a turning, or more mundanely, that the direction and more formal theory of his early writings are apparently left behind in his later ones. Baudrillard becomes increasingly oblique. In the language of *Seduction* he is preserving a secret by which he delays the inevitability of his writing becoming a hostage to the terrorism of the transparency of meaning. A useful parallel could be drawn with the reception of Derrida's work where most of critics such as Terry Eagleton ("He has not delivered on some of the promises which were implicit in his earlier work") "prefer" his early writings while often his effusive admirers, such as Rorty, valorize the later work.

For better or worse the credibility of Baudrillard's entire work seems to rest on a particular reading of his early writing.¹ The identikit picture is someone wrestling with Marx in obviously changing

times. This person has sociological leanings, the evidence for which is found in the residue of a method and his choice of subject matter. Baudrillard himself confesses in a later interview that in his early work he was still interested in a sociology of distinctions. He was interested at this stage in attempting to formalise the ways in which the mechanisms of social prestation reproduce the control of political economy. This is done not as the ideological effect of economic forces but through the functioning of a code, the political economy of the sign. Nevertheless, Baudrillard could not be described as having been at any stage a semiologist. Baudrillard has throughout his work been consistent in his suspicion of meaning as a function of the metaphysical structure of signification, and therefore of semiology's domestication of the sign. As will become clear, his interest in symbolic exchange is an example of this.

Baudrillard's early work could be seen as an exploration, an attempt to find a language to describe social and economic processes that is not compromised by the set of problems he identifies in traditional Marxist analysis. In short, he sees the concepts of production, needs, the subject and the object (insofar as it framed in terms of use-value/exchange value) as analytically bankrupt, whose theoretical reserves can no longer pay their way. Unlike Douglas Kellner, who regards Baudrillard's early tarrying with Marxist

analysis as his theoretical Eden from which he is banished through the original sin of 'aristocratic Nietzscheanism', I would argue that Marxism for Baudrillard was only ever an historically dominant form of economic, social and cultural analysis that for various reasons - political and philosophical - demanded to be undone. The significance of Baudrillard's interest in Marxism is in its analysis of the object. Baudrillard is not interested in the issues of alienation, justice or revolution but in the functioning of the object, and in the case of Marxist analysis in the object as commodity.

A key feature of Baudrillard's theoretical trajectory is the dissatisfaction and disenchantment that motivates his work. This is manifested in his dalliance with various conceptual schema and his ongoing discarding of them. One could cite Freud, Marx, Lacan and the sociology of distinctions as early theoretical flirtations. In this chapter these features will become obvious. What interests me here though are the elements which are sustained throughout his work and which destabilise his theoretical flirtations. There are two key features here;

- 1) An attack on the subject in its various apparitions. I would argue that to judge Baudrillard by his own criteria would be to evaluate the success of his attack on the subject.²

and

2) a fascination with the 'object' and the way it is systematically put to work in the service of a series of political, moral and epistemological schema. Ultimately its submission by a code of value.

One familiar way of understanding this second trait in Baudrillard's work is in terms of a *surrealism* that is not committed to the *liberation of the subject* through the phantasm produced.³ Baudrillard argues that surrealism marks the moment when the object is "liberated" as function, its new reality principle, through the processes of production. However surrealism is not so much a transgression of functional logic but the recognition of and a consequent play on the disparity of the new functionality of the object and the anthropomorphic object. The surrealistic aspect of Baudrillard's work is often underestimated or mistaken for the practice of rhetoric at the expense of theoretical rigour. A good example of this is Douglas Kellner's comments on Baudrillard's later work:

One cannot help but wonder what it was that led Baudrillard to conclude that objects now reign supreme, and that we should submit to their dictates and laws. Was his word processor (if he has one) taking over his thought processes? Or was his television set controlling his imagination? Did his car, as on an episode of the old *Twilight Zone* television series, start driving him one day?⁴

Kellner presents an intriguing set of possibilities. However I hope to show how Baudrillard arrived at such a position without necessarily having been held hostage by his word processor.

In *The System of Objects and Consumer Society* Baudrillard is often read as attempting to provide a more sophisticated marxist analysis of a post-industrial order. Baudrillard considers the assertion that the political and economic problem of the late twentieth century is no longer that of the production of goods but the necessity of their consumption. The problem addressed is: what does the practice and system of consumption consist of? In what sense can it be said that consumption, as opposed to production, constitutes a system? Furthermore it could be argued that in order to understand the theoretical development of his work one other issue remains in the background of his analysis of production and consumption. That is, what is at stake in the relation constructed by both the system of production and consumption. Not the fact that it is an exploitative relation or alienating relation but that it is a relation at all. I would suggest that this lies behind the attraction in his early work in the principle of symbolic exchange.

Baudrillard's style of argumentation often consists of a consideration of various theoretical positions before addressing their assumptions and

unsatisfactory philosophical consequences. For Baudrillard, the practices of consumption draw out important assumptions in sociological and economic analysis. The most problematic area, as far as he is concerned, is the extent to which such analysis rests either on notions of alienation on the one hand or of self-fulfillment through a calculus of satisfaction of needs on the other.

In *The System of Objects* this polarity is displayed in its structuring of the analysis of advertising. Is advertising an ideological practice or is it a rational enlightening for people of their wants and needs? However it is really only through paying attention to Baudrillard's worrying away at the status of the object that one can avoid the error of reading Baudrillard's early work as a point of critique which he later rejects. The central question is posed as follows:

At the stage of artisanal production objects reflect the contingent and singular character of needs. While the two systems are adapted to one another they are no better integrated since they depend on the relative coherence of needs, which are fluid and contingent: there is no objective technological (*technique*) progress. Since the beginning of the industrial era, manufactured goods have acquired coherence from technological organization (*l'ordre technique*) and from the economic structure. The system of needs has become less integrated than the system of objects; the latter imposes its own coherence and thus acquires the capacity to fashion an entire society. (SO pp.14-15)

What could be clearer than this as a statement of intent with respect to Baudrillard's theoretical interests. How has the object come to attain such a position of domination? Baudrillard is dissatisfied with the notion that commodities function as a discrete economic system either reflecting, on one account, or producing on another, a coherent set of needs. The object of consumption is not the reference of a particular essential human need. Neither is it the fulfilment of a ideologically constructed specific need. According to Baudrillard, the object of consumption requires for its ontological status its transformation into a *sign*. As a commodity or object-sign what is consumed is not a material object but the *idea of a relation* - a social and personal statement of one's place in the world. Consumption is therefore an activity directed not towards the usefulness, functionality or materiality of an object which would satisfy a natural or produced need. So for example "materiality", "usefulness" and "functionality" may be bought but only as an abstract, or material, sign. Its "usefulness" is signified through object-sign differentiation rather than through any essential quality of the object. Baudrillard argues that this function of consumption makes it a historically unique relation to objects.

What distinguishes this analysis of the commodity object as vehicle of social and philosophical relation

from a traditional Marxist one is that this idea of a relation is produced as a consequence of an essential lack. These objects do not mediate reality or distort it. They conjure up its very idea. The dynamic of consumption is not therefore merely the polar opposite of active production. Consumption is a labour of lust and its object is constantly shifting and it cannot be terminated by either satiation through satisfaction (the resolution of tensions), or controlled by an appeal to humanist morality, via "basic needs", which would aim at moderating it. I will develop this issue presently. For the moment it is enough to note that Baudrillard is consistent throughout his work in rejecting the notion of alienation. The activity of consumption cannot therefore be moderated or reformed from the starting point of essential needs:

At the heart of the project from which emerges the systematic and indefinite process of consumption is a frustrated desire for totality. Object-signs are equivalent to each other in their ideality and can proliferate indefinitely: and they must do so in order continuously to ful-fill the absence of reality. It is ultimately because consumption is founded on a lack that it is irrepressible. (SO p.25.)

The Lacanian vocabulary is particularly noticeable here and is a good example of Baudrillard's flirtation with psycho-political analysis. There is the process of a desire, constituted by a lack, moving along a chain of object-signs without limitation or finality. This is why it is "irrepressible". The object-commodity is not a fetish for that would make it a

function of the psychology of the alienated subject. Hence Baudrillard would reject any psycho-economic description of consumption. It is the object-commodity itself which presents the abstract idea of fulfilment, of satisfaction, in its proliferation. Yet its very condition of possibility as commodity-object requires the constant deferral of satisfaction. Looking at it this way it is the commodity that is sovereign:

We are living the period of the objects: that is, we live by their rhythm, according to their incessant cycles. Today, it is we who are observing their birth, fulfilment and death; whereas in all previous civilizations, it was the object, instrument, and perennial monument that survived the generations of men. (CS p.29.)

At this point in his work Baudrillard believes that paradoxically, we are no longer in the time of the subject, if we ever were, but live according to the time of the object. Or more specifically, the time of the commodity. We are now made to bear witness to the object-commodity. This is not to say that Baudrillard is criticising the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. He will argue that the concept of the subject is irrevocably tied to the logic of political economy.⁵

He identifies the two dominant analyses of the commodity's function as utility in the discourse of economics, and conformity in the language of sociology. As I have already shown Baudrillard indicates why both attitudes towards the commodity are theoretically unsatisfactory. Of the two positions Baudrillard

concedes that the classical economic theory of the equivalent utility of objects is more consistent than the moral critique of it. In assessing the claims of J.K. Galbraith he cites the example of the equivalent satisfaction level of a rich person who buys yet another fur coat and the hungry man who buys a hamburger. Classical economics asserts an equivalent level of satisfaction, for it cannot be proved otherwise, while Galbraith's moral, and needs based critique, disagrees. According to Baudrillard, Galbraith's position is at the very least empirically incorrect. He assumes that each specific need can be satisfied by a particular empirical object and such a need is originally produced by marketing and advertising. However advertising does not always work and consumer needs are adaptable and elastic, and can be fulfilled by a variety of objects:

The empirical "object," given in its contingency of form, color, material, function and discourse (or, if it is a cultural object, in its aesthetic finality) is a myth. How often it has been wished away! But the object is *nothing*. It is nothing but the different types of relations and significations that converge, contradict themselves, and twist around it, as such - the hidden logic that not only arranges this bundle of relations, but directs the manifest discourse that overlaps and occludes it. (CPES p.63)

So for Baudrillard the object can only appear as a relay of relations. In "The Ideological Genesis of Needs", Baudrillard identifies four logics of signification (or forms whereby it appears) of the object. As there are no empirical objects, what the

object means is determined by the particular form of value specific to each logic:

1) The functional logic of the object. This is the object as technical instrument. It would be a generic object like a "hoover" or Baudrillard's example of the refrigerator, "fridge". At a basic level the object is not substitutable for another product. For example if I want to buy an object to freeze food only a fridge, and not a T.V. or V.C.R., will satisfy my requirements. It is an object of specific utility. At first glance there seem to be problems with this description of the functional object insofar as Baudrillard appears to naturalize the object which goes against the thread of his critique of essential needs. I will come back to this.

2) The economic logic of exchange. The object here is the commodity. The object in this instance is therefore substitutable as it is determined by the logic of the market. In this instance the aforementioned "hoover" or "fridge" may appear according to this logic if it is a luxury item.

3) The logic of symbolic exchange. The object in this case is ambivalent and reversible (through reciprocity), its value wholly dependent upon the relationship established by the exchange. Baudrillard cites the "gift" as such an object. Strictly speaking

the object is erased in symbolic exchange. It has no value, or "objective" meaning in itself - functional, economic or prestigious. The giving is intransitive. Such an object is unique. Baudrillard contrasts the substitutability of the fashion ring with the permanence of the wedding ring. The symbolic is however in principle exclusive of the economic.

4) The logic of sign-value. This is the object of consumption which is constituted through difference. The object of consumption is a status sign. The object is substitutable but in this case through the play of signs as in fashion:

The definition of an object of consumption is entirely independent of objects themselves and *exclusively a function of the logic of significations.*

An object is not an object of consumption unless it is released from its psychic determinations as *symbol*; from its functional determinations as *instrument*; from its commercial determinations as *product*; and is thus *liberated* as a sign to be recaptured by the formal logic of fashion i.e., by the logic of differentiation. (CPES p.67)

It is at this level that one can begin to identify the metaphysical basis for the political economy of the sign. The system of representation is a necessary condition for the functioning of political economy.

In the logic of sign-value the symbolic and the functional are excluded. Though as I have said it is possible to display the 'functional' as a sign, to put

it in quotation marks. However the commodity-sign is not transformed from a product into a sign of prestige. The object exists only as an element in a calculus of signs. It becomes a signifier and the political economy of the sign is the signified of utility or functionality (the reality principle) which acts as an alibi for sign-value.

The specular myth of the autonomous object of utility, its utility being the reality principle of the object, simultaneously produces the subject. They are unified through the relation of need. According to Baudrillard each can only be defined in circular fashion need being the functional relation of subject to object and object to subject:

Metaphysics itself has never done anything else and, in Western thought, *metaphysics and economic science* (not to mention traditional psychology) *demonstrate a profound solidarity*, mentally and ideologically, in the way they posit the subject and tautologically resolve its relation to the world. (CPES p.71)

This proposition demonstrates that Baudrillard's account is not a purely sociological or politico-historical one. The logic of economic science is part of the wider genealogy of occidental metaphysics. Recent transformations in political economy are not hermetic. There is no "last instance" of economic determination if the economic is conceived outside the metaphysical thought by which it is abstractly constituted. One example of which is this circular

logic which is in fact the principle of adequation, the identity principle of $A=A$. Hence the individual and its needs do not only enter the system of productivity through what he calls *consummativity*. Needs are not the primary qualities of a subject which are then manipulated and alienated. They are what sustains the concept of the subject. Needs, he writes, are:

better defined as a *function* induced (in the individual) by the internal logic of the system: more precisely, *not as a consummative force liberated by the affluent society, but as a productive force* required by the functioning of the system itself, by its process of reproduction and survival. (CPES p.82)

Having shown the systemic necessity of the integration of the sign with political economy, Baudrillard contends that traditional Marxist analysis is flawed as long as its first principle is that of *production*. The error is firstly that such analysis is directed towards the content of ("bad" objects and "good" objects") and not at the formal logic of production. Marxist analysis of political economy is in fact a reflection of the productivist logic of political economy. Use value is not a beyond of economic exchange value. As we have seen it is the signified to exchange value's signifier. It is an essential reference of sign-value. It does not transcend it but it acts as its horizon. It is ultimately the reality principle of exchange value. The principle of *to each according to his needs* is, as

Baudrillard shows, essential to the logic of sign-exchange value. There is:

...a homology between the emancipation in the bourgeois era of the private individual given final form by his/her needs and the functional emancipation of objects as use values. (CPES p.132)

While traditional marxist analysis unmaskes the content of political economy based on the abstraction of exchange value it can only confront its form as a reflection of it. It leaves untouched the tautology whereby need is constituted and constructs an anthropology of use-value. Just as exchange value is not a substantial feature of an object but rather the form by which a social relation is expressed, so use value as a principle of Marxist theory does not describe anything innate about an object. Utility and use-value operate as the 'moral law' of the object. In this way it is:

...an abstraction of the system of needs cloaked in the false evidence of a concrete destination and purpose... (C.P.E.S. p.131)⁶

According to Baudrillard, marxist theory is rooted in a reflection of a particular phase of political economy and the consequent Marxist genealogy. In the first pre-capitalist phase only the surplus is exchanged. Though as Baudrillard points out it is only through the abstraction of the dialectic that such archaic societies can be described purely in terms of their containing the seed elements of political

economy. Hence they are merely *pre-capitalist*. The retro-narrative of marxism proposes that while there is a major transformation from this first order to industrial capitalism the putative third order is merely an extension of the second. In this third phase there would be a general encroachment of exchange value into what had previously been considered "unalienable" such as "love", knowledge etc. Baudrillard argues that there is an as extensive mutation from industrial capitalism to post-industrial capitalism as there is from pre-capitalist society to industrial capitalism:

The mutation concerns the passage from the form-commodity to the form-sign, from the abstraction of the exchange of material products under the law of general equivalence to the operationalization of all exchanges under the law of the code. With this passage to the *political economy of the sign*, it is not a matter of a simple "commercial prostitution" of all values (which is the completely romantic vision from the celebrated passage of the *Communist Manifesto*: capitalism tramples on all human values - art, culture, labor, etc. - in order to make money; the *romantic critique of profit*). (MOP p.120)

This extensive mutation is complex and as we have seen already has a different logic. The contradictions which Marx saw as the seeds of destruction of capitalism are integrated and distributed through consumption, by the code. All political and social distinction and difference is not only contained by the code but anticipated by it. The system of sign-exchange depends on the incessant play of difference in order that it may function at all. There is no longer the *competitive sign of representation* with a signified

but rather the pure commutability of signs. Even though the code does not function according to a logic of representation it uses the "referent" (use-value) as its alibi. Baudrillard argues therefore that there is necessary equivalence and homology between the system of representation and political economy. What is critical to understanding Baudrillard's position is his refutation of the apparent theoretical choice between;

a) the naive idealism of treating the sign and representation as the final determinant of social and political change,

or

b) the "materialist" theory situating the economic as the final determinant.

There is nothing to choose between these two alternatives. The system itself does not present this difficulty: it comprises neither materialism nor idealism, nor infrastructure nor superstructure. It proceeds according to its form and this form carries along all of them at the same time: production and representation, signs and commodities, language and labor power. (MOP pp.130-131)

In effect Baudrillard could be said to have "deconstructed" the core principle of political economy and the marxist criticism of it. That is say, he attempts to show how the apparently essential feature of an object, its use-value, is a function of the "supplementary" logic of exchange.

As I have shown, the system of needs goes hand in hand with the system of commodities, and the abstraction of the individual subject is a function of the logic of sign-exchange:

The individual is an ideological structure, a historical form correlative with the commodity form (exchange value), and the object form (use value). The individual is nothing but the subject thought in economic terms, rethought, simplified, and abstracted by the economy. The entire history of consciousness and ethics (all the categories of occidental psycho-metaphysics) is only the history of the political economy of the subject. (CPES p.33)

This is a strong claim for Baudrillard to make and is something which is sustained in ever more sophisticated, or convoluted, ways throughout his work. The subject is constructed through this operational mirror of production and is constituted and brought about through the 'theology of value'. Despite the Marxist attack on *homo economicus*, its analysis is still a function of production and thereby acquires its own subject which is bound by utility. It is a different manipulation of the same code of value.

I would argue that it is Baudrillard's understanding of the subject which ultimately makes his work unacceptable to his many critics. For instance Kellner simply asserts:

I believe that we can specify what needs and use values of various commodities serve our own purposes and self-defined needs (that is, what furthers the goals of self-valorization in opposition to capital-valorization).⁷

The philosophical basis for Kellner's attitude is firstly empirical. He naturalizes the relation of need between subject and object in exactly the manner that Baudrillard identifies as the process of consumption. He argues that somehow through personal experience we can identify a scale of use-values and needs. Assuming this relationship he contentedly and confidently re-asserts the pivotal role of the subject. Kellner on the one hand agrees with Baudrillard's analysis of the importance of consumption for the generation of a capitalist political economy. On the other hand he rejects the theoretical basis which makes such an analysis coherent and possible i.e., the recognition that the subject, needs and use-value are the cornerstones of a political economy of consummativity.

It is worth noting that in this respect Kellner is like many commentators of recent French philosophy. He recognises and applauds an iconoclastic element in it before disavowing those iconoclastic features in favour of moderation.

The only truly open practitioner of such a strategy is Richard Rorty. He admires the "ironic" writing of Nietzsche and Derrida for example and argues for the poeticization of culture which would be an inversion of the platonic *Republic*. But on the basis of a pragmatic "hunch", prefers the political

liberalism of Dewey and Habermas. His difference with Habermas being "merely philosophical". Furthermore he is convinced of the necessity of a "de-divinized" contingent self whose limits are those of "her" language. Nevertheless it is clearly an affirmation of the subject. Rorty recognises that essential to the anti-humanism of recent continental philosophy (he emphasises the particular contributions of both Foucault and Heidegger in regard to this) is its incompatibility with capitalist liberal democracy. In any case Rorty, for reasons concerning both his pragmatic liberalism and suspicion of philosophy with a big "P", rejects the move whereby a philosophical theory is universalised in a political or social agenda.

For many critics the criteria for whether Baudrillard is a philosopher worthy of interest rests on the presence or otherwise of an explicit political commitment. If Baudrillard represents the human subject as the central element of political economy, the subject is clearly compromised:

The whole system of individual values - this religion of spontaneity, liberty, creativity, etc - is bloated with the productivist option. Even the vital functions are immediately "functions" of the system.

We must reverse the terms of the analysis, and abolish the cardinal reference to the individual, for even that is the product of this social logic. (CPES p.86)

Hence, if there is any alternative to political economy it cannot have the subject of humanism as a principle of its organisation. In *The Mirror of Production* Baudrillard develops his attack on the subject. The mirror of production not only designates Marx's theoretical dependence on the productivist logic of capitalism, but the specular phantasm whereby the subject is posited and represented. This comes about, Baudrillard argues, through the conceptual opposition in Marxist theory of quantitative and qualitative labour. Quantitative labour is labour as a commodity. It is abstract, universal and according to Baudrillard "commensurable". It has abstract exchange value. This abstract labour has no value in itself. Qualitative labour is incommensurable, it produces specific utility. It is concrete and its own end. But it also:

signifies the comparability of all human practice in terms of production and labour. Or better: the abstract and formal universality of the commodity labor power is what supports the "concrete" universality of qualitative labor. (MOP p.27)

The supplementary logic of this opposition organises a conceptual series in Marxism. Elsewhere Baudrillard remarks that the whole of Marx can be seen in terms of an aspiration towards a good use of economy. According to Baudrillard, when Marx makes the ontological distinction between abstract labour and concrete labour he is in fact affirming the reality principle of *production* which is the condition of possibility for political economy. Qualitative,

concrete labour is a rationalisation and anthropological mystification of an abstract generic activity - production. Baudrillard attempts to show how this logic permeates the Marxist discussion of play or *non-work*, which on his reading, is thought wholly in terms of the production of value. In play the subject is liberated through producing himself as value. Unlike abstract production the activity is not determined by the production of contents. However it is determined by its task of producing a higher form of value. It confirms that even, or especially, in non-work man's essence is as the producer of value:

Exactly as the pure institutional form of painting, art, and theater shines forth in anti-painting, anti-art and anti-theater, which are emptied of their contents, the pure form of labor shines forth in non-labor. (MOP p.41)

It would appear on this reading that the apparent concreteness of play is in fact entirely abstract. Every activity and relation must yield value. This is the core of Baudrillard's difficulty with Marx. Marxist analysis reproduces the code of political economy, of production and value. Even leisure is founded on the productive and is not a useless activity or waste. Baudrillard argues that the threat to the system is its inability to allow for the anti-production of symbolic exchange value - waste, excess, destruction and reciprocity. All social and political difference is tolerated, anticipated and necessary:

We are faced with coding, super-coding, universalization of the code, proliferating axiomatization of the capitalist system (Deleuze). But against the triumphant abstraction, against the irreversible monopolization, the demand arises that nothing can be given without being returned, nothing is ever won without something being lost, nothing is ever produced without something being destroyed, nothing is ever spoken without being answered. In short what haunts the system is the symbolic demand. (MOP p.147)

The symbolic demand for Baudrillard is an alternative non-economic order irreducible to the system of political economy and representation. The possibility of revolt occurs in the margins in groups - youth, women, blacks - in a refusal of rationalization through classical politicisation. Ultimately it rejects its articulation in the axiomatics of political economy. There is a transformation of this analysis throughout Baudrillard's work and I will return to this.

However what Baudrillard identifies in *The Mirror of Production* as epistemological problems of the dialectic - which Baudrillard resolves into conceptual oppositions that replay the specular origin of the Marxist critique of political economy - can be viewed more specifically as a problem concerning the restricted economy (of production) of theory. The fundamental problem of theory, most evident in the dialectic, is the production of its object. It is the reduction of the singular to the same whose narrative is the production of meaning. Though Baudrillard does

not explicitly offer this as a criticism of Marxist theory it is implicit in his analysis of the retro-narrative and prophesy of the dialectic. This concern with the position of theory is a common theme of recent French philosophy though it is often presented (on the side of the subject) as the issue of recent theory's self-reflexivity. An example would be Derrida's debate with Gadamer in which what is truly at stake is the implicit desire of hermeneutic interpretation to set the terms and framework whereby its object is understood as the function of a subject. Baudrillard, like Derrida, wants to reverse the relationship. As we will see this problem exercises Baudrillard through the rest of his work.

I have attempted in this chapter to give a brief outline of Baudrillard's analysis of production, subjectivity and the political economy of signs. The purpose of which is to set up the background for his account of the simulacrum. What is at stake for Baudrillard in the simulacrum can only be appreciated through recognising the total complicity of the subject, production and the reality principle in political economy and its enlightened rational and moral critiques:

The concept of critique emerged in the West at the same time as political economy and, as the quintessence of Enlightenment rationality, is perhaps only the subtle, long-term expression of the system's expanded reproduction. (MOP p.50)

For this reason the form of Baudrillard's theorising begins to take on a different shape. Any lingering commitments to critical distance and difference will eventually be abandoned in favour of theory as a 'pure event', without a critical context (of rationality or subjectivity) or a necessary destination. The negative passes over to the side of the object.

CHAPTER 3: HOW A MYTH AT LAST BECAME THE REAL WORLD

The real is not threatened by its double
today (Clement Rosset): it is threatened by
its very idiocy. *Cool Memories*

There are two fundamental questions that must be addressed regarding the concept of the simulacrum in Baudrillard's work. Firstly does the simulacrum have its origin in contemporary political economy or is it in fact a structure of western thought. Secondly, and this is not inseparable from the question of its historical genesis, to what extent does Baudrillard displace the simulacrum as a question of representation by the simulacrum as the motor of a technological imaginary. In some respects the double genealogy is not really resolved throughout his work. However representation and its history begins to take more of a centre stage in Baudrillard's account of the simulacrum. His account of the reality principle of the political economy of the sign leads him to focus more specifically on the function and dynamics of the real. It could be argued that in fact, and I will look at this in the next chapter, that the current simulacrum brings to an end the system of political economy. In short Capital no longer functions according to the critical and reality principles of political economy.

In his early work his analysis of representation produces two genealogies of the sign. On the one hand he attempts to show how technological and economic development are produced at the same moment as the political economy of the sign. At the same time his analysis of this political economy suggests that this process is grounded in traditional philosophical concepts and reasoning. The result of this analysis is the concept of the simulacrum.

In this chapter I will set out the ground for an account of Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum. This scene setting seems to me to be necessary for the word simulacrum is much misunderstood. Most commentators on Baudrillard and on the 'simulacrum' (David Harvey for example whom I cited in the first chapter) take it to be synonymous with an image or a representation. This is not the case and leads to a fundamental misreading of his work. Partly because of this misreading, but also because of underlying serious misgivings about the consequences for the possibility of a critical politics, Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum has been considered controversial. The wider debate on the simulacrum has been almost entirely conducted within the framework of post-modernism. So in this section I will outline firstly what I think is a more congenial philosophical heritage for the reception of the notion of the simulacrum in the analyses of Derrida and Deleuze. While it is not the

case that Baudrillard, Derrida and Deleuze give similar accounts of the simulacrum there are points of contact.¹ Firstly, the fact that in all three accounts what is at issue in the simulacrum is more than a question of the image. Secondly, the accounts provided of the simulacrum have consequences for the way they perceive their own writing. In short its relation to the 'world'. I will also look at the perspectives on it from those who take it to be exemplary of the post-modern. Though I would argue that my account of the analyses of the simulacrum by Derrida and Deleuze will shed some light on what is at stake in the simulacrum for Baudrillard, none are reducible to each other.

Firstly, Deleuze, in an appendix to *The Logic of Sense* entitled *The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy* sets up his analysis with Nietzsche's declaration that the task of philosophy is to reverse Platonism. Charting this reversal is the ultimate end of his analysis of the simulacrum. He argues that this reversal would not be a simple abolition of the dichotomy of the world of appearances and the world of essences. This seems to me to be crucial to understanding any conception of the simulacrum. This opposition is only the foil for a manoeuvre by Plato to establish a moral order. According to Deleuze the division of essence and appearance, of true object and image, is motivated by a will to selection. This process of selection establishes a proper genealogy or

lineage by which all claims to truth, purity and authenticity may be measured. Deleuze notes however that this Platonic procedure is jettisoned at important moments in favour of various myths of circulation - the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* are the dialogues cited by Deleuze. In these texts the analytic function of division as a means of classification (division of genus into species for example) becomes a moral function in the process of *elective participation*:

The characteristic of division is to surmount the duality of myth and dialectic, and to reunite in itself dialectical and mythic power. Myth, with its always circular structure is indeed the story of a foundation. It permits the construction of a model according to which the different pretenders can be judged.²

Hence the place of *anamnesis* by which souls are credited with original contact with the Ideas or Forms. In this operation a distinction is made between true love and well-founded delirium on the one hand, and the sensual forgetfulness of the *false pretender*. This feature of memory is also fundamental to conceptions of the simulacrum in Derrida and Baudrillard. In Deleuze's reading the criterion of proximity to a founding truth organises many stories at the heart of Platonic dialogues and what is crucial to discerning the truth is to set up and identify the false pretender which at some point, Deleuze argues, is constituted as and revealed to be a mirage or simulacrum. He notes that of the three important dialogues concerning division - the *Phaedrus*, the *Statesman* and the *Sophist*

- only the latter contains no founding myth, no means whereby one can measure the just pretender. What occurs in this text is the definition, delineation and tracking down of the false pretender. In this story, according to Deleuze, Plato realises through the figure of the sophist that the simulacrum is not just a false copy or distorted distant misapprehension of an original:

Copies are secondary possessors. They are well-founded pretenders, guaranteed by resemblance; simulacra are like false pretenders, built upon a dissimilarity, implying an essential perversion or deviation. It is in this sense that Plato divides in two the domain of image-idols: on the one hand there are *copies-icons*, on the other there are *simulacra-phantasms*.³

Deleuze argues that this difference is the fundamental axis upon which the function of representation is founded. Representation considered not as external image of an object but as having an internal fidelity to an essence or model. As far as Plato is concerned true representation is governed by the principle of establishing a limit upon which selection can be made, and lineage can be established in a secondary way. The difference between copies and simulacra is not one of degree, the simulacrum in this instance being merely a further remove, a copy of a copy. The essential difference depends on the notation of resemblance to the model. Resemblance here is understood as the model of the Same imposed upon the copy.⁴ The simulacrum is more than the same and the

similar and is an act of dissemblance. Deleuze suggests that the difference between the two can also be defined in terms of how they are produced. Whereas the good copy is the result of the activity of someone with true knowledge and who uses understanding to achieve the end of resemblance. The simulacrum, on the other hand is not a function of knowledge:

The copy can be called an imitation to the degree that it reproduces the model; since this imitation is noetic, spiritual, and internal, however, it is a veritable production ruled by the relations and proportions constitutive of the essence. There is always a productive operation in the good copy and, corresponding to this operation, a *right opinion*, if not Knowledge.⁵

The simulacrum is on the other hand, a non-productive effectivity. It is not brought about through the operation of knowledge but is entirely external to it. Deleuze suggests that Plato, in his definition of the simulacrum, correctly identifies the threat to his entire philosophical project. That is to say, the simulacrum is huge, is of immense depths and hidden caves which cannot be fully comprehended by the observer. The resulting confusion on the part of the beholder of the simulacrum is not based on mere misrecognition or mistaken identity. It is of an entirely different order:

This simulacrum includes the differential point of view; and the observer becomes a part of the simulacrum itself, which is transformed and deformed by his point of view. In short there is in the simulacrum a becoming-mad or a becoming unlimited, as in the *Philebus* where, 'more and less are always going a point further', a becoming

always other, a becoming subversive of the depths, able to evade the equal, the limit, the Same, or the Similar: always more and less at once, but never equal.⁶

It is in this, the difference, movement and destruction of limits that Deleuze identifies as synonymous with the eternal return. The simulacrum is both the same and inclusive of difference and is in fact constitutive of the origin and the Same:

Let us consider the two formulas: 'only that which resembles differs' and 'only differences can resemble each other.' These are two distinct readings of the world: one invites us to think difference from the standpoint of previous similitude or identity; whereas the other invites us to think similitude and even identity as the product of deep disparity.⁷

The former, in which difference is a function of a prior identity, is the form of copies-icons in the domain of representation. The latter in which difference is primary, is what he calls the phantasmatic world of the simulacra. One is directed towards the finite and convergent, the other, the simulacrum in its constitutive externality is productive of divergence and heterogeneity.

Deleuze extracts his analysis of the simulacrum from Plato and resituates it as a moment in a Nietzschean logic. Firstly, he introduces the aesthetic not in order to place simulation within representation but to explain its mechanism as being exemplary of what he calls modernity, specifically the series in modernity. The model used is Joyce's

Finnegan's Wake in which a heterogenous series of divergent stories are told which are not different points of view on the one story. The divergent series produce an *internal resonance a forced movement*.⁸ This is the power of the simulacrum. According to Deleuze this is also the structure of the phantasm as defined by Freud which is the affective charge brought about through the difference of two series - the infantile and the post-pubescent:

The affective charge associated with the phantasm is explained by the amplitude of the forced movement which carries them along. Thus the conditions of real experience and the structures of the work of art are reunited: divergence of series, decentering of circles, constitution of the chaos which envelops them, internal resonance and movement of amplitude, aggression of simulacra.⁹

The simulacrum internalises and contains the two series of the same and different and it is in this that its power resides. The Same and the Similar upon which Plato's Model and Idea are organised can now be understood as effects of the simulacrum. Any essence is a simulated one:

Resemblance subsists, but it is produced as an external effect of the simulacrum, in as much as it is built upon divergent series and makes them resonate. Identity subsists, but it is produced as the law which complicates all the series and makes them all return to each one in the course of the forced movement. In the reversal of Platonism, resemblance is said of internalized difference, and identity of the Different as primary power.¹⁰

This doubling of the simulation, its demonic power of the false, is mirrored in the structure of Nietzsche's eternal return. The eternal return according to Deleuze is the forced movement of simulated conformity of the Same and the Similar. And it is precisely this movement which destroys any attempt at selection and foundation. For each model is simulated and paradoxically when the Same is not simulated it is a simple illusion.

If simulation is 'inseparable' from the eternal return it is clear that the eternal return itself can only be a simulation of a theory. This is the reversal of Platonism. As will become clear there are differences between Baudrillard's and Deleuze's conception of the simulacrum. What is interesting is this idea of the simulation of theory contained in both. What is common to both is the attempt to detach theory from an assumed and highly problematic relation with the real.

Though it may not be the focus of his analysis, this question of the status of theory is also ultimately raised by Derrida. It can be said that Deleuze's agenda in his work on the simulacrum in Plato, is to show its alignment with a principle of change vis a vis key aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy so Derrida's examination has its own frame of reference; the reading and writing of a text, its

conditions of possibility, and the displaced motor of the textual movement. The process of reading a text is given as identifying a seam, ripping it back and weaving in an extended thread:

There is always a surprise in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it had mastered the game, surveyed all threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without touching it, without laying a hand on the 'object', without risking - which is the only chance of entering into the game, by getting a few fingers caught - the addition of some new thread.¹¹

This well known, if not well read, essay of Derrida sets out the now infamous Platonic exclusion of writing from the domain of truth, knowledge and understanding. There are a whole set of criteria by which writing is deemed either an imperfect vehicle for the conduct of philosophical inquiry, or is positively a threat to the activity of reason in its pursuit of true knowledge. It is the latter, understood psychoanalytically as a moment of disavowal, that are considered by Derrida to be defining moments for the organisation of a text. In order to specify exactly Derrida's notion of the simulacrum it is necessary to follow his exploration of the function of writing in his reading of the *Phaedrus*.

The twin axis upon which this reading revolves is that of writing as *Pharmakon* (poison, cure, medicine) and as a *paidia* (game). Of the former, which I shall treat first, much has been written, identifying it as a

nom-de-plume of deconstruction. Yet much of this commentary has focussed on a semantic ambivalence in the word *Pharmakon* - cure and poison. It is clear however, that Derrida's reading is not motivated by an etymological paradox. It is rather concerned with the *pharmakon* as a self-generating pattern of effects which reproduces itself in/as the governing logic of the text and exemplary of textuality in general. Consequent to the emphasis on the semantic paradox of the *pharmakon* is the issue of speech and writing. This is often treated as a kind of anthropological truth. It is clear however that writing, for Derrida, designates Plato's text it serves firstly, and literally, as a scapegoat upon which various aberrant practices and ideas are blamed. And secondly, as a kind of black economy upon which Plato's conceptual economy depends. One example of this is the series distributed by the term Pater; Father, chief, good(s), capital. This series also designates the familial connections necessary for participation:

The status of this orphan [writing], whose welfare cannot be assured by any attendance or assistance, coincides with that of a *graphein* which, being nobody's son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all and no longer recognizes its origins, whether legally or morally. In contrast to writing, living *logos* is alive in that it has a living father (whereas the orphan is already half dead), a father that is present, standing near it, behind it, within it, sustaining it with rectitude, attaching it in person in his own name...¹²

However this lineage is important not as an anthropological structure but because it is the mechanism for the correct and proper exchange of value.

. The logos for Plato in the Phaedrus is a living creature (*Zoon*), and should be of noble blood. Derrida's reading of the Phaedrus parallels Deleuze's at other crucial points particularly in his account of the Myth of Thoth recounted in Plato. This story has origins in Egyptian mythology and is woven into the text for obviously exemplary reasons. Derrida argues that it is not a case of simply borrowing, or adding, in order to give an example. It is the very logic which attempts to delimit writing. Furthermore, it conforms to a problematic concerning the relationship between mythos and logos in western philosophy. The Myth itself concerns the displacement or substitution invited by Ra to Thoth the God of writing:

Be in the sky in my place, while I shine over the Blessed of the lower regions... You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth he who replaces Ra.¹³

Thoth is also the generator of plots, intrigues and violence which according to Derrida is wholly related to his designation as the God of writing:

This process of substitution, which thus functions as a pure play of traces or supplements or, again, operates within the order of the pure signifier which no reality, no absolutely external reference, no transcendental signified, can come to limit, bound or control: this substitution, which could be judged 'mad' since it can go on infinitely in the element of the linguistic permutation of substitutes, or substitutes for

substitutes: this unleashed chain is nevertheless not lacking in violence. One could not have understood anything of this 'linguistic' immanence if one saw it as the peaceful milieu of a merely fictional war, an inoffensive word-play, in contrast to some raging *polemos* in 'reality'.¹⁴

It is worth noting that the language in which Derrida couches his account is not dissimilar from Deleuze's. The madness which follows results from the infinitely variable permutations. Hence what is at stake in this simulacrum is more than merely a linguistic event. Derrida refuses to oppose it to some reality outside and beyond this process.

The madness and death accompanying the God of writing relates directly to the motif of the *pharmakon*. Madness would be a function of the temporal flux resulting from the unlimited substitution. Presence is infinitely deferred and memory is rendered impossible. As the *pharmakon* itself is both cure and poison, the writing as mnemonic, as a kind of *techne* is undermined by its incapacity to mirror the *understanding* required in the pursuit of the true. As a mnemonic device it produces forgetfulness instead of aiding memory. I will come back to this in a moment. Ultimately it is precisely in the operational guise of this *writing* as repetition that Plato recognises its fundamental threat, as a poison.

In the *Timaeus* Plato contrasts the disease as a living being with the effective disease of a medicine

which aggravates a problem. The natural disease is preferable over its synthetic 'cure' which in fact is an irritant. Moreover, according to Derrida, the internal opposing sense of *pharmakon* as writing is not one opposition among a series of values set up by Plato but is the matrix of seriality in general. The idea of limit fundamental to the hierarchical values is folded upon this model of contamination. Derrida goes so far as to argue that translations of the Greek *pharmakon* singularly by either remedy or poison is not an accidental feature of translation, but rather an effect of Plato's attempt at maintaining an economy of order:

It could no doubt be shown and we will do so when the time comes, that this blockage of the passage among opposing values is itself already an effect of 'Platonism', the consequence of something already at work in the translated text, in the relation between 'Plato' and his 'language'.. All translations into languages that are the heirs and depositories of Western metaphysics produce on the *pharmakon* an effect of analysis that violently destroys it, reduces it to one of its simple elements by interpreting it, paradoxically enough, in the light of the ulterior developments it itself has made possible.¹⁵

At the same time that this effect ignores and forbids the *pharmakon*, it leaves it untouched in its own effects. There are two elements of interest in this passage that converge somewhat with Deleuze's analysis. There is of course the aspect of Platonism as functioning on the basis of blockages and limits. Secondly the *pharmakon* effect, or writing is fundamental to western metaphysics. I will return to this second aspect presently. For the moment I will

attempt to specify the simulacrum as function of writing, or more properly, as one of its headless faces.

The simulacrum directly confronts the Platonic project in the question of memory. The insufficiency of writing as mnemonic device has already been shown. It is manifestly condemned as either incapable or leading to a false knowledge based on repetition or appearance. It is in fact hypomnemonic, casting a spell on the soul. Because it has no lineage, no proper origin, the seeds of writing are wantonly dispersed to no purpose. Furthermore, it is a weak apparatus for memory's surveillance of knowledge. The model of anamnesis is more than an image, it is a myth assigned to the task of securing the heart of truth. If writing is contrary to proper re-presentation there lurks the danger of its appearing as a false pretender:

For writing has no essence or value of its own, whether positive or negative. It plays within the simulacrum. It is in its type the time of memory, of knowledge, of truth, etc. That is why men of writing appear before the eye of God not as wise men (*sophoi*) but in truth as fake or self-proclaimed wise men (*doxosophoi*).¹⁶

The simulacrum mimics, it simulates the fundamental platonic order of knowledge, truth and memory. This simulation sets itself beyond the order of representation since, in Plato's terms, it has no proper origin, and its purveyor, the *simulacrum-man* is the Sophist. His signs are memorials, monuments, the

dead letter. The sophist is a magician, the artist of illusion and his magic is the simulacrum. One recalls the image of Thoth as the magician, the bearer of the occult drug, the pharmakon:

A formula to be recited before the sun: 'I am Thoth, inventor and creator of philters and letters, etc'.¹⁷ (cit p.94)

It could be said that the simulacrum can be recognized as the shadowy figures of Plato's cave. Though this is a simple inversion of the existing order of knowledge. It is however from the perspective of the sophist, ersatz truth, the only form in which truth appears in any case, and it is the necessity of its empirical appearance and registration which produces the remainder, that which was not thought;

...the *philosophia*, the episteme are not "overturned", "rejected", "reined in", etc., in the name of something like writing; quite the contrary. But they are, according to a relation that philosophy would call simulacrum, according to a more subtle excess of truth, assumed and at the same time displaced into a completely different field, where one can still, but that's all, "mime absolute knowledge", to use an expression coined by Bataille...¹⁸

The 'relation' of the simulacrum is one of an excess of truth. As I will show, like Baudrillard's conception of the Hyperreal (an excess of the real), the simulacrum in this instance is problematic for Platonism and metaphysical thought in general. Its relation to the real or the true is in effect absorbed by the operation of the simulacrum (becoming more) and

meaning, the presence of the true and the real, itself is thereby displaced and infinitely deferred. It must be stressed that the simulacrum is a process as this absorption is not the drawing into an interior. In this way the miming or simulation of 'absolute knowledge', or of concepts of knowledge in general, is in effect non-knowledge. It is a thinking without relation or end. This structure will be seen both in Baudrillard's account of the mass and in his perception of his own writing.

Derrida however, like Deleuze has his own philosophical and historical agenda to which Plato's delineation of the simulacrum is enlisted. It is clear that this *displacement* he refers to is nothing other than the deconstruction of western metaphysics. Also what is fundamental to the construction and possibility of memory for Derrida is the process of repetition. This aspect of inscription is perceived by Plato as harbouring a double threat. Manifestly the repetition as a mnemonic device produces a catechetic knowledge without understanding. Secondly the forms or ideas of things by definition and in principle must be repeatable as the same over time. Yet repetition as inscription is the inauguration of a movement, a spacing, a deferral and ultimately the displacement of the idea as present to itself. And it is here that one returns to the issue of resemblance identified by Deleuze as the key to understanding the importance of

the simulacrum and ultimately resolved by him through the notion of the eternal return:

A perfect imitation is no longer an imitation. If one eliminates the tiny difference that, in separating the imitator from the imitated, by that very fact refers to it, one would render the imitator absolutely different: the imitator would become another being no longer referring to the imitated. Imitation does not correspond to its essence, it is not what it is - imitation - unless it is some way at fault, or rather in default.¹⁹

It is worth recalling here Deleuze's remark that it is only the image, or representation, that is illusory. This is the paradoxical structure of the simulacrum or phantasm. A pure imitation or simulacrum through eliminating its difference from the imitated, becomes therefore absolutely different. Plato has already argued that its familial lineage, its lack of proper origin render it unsuitable as a form of resemblance to the object of true knowledge. It is also clear that its structure analytically poses the gravest threat due to its supplementary logic. Plato recognises the necessity of repetition and attempts to demarcate it through his description of anamnesis, which is also a spectral genealogy. Plato tries to make the necessary moment and movement of difference in repetition a movement of the same. He attempts to borrow, to add on to a whole, the necessary condition of repeatability but this adding on is in fact an interiorised repression, "laying out within itself a space of repression"²⁰. While Deleuze accounts for

this through the dynamics of the eternal return Derrida situates it within the economy of *differance*:

the being-present (on) in its truth, in the presence of its identity and in the identity of its presence, is *doubled* as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. *It appears*, in its essence, as the possibility of its own most proper non-truth, of its pseudo-truth reflected in the icon, the phantasm, the simulacrum. What is not what is, identical and identical to itself, unique, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being repeated as such. And its identity is hollowed out by that addition, *withdraws* itself in the supplement that presents it.²¹

Thus the simulacrum is the condition of possibility for the *eidos*. The *eidos* no longer epistemologically dominates the field but is produced as effect. In this way, repetition or registration in the economy of *differance* which has as its motor the simulacrum, functions in a similar manner to the eternal return. Both Derrida and Deleuze offer a theory of circulation which accounts for the simulacrum effect as a fundamental event and dynamic process of western philosophy. For Derrida it is its internal limit which can be read as the fault line of metaphysical thought. Both *differance* and the eternal return (via the will-to-power) result in a description of the simulacrum which situate it as the dynamic unthought engine of thinking. Both account for the same in terms of difference and identify the indigenous threat it poses to Platonism. They also understand their writing as an instantiation of the simulacrum. There are of course fundamental and important

differences. For Derrida the simulacrum is the ghost in the machine of western philosophy. In a discontinuous disengagement he attempts to unsettle and seduce the governing concepts of metaphysics. This is in order to unblock and unleash the incessant and unlimited force of writing and the simulacrum as a challenge to thought and knowledge:

Writing can only *mime* them [truth, Plato's dialectics]. (It could be shown, but we will spare ourselves the development here, that the problematic that today, and in this very spot, links writing with the (putting) in question of the truth - and of thought and speech, which are informed by it - must necessarily exhume, without remaining at that, the conceptual monuments, the vestiges of the battlefield (*champ de Bataille*), the signposts marking out the battle between sophistic and philosophy, and, more generally, all the buttresses erected by Platonism. In many ways, and from a viewpoint that does not cover the entire field, we are now on the eve of Platonism. Which can also be thought of as the morning after Hegelianism.²²

It is clear thus far that the simulacrum for both Derrida and Deleuze functions as a pivotal instance coterminous with their general philosophical projects. The concept of the simulacrum is produced through an examination of the place and function of representation. It is not an addendum but rather a matrix which has produced a set of moves and effects in the history of philosophy. The similarities are delimited by particular philosophical manoeuvres, in this instance either deconstruction or Nietzschean critique. It should be clear however that the issue of the simulacrum cannot be approached simply in terms of

the image. Furthermore it is difficult to see in their respective analyses anything uniquely post-modern. The simulacrum on their account is not a specifically contemporary experience or event. It marks the 'eve of Platonism' for Derrida, a true *twilight zone* which in such thought will always find itself. One final and crucial feature of their respective accounts of the simulacrum is that it is not a function of communication. The simulacrum is never present as such as either image or essence. In this way the simulacrum is precisely that which forbids communication. Hence both Derrida and Deleuze underwrite their theory as a 'mime' or a simulation of theory. The simulation of that which would communicate.

It will become clear that Baudrillard's account of the simulacrum intersects with those of Derrida and Deleuze. As I will show Baudrillard is also thoroughly sceptical of a realist simulacrum. However before addressing his analysis I will briefly attempt to put the simulacrum in the more nebulous context of its reception within the framework of post-modernity.

The appearance of the simulacrum as an object of investigation is but one of a collection of worries and perceived threats that constitute the debate on post-modernism. One other important element is drawn from current perceptions about the nature of language, namely that the circulation of signifiers dominates

that of the signified. Presented in a certain way this is meant to suggest that the world is a text, without the criterion of the real whereby it can be measured. As I have shown that for Derrida such an opposition is spurious. Alongside the continual innovation in communications technology there is a perceived pattern in which the civilization of the image may be divined. Richard Kearney writes of the parodic imagination as the key to an understanding of post-modernity:

The role of the image in post-modern culture is essentially one of *parody*. By this is meant that the image no longer refers primarily to some 'original', situated outside itself in the 'real' world or inside human consciousness. Devoid of any fixed reference to an origin, the image appears to refer only to other images. The post-modern image circulates in a seemingly endless play of imitation. Each image becomes a parody of another which precedes it...and so on. The idea of an 'authentic' image is thus subverted - as is evident in the practice of pastiche which informs contemporary forms of representation.²³

This description covers some of the detail provided by both Derrida and Deleuze. However there are fundamental differences. This can be shown by contrasting the notion of *pastiche* with Deleuze's *heterogenous series*. The former is a technique mastered by a subject while the latter is not remotely the function of a subject. If Kearney is correct (and I think he is) in identifying this as a feature of what may be termed post-modern, the post-modern concern with representation signifies less a threat to subjectivity than its zenith in its ability to play the field of tradition and history. I would argue that pastiche is

not even the presentation of incommensurable ideas, rules or styles but is in fact the simple synthesis of different objects or styles. At best it may be the expression of a subject disillusioned with tradition and the narratives of emancipation. Baudrillard identifies post-modernism as the practice and fetish of inferior imitation:

...the ultimate configuration, that of "postmodernism", undoubtedly characterizes the most degenerated, most artificial, and most eclectic phase - a fetishism of picking out and adopting all the significant little bits and pieces, all the idols, and all the purest signs that preceded this fetishism. (A.R. pp.40-41.)

In this way post-modern pastiche far from radicalizing and hastening the demise of the subject, the true and the real, amounts to little more than auto-biographical memorials. Furthermore Kearney's analysis of the post-modern also skirts a key problem. This is that certain features of post-modernity are understood to herald an entirely new situation. However as we saw in both Derrida's and Deleuze's analyses the simulacrum and the challenge it poses to proper representation was at some level already understood by Plato to be the internal limit of his account of knowledge. I would argue that it is the perception of the constitutive elements of post-modernity as something utterly new which produces the tone of crisis or apocalypse. The simulacrum for both Derrida and Deleuze is never contemporary. It is the deferral or excess of the contemporaneous. As I will

show Baudrillard understands crisis to be solely a function of linear time.

Nevertheless this perception of crisis is acutely felt in the domain of the critical evaluation of culture. An apparently lethal combination of the critique of rationality and the society of the spectacle displaces the ground of traditional aesthetic criteria. The aesthetic in this instance stands for the means of discerning value. In respect of post-modern artistic practices the apparent displacement of the values of authoriality and originality changes the status and perception of art. Richard Kearney cites the examples of the parody of tradition in Martin Sharp's pop poster of Van Gogh and Larry Rivers' presentation of Rembrandt's "Dutch Masters". It could be argued that these are forms of post-modern iconoclasm whereby the sanctified icons of tradition are stripped of their aura. I will return to the notion of aura in the following chapter as it is fundamental component of Baudrillard's technological imaginary, which in fact is the apotheosis of the imaginary. However parody, satire and iconoclasm are not unique to the post-modern. What may be unique to post-modernism is the knowingness of its pastiche and parody, the manner in which its iconology is incessantly paraded in quotation marks.

Nevertheless as Kearney points out there is in post-modern art not only a direct parody of tradition but an indirect challenge to its sublime objects. Take for instance Andy Warhol's celebration in his serigraphs of images from popular and consumer culture. On this reading the boundaries between high art and popular culture become increasingly obscured and the modernist demand for an elite avant-garde bearing the burden of the enlightenment of mankind becomes theoretically and politically suspect. In this way the traditional criteria and sources of value are put in question. Again, at the risk of being repetitious, it is worth recalling Deleuze's account of Plato's anxiety over the foundation of his hierarchy of values. Though the question must be asked as whether this anxiety over value can be attributed to post-modern art practice. Furthermore whether Warhol counts as post-modern is questionable.

In any case for some critics the consequences of this is the valorisation of kitsch through the equalisation of all culture through the lack of any certain means of establishing value.²⁴ According to the perceived logic of the signifier, the fear is that everything becomes, or already is the same as anything else. Kearney cites Milan Kundera's observation that the pleasure of the trivial represents:

the kitsch-man's need for kitsch - the need to gaze into the mirror of the beautifying lie and be

moved to tears of gratification at one's own reflection.²⁵

Kundera restricts, as a thoroughgoing humanist, restricts his abhorrence of reflection to the false pretender of Kitsch. It is demeaning of true art. He leaves aside the operations and assumptions of critical reflection organised around its reflective subjectivity. With respect to the question of taste however it is also worth mentioning Bourdieu's account of this phenomenon in terms of a sociology of distinctions. It is as for him a practice of revalorization. The practice of revaluing heretofore kitsch objects signals a certain social and educational status. Such activity is an attempted display of social power. This can be seen either as the triumph of bourgeois values or the emergence of the everyman. It is the latter which Michel De Certeau schematizes.

However, there is another way, outside the framework of the subject, of perceiving what is in effect the indifference of values. I would argue that the goalless fascination, not the celebration of, the trivial is expressive what I would prefer to call the *untermensch*. The *untermensch* is the subject unburdened of all existential and political projects of truth, meaning, history or reflection. The *untermensch* is not in pursuit of a sentimental imaginary, as Kundera suggests of the kitsch-man. The *untermensch* is only exhausted by the labour and tedium of truth, identity

and history and is therefore indifferent to their metaphysical charisma. Hence as E.M. Cioran suggests, the frivolous replaces the value of enduring sobriety;

No one achieves frivolity straight off. It is a privilege and an art; it is the pursuit of the superficial by those who, having discerned the impossibility of any certitude, have conceived a disgust for such things; it is the escape far from one abyss or another which, being by nature bottomless, can lead nowhere.²⁶

In Lyotard's language it could be said that implicit in the frivolous is a rejection of the grand narratives. Though it is hardly perceived as such. And therein lies its force. It is to no end. Michel De Certeau writes extensively on the poetic practices of everyday activities such as walking, cooking, stealing (*la perruque*) exercised against the backdrop of an apparently all pervasive system of exploitation and control in an attempt to redeem some source of value. Baudrillard, as I will make clear, proposes a different scenario guided by the assumption that developments in communications technology produces a mutation in subjectivity. The subject metamorphosised into the *Mass*.

One can understand how these features attributed to the notion of post-modernity worry certain commentators. The problems of value, discrimination and the supposedly unlimited autonomous circulation of signifiers with no ties to the real. However such critics miss what is essential to the simulacrum in

Deleuze, Derrida and Baudrillard. That is, if theories of representation have their limit in the simulacrum, then it is surely misguided to treat the simulacrum in terms of language and representation.

For example, in the area of film studies, and film is considered paradigmatic of the "civilization of the image", the pre-eminence of Lacanian theory has led to theorising the cinematic image in terms of language and narrative. Such an image is treated merely as an extension of the dreamwork and resolved through the application of psychoanalytic categories which situate the subject positions of actors and audience. The film is an event organised around the scopic drive. The cinematic image signifies like any other system of signs and is therefore reducible to the operations of representation. In this way the cinematic image is given an extra-cinematic time and place - the time and place of the narrative imposed upon it. What is specific to the image is displaced through the imposition of narrative categories. Deleuze counters that:

A theory of the cinema is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices, the practice of concepts in general having no privilege over others, any more than one object has over others. It is at the level of interference of many practices that things happen, beings, images, concepts, all the kinds of events. The theory of the cinema does not bear on the cinema but on the concepts of the cinema, which are no less

practical, effective or existent than cinema itself.²⁷ (Cinema 2)

In short, the object of any *interpretation* becomes a moment in the narrative of interpretation, it makes it represent. According to Baudrillard such is the destiny of theory predicated on truth. It is of necessity tautology. As I will show, he proposes that the simulacrum is without a scene, a narrative of time or place, or essentially a *mise-en-scene*.

Scott Lash is one of the few commentators on post-modernity who have identified what is at stake in the reduction of the cinematic image (a simulacrum) to representation. Lash does draw upon Lyotard's description of the 'perceptual memories' of the unconscious. However the fundamental feature of Lyotard's unconscious is that energy is discharged figurally through the primary process. It is the secondary process through which energy is discharged verbally. So, according to Lash's argument, if the unconscious resembles the cinema it is because it *figures* not because it is structured like a language. He cites Benjamin to support his claim that cinema figures rather than narrates:

As Benjamin noted, cinematic reception, unlike reception of the painting or novel, takes place not in a state of 'contemplation', but of 'distraction'. Cinema consists of a set of mechanically reproduced images which can be presented along the lines of the temporal causality of narrative realism. But as a literal set of images they come closer to the disconnected

temporality of the succession of perceptual memories in the unconscious.²⁸

However what is curious about this is that on the one hand he seems to suggest that the cinema is generically figural rather than discursive while on the other says that it can be made to function narratively. Lash distinguishes four categories of cinema.

1) Realist or narrative cinema is organised around *quattrocento* perspective and whose narrative is temporally sequential. The space of the subject viewer is fixed by the narrative development and the investment of the secondary process in a 'hero' who functions as an ego-ideal.

2) Mainstream post-modern cinema is a figural cinema but one whose effect is to fix the identity of the subject, not through secondary processes of identification, but through primary process investment in spectacle. He cites the films of Spielberg and Schwarzenegger as examples of this.

3) Modernist cinema is discursive cinema insofar as it acts to distanciate the audience from the image through allusion and reference to the rules and conventions of the cinematic imaginary. It is also modernist insofar as it introduces cultural differentiation marking the difference of the cinematic image from the real. According to Lash the distance it produces allows for a

greater flexibility of subject position from the image. An example here would be Godard whose *Deux ou trois choses* juxtaposes the narrative commentary which documents the process of film making, with the sleight of hand of the image.

4) Postmodernist transgressive cinema which is a figural cinema but unlike mainstream cinema does not fix the subject position of the viewer. This flexibility stems not from the critical distance of modernist cinema which opens to question the conventions of cinematic practice but rather through a problematisation of the fixed nature of the real. According to Lash this process of de-differentiation (of the real from the artificial) is the key element of post-modernity. This is, as I will show, prominent in Baudrillard's conception of the simulacrum. The point is that the real is not de-differentiated from its representation through the conventions and language of cinema, thereby becoming a text in the crude sense. Rather it is de-differentiated from its resemblance. Recalling Derrida, it is the absence of the tiny difference between the object and its perfect imitation which makes them absolutely different for the latter is no longer an imitation of the object. It is its own simulation.

Lash suggests that the disturbance of the real as constitutive of art has a pictorial precursor in the

figural motor of surrealism. The real becomes a figure through the juxtaposition of disparate referents. This operation, he says citing Breton, is a 'poeticizing of the banal' (similar to Cioran's frivolity) and is exemplary of the refusal by surrealism of the distinction between life and art:

The surrealist innovation thus is a problematization of what constitutes the real. It is thus similar to Warhol's silk screens, which problematizes, not just high art, but also the real in that it reveals reality itself to be composed of images...If art is no longer to be considered a of a different order than life, than the idea of aesthetic avant-gardes is questioned. If theory itself is to be no longer the 'double' of art or life then Nietzschean affirmation and not critical theory would be on the intellectual agenda.²⁹

If theory is no longer purely imitative, reflective of life or reflective in general, then as the "demonic power of the false", it is its own simulation. I will discuss in a later chapter Baudrillard's own challenge to the real through *seduction* in which he also enlists the example of surrealism in support of his argument. For the moment it is enough to note that the issue of the simulacrum cannot be simply reduced to a narrative of representation.

It is clear then that what is at stake in the concept of the simulacrum is more than an anxiety over the duplicity of the image. The accounts offered by both Derrida and Deleuze suggest that it marks the spot

at which the thought of the real world, and its ratio of value, breaks down. I would argue that the post-modern concern over representation, reference and the values and objects of tradition is not motivated by the same questions. In its anxiety its mood is curiously modern. The demise of the *grand narratives* is perceived as a kind of homelessness or exile. I would argue that this demise is perceived as a fundamentally empirical event: the idea that at some point they were true. What is diagnosed is the historical failure of *grand narratives* and not, as in Derrida for example, their structural impossibility. For this reason the apparent iconoclasm of post-modernism is somewhat pathological.

For Baudrillard the simulacrum is not the different as a condition of the possibility and impossibility of the same. It is in fact the self-generating mechanism of the same, its absolute perfection. On Baudrillard's account it will become clear that we have entered the *utopia*, to put it in a particular language, of absolute presence. However and precisely because of this it is also the moment of collapse and catastrophe of the system of representation. At its limit there is neither the real, the difference nor the negative upon which the systems of representation and political economy depend.

What is increasingly evident is that as Baudrillard elaborates on his analysis of the simulacrum, with the pure-event for example, he also begins to see the effects of the simulacrum in terms of the dissolution of memory. As is clear from the analyses of Derrida and Deleuze this renders problematic the possibility and conditions of judgment.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIFFERENT SIMULATION

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?...But no! with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world! Nietzsche.

In the preceding chapters I have tried to suggest that there are problems with schematising simulation in terms of post-modernism. Framing the issue of the simulacrum in terms of post-modernism gives it an ideological status. Or else it is reduced to a semi-aesthetic concern with surfaces and appearances rather than content or essentials. I have shown its specificity and its *fundamental importance in the* accounts of Derrida and Deleuze. In this section it will become clear that Baudrillard has a different agenda for the simulacrum than that proffered in the debate on post-modernism. It also differs from the accounts of Derrida and Deleuze. Nevertheless it retains a primary role in the development of his work; it is not an addendum. It is the impetus behind transformation in his work. The problematic of production is resolved into the dynamics of the simulacrum. The time of production and its conceptual network, as I will show implodes into the immanence of the simulacrum. In particular Baudrillard's account of the simulacrum marks the point in a theoretical trajectory culminating in Baudrillard's desire to disappear as a subject and theorist.¹

It is true to say that the issue of the simulacrum does converge with the question of representation. But it will only be one phase of the simulacrum - the simulacrum of reference. There are four areas which delimit the background and operations of the simulacrum;

1) In his analysis of the concepts of production and value in the political economy of the sign he revealed the metaphysics of use value in the reality principle of the object. With the concept of the simulacrum Baudrillard tries to define how the production of the reality principle is no longer just a function of political economy. It will become an end in itself through the process of reproduction. He offers, as I will show, a genealogy of the sign describing its various transformations.

2) He describes the simulacrum in terms of a code. This code is not based on the structuralist model of the code but on the model of DNA and genetics.

3) The simulacrum is also a function of technological development which has transformed the production of the image and consequently and the way in which it is perceived and experienced. Though as I will show to talk in terms of *perception* is misleading. This has serious consequences for any conception of politics or

social organisation. Furthermore technology is neither a purely instrumental object nor (despite the fundamental structure of the code) a new ontological determinant.

4) Like the simulacrum in the accounts of Derrida and Deleuze, Baudrillard's conception has effects on the entire framing of his analysis. Ultimately this question of theory will be addressed in various forms; in terms of a seduction, a pataphysics and a fatal strategy. However in his work on simulation in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard barely begins to consider the consequences of his conceptualisation of the simulacrum for his theoretical writing.

For schematic purposes I will deal in the main with the first two schemas in this chapter, while drawing attention to the theoretical effects they will produce.

It should be clear from this, and from the last chapter, that the simulacrum cannot be analysed as a function of language. It is not a signifier of a signifier. One of the features in the reception of recent continental philosophy is its formalisation as a problematic of language. In its reception as post-modernism this reading is magnified. An obvious example is the reception of Derrida's concept of *texte*. Derrida's precautionary zeal is a warning against

getting the essential "on the cheap" - in language for instance:

The devaluation of the word "language" itself, and how in the very hold it has upon us, betrays a loose vocabulary, the temptation of a cheap seduction, the passive yielding to fashion, the consciousness of the avant-garde, in other words - ignorance - are evidences of this effect.²

If the simulacrum cannot be understood in terms of language I will also show that it is not reducible to an image. As I have already suggested, post-modernism has a tendency to mask the differences between a variety of different philosophers and regards them as symptoms of a common problem, that of language. It could be argued that if there is a significant convergence it is not on the problematic of language but that of empiricism and its redefinition. Baudrillard's simulation inaugurates a new world of sense. But as will become clear, in a reversion of McLuhanism, it is a purely external sensorium. In any case as Derrida notes, empiricism traditionally derives its force from a simple opposition to the values of idealism. Baudrillard is aware of this problem in his theorisation of the simulacrum. Hence his professed disinterest in a "realist" simulacrum, either understood in terms of language, or dependent on the metaphysical foundations of subjectivity, consciousness and pure perception. In short the simulacrum is neither a function of language (whichever model you choose to use) nor an appearance for a subject. The

analysis of the simulacrum does not just work on the side of the 'object' while leaving the subject alone. It changes both sides of the equation.

One other general feature worth mentioning here is a parallel with Derrida's analysis of the unfolding of the problematic of writing as a symptom of the closure of an epoch, logocentrism. Baudrillard's description of the current simulacrum also seems to function at the limit of an historical and philosophical project. However it is only rarely that a history of thinking is implicated in the current unfolding of the simulacrum.

Baudrillard offers a genealogy of the sign which traces its movement from being a function of the feudal order and then political economy, to its ultimate transformation and disappearance in the hyperreality of simulation. The three orders of the sign are as follows.

1) The Counterfeit: this is the mode of appearance born out of the renaissance. With the breakdown of feudal order new forms of signifying social positions were necessary. The medieval hierarchy of signs disappeared as did the immutable order it reflected. In a society of fixed cast and rank:

signs are limited in number, and are not widely diffused, each one functions with its full value a interdiction, each is a reciprocal obligation between castes, clans or persons. (*Sim* p.84)

This is the era of the obliged sign which designates directly one's place in the social order. These are signs of prestige. When this order ended so did the era of the bound or obliged sign, inaugurating the open competition of equivalent signs and ushering the age of the counterfeit. Their arbitrariness is the condition of their equivalence. There is general proliferation of signs which bear no resemblance to the obliged sign of limited diffusion. He calls this sign the counterfeit not because it fakes a real sign but because from its *new perspective*, the obliged sign appeared to correspond with the real. It simulates its own necessity. This necessity is produced as a simulation of the arbitrary sign's correspondence with the real. In the following passage Baudrillard identifies this as the genesis of modernity:

it is its counterfeit, not by corruption of an original, but by extension of a material whose very clarity depends on the restriction by which it was bound. No longer discriminating (it is no more than competitive), unburdened of all restraint, universally available, the modern sign still simulates necessity in taking itself as tied somehow to the world. (*Sim* p.85)

The modern sign he argues is nostalgic for a past in which it was obliged and symbolic of a law of nature. One could ask to what extent can the clarity and distinction of symbolic feudal sign be considered to be a sign for it does not appear to simulate anything. Baudrillard proposes that the modern sign simulates obligation but can only do so through the

neutral values of competitive signs that can be exchanged. Nevertheless there is a magnificence to this sudden semiurgy:

It is the Renaissance that the false is born along with the natural. From the fake shirt in front to the use of the fork as artificial prosthesis, to the stucco interiors and the great baroque theatrical machinery. (*Sim* p.87)

In a typically deconstructive move, the modern sign is originally counterfeit and it is this which constitutes the "natural". This produces a neurosis of the natural which haunts the modern sign and is the motivation in its simulation of reference or a natural union with the real. Like Derrida's remarks on the "technics" of writing, it believes it leaves its field neutral. This he argues is the very structure of technology in its desire to imitate and thereby reproduce "natural" processes.³ It is this technological imaginary that the modern sign pursues, which is in effect the pursuit of the real through its reproduction. Baudrillard suggests that this desire for unity with the real is expressed in the Renaissance search for universal substance which would mirror the modern sign in its equivalence in all objects. David Harvey gives an example of this shift in the transformation of mapping brought about in the Renaissance. The "sensuous", finite and place-bound maps of the medieval world evoke a tactile experience of place.⁴ For the moment it is enough to note that

Renaissance mapping unifies space through perspective and geometry. This simulates a new natural order:

The fixed viewpoint of perspective maps and paintings...generates a 'coldly geometrical' and 'systematic' sense of space which nevertheless gives 'a sense of harmony with natural law, thereby underscoring man's moral responsibility within God's geometrically ordered universe'...A conception of infinite space allowed the globe to be grasped as a finite totality without challenging, at least in theory, the infinite wisdom of the deity.⁵

Geometry and perspective become the sign of space. It is the "closed mental substance" of Renaissance perspective space which orientates and masters all objects and the world from one point. This issue of perspective is crucial to the development of Baudrillard's theorising. His attack on the subject is largely based around its opening as perspective and hence he will eventually counterpose the 'black hole' of the mass which absorbs all 'lines of flight'.

However there are limitations to the extension of this sign. It is a simulation to the extent that the counterfeit forges its own origin. Nevertheless it basically operates according to analogy. If it is also technical in that it is imitative, attempting to produce an ideal counterfeit of the world, it is finally and necessarily limited by its form of production. In this way the latter factor is constitutive of its *frame of reference*.

2) Production: The Industrial Simulacrum. The second order of simulacra is founded on the productive technologies of the industrial revolution. Signs are no longer counterfeited but serially produced. The origin of the sign or what it refers to is not constitutive of its operationality. The phenomenon of the series is now introduced as the form of production. Baudrillard uses the example of the distinction the classical automaton and industrial robot to display the operational changes wrought by the second order simulacra. The classical automaton in its severely mechanical movements, provokes classical concerns concerning reality and appearance and the natural and unnatural. Using the Derridean conception it is the clearly defined difference between the real and its imitation which assures the reality of the natural. The robot replaces the metaphysics of being and appearance, of resemblance, conjured up by the automaton, with a logic of efficiency and production. Baudrillard believes that such a mechanics is a less charming attempt at an imaginary 'mastering of the world.' Man's double, if the robot can be understood as such, is now productive and mechanical. The apparent difference no longer concerns the distinction between abstract, dead labour of which the robot is a model, and living labour. Such a reading invokes the idea of useful work. The counterfeit is displaced by a productive mechanical, serial simulacrum. There is now

the possibility of two or of n identical objects. The relation between them is no longer that of an original to its counterfeit - neither analogy or reflection - but equivalence, indifference. In a series, objects become undefined simulacra one of the other. And so, along with the objects do the men that produce them. Only the obliteration of the original reference allows for the generalized law of equivalence, that is to say the very possibility of production. (*Sim* p.97)

This order inaugurates the production of equivalent objects, each simulacra of the other. The origin of the sign in the industrial age is therefore technique, in the formal reproducibility of signs and objects. Equivalence, destroyed at the level of original reference, is re-introduced as the generalized law of exchange. This manouvre forms the general matrix for the mutations of the simulacra from one order or level to the other.

Baudrillard argues that production should only be considered a moment in the order of simulacra. This is a serious committment for Baudrillard to make. Productive capital is but one historical form of a disenchanted world of equivalence. Its disenchantment rests precisely in it being *the* historical world. The *linear, irreversible* progress of human endeavour. The homogenous time and space of emancipation, liberation and equality driven by historical inevitability. Industrial production produces referents in a variety of ways; in the commodity law of value; its critique presented as the intrinsic use-value of objects; in the fixed exchange rates of the gold standard; ultimately

in the fixity and unity of the productive, autonomous subject. Production prohibits the useless, exploiting it, making of everything a reserve to be tapped or invested. It does this as a matter of course because it is autonomous. It is the motor and determinant of history. Baudrillard argues that it is not potentially liberating or emancipatory. Or if it is, this is only because the latter cannot be understood except in terms of liberating a potential - something which has not been hitherto used, a waste. In the order of production everything, everywhere must be put to work - psychically, socially, politically or economic. Every need finds its equivalence, every potential finds its realisation. In this way the industrial simulacrum is limited. It requires reference in the real to sustain it. The medium is not yet the message.

3) At this point one may ask what is really at stake in simulation? Baudrillard has already accounted for two different forms. Both have a different set of effects. The issue for Baudrillard is that the simulacrum, which is simply the simulacrum of the world, introduces a particular disenchanted relation to the world. It imposes new forms for the circulation of objects and at the same time giving them meaning and value. Production is ultimately its own end. It has no other purpose. Hence the change from production to reproduction is hardly even a matter of time. What occurs is not a revolution in the sense of an

overturning of capital but a revolution in a cycle of value, whereby it reproduces itself as an end in itself. Paradoxically this is also the end of the historically determined appearance of production in that it does not produce anything - the use-value or exchange value of an object. The simulacra designate transformations in forms of circulation. What follows from this is also a transformation in the manner of the subject that produces and the object which is produced. The technical efficiency and superior capacity of the productive simulacrum over the counterfeit one is only superceded in its realisation as its own end, in reproduction. It consumes itself in its own doubling. No longer even requiring the brief mediation of the object. It becomes pure circulation:

Benjamin first (and later McLuhan) understood technique not as a "productive force" (wherein marxist analysis is lost) but as medium, as form and principle of a whole new generation of sense...Technique as medium dominates not only the "message" of the product (its use-value) but also the force-of work that Marx wished to make the revolutionary message of production. Benjamin and McLuhan saw this matter more clearly than Marx; they saw the true message: *the true ultimatum was in reproduction itself.* And that production no longer has any sense; its social finality is lost in the series. The simulacra win out over history. (*Sim* pp. 99, 100)

There are many questions raised by this. When Douglas Kellner⁶ criticizes Baudrillard for reducing media to their technological essence he misses the central point of Baudrillard, McLuhan and Benjamin. Kellner fundamentally understands technology to be

instrumental. The issue here is the transformation of sense. Reproduction inaugurates a new prosthetic sensorium.⁷ In some respects it is a deeply anthropological account of production whose starting point is really the industrial revolution. Its historical momentum rests in its deepening of the disenchantment of the Renaissance simulacrum. Disenchantment is the conception of a world, of a real. This is implicitly counterposed by Baudrillard to the order of symbolic exchange which is without signs of the real and whose circulation of objects is neither rooted in accumulation, nor the equivalent exchange of objects. Objects in symbolic exchange had no intrinsic use or end. Ultimately the genesis and linear time of history heralds the disappearance of the reversible cycle of symbolic exchange. If history is in effect the history of production it is no accident that it is the model of reference and representation. It is the absolute vantage point of perspective. Perspective not just as a mastery and unification of space but as a mastery and convergence of time.

In this third order there is only reproduction without reference. Value is not predicated on exchange or use-values. This third order of simulacra is the post-industrial order in which the real is defined as that which is capable of being reproduced. Baudrillard relates a Borges' story in which the map of a territory is so detailed that it covers exactly the space which

it maps. With the decline of empire the map frays and all that is left is a few threads in the desert. Baudrillard argues that the equivalence of the map, which evokes the charisma of difference between the real and its representation, is a second order simulation. Such a simulation is of the order of the double, the mirror and the imaginary. According to Baudrillard, if one wrote a story allegorising the current order of simulation it would be the territory rotting across the map leaving a desert of the real. One might be tempted to say that it is the map which precedes the real and engenders it. However simulation abolishes the difference between the real and imaginary. Simulation is now of an order of *genetic commutation*:

The real is produced from miniaturised units, from matrices, memory banks and command models - and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times. It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere. (*Sim* p.3)

It is worth noting here the absence of negativity in the current order of simulation. Its transformation is not dialectical. The concrete ends of production (the commodity or revolution) no longer pertain in this order. The displacement of the real by the hyperreal leads to a panic proliferation of signs of the real and the true. This is an expression of the hyperreal in

the real's "striking resemblance to itself". There is an hysteria of production but it is not motivated by accumulation as in the logic of political economy. It is an attempt to restore the real through the simulation of production.

Nevertheless it is a function of capital insofar as it is an extension of capital's pursuit of a reality principle. This is already at work in the principle of production. Reproducibility is not after the fact, it is its condition of possibility:

...it was capital which was the first to feed throughout its history on the destruction of every referential, of every human goal, which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power. It was the first to practice deterrence, abstraction, disconnection, deterritorialisation, etc.; and if it was capital which fostered reality, the reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it in the extermination of every use-value, every real equivalence, of production and wealth, in the very sensation we have of the unreality of the stakes. (*Sim* p.43)

Baudrillard therefore far from relegating capital in his analysis of simulation, or valorising culture as the principle of the 'civilization of the image', places it as a source for the hyperreal. Capital requires the destruction of original reference, in order to establish its pure unmediated circulation through the general equivalence established at the level of production - or rather reproduction. What he does do is separate its operations from the logic of

political economy. He suggests that political economy is a simulation model for capital. It is what he calls a phantom reference or a simulation reference.

Here we get to the matrix of these transformations in value. Just as the natural law of value in the Renaissance was maintained as an imaginary referent in the succeeding phase of the commodity law of value so the commodity law of value is recycled in the structural law of value. This imaginary is therefore the sign of something that was only ever another sign.

Finally in the incessant pursuit of the real, capital perfects it in the disappearance of the real into the hyperreal. This is a spiralling process (a revolution) where each previous law of value is absorbed in the successive functioning logic, or order of simulation of the system:

The current revolutions index themselves on the immediately prior phase of the system. They arm themselves with a nostalgic resurrection of the real in all its forms - in other words, with simulacra of the second order: dialectics, use value, the transparency and finality of production, the 'liberation' of the unconscious, or of repressed meaning (of the signifier or of the signified called desire), and so on. All of these liberations offer an ideal content, the phantoms which the system has devoured in successive revolutions and which it subtly resuscitates as revolutionary fantasies. (*Sim* p.57)

One could say therefore that the real, on the side of the system, has always already occurred. It is

mirrored, in total complicity, on the side of its critique as a future event. The consequence of this, similar to his analysis of the mirror of production, is that all critique based on notions of alienation and ideology re-inforce the phantoms whereby capital sustains itself. Capital now functions at a different level, having dissolved its own contradictions. It is beyond the true and the false. The current order of simulation operates according to the neutralization of referents, determinants and finalities of production by the code. It is no longer a question of criticising Capital on the basis of its exploitative exchange value as there is nothing to exchange. The medium is the message:

...when the medium becomes the message, we enter the cool era. This is really what happens with money. Having arrived at a certain stage of severed connection, money ceases to be a medium or a means of commodities, but becomes the realisation of the system in all its spiralling abstraction: it is *circulation itself*. (EOP p.114)

In the second industrial order the abstraction of exchange value has its alibi in the reference of use value. The smooth working of the system was sustained through the maintenance of a representative equivalent in the commodity. However this order is superceded by the structural law of value in which capital only requires a commitment to the reproduction of the real, but without its referents! Therefore simulation in the hyperreal, unlike the principle of exchange value at

the heart of representation, has no equivalent in the real:

All this [the 'real' contents of political economy] is surpassed by the other stage of value, that of total relativity, generalised commutative, combinatory simulation. This means simulation in the sense that from now on signs will exchange among themselves exclusively, without interacting with the real (and this becomes the condition for their smooth operation). (*Sim* p.60)

The logic of production no longer has any representative equivalence in the real. Capital and its simulation now operates as a code. The code is a model from which everything proceeds. The code operates immanently and is capable of producing combinations generated by its binary structure. There is no longer any necessity for the transcendent finalities of use-value or history. Where there was once finality in the objective reference of utility, there is now the genetic structure of the model which produces all possibilities simultaneously:

Only the model makes sense, and nothing flows any longer according to its end, but proceeds from the model, the signifier of reference", is a kind of anterior finality and the only reference there is. (*Sim* p.101)

In some respects there is nothing particularly unusual about such a hypothesis based on the notion that the form or mode of production determines what is produced. What Baudrillard is arguing is that a mode of production is replaced by a code. It is this which makes the current order worthy of attention. The

question of means and ends, of modes and relations, therefore escapes what is essential to this order. In the current phase of simulation, it is not to be understood as a more sophisticated technological determination but as a pure medium of reproduction. The finality of determination belongs to the previous order. Causality and generic teleology gives way to genetic mutation;

Practically and historically, this signified [the replacement of teleological determination by the code] the substitution of social control by the end... for social control by anticipation, simulation and programming, and indeterminate mutation directed by the code. Instead of a process which is finalized according to its ideal development we generalize from a *model*. (*Sim* p.111)

Parallels can be drawn here with Derrida's account of metaphysics in the way it anticipates possible moves through the *always already*. If there is difference here it is in the variation of the same. One could even draw a comparison with Plato's forms.⁸ This process marks an advance over the previous forms of control. The transcendent ends of History, Man and progress are absorbed by a further revolution in the cycle of simulation. This mode of reproduction allows capital the simulation of necessity, of its origin and end (revolution). Because it is no longer confronted with a real, reference or ideological rationality its own internal contradictions (and its semblance of power) disappear:

Once short-circuited the myths [of origin and end of capital, the revolution as the generic potential of man] ...in an operationality of fact and without discourse, once capital itself has become its own myth, or rather an interminable machine, aleatory, something like a *social genetic code*, it no longer leaves any room for a planned reversal; and this is its true violence. (*Sim* p.112)

The code is irreversible. Hence it is not only an anticipation of the real but an anticipation of death in its own dead power. The resurrection of dead power by critical and moral thought is equivalent to the hysterical production of the real. Baudrillard's formulation of the code qua model is the genetic code:

all cells, electronic cells, party cells, microbiological cells: always the search for the smallest indivisible element, whose organic synthesis would be made according to the givens of the code. But the code itself is but a genetic cell, a generator where myriads of intersections produce all the questions and possible solutions, so that choices (by whom?) can be made. (*Sim* p.105)

The code dispenses with teleology, causality and determination. With the code as the model of simulation everything is given all at once. With the disappearance of history and teleology, time is also absorbed by this indifferent space of simulation. This describes a process of instantaneous communication and complete saturation of space.

Hence it could be argued that all interpretation or analysis is misdirected in its attempt to uncover the underlying cause or direction of its object. But Baudrillard is saying more than this. Such activity is

not flawed, it becomes an exacerbated function of a system given over to a hysteria of the real and a frenzy of truth. When simulation destroys perspective space referenda replace reference. If the idea of a medium did not entail the idea of different realities which are mediated it could be said that simulation is a pure medium . He cites the activities of polling, surveying and sampling as extensions of the digitality of the code to 'everyday life', simulating the time and place of the bizarre notion of public opinion. The poll is a 'pure medium' in that it is not the bearer of any content. The binary structure, the zero and one, provides the given and its possible transformations.

The poll, the sample, the test, therefore reflect nothing and herein resides their 'spectacular nullity'. Reflection of course belongs to the psycho-metaphysics of perspective, the mirror and the double. Public opinion polls are spectacular because they are devoid of content and are representative of nothing. Though this of course cannot be criticised in the name of some superior, concrete expression of public opinion. Opinion is anticipated and absorbed through questions and thus has a spectacular image for the 'public' in the simulation of opinion. Polls reproduce the operations of simulation, the anticipation of the model over reality for they do not represent, express or refer to anything whatsoever. Public opinion is

measured as to whether it can meet the simulated horizon (its reality) of its own testing:

As to the response of the polled to the poll-takers, the natives to the ethnologist, the analyzed to the analyst, you can be sure that the circularity is total: the ones questioned always pretend to be as the question imagines and solicits them to be. Even psychoanalytic transference and counter-transference fall today under the sway of this simulated, simulated-anticipated response, which is nothing other than the very model of the self-fulfilling prophecy. (*Sim* p.130)

This is the short-circuit of the real in the network of simulation. Yes. No. The answers are exchangeable. The paradox is of course that the referent of the public or natives (in ethnology, for testing is but generalized ethnology and biopsy) disappears in the medium of its interrogation and production. Thus it provides the very justification and necessity for its continued sampling. Baudrillard is therefore not suggesting that public opinion is somehow distorted by media polling. Its existence depends on polling.⁹ It is not the false representation in contradistinction to the true representation of the franchise in a democratic election. According to Baudrillard there is no difference. The statistical constraint of polling is the very paradigm of the vote in the alternating terms of the "representative" democratic systems:

Democracy realizes the law of equivalence in the political order. This law is accomplished in the back-and-forth movement of the two terms which reactivates their equivalence [and]...allows... a

public consensus to be formed and the cycle of representation to be closed...the vote comes to resemble a Brownian movement of particles or the calculation of probabilities. It is as if every one voted by chance, or monkeys voted. (*Sim* pp. 131-132)

Representation presumes at some level the open competition of signs. However for simulated equivalences binary regulation is the key to the stability of the system. Alternation of the two terms leaves no room for a space of representation. This process absorbs and neutralises its referent, 'the will of the people'. The minimal difference of New York's Twin Towers is emblematic of the binary operation regulating Capital. Previously, he argues, the vertical transcendence, competitive jungle and mutual reflections of the New York skyline indicated the competitive struggle of Capital. However the development of Capital does not move naturally from open competition to oligopoly to monopoly. It is rather a 'tactical doubling of monopoly' that describes the current phase of Capital. The Twin Towers are a model of binary duplication. The competitive verticality of New York's midtown skyscrapers with their corporate jostling for space presents the very image of competition and vertical transcendence which is the final guarantee, the lender of last resort of representation. The Twin Towers do not indicate a struggle between competitors but duplication through oppositional couples:

From the smallest disjunctive unity (question/answer particle) up to the great alternating systems that control the economy, politics, world co-existence, the matrix does not change: it is always the 0/1, the binary scansion that is affirmed as the metastable or homeostatic form of the current systems. (*Sim* pp.134-135)

The system is metastatic in its capacity to anticipate and reproduce its oppositional equilibrium. The effect is inertia - dead power. The bipartite political systems of substitution is a function of a unitary system organised by binary regulation. It is a process of neutralization that absorbs competition in the maintenance of stable equilibrium. However if there is equivalence it is not in the sense of there being a correspondence with the real. Moreover any system of equivalence will need a "lender of last resort", a general equivalent which would *guarantee* an exchange or translation. Simulation is more sophisticated than exchange value in political economy in the generation of equivalences:

The system of equivalences imposes in effect the form of a general equivalent, and therefore the centralization of a global process. Archaic rationality compared to that of simulation; there is no longer a single general equivalent, but a diffraction of models that plays a regulatory role. No longer the form of the general equivalent, but that of distinctive oppositions. (*Sim* pp.138-139)

The consequences of this for any attempt to grasp the real of an event is bleak. Baudrillard gives the example of a scenario of simulation in which a terrorist bombing may have a variety of attributable causes. Was it leftist terrorists? Right wing

provocation? Centrists looking to discredit "extremes"? The police looking to highlight their own security interests? According to Baudrillard all are equally true. The only way that the reality principle may be saved is through a check on this vertigo of causality simulated by models. This is achieved through the simulation of a perspectival space, which restricts the field and provides a vanishing point on the horizon of the real. Simulation models do not act according to a determinate logic. "Facts" are anticipated through the intersection of various models. In fact they may all stem from the same model. The point is that all possibilities are exchangeable. Hence any critique of such an event by providing a perspective and distance endorses an equivalence between the real and its theoretical representation which appeals against this distortion of reality. However this is flawed for at least two reasons;

- 1) It misses what is essential to the system, that it lives off the anticipation of the real;
- 2) It benefits the system by the restoration of a political credibility which the system lacks:

Ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs; simulation corresponds to a short circuit of reality by signs. It is always the aim of ideological analysis to restore the objective process; it is always a false problem to want to restore the objective process; it is always a false problem to want to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum. (*Sim* p.48)

Critical thought is already anticipated by the model. It is an expression of the simulation of value which sustains the system of simulation. It is an analysis indigenous to the second order simulation. It is a resurrection of a dead power. Baudrillard wants to substitute the credibility of the real with a "pure event", devoid of determination, linear causality, origin, finality, meaning and mediation. It is only in this way that one can begin to recognise what is at stake in the current order of simulation. Which is to say that power is an effect of the real and all attempts to engage with it at that level sustain its simulation. Power depends on the distinction between the true and the false in law, and the difference of real and imaginary in its representation. The consequences of this political "incredibility" is the subject of my next chapter.

With his genealogy of the simulacrum Baudrillard attempts to account for the transformation in capital. Hence it is not attempting the same tasks required of the simulacrum in both Derrida and Deleuze. It is mainly directed at the project of critical thought, showing why as a second level simulation, it is insufficient as an explanation of the current order of the hyperreal. Hence at this stage it is somewhat limited in its range. For both Derrida and Deleuze the simulacrum ruptures fundamental conventions of thought

and the idea of the world they generate. The thought of the simulacrum is built into their analyses. However Baudrillard has not yet considered the consequences of the thought of simulation for his own theoretical enterprise. It is only when Baudrillard begins to think of, and analyse, an alternative response beyond the concept of symbolic exchange that his analysis of the simulacrum begins to develop theoretical momentum. This is ironic considering that it is for this account of simulation that he has gained a certain notoriety. What is really interesting about Baudrillard's work is where he takes this insight concerning the hyperreal.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CRITICAL INDIFFERENCE OF THE MASS

We mistrust the swindler, the trickster, the con-man; yet to them we can impute none of history's great convulsions; believing in nothing; it is not they who rummage in your hearts, or your ulterior motives; they leave you to your apathy, to your despair or your uselessness. E.M. Cioran.

An examination of Baudrillard's conceptualisation of the *mass* begins to reveal the wide ranging effects effects generated by simulation. It will become clear that the concept of mass functions at a variety of different levels. It is most obviously an effect of Baudrillard's analysis of what happens with the demise of the political in the hypereal.

The work in which Baudrillard theorises the mass is titled *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (though there are moments in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* in which mass-like activity is proposed). The silent majority is the bane of critical political discourse. It has traditionally designated the essentially apolitical, but conservatively disposed, bourgeois majority. It is disdainful of all liberal and progressive projects.

Hence Baudrillard's choice and valorisation of the term of mass is polemical in that it feeds off this association. Traditionally the mass is a degraded term

of political and social discourse - unthinking, irrational, uncritical and beast-like. However this is precisely what commends the term for Baudrillard. The fact that, on his reading, the mass abjures all perspective, especially critical perspective, proffering only silence as a phenomenon from which one might learn how to deal with the current system of simulation. Yet with his conception of the mass the reader enters into a world truly bereft of any distinction between the real and simulation. If there is a moral it is only the simulation of one. At the level of the system's duplication of itself, the mass also refers to the critical mass of this system, the moment of its implosion. The simultaneous point of a systems realization and its immanent decay.

The mass, as opposed to the social, is a concept adequate to the third level simulation of the hyperreal. He argues that the mass and its operations replaces the terminology and theoretical network and principles of the social. The latter belongs to the second order. For Baudrillard the social designates the functional and utilitarian product of political economy. It is an application of the principle of work, accumulation and the useful. With his schematization of the mass Baudrillard attempts to undermine the values and logic of the social and more fundamentally the principles whereby it is conceived.

The social is in Bataille's sense, a project. It is the space and dynamic for the rational exchange of the humanistic and utilitarian. However, Baudrillard will theorise the *absorption* by the mass of the energy, hope, future and progress of the social. This process of absorption has numerous effects and may be understood with reference to its scientific connotations. Though this is not quite correct. For Baudrillard the effects of the mass are seen not through scientific analogy, but as a material process.

In what follows I will focus on Baudrillard's description of the general response (or more properly non-response) to the hyperreal. What he proposes in his analysis of the mass is a somewhat unique and unusual scenario in the area of "political" activity. Hence the disappointment of critics like Kellner. However, I would hope that given my presentation of his work so far this development can be seen as a theoretical necessity. For Baudrillard to attribute to the mass a political agenda or responsibility would completely contradict the theoretical direction of his work. Therefore the political worries of commentators such as Kellner miss the point. It is a purely external criticism, bringing to bear categories and schema that have no bearing on Baudrillard's writing. It is akin to criticising *Finnegan's Wake* for not having punctuation. The mass would not be the mass if it had a political or revolutionary function or

destiny. It is not the second level concept that Kellner would like it to be.¹

In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, The Mirror of Production and Symbolic Exchange and Death*, while attacking the concepts of ideology, alienation and the productivist logic which motivates them, Baudrillard is still tempted by a form of resistance beyond political economy in the practice of symbolic exchange. This took the form of micro-resistance by marginal groups, the waste or residue of the economy. Hence one must bear in mind this principle in considering the mass. However the consequences of his theory of the simulacrum make this response to political economy seem too romantic and explosive. There is in some respects a difference in the tone of Baudrillard's writing. His propositions outbid the system in terms of its cynicism.

This shift in tone is a consequence of his reading of the current order. Political economy itself becomes a simulation and the system is no longer an explosive one. The latter belongs to the second-level, the order of production. On the contrary the current system is implosive. The system sustains itself on the simulation of political opposition, on the belief in the referentials of political truth. The mass as I will show is not of, or a beyond of the political order.

The previously attractive idea of the transformation of value through symbolic exchange is ditched on the basis that for something to be spent it must still have value. Baudrillard becomes increasingly diverted by the ritual of *challenge* rather than the possibility of symbolic exchange. In a review of the *Oeuvres Completes* of Georges Bataille he writes:

He [Bataille] who has so well explored the human sacrifice of the Aztecs should have known as they did that the sun gives nothing, it is necessary to nourish it continually with human blood in order that it shine. It is necessary to challenge [*defier*] the gods through sacrifice in order that they respond with profusion. In other words, the root of sacrifice and of general economy is never pure and simple expenditure - or whatever drive [*pulsion*] of excess that supposedly comes to us from nature - but is an incessant process of challenge.²

The mass is an early expression of this concept of challenge, a concept which foregrounds his later work. In *Seduction*³ he contrasts the game of seduction (of appearances) to the teleology and law of production (of meaning). He now extends the logic of the simulacrum to an analysis of what has heretofore been understood as the social but which, in the third level simulation, is superseded by the mass. The presentation of this is organised around two specific objectives:

- 1) an investigation of the concept of the social (and its replacement by the mass); what it has designated,

and how the term functioned as an integral part of the productivist logic of political economy;

2) given the logic of the simulacrum how is one to understand critical analysis, whose object and its predicates are rooted in the previous era of production. Baudrillard's account of the mass is wholly bound up with the nature of criticality and critical concepts. It is an extension of his analysis of Marx in *The Mirror of Production*.

Baudrillard argues that any form of critical discourse or interpretation is, at best, deeply flawed. It freezes its dead object of interpretation in order to resurrect it as meaning through the practice of interpretation. Interpretation becomes cryogenesis. An example of this in *The Precession of Simulacra* can be found in Baudrillard's description of an anthropological discovery - of the remains of the Tasaday Indians. What occurs is a perfect model of the consequences of traditional theory and interpretation. However there is in this, an allegory of the effects of the mass. For on contact with air, the remains, the now ethnological artifacts, begin to decompose:

For ethnology to live, its object must die. But the latter revenges itself by dying for having being "discovered", and defies by its death the science that wants to take hold of it.

Doesn't every science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in the very process of

its apprehension, and by the pitiless reversal this dead object exerts on it. (*Sim* pp.13-14)

The ethnologists simulate a sacrifice through the closing down of the dig. In a *delicious* irony the savages are indebted to science for still being savages but thereby become a simulation model, provided by ethnology, for all other primitives. In the "challenge" and defiance of their own death, ethnology loses its object. This seems to be a fundamental condition of any theory. However the object always has its revenge:

It is science which ostensibly masters the object, but it is the latter which deeply invests the former, following an unconscious reversion, giving only *dead and circular replies to a dead and circular interrogation.* (*Sim* p.17)

It is the construction of the truth and the reality principle of an object that Baudrillard identifies as the fantasy of meaning in any scientific, critical or hermeneutic enterprise. In his early work his concern was how the critique of capital and the political economy of the sign was a function of that which it criticised. In short what were the metaphysical assumptions behind critique governed by concepts such as ideology, manipulation and interpretation. What becomes increasingly important in his work is interpretation, critique and theory in general and the objects (like the Tasaday) they produce.

The mass as conceived by Baudrillard is this principle ostensibly applied to the field of sociology. In an interview Baudrillard suggests, possibly ironically, that the only sociological work he has done concerns this analysis of the social.⁴ However I would argue that his analysis, despite dealing with the social is, in the end, not the least sociological. It is not really even meta-sociology. It is an account of that which heralds the end of sociology. That is to say the useless form of the mass. In some ways it is futurology as history. It is the beginning of a thought, culminating in *Fatal Strategies*, concerning how the future, and utopia, came to pass.

Thus far I have attempted to outline the issues Baudrillard is unravelling in his account of the mass. But what exactly is it? Properly speaking, it is not representable. Nevertheless Baudrillard plays on its variety of associations. The Mass denotes matter, earth (in the electrical sense) and majority (mass of people). Despite its connotation of plebeian subjugation and slavery it has no moral import. Neither is it a negative moment in a dialectic. The mass is not an object of manipulation or the subject of history. The mass absorbs and neutralises all the destinies of meaning given to it - Reason, History, Culture, Revolution. This absorption not the expression of a collective rationale or practice. It is not the means to the end of a political project.

Neither is it an act of self-interest. There is no psychology of the mass for it is not a subject, consciousness or agency. It is neither active nor passive as it is neither subject nor object.

Baudrillard defines it as the neutral (*ne-uter*), or the indifferent, like the current simulacrum. Its effects are inertia and silence. Using Baudrillard's model of simulation as the 'satellisation of the real', it can be said that the mass is the Black Hole into which these satellites of the real disappear. The gravity of the real, the ground of reference, is not enough to prevent it from being absorbed by the implosive inertia of the mass. The result of this is that all the great metaphysical referents are drawn towards the black hole of the mass. Nevertheless it must be stressed that this process has no meaning. Using the scientific analogy the event-horizon of the mass prevents light (meaning) escaping.

The question must be asked as to whether Baudrillard is borrowing the terminology from science (the code and the black hole of the mass) and is therefore only metaphorizing a process which occurs at a different level. One response to the problem of the status of scientific metaphor is to consider the language as one element of what he calls pataphysics, "the science of imaginary solutions". Pataphysics serves a double function in Baudrillard's writing. At

one level it is an expression of his anti-cultural instincts. The mass is a pataphysical elaboration of this anti-intellectual impulse. Secondly pataphysics is a simulation of science, but of a science of the impossible. In this way it traverses the limitations of traditional science which, according to Jarry is grounded not on genuine experimentation and the journey into the unknown but convention and utility. Moreover it neither presumes a world or any relation of theory to a world:

Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be and should be - envisaged in place of *the traditional one*, since the laws that are supposed to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which, reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the virtue of originality.⁵

This science of exceptions can therefore also be understood as the science of remainders, of that which is excluded from the conventional and traditional order of the world. Furthermore, in Baudrillard's hands this science will aim at its own disappearance in order to "choke" its own meanings. It is a simulation of the "true" world thereby absorbing it. Therefore in his analysis Baudrillard attempts to simulate the masses absorption of meaning:

We must manage to choke back the meanings we produce - which always tend to be produced. If a theory - or a poem, or any other kind of writing (it's not endemic to theory) - indeed manages to

implode to constitute a concentric vortex of implosion, then there are no other effects of meaning. Theory has an immediate effect - a very material one as well of being a void. (FB p.128)

So theory, in simulating the mass, is not like a void but is a void.⁶ In a sleight of hand, while describing the effects, without determination, of the mass Baudrillard maintains, and hopes, that it is not representable. It has no meaning and is not of the second level order of representation.

A pressing question then is how does Baudrillard intend to disappear. The possibility of such a project is signalled in the word 'Shadow' in the title. In an interview he describes the effect of "shadowing" by the artist Sophie Calle:

For no particular reason...she followed a stranger in the street; she became his shadow and thus in a certain sense, erased his traces, acted as his destiny...She herself is nothing. She has no desire in all this. She doesn't want to go anywhere, even though she follows him all the way to Venice. She doesn't want to find out what he is or to know his life. She is the proof that, although he thought he was going somewhere, in fact he is going nowhere. Where he supposedly is there's no one. (FB p.118)

The Mass, as shadowed (and erased) by Baudrillard, is in effect nothing, and is a concept with no theoretical destiny or horizon of meaning. It would not be difficult to draw parallels with the concerns of recent deconstructive thought and the putting under "erasure" of concepts. However Baudrillard would want to emphasise that this operation (like the mass) has no

significance whatsoever. I will show the development of this in the pataphysics of "disappearance" in chapter seven.

The mass therefore unlike the social must be understood in terms of its "radical lack of definition", its indifference. It is not a body of opinion or a collective consciousness. Like the simulacrum, of which it is a phenomenon, it cannot be exchanged for its equivalence in a real by representation. Baudrillard's interest in the social is not just based on its apparent theoretical inadequacy as a term rooted in a previous order of simulation. It is important because it is paradigmatic of the 'relation' in general. The very definition of the social implies relation. Baudrillard's analysis of metaphysics and the political economy of the sign is directed at the disenchanted relations that capital imposes through its various exchange values. Relation in general, according to Baudrillard, is disenchanted and is the cornerstone of idealism and metaphysics - the relation of equivalence of the identity principle, of representation, of subject and object and the relation imposed by the logic of cause and effect to name but a few. This manoeuvre is an attempt by Baudrillard to provide a materialist basis to his account of the mass, and also his conception of his own writing. By stressing this I want to emphasise his

affinity with the concerns of recent continental philosophy

The mass therefore does not designate a relation and its space of activity is not a space of relations. It is not a function of a theoretical subject-object polarity. It does not have the negative force of the social and cannot be alienated. As I have said Baudrillard calls it the *ne-uter*, the neutral into which all distinction and difference is absorbed.

The mass absorbs all relations directed at it, substituting fascination for contemplation or meditation. He argues that all the great systems of meaning whether, from religion or revolution, only ever held a profane fascination for the mass. He defines fascination as the "extreme intensity of the neutral". In this way the fascinated mass exerts intense implosive force on all the sober referents aimed at it. The mass leaves meaning to the civil servants of truth:

They [the mass] have never been affected by the Idea of God, which has remained a matter for the clergy, not by anguish over sin and personal salvation. What they have retained is the enchantment of saints and martyrs; the last judgement; the spectacle of the Church; the immanence of ritual - the contrast to the transcendence of the Idea. (SSM p.7)

Hence the mass must be radically distinguished from the social. The social would be one particular rational, and historical destiny projected on to the

mass. This "enchantment" of the mass has many sources and parallels, one of which is in the renaissance understanding and practice of the art of politics.

This art of politics has a symbolic resonance unconnected to any set of political ends. He argues that the concept of politics which emerged with Machiavelli and ecclesiastical politics initially emerged as a strategy, or a game of signs with a complete disregard for ends. Hence Machiavellianism would not be understood as the cynical pursuit of power but rather as an exercise in virtuosity. The political space is of the same order of the simulated perspectival space of the period. It is a theatre of games rather than representation and was not a function of a rational quest for power, or of a democratic, representational imperative. According to Baudrillard the insight and sophistication of the players lies in the recognition that power is dead once it is aimed at as an object, substance or reference, for power never functions according to the real and its relations:

Power did not always consider itself as power, and the secret of the great politicians was to know that power *does not exist*..[it knows]..that it is only a perspectival space of simulation, as was the pictorial Renaissance...This secret of power's lack of existence...also belonged to the great theologians and inquisitors who knew that God does not exist, that God is dead...Power is truly sovereign when it grasps this secret and confronts itself with that very challenge. When it ceases to do so and pretends to find a truth, a substance or a representation (in the will of the people, etc.)...it dies in effect at the hands of that infatuation with itself. (FF pp.58-59)

A change occurs in the eighteenth century, specifically with the French Revolution. The ludic origin of the political mutates into the representational. Just as perspective changed from a mechanics of the ludic into 'the place where a truth of space and of representation was inscribed' (SSM p.17), so the political was invested via representation with a referent: the will of the people.

Baudrillard argues that for a period, under the sway of liberalism a balance existed between the competing claims of the political and the social - the political in this sense designating the legislative and institutional forms of the state as opposed to the newly signified needs of the social (people).

However, two interdependent forces disrupt this balance - capital and its marxist critique. The theoretical premiss of marxism sought the end of the political through the transparency of the social - no need for the representation of the people. The legislative and institutional forms of the political are completely harnessed to the demands of the social. Yet according to Baudrillard the social was initially posited by Capital as a momentary source of value and has already surpassed the particular historical model which required the social. The transparency of the social as the end of certain marxist analyses has

occurred but not because of the revolutionary order which was prophesied therein. The dynamic which brings this about is simulation - the current form of Capital's circulation. The implosion of perspectival space occurs through the absolute saturation of space by the simulation of the social. All interstices of space are filled by this relation. It is a question of the logic and telos of the social attaining the purity of its own immanent presentation, actualised and realised thereby reaching its own fantastic limit and vanishing point. He writes that

at this point of absolute reference, of omnipresence and diffraction in all of physical and mental space... its specificity is lost, its historical quality and its ideality vanish in favour of a configuration where not only the political becomes volatilised but where the social itself no longer has any name. Anonymous. *The Mass. The Masses.* (SSM pp.18-19)

When Baudrillard writes, approvingly, of this 'reversal of energy' he is describing the process of implosion. There is no longer a referential equivalent corresponding to the social. He argues that the only referent of the social is the simulated one of the 'silent majority' produced by the simulacra of polling, surveying and testing. I will return to the question of how this functions presently.

What I want to focus on are the effects of the mass. In so far as the social is a particular orientation of perspective space he suggests that just

as perspective is a simulation model, a simulated and unified configuration of the real, so is the social. Hence the rational destinies in general (democracy, revolution, emancipation, etc,) and the idea of relation in particular, which are imposed by the social, are delusory. They are of interest to Baudrillard only because they are fascinating effects of the simulated truth of perspective space. Furthermore the idea that increased socialisation is produced as an effect of the rational expansion and extension of capital, conceals the violence, symbolic and otherwise, as the dynamic at the heart of things:

The social itself must be considered a model of simulation and a form to be overthrown since it is a strategic form of value brutally positioned by capital and then idealized by critical thought. (FF p.53)

In *The Precession of Simulacra* Baudrillard argued that viewing capital as accountable for its abuse, violence and injustice is a fantasy of enlightenment thought. Criticising capital for being immoral is a complete misrecognition of what is essential to it. Capital is not of the order of morality or rationality. Critical thought understands it as an instrumental force capable of being harnessed to the needs of the social through economic rationality. Capital both produces and destroys the social but the violence by which it does this has nothing to do with the social:

Ultimately things have never functioned socially, but symbolically, magically, irrationally, etc.

Which implies the formula: capital is a defiance of society. That is to say that this perspective, this panoptic machine of truth, of rationality, of productivity which is capital, is without objective finality, without reason...(SSM pp.68-69)

What is increasingly fundamental to his analysis of the mass is that it is a model of a non-critical response. It is not a model of resistance to the current form of capital - simulation. Recalling the sentiments expressed in *The Precession of Simulacra*, the scandal of Capital is that there is no scandal. This is important to note, for if in *The Mirror of Production* Baudrillard gestures towards an alternative conception of value as a form of resistance, in his conception of the mass he denies the theoretical premiss (alternative conceptions of value) upon which such resistance depends. He cites recent sociological analyses which propose that the mass is not the passive receiver of the messages addressed at them by Capital, the media and advertising. On this reading the mass decode the messages imposed upon them and re-code them according to their own codes and values.⁷ Baudrillard argues that such a process depends on a quasi-anthropological conception of the mass as a tribe with its own codes, structures and values. Such forms of identity no longer exist if they were ever anything other than an anthropological fantasy - a retro-narrative of wishful thinking:

Critical thought judges and chooses, it produces differences, it is by selection that it presides over meaning. The masses, on the other hand, do

not choose, they do not produce differences but a lack of differentiation... (SSM p.35)

The mass as a simulacrum has no capacity for producing difference, for making judgements or evaluations. It exorcizes their possibility. This is of course the Platonic nightmare of the simulacrum. It induces a paralysis of reason. In the world of simulation reason cannot produce difference, distinction, value or hierarchy.

It must be emphasised therefore that when Baudrillard describes the effects of the mass he is not proposing a plan of action or a preferred strategy in responding to Capital. There is no rational or just course of action. He does not make the mass represent a political or emancipatory force. The mass is an immanent moment of the system of simulation, the focus for testing surveying and information:

The mass realises that paradox of being both an object of simulation (it only exists at the point of convergence of all the media waves which depict it) and a subject of simulation, capable of refracting all the models and of emulating them by hypersimulation (its hyperconformity, an immanent form of humour). (SSM p.30)

The mass is not beyond the system through bearing some transcendent order of value. It may be said that in order to understand Baudrillard's own agenda, he can be conceived to be emulating the immanent humour of the mass. What Baudrillard means by the hyperconformity of the mass is its response, inertia, silence and

muteness, to all the simulation models orbiting around it. These models - statistics, advertising, revolution all attempt to represent the mass - which are communicated, directed towards, and simulating the mass are absorbed through an 'ironic fidelity'. It is a simulation of obedience and passivity, but it may also be the simulation of revolution and activity depending on the discourse which attempts to manipulate, produce, discover or emancipate its object:

From this would follow, in the literal sense, a *pataphysics* or science of imaginary solutions, a science of the simulation or hypersimulation of an exact, true, objective world, with its universal laws, including the delirium of those who interpret it according to these laws. The masses and their involuntary humor would introduce us to a *pataphysics* of the social which ultimately would relieve us of all that cumbersome metaphysics of the social. (*SSM* pp.33-34)

The position of the mass is analogous to that of the Tasaday Indians in the refusal to be made into an object.

Baudrillard proposes that the only equivalent to this refusal of meaning is terrorism. However terrorism is not the expression, medium or representative of the 'frustrated' silence of the mass. On the one hand, and contrary to its own beliefs, the effectiveness of terrorism does not lie in its defence of and *solidarity* (a relation) with the repressed. On the other hand it is not a threat to the state. Terrorism, like the mass, is effective only when it has

no direction or objective and is without determination. Baudrillard argues that any attempt to attribute a rational destination for terrorism, or to subject it to a logic of cause and effect, gives foresight to something which replicates the 'blindness' of a system of indifferent simulation. The system does not work according to the logic of value (and therefore use-value) but is indiscriminate and indifferent simulation. Like the mass there are no political objectives or consequences to terrorism. Hence the targets are also replicas of this undifferentiated system - anybody:

Paradoxically, it seems that the innocent pay the crime of being nothing, of being lotless, of having been dispossessed of their name by an equally anonymous system whose purest incarnation they become. (*SSM* p.56)

Baudrillard argues that its only resonance is in the "shock effect" in the media. However, it is not quite correct to say "in" the media. For terrorism is of the order of fascination ("the extreme intensity of the neutral", *SSM* p.58).⁸ The mythical agenda on both sides of terrorism miss the indifferent essence to media as absorbers and neutralisers of meaning - its senseless, mute, indifferent fascination. Terrorism, as a medium is in Baudrillard's conception an event. An event is without causality or finality. Therefore there is no (*mise-en*) scene or context for it. All attempts to attribute meaning to it, to 'exterminate' it with meaning is an attempt to deflect its nullity

which is its implosive force. Why is this bombardment of sense necessary? Baudrillard argues that the hyper-reaction of the system - via information, the media, politicians, talking heads - is a hysteria of the real. There is an excessive proliferation of meaning in an attempt to resignify it as a moment of the real. Or more to the point, to reinvest the real with meaning. Yet, for Baudrillard, the effectiveness and challenge of terrorism resides in the response it provokes:

the virulence comes from the implosion - and the death of the terrorists (or of the hostages) is of this implosive order: the abolition of value, of meaning, of the real, at a determined point...Around this tiny point, the whole system of the real condenses, is tetanized, and launches all its anti-bodies. It becomes so dense that it goes beyond its own laws of equilibrium and involutes in its own over-effectiveness. At bottom, the profound tactic of simulation (for it's very much a matter of simulation in the terrorist model, and not of real death) is to provoke an excess of reality, and to *make the system collapse under an excess of reality.* (SSM p.120)

The questionable circumstances surrounding the death of the German terrorist Andreas Baader works to the advantage of the system. It introduces the truth via this doubt thus shifting the focus from the fascination of death (its futility) to the *truth* of the death, valorising death - "How did he die? What does it mean? How do we represent this?" Hence anyone calling into question the role of the German government in all of this sustains the real. If there is any reality to terrorism it is in its threat to the "social" - its institutions and its value:

Whether or not one accepts its brutality, it alone truly marks the end of the political and of the social. It alone betrays this reality of a violent implosion of all our systems of representation. (SSM p.53)

Its violence is not of a political or real order but the violence of a challenge to the real. Baudrillard's brief fascination with terrorism as a simulation model is clearly of a piece with his account of the end of the expansive, explosive systems and the representative forms of their simulation. He is not alone among recent philosophers who have understood terrorism to be paradigmatic of a contemporary problematic. However it will become clear Baudrillard's analogy of terrorism and the mass renders his analysis markedly different from other contemporary considerations of terrorism. As far as Baudrillard is concerned they would be too meaningful, underwritten by value.

Both Lyotard and Eco, as sometime chroniclers of "post-modernity", isolate terrorism while making it a function of the changing interests of the system of power. Lyotard understands terrorism as a violent displacement of the question and pragmatics of the "just" - the just, like the simulacrum, precludes a ground or criteria of discrimination and judgement. He gives the example of a kidnapping in which the kidnapped is treated as a means, thus betraying a basic Kantian edict. Threats of death are directed not at

him but at a third party - the state. As in Baudrillard's analysis, terrorism distorts its effects through an improbable pedagogical imperative, when it aims at public opinion. Hence terrorism may be a function of the state as well as urban guerillas. Without passing judgement he distinguishes the stake of death in terrorist blackmail addressed to a third party from war in which death and violence is a two-sided (immanent) affair. He argues therefore that the destruction of an American army computer in Heidelberg is an act of war rather than terrorism.

Eco's understanding of terrorism is superficially similar to some elements of Baudrillard's form of analysis. It is precisely because of such similarities, particularly concerning power and 'resistance', that both are generally understood to be post-modern writers. Concerning this notion of power in the modern state, Eco argues that the Red Brigades' attempt to strike at the heart of the state, supports a concept of power that no longer exists - of ideology, manipulation and direct repression which is controlled from some central source. In fact it encourages the idea of the state that has passed with the demise of the Gutenberg Galaxy and its replacement by a post-mechanical order of information and communication. The network and limits of power in this order are not bound by the geography of the state. Terrorism of the conventional kind is misdirected;

Only the Red Brigades, those last incurable romantics of Catholic-papist origin, still think the state has a heart and that this heart can be wounded; and they fail because the kidnapping of one Moro, or ten or a hundred, doesn't weaken the system, but rather recreates the consensus around the symbolic ghost of its "heart", wounded and outraged.⁹

Eco, with an instrumental view of technology, suggests that 'techno'-terrorism is better suited to the new situation. Moreover the technological "terrorism" he entertains is non-violent directed only at the simulated consensus essential to the maintenance of order. It is aimed at the periphery of a system whose "power" functions at that level. He gives an example of the technology of photocopying. Rather than buying a book students in effect expropriate property through the extensive duplication. This has only limited effectiveness as publishing houses raise the price of books to the extent that only institutions and libraries buy them. Nevertheless they recoup their revenues through for example halving the print but doubling the price. Hence its results and aims are not revolution but resistance, harassment, staying in the game. Of course for Baudrillard the notion of resistance is fundamentally another metaphysics - of opposition, agency and meaning. In *Fatal Strategies* he returns to the model of terrorism with his transpolitical concept of the hostage and I will discuss that in chapter seven.

As I have pointed out Douglas Kellner for one criticises the political limitations of Baudrillard's concept of the mass. Yet it is clear that Baudrillard uses it as a starting point for the examination of a whole range of issues: critical negativity; relation; sociology and theory in general; the winding down and implosion of the order of production; the state of politics in the hyperreal; and terrorism.

There is one other dynamic fundamental to the idea of the mass, and that is the conceptualisation and operations of the media. In the following chapter I will address the role of media as a process of simulation and as constitutive of the mass.

CHAPTER SIX: THE MEDIA IS THE MASS(AGE)

"...through images we dream of the immortality of protozoa." (*EC* p.36)

In the last chapter I outlined the different functions the concept of mass serves for Baudrillard. In its unrepresentability it marks the limit of all critical, rational and productive activity. For this reason it could be considered the remainder of simulation. It is indifferent to its 'interests' as conceived by any enlightened project. It absorbs and circulates the various messages projected at it. The latter is the vain attempt to shore up the real and its referents. Baudrillard's account of the mass, modern media and simulation are informed and driven by an agenda of anti-humanism. They mark the limit of fundamental principles of western thought. Paradoxically they are the end of a dynamic whereby the same wins out over the different. According to Baudrillard the current melodrama of difference is yet another narrative in the service of an abstract utopia of eventual reconciliation.

For Baudrillard the fact that the mass circulates indifferently all messages entitles it to be considered as a medium. In this chapter I will be looking at how this expands and clarifies what is at stake for him in the mass. In doing this I will examine the question of

the media as conceived by Baudrillard. Baudrillard has a certain notoriety as a sometime theorist of the modern media. This he would argue is based on a fundamental misreading of the simulacrum. This misunderstanding, as I have pointed out, is the idea that the simulacrum is an image. From this perspective the simulation of the modern media is considered merely as the most sophisticated form of image production and image perfection. However for Baudrillard the question of media is not reducible to the global and psychic colonisation of the unconscious as perceived by the film director Wim Wenders.¹

Baudrillard brings to bear an an entirely different set of problems on the question of the media. If his early work does consider the media in a somewhat conventional way, though never really as the empty peddler of ideology, he develops his account in line with the issue of simulation. His analysis owes much to McLuhan. This largely forgotten media prophet is resurrected by Baudrillard. Not for his optimistic evolutionary vision but because McLuhan refused the instrumental view of technology. Despite his apparent radicalism, he recognised in a traditionally anthropological way the transformations in subjectivity wrought by media technologies. For example:

Man the food gatherer reappears incongruously as information gatherer. In this role electronic man is no less a nomad than his paleolithic ancestors.²

Though Baudrillard does not have a 'tribal' view of technology he harnesses McLuhan's essential insight to his own anti-humanistic agenda. Modern media are worthy of attention in that far from extending man, the subject becomes a terminal in this network of information. Or as I will show, and this recalls the reversion of the mass, a projecting screen.

With respect to media Baudrillard is also interested in the more general question of relation. He will argue that, paradoxically, modern *media* are destructive of relation. It is not even as if they impose a false or delusory relation. However this does not make him a technophobe as Kellner suggests. In the end though it is with the concept of mass that Baudrillard draws out the full implications of modern media as the condition for the impossibility of communication.

Baudrillard works with a variety of conceptions of the media, each addressing different issues. These can be categorised as the following; media understood as the new communications media; the idea of a medium in general as establishing a relation; modern media as a form of testing; and the equivalence of media and the mass.

It could be said that one of the constitutive elements of the mass is the media. Yet Baudrillard

would also like to argue that the mass is a medium. So what does *the media* mean for Baudrillard? In what follows I will address the different conceptions that Baudrillard has of media - from his early semi-formal appreciation of it as a form of control via the code, to his later descriptions of it as inseparable from that which he will identify as the current disenchanted simulacrum.

I would argue that Baudrillard's reputation as a sometime media theorist is misplaced. Baudrillard, as much as any theorist of media, describes and constructs media as a concept in such a way as to support his own theoretical project. Hence the shifts in emphasis and attributes of media as his work develops. This is true to the extent that it would be hard to abstract and isolate a concept of media from his own particular philosophical agenda. It would therefore be difficult to "apply" generally, outside the limits of its place in Baudrillard's work. I would suggest that the notoriety and difficulty in Baudrillard's conception of media is due to the sameness of media theory. Most theories of the media rest on some notion of ideology and semiology. Baudrillard does flirt with ideology in his early work on media. He also limits his analysis here to media as T.V., Radio etc. However he will reject this and build on other ideas developed therein. However Baudrillard's non-ideological approach is often

mistaken for some sort of pure identification with "the" media. Mark Poster writes:

Baudrillard has developed a theory to make intelligible one of the fascinating and perplexing aspects of advanced industrial society: the proliferation of communications through the media...The new media employ the montage principle of film (unlike print) and time-space distancing (unlike face to face conversation) to structure a new linguistic reality. Baudrillard theorizes from the vantage point of the new media to argue that a new culture has emerged...³

There are a number of flaws with this, an analysis of which will help to specify Baudrillard's position. In general, the theoretical direction of his work does not support Poster's claim. It is but one element. With respect to modern media, Baudrillard, taking McLuhan's logic of the medium to its limit will assert, that not only is there no message, but there is no medium. If there is no medium (which paradoxically is that which defines modern media, for there is nothing to mediate) one can hardly take its side. Furthermore a central feature of this is the destruction of perspective space. The latter of course is one element that recommends modern media to Baudrillard. There are no *vantage points*. This is important to note as it informs Baudrillard's later conception of his own writing. Furthermore, Poster seems to suggest that Baudrillard's writing reflects the techniques of montage used in film. This line of argument possibly stems from a particular understanding of recent continental philosophy, in which the discourse of the

theorist reflects the object being theorised. This is the idea of an immanent presentation of the rules and concepts derived through the analysis. It is often understood in terms of 'self-reflexivity'. The problem with this perception is that there is the danger of re-introducing the subject, *vis-a-vis* self-reflexivity, into theories which attempt to problematise subjectivity. The result is a untheorised form and distant relation of hermeneutics. However I would argue that while Baudrillard becomes increasingly aware of this problem of theory it is not elaborated in the way proposed by Poster. I have already addressed Baudrillard's suspicion of meaning wherever it appears. If the media are to be theorised as function of general communications, Baudrillard's work would have little to offer.

In effect, he deconstructs the term "media", to show that contrary to common preconceptions the media does not mediate. The founding principle of modern communications is non-communication.⁴ The single most consistent thread in Baudrillard's work on the modern media is the proposition that it (like the mass) fabricates non-communication. Hence any theoretical expression and reflection of the media will not be found in montage but in non-communication. This increasingly becomes the desired destiny of his work. In what follows I will show the development of this project. I will also emphasise that montage for

Baudrillard is like a movable feast. It's meaning varies from place to place. What is consistent, and this cannot be over stressed, is that he never considers it to be merely a modern, or more sophisticated form of representation.

In the early essay "Requiem for the Media", Baudrillard still envisions some form of symbolic exchange as an instance of defiance to the political economy of the sign. In it he addresses himself to contemporary theoretical views of the media:

1. McLuhanism - the medium is the message. The modern media are revolutionary firstly because of their electronic structure and secondly because they are tactile. The surpassing of one medium (roads by the telegraph) by another medium is a revolutionary event. It produces unforeseen transformations in human perception and social organisation.

2. Modern media ("the media") are subject to another power or control. The assumption here is that by appropriating the modern communications media, changing the content or "the message", one changes media effects. The form remains unquestioned. It is essentially an instrumental view of media. It also neglects the wider historical conception of media such as adopted by McLuhan.

3. The new electronic media by their very essence are a socialist and democratic form of open communication, are immanently rational and are a universal source of information. The project here is to liberate this potential through the extension of the technological means.

Though Baudrillard ultimately rejects McLuhan's vision of the media, his perspective on media as forms of circulation place his work closer to McLuhan than to other models and conceptions of media. However he would reject the epistemological imperative at the core of McLuhan's axiomatic of 'the medium is the message'. A medium is a relation, and its effects are both social and psychic. For example, McLuhan's *Understanding Media* is subtitled *The Extensions of Man*. Media understood in this way are not technological accessories of an immutable, ahistorical subjectivity. For this reason media are not just the disseminator of images. Even on McLuhan's reading, even if the latter were true, it would only have been a recent event in the evolution of communications.

Baudrillard focuses on the instrumentalist nature of the last two propositions particularly in so far as they have been proposed by various theorists of the left. The main figure in this instance is Hans Enzensburger. He notes that left theorists have been suspicious of mass-media culture as the vehicle of

ideological manipulation but his alternative optimistic view is on Baudrillard's account equally naive. Enzensburger argues that the media need to be liberated from their present purpose and put in the service of open-communication and democratic exchange. However, this assumes that the media is the merchandising and advertising of a dominant ideology with its (economic) determinant somewhere else.

In contrast with Poster's assumption about modern media, Baudrillard argues that what is specific to modern media (unlike roads and railways for example), is its fabrication of non-communication. It is this which constitutes the current forms of power and through which social control function. It does this through the imposition of a code. Most commentators recognise the latitude Baudrillard gives himself by not having a consistent or coherent account of the code. In the last chapter for example simulation was shown to be based on the genetic or binary code. In his early work on media, I would suggest that in this instance what is at stake for Baudrillard in the code is the simulation of a *relation*. The media precludes any response, any responses are what he calls *response simulation* by which the exchange is already integral to the transmission. Phone-ins and feedback are examples of such reversibility without reciprocity. He also cites referenda as being the mass-media *par excellence*

in which the response is already determined by the question:

It is speech that answers itself via the simulated detour of a response, and here as well the absolutization of speech under the formal guise of exchange is the definition of power. (CPES p. 177)

This passage is a good example of the residual commitment to symbolic exchange in this essay. Speech in this quote is the moment of reciprocity of symbolic exchange which is replaced by the reversibility of feedback. In this essay Baudrillard is uncharacteristically tempted into considering this essential form of modern media as intrinsically ideological. It reproduces all possible events in its own form. Therefore his argument against Enzensburger rests on the fundamental abstraction of the media in its presentation of events. Despite the optimism of Enzensburger, Baudrillard argues that all events, "political" or otherwise have the status of a *fait divers*. Local events are diffused to the extent that they acquire an abstract universal historical aura. As the world becomes smaller and the political import of local events grows, the miscellany of the media invades the political. His argument is not that this miscellany trivialises but that it imposes its own model on all categories of events:

In fact the essential media is the model. What is mediatized is not what comes off the daily press, out of the tube or on the radio: it is what is re-interpreted as the sign form, articulated into models, and administered by the code...At best,

what can occur under the aegis of the media is a formal surpassing of the categories of *fait divers* and politics, and of their traditional separation, but only the better to assign them together to the same general code. (CPES pp.175-176)

In this way Baudrillard denounces both the Orwellian myth of the media as an essentially terroristic form of social control or as a resource of liberatory potential. These two positions are underwritten by a bipolar theory of communication such as that proposed by Roman Jakobsen, viz;

Transmitter - Message - Receiver.

Encoder - Message - Decoder.

This analysis of Jakobsen guarantees the terrorism of the code. It exchanges, distributes and reproduces itself among the two terms as message. It also provides a linear and teleological account of media and communication. The message always arrives at its destination. Moreover this process is analogous to the system of abstract economic exchange in which people no longer exchange but the system is reproduced through them. For this reason any attempt at political intervention at the level of content the media will necessarily fail, for in aiming political acts at the media it forgets the media's 'pursuit of the political act in order to depoliticize it' (CPES p. 174). Thus Baudrillard argues that the left-right distinction of traditional politics has been rendered meaningless by

the media and credit should be given where it's due.
Ultimately, he argues:

In fact the essential Medium is the Model. What is neutralised is not what comes off the daily press, out of the tube, or on the radio: it is what is re-interpreted by the sign-form, articulated into models, and administered by the code (just as the commodity is not what is produced industrially, but what is mediatized by the exchange system of abstraction). (CPES pp.175-176)

One reason I would avoid calling Baudrillard's approach in this essay ideological, is the response he proposes. He rejects Eco's formulation of resistance through the re-interpretation of the media code. Eco cites the post '68' popularity of graffiti in advertising as an expression of this resistance, as a takeover of a media form. For Baudrillard graffiti is effective not as a content but because on the street it breaks the form of non-response imposed by the media. As I noted in the last chapter, Baudrillard is sceptical of the 'techno-terrorism' advocated by Eco, a fraying of the edges of the system. What is significant about graffiti for Baudrillard, is not that it communicates, or communicates better, but that it establishes a reciprocal relation rather than the mediated reversible one:

At the limit [of the technological code] to be sure, it is the very concept of medium that disappears - and must disappear: speech exchanged dissolves the idea and function of the medium, and of the intermediary, as does symbolic land reciprocal exchange...Reciprocity comes into being through the destruction of mediums per se. "People meet their neighbours for the first time

while watching their apartments burn down." (CPES p.177)

In this way symbolic exchange is destructive of relation and media. I want to argue that Baudrillard will abandon the 'face to face' described here in favour of a less meaningful simulation of media's essential non-communication.

Baudrillard after developing the analysis of simulation, comes to a different appreciation of media non-communication. The notion of media is also less limited. There is a shift in emphasis in Baudrillard's later books from analysis of the form of the media, to an analysis of its commonly perceived effects in the dissemination of information. There are two strands to which I will attend. Both concern the most common conceptions of media. Firstly the question of the 'spectacle' which Baudrillard replaces with the notion of fascination. Secondly the related function of information, not as a possibility for the expansion of knowledge, but as a testing which destroys the distance of the spectacle.

Baudrillard is sometimes identified as nihilistically affirming the idea of the 'society of the spectacle' or a 'post-modern carnival'. He certainly has some affinity with Debord's conception in that they are both concerned with an apparent transformation of forms of control. However Debord's

analysis is traditionally Marxist. This fact alone would limit their resemblance.

Debord's spectacle is an ideological operation whereby capital reproduces abstract social relations through mediatization. The spectacle refers to the operation in which capital has reached such a stage of development that, no longer disguising itself in abstract social relations, it is objectified in the spectacle.

The spectacle is the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue. It is the self-portrait of power in the epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence.⁵

The spectacle of Capital is the extension of the commodity into all areas of human affairs;

The spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image.⁶

Reality, as a result of capitalist accumulation has been commodified to the extent that all objects and relations are the vehicles and expressions of the system, and this system is essentially alienating. Capital still functions according to accumulation and the abstraction of exchange value. Debord's criticism is directed towards its perversion of use-value:

In the inverted society of the spectacle, use value (which was implicitly contained in exchange value) must now be explicitly proclaimed precisely because of its factual reality is eroded by the

overdeveloped commodity economy and because counterfeit life requires a pseudo-justification.⁷

Therefore behind exchange value, no matter how distorted and abused, lies the factual reality of use-value.

There are many reasons other than the immediately obvious ones concerning use-value, alienation etc., for Baudrillard rejecting such a model. In "The Order of Simulacra" he put forward the model of the DNA code as the current model of simulation whereby Capital functions. The binary regulation of the code neutralises all differences - especially the difference between reality and simulation. One expression of this is the operations of referenda, polling and testing which produces a circular response.

Baudrillard is particularly interested in Benjamin's analysis of filming a actor from a variety of different positions. The film editor chooses the frames and composes the film from, as it were, the series of optical tests. This testing is for Baudrillard more significant than cinema as reproducer of images. The audience identifies with the camera in film thus destroying the heretofore theatrical distance of the actor. The cinema then is not a technologically advanced system of representation but a model of scientific experimentation. What he wants to emphasise here is that film generally understood as a visual

medium, has its 'sense' elsewhere, in the tactile. He cites the dadaist cinematic project which understands a film as a 'projectile' which invades the reflective space of the audience. The tactility of the angles through angles and edits stimulate the audience and demands an instantaneous response:

No contemplation is possible. The images fragment perception into successive sequences, into stimuli toward which there can be only instantaneous response, yes or no - the limit of an abbreviated reaction. Film no longer allows you to question. It questions you and directly. It is in this sense that the modern media call for, according to McLuhan, a greater degree of immediate participation, an incessant response, a total plasticity. (*Sim* p.119)

What is at stake here is a transformation of the senses and the mutation into the tactile. There are some distinctions to be made in Baudrillard's use of McLuhan here. McLuhan separates out 'modern media' into hot and cold forms. A cool medium, such as the telephone or television, is low definition, it transmits little information and requires therefore greater participation on behalf of the participant. Film, which Baudrillard refers to, is high definition because it extends one sense with high intensity. McLuhan calls it 'being well filled with data'. The medium such as film therefore, not only requires little response but is a form of circular testing. Its circularity derives from the code which already anticipates the response. Unlike his analysis in

"Requiem for the Media", media demand and determine a response.

At this point he understands the cinematic technique of montage as a coding and the viewer's activity is an encoding or a reading. In the later *Evil Demon of Images* montage is less a code than the immanent model of its own form. Here however, the focus is on the delimited space of media. It has the form of an integrated circuitry through which this code circulates. In this way the tactile replaces the visual not as a new model of sense and communication as such, but rather as an extension of testing, prodding and manipulating (in the non-ideological sense):

At the same time as touch loses its sensorial, sensual value for us ('touching is an interaction of the senses rather than a simple contact of an object with the skin') it is possible that it returns as the strategy of a universe of communication - but as the field of *tactile* and *tactical* simulation, where the message becomes 'massage' tentacular sollicitation, test. (*Sim* p.124)

The demise of the visual as a dominant sensory form of contact and interaction between subject and the world is brought about through the contraction of space and this puts paid to the whole metaphysics of appearance and reality. In another way it is paradoxically the utopia of metaphysics insofar as it eradicates all media such as representation. Though Derrida for example points out ironically that the

latter was only ever a medium on the quiet, only ever supplementary.

The hyperreal, as a function of models and testing, therefore designates an absorption of space. The system of control no longer operates according to the perspective space of the panopticon or the repressive police space. There is a cold promiscuity of information, a superficial saturation of space, not an excess of meaning but absorption by media. It is an environment of tactile stimulation and tactical simulation of feedback, participation and response programmed by the code. Context and distinction as a function of causality are displaced by ambience, environment and ecology. Hence to speak of a spectacle makes no sense as there is no stage or theatre which operates at the limit it establishes between the real and illusion. There is no *distance*, *perspectival context*, or as will become increasingly clear, *subjectivity* for the perception of the spectacle. For this reason the concept of the spectacle would be considered by Baudrillard to be a ruse of ideological thinking. It is no more than a manifestation of the traditional Marxist account of how capital extends itself into all areas of (non-economic) life. For Baudrillard of course the production of the real is not supplementary to capital or an example of its ideological distortion of real relations. And despite the conceptual conflation of simulation and the visual

it is evident that the effects of the simulation of the real will not be revealed in an examination of subject positions with respect to an image-object.

A map of this process may be found in various developments in recent narrative technique. He argues that the *rhetoric* of realism is a guide to the mutations and modalities of the real and its disappearance. Once realism is constituted as a style, he argues, the status of the real is considered problematic. The duplication of the real is also destructive. It is symptomatic of a nostalgic need to duplicate something that has disappeared. Attacks on the real also play this game. Surrealism still maintains a correspondence with the real in that it plays the real off against an imaginary, an hallucinatory moment which augments and sustains the intensity of the real. The hyperreal is a superior form in that it does not play with the real, but conjures up *the real's hallucinatory resemblance to itself*. Baudrillard's analysis of recent developments in art and literature are instructive. He sees the new novel not as an advance or exploration of narrative technique but as exemplary of simulation. The new novel appears a function of the real in the manner in which it obsessively empties out the real in the narrative devices of de-subjectification and de-psychologization. This process however is less an attentiveness to the object than the objectification of

the pure look. What happens when narrative takes on the operation of the code is the abolition of relation, distance and the time of narrative. However, if one is to take seriously Scott Lash's account of the figural as the mode of presentation of post-modern cinema, one would have to say that Baudrillard's analysis at this point does not match up to such a post-modern paradigm. The anterior finality of the code always already anticipates the real, instantaneously. There is visibility but without perspective (as a function of time) or relief, through flattening of space. McLuhan identifies this process in cubism:

cubism, by giving the inside and outside, the top, bottom, back, and front and the rest, in two dimensions, drops the illusion of perspective in favor of instant sensory awareness of the whole.⁸

Baudrillard would acknowledge the transformation in space identified here but the sensory 'awareness' is in the end, for McLuhan, tied to subjectivity. McLuhan, isolates the possibility of subjectivity from this simultaneity and instantaneity of sense. It is always a function of consciousness and conscious interreaction. Despite a certain ambivalence what ultimately commends the tactile to Baudrillard is its undermining of subjectivity. One way of conceiving this tactile subject, open to the incessant and instantaneousness of information and sense, is as the schizophrenic. All distance and future and past time is dissolved in this information overload. His account

of this scenario in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* is without doubt less positive than it will be in his later work. And furthermore the schizophrenic will be regarded as the residue of a second level subject. It will eventually be replaced by the serial and genetically reproduced clone.

Nevertheless he suggests that despite the dominance of the tactile there is a form of *looking*. He argues that in the new novel for example there is a 'look' but it is not a look predicated on distance - that between subject and object for instance. The narrative technique as a pursuit of a story of time is replaced by space exploration, and absorption, in the form of testing:

Syntax and semantics have disappeared - there is no longer apparition, but instead subpoena of the object, severe interrogation of its scattered fragments - neither metaphor or metonymy: successive immanence under the policing structure of the look. The "objective" minuteness arouses a vertigo of reality, a vertigo of death on the limits of representation-for-the-sake-of-representation. (*Sim* p.143)

This vertigo of the hyperreal is therefore not brought about through external determination, through a beyond of representation. Representation at its limit folds over into simulation. According to Baudrillard what this denotes is a circular *seduction* given over to a pleasure, that isn't scopic, of not been seen - a pure operationality of the look on the surface of things. This look is no longer tied to the object. It

is part of a relay. As a relay it abolishes the logic of cause and effect. It is what he calls a 'circular seduction' or deterrence through which the subject disappears.⁹ Strictly speaking this marks the demise of both subject and object. There is nothing to be exchanged in a system given over to pure circulation. Baudrillard sets up four possibilities of reading this vertiginous simulation of the real.

Firstly, there is what he calls a deconstruction of the real. The real is broken down and its details appear as the declension of a grammar. Objects, as in cubism, are flattened and partialised. This would be similar to metonymy if the object appeared as such. What occurs of course is simulation.

Secondly, there is the post-modern paradigm of the reflecting mirrors, a mimesis without origin. Yet the metaphors of exile, nostalgia and loss still pervade this model. Moreover Baudrillard reads this model remaining within the paradigm of reflexivity (via the mirror). This is why he wants to avoid the language and perspective of vision. If there is something of interest in this for him it is through the substitution of the mirror by the series. The mirror is still too romantic and sentimental a model when compared to the systematic unfolding of the series:

From now on, though this indefinite refraction is only another type of seriality. The real is no

longer reflected, instead it feeds off itself till the point of emaciation. (*Sim* p.144)

This is exemplary of what Baudrillard will call the 'anorexic ruins'. The world become a useless body given over to the frenzied production of the real. He argues that anorexia is the response of a culture saturated with truth and abundance.

Thirdly, the serial form is generated from the model. In this form reflection is thoroughly abolished precisely because of the serial duplication. The object's emaciation is an effect of this serial duplication, its emptying out:

Like those two twin sisters in a dirty picture: the charnel reality of their bodies is erased by the resemblance. How to invest your energies in one, when her beauty is immediately duplicated by the other?...This generation by model along an endless chain that in effect recalls the protozoans and is opposed to a sexual mode that we tend, inaccurately, to confuse with life itself. (*Sim* p.144)

The polarity and contact of hot sexual reproduction is replaced by the cold contiguity of asexual reproduction, like the code. Vision and looking becomes a circular movement, which is in fact only a simulation of movement, and the look is not dialectical (subject/object, appearance/reality) but a relay without direction or end. There is no *reflection* cogitative or otherwise. Finally, he suggests that this operability of the serial form, its machinic

process, is only the limit of a more encompassing system: the digital processing of the binary code:

Not pure repetition, but the minimal separation, the least amount of inflection between the two terms, that is to say the "very smallest common paradigm" that the fiction of sense could possibly support. (*Sim* p.145)

This process holds Baudrillard's interest because it is not structured by relation. Neither is the relay a function of difference, for that is only simulated, but the minimal separation for the operation of the code. This minimal inflection is the limit of the real, its moment of self-recognition where it becomes self-generating, hyperreal and is no longer tied to the real. I would argue therefore that if one is going to look to Baudrillard for a notion of the post-modern the architectural analogy of pastiche and allusion certainly breaks down here. If there is an architectural analogy here it is with the binary code, hence Baudrillard's citation of New York's twin towers. Moreover the architect as a designer of space, of the play of interiors and exteriors, would have little to work with here.

Thus far I have attempted to demonstrate that Baudrillard's interest in media cannot be understood in terms of the spectacle or t.v. or the simple proliferation of images. It is a theory about the media concerning the destruction of media, of relation. What I want to address here is how this is played out

in his conception of the mass: in other words, leaving aside the pun on the tactile, what is at stake in his proposition that the 'Medium is the Mass(age)'.

In his work on the mass, Baudrillard is concerned with spiking the truisms surrounding information and the global village. Information is generally understood as informing, as providing access to something. It is commonly held to be 'a good thing'. In this way a technological event passes over into a moral capacity. To be informed is an essential feature of determining the correct course of action. So Baudrillard is not just offering an alternative theory of information, but an account of how information becomes a ruse of a critical and moral agenda. In effect, concepts of, and perspectives on, information and communications are often determined by a morality of meaning. He presents three commonly held positions concerning information and their effects in the understanding of modern forms of communications;

- 1) The growth in information institutes an equivalent growth in meaning. The idea here is that access to information is necessarily illuminating or informing. However this essentially positive attribute of information is qualified by the constant drainage or waste of sense and signification. According to Baudrillard the common response to this is the idea of making communications technology more widely available

thus reducing the 'alienating' effects of information overload. This position would be similar to that of Enzensburger.

2) Information has nothing to do with meaning. It is of an entirely different order and is purely instrumental. If this is the case there is no relationship between the inflation of information and the reduction of sense. This is information as a code or grammar and Baudrillard equates it with the information theory of Claude Shannon. Information is a coding of various data and is therefore entirely neutral.

3) There is a direct relationship in which information disseminated by the media essentially destroys or neutralises meaning.

The issue here is what is at stake in the attempted production of meaning. The third option is the one favoured by Baudrillard. This runs counter to the conventional view that current technology allows wider and instant circulation of meaning as information, McLuhan's Global Village would be an example of this. The conceptual series here assumes a natural direction and order to modern communications, finally underwritten by the subject as decoder and user:

information - communication - meaning

And even if there is a proliferation of information which might appear to run the risk of oversaturation, it is argued that a necessary residue (surplus) of meaning remains distributing itself, 'among the interstices of the social fabric' (*SSM* p.97). There is in this way no remainder, nothing that cannot be consumed. Baudrillard proposes that the increased socialisation which is supposed to obtain from this is a myth and that there is desocialisation in direct proportion to the increase in more sophisticated institutions. He writes:

Thus for all the institutions which have marked the social (organization, centralization, production, work, medicine, education, social security, insurance, including capital itself, doubtless the most powerful medium of socialization) it could be claimed that they at once produce and destroy the social. (*SSM* p.65)

Such is the case he argues with media and information. Information is exhausted in the staging of communication and destroys its own content and message. He cites phone-ins, and non-directive interviews which simulate shared communication and debate. Communication as anti-communication:

It is useless to wonder if it is the loss of communication which causes this escalation in the simulacra, or if it is the simulacra which is there first, with its dissuasive finality, since it short-circuits in advance all possibility of communication (precession of the model which puts an end to the real). It is useless to wonder which is the first term. There is none, it is a

circular process - that of simulation, that of the hyperreal; a hyperreality of communication and of meaning, more real than the real. Hence the real is abolished (*SSM* p.99)

This is exemplary of the precession of the model. This circular process, or simulation, is an implosion of poles. It short-circuits communication. Implosion, as I showed with respect to the camera and the audience, signifies the abolition of distance, and I will develop this in a moment.

One further point concerning the derivation of the term implosion. Baudrillard draws partly from quantum physics and partly from McLuhan. In a passage from *Understanding Media*, McLuhan writes:

The stepping up of speed from the mechanical to the instant electric form reverses explosion to implosion. In our present electric age the imploding or contracting energies of our world now clash with the old expansionist and traditional patterns of organization. Until recently our institutions and arrangements, social, political, and economic, had shared a one-way pattern. We still think of it as "explosive" or expansive.¹⁰

Baudrillard, while being continually tempted by theoretical possibilities of a first principle of symbolic exchange, also refuses the naturalisation of explosive, accumulative cultures. One might note however that the concept of reversibility invoked by McLuhan against the linear 'one-way' pattern of previous organisation is apparently an original event. For McLuhan the motor of change is technological progress which impose different forms of space and time

on experience. Spatial implosion is a function of the speed up in time due to developments in communication:

Our speed-up today is not a slow explosion outward from centre to margins but an instant implosion and an interfusion of space and functions.¹¹

Hence the Global Village. The new forms of communication institute new forms of perception. This process can be understood as a technological prosthesis of modern communications. Benjamin in his account of the camera recognises the new perception imposed through the diminution and abolition of distance. In Benjamin's terms, if the image has lost its aura through mechanical reproduction so has the natural object. Just as the object of representation loses the *semblance of distance*, both from the perceiver and the 'real' world, so the natural object is brought closer. Baudrillard, extending this argument, suggests that the real disappears under the weight of its omnipresence, replaced by a pornography of the real. This overcoming of distance is also an overcoming of time. Paul Virilio describes this metaphysics of disappearance which he understands to be the guiding principle of cinema:

"Film what doesn't exist," the Anglo-Saxon special effects masters still say, which is basically inexact: what they are filming certainly does exist in one manner or another. It's the speed at which they film that doesn't exist, and is the pure invention of the cinematographic motor. About these special effects - or "trick photography", hardly an academic phrase - Melies liked to joke, "the trick intelligently applied,

today allows us to *make visible the supernatural, the imaginary, even the impossible.*"¹²

The issue here is modifying the reality effect through cinema technique. This is not to say that reality is preceded by the image. The point is that in the final instance there is no difference or unique determination. There is no epistemological or ontological difference between image and reality. Moreover to say that reality is a special effect is not a moral judgement or an epistemological regret. Baudrillard argues that it is the experience and awareness of speed that is fundamental to our era. It eliminates what Benjamin recognises as that which is essential to an authentic object, its substantive duration and the historical testament of that duration. Baudrillard argues that this speed cancels out the categories of time essential to history, the perception of depth, and rational connections based on the logic of cause and effect:

Speed creates pure objects. It is itself a pure object, since it cancels out the ground and territorial reference-points, since it runs ahead of time to annul itself, since it moves more quickly than its own cause and obliterates that cause by outstripping it. Speed is the triumph of effect over cause, the triumph of instantaneity over time as depth, the triumph of the surface and pure objectality... (A. p.6)

What 'exists' is already superseded by the speed of its appearance. As in Benjamin's account the time of the cause or determination of an object disappears. So if there is an imaginary to the modern media it is a

simulated one. Baudrillard recognises the imaginary of the myth-making component of cinema and distinguishes it from television's complete lack of an imaginary, simulated or otherwise:

The cold light of television is inoffensive to the imagination (even that of children) since it no longer carries any imaginary, for the simple reason that it is no longer an image. (EDI p.25)

Borrowing the title from a 60's sci-fi television series, it could be said that the imagination of the current simulacrum is *Lost in Space*, a digital and televisual space. This is crucial to an understanding of Baudrillard's concept of media and information. Commentators such as Richard Kearney, who reflect the instrumental view of modern technology, see in Baudrillard the nihilism of a putative post-modern imaginary. For Kearney, who makes a distinction between 'good' post-modernism and 'bad' post-modernism, modern technology is neither good nor bad in itself. Simulation is in effect the 'civilization of the image', an image which has its determination elsewhere, in ideology for example. Resonant with Baudrillard's sceptical description of optimistic and instrumental views of information, Kearney cites *Live Aid* as an example of a good use of technology. According to Kearney this was an event in which t.v. was able to alert the ethical responsibility for the other through a face-to-face with the starving. It establishes an ethical relation. Television becomes an instrument of

empathy. Baudrillard suggests that a more accurate description of mediatized events might be found through the inversion of a basic principle of cybernetics - that information is negentropic, organised and meaningful. Conversely what if:

the information or knowledge about a system or an event that can be obtained is already a form of neutralization and entropy of this system...The information in which an event is reflected is already a degraded form of the event. (SSM pp. 109-110)

This though is a weak claim to make. In effect it is the idea that the media distorts the 'real'. For Baudrillard the fundamental flaws of instrumental views of technology are elsewhere. Specifically in its incapacity to recognise the essential indifference of modern technology as;

- 1) a (short) circuit of non-communication.
- 2) as destructive of all relation.
- 3) as a function of the general operating principles of the simulacrum.

Furthermore, Kearney is by no means alone in this conception, and faith, in technology as instrumental. Eco and Enzensburger adopt a similar faith. However his particular example of *Live Aid* would be for Baudrillard, a phenomenon of *post coitum historicum*, a

post-orgy sensibility. The orgy is the excess of values, ends, absolutes of the hyperreal. *Live Aid* is an instance of the excess of soft ideology which has superseded the hard ideologies of revolution, of history, of politics in general and Religion. For a post-ideological and a post-revolutionary generation which has had everything, *Live Aid* contains the soft solidarity commensurate with its own ambition:

[Anti-racism, anti-nuclear, third worldism etc,] are the ideology of a neo-romantic and politically neosentimental generation that is rediscovering love, selflessness, togetherness, international compassion, and the individual tremolo. Effusion, solidarity, cosmopolitan emotivity and multimedia chaos...Transcendental and publicly marketable idealism [a generation] that practices solidarity with the greatest of ease, that bears neither the stigma of class misfortune nor the stigma of capital...They are European yuppies. (AR pp.43-44)

Such a description would also characterise the project, elucidated in the first chapter, of Richard Rorty. Rorty's fundamental and only principle or foundation is the 'soft ambition' to avoid cruelty. Rorty however recognises this for what it is, 'post-modern bourgeois liberalism'. The tremolo of the individual inspired by *Live Aid* for example is a soft solidarity of a weak, quivering subjectivity with its romantic other. It is not governed by a meta-narrative, or the hard ideologies of class solidarity or the politics of exploitation.

However this account is but one scenario of response. There is also the non-response of the mass. The mass refuses this blackmail of values. The attempts to moralise and resignify the mass either through information (polling, multimedia solidarity etc,) or through its theorisation as victim of psychic and social distantiation and difference (alienation, lack, etc,)), have an opposite effect. Information instead of liberating the mass transforming it in to energy, produces more mass. The mass is subjected to testings, polls, surveys, equations, probings, solicitations, the politics of special effects, somewhat akin to microbiological warfare. This is the media as massage.

As I have shown, the response of the mass to this is one of hyperconformity. Baudrillard refuses manipulation theories of politics for two essential reasons. Firstly, such theories are organised around causal narrative. They are rooted in the logic of critical thought of the second order of simulacrum. This perspective is in fact a violence equivalent to the violence of the state. It supports the myth of the reality principle, of the true. It imputes to the mass, alienation, a lack and an imaginary. It is critical and judges, and produces difference. Baudrillard gives an example of the introduction of perspective by attempting to limit simulation, or the precession of the model. A terrorist bombing has many

models (of truth) in orbital circulation around it. Is it the work of left terrorists, of right wing extremists trying to provoke, or centrists trying to bring all terrorists into disrepute and shore up failing power, or the police who want more funds for public security. What is at stake here for the system of control is the truth of the event which is maintained by attempting to put a check on the vertigo of interpretations, and the *metamorphosis* of models, in order to render it purposive and meaningful, from any generated perspective no matter which. Commenting on the events at Stammheim he writes:

Principle of meaning as principle of truth: there you have the real life blood of state terrorism. (SSM p.118)

This forms the basis of the second objection to critical thought. The terrorism of meaning it attempts to impose on the mass is at least of equal ferocity to the disenchanting simulation of the system. It is the blackmail of value.

Baudrillard argues that the implosion of the social and information by the mass is the macroscopic equivalent of the involution of McLuhan's epistemological axiom - the medium is the message. This is the problem of media which is posed to any project which dreams of re-directing media to its own ends. As I have shown, there is no direction for the

media, it is a circular process absorbing the poles of senders/receivers etc.

However what makes modern media a practice of simulation is not simply the implosion of the message in the medium. The implosion of the message into the medium is not a distinct event that leaves all else untouched. At the limit of this axiom, once the idea of the message disappears so does the medium. Rather it is the implosion of the *medium in the real* which confers the status of 'simulation model' on modern media. Not only is there no message but there is no medium in the sense of mediating between two states of reality. Modern media are characterized by *not* being vehicles of communication. For this reason *metamorphosis* replaces *metaphor*. The transport of meaning from one figure to another is replaced in modern media with tactile immediacy and metamorphosis of models. The speed of metamorphosis as instantaneous transformation is not structured or organised by a temporal narrative or movement. Unlike metaphor it is without origin. Virilio describes something similar in the development of the cinematic process. The significance of cinema lies not in its capacity to produce images as such, but through the destabilising speed whereby it transforms sense:

...with the cinematic accelerator, itself conceived as an active prosthesis, the measure of the world becomes that of the vector of movement, of the means of locomotion that de-synchronize

time. When Marey reduces the movement of life to certain photogenic signs, he makes us penetrate into an unseen universe, where no form is given since all forms fill a different time, stripped of mnemonic traces, already.¹³

In this way metamorphosis, unlike metaphor, is not a medium. Furthermore, simulation models abolish the narrative perspective of metaphor - the point of view. According to Baudrillard it is this feature which distinguishes the current era of simulation:

Without a message, the medium also falls into that indefinite state characteristic of all our great systems of judgement and value. A single model, whose efficacy is immediacy, simultaneously generates the message, the medium, and the "real". (SSM p.102)

Because of his avowal, at some level, of the destruction of media and this tactile immediacy Baudrillard would claim that he is a materialist. As simulation and like the mass, media neutralises all perspective and meaning. It undermines all conscious perception. All distinct oppositions, differences and distance implode. Modern media such as Jakobsen's model of communication:

Meaning in the sense of a unilateral vector leading from one pole to another, becomes impossible. (SSM p.142)

This proposition increasingly finds its way into Baudrillard's understanding of his own writing. Theory ought no longer communicate. It becomes a problem of how not to communicate, how to communicate nothing and how to render meaningless the communication of nothing.

Unless one understands Baudrillard's appreciation of this state of affairs one misses what is essential to his work. An illuminating example of this is the question posed by Brian Seitz:

As others have asked, is Baudrillard nostalgic for some mythical time when signs "really meant something"¹⁴

This formulation is instructive as one only needs to invert the proposition to arrive at the central issue. If Baudrillard is guilty of nostalgia it is for a time in which signs 'really meant nothing'. For example in symbolic exchange. The danger of elevating symbolic exchange to a principle is that it obviously profits meaning. It cannot be a foundation or an agenda. As he remarks in *Cool Memories*:

You can't theorize something as the 'accursed share' without yourself being part of that curse. (CM p.78)

For this reason the catastrophe of meaning brought about by the mass and the media cannot be understood as meaningful. It is not in the service of any project, symbolic or otherwise.

Baudrillard argues that to view this impossibility of meaning as catastrophic or nihilistic is to be governed by a misplaced idealism of meaning and communication. Catastrophe itself is etymologically the 'horizon of the event' (in terms of physics, a Black Hole). He argues that catastrophe has only the

sense of an end when it is governed by the logic of production and the linear finalities it imposes. Catastrophe is instead a limit to meaning beyond which nothing occurs which has meaning for us. It is therefore outside the conceptual order of meaning and the nihilistic sense of catastrophe is ungroundable. What is beyond this is:

fascination: the result of the neutralization and implosion of meaning. Beyond the horizon of the social there are masses which result from the neutralization and implosion of the social. Is not the opposition of fascination and meaning what is at stake in information. (*SSM* p.142)

This is the core of the argument concerning why the mass is not the victim of capital's 'spectacle'. Baudrillard uses the word spectacle without any ideological sub-text. Fascination is not equivalent to the Debordian spectacle. That spectacle is an epistemological principle that is deformed by ideology. Fascination is not of the order of knowledge. What is crucial in the production and circulation of meaning, whether it is cultural, political or pedagogical he argues, is the impulse to moralise, to inform, to enlighten the masses. Whereas the masses remain fascinated impervious to messages, preferring the interplay of signs. The masses receive meaning while what they want is entertainment. The Mass:

scent the simplifying terror which is beyond the ideal hegemony of meaning, and they react in their own way by reducing all articulate discourse to a single irrational and baseless dimension, where

signs lose their meaning and peter out in fascination; the spectacular. (SSM pp.10-11)

Suggestions that this is a form of mystification is self-interested hypocrisy providing, 'intellectual comfort...[for]... the producers of meaning'. If one were to entertain the thought of ideology it could be argued that these 'producers of meaning' are the dupes of the system rather than the mass. There is no depth or interplay of public and private whereby hidden meaning, alienation or ideological manipulation can be revealed. He cites the example of an extradition of a criminal on a night in which France were playing in the World Cup. While a few people demonstrated outside the prison, twenty million were tuned into the football. Offence was taken by this indifference, *Le Monde* ironically reporting:

9 o'clock. The German lawyer has already been removed from *La Sante* prison. In a few minutes Rocheteau will score the first goal. (SSM p.144)

The reasons for this indifference is alleged to be the mystification or manipulation of the masses. Not only are they stupid but their apathy is denied them. Baudrillard points out that at all costs one must not analyse this indifference as a disturbance of current theories of manipulation (and modern communications) but instead it acts as confirmation despite consistent evidence to the contrary. The mass with its predicates is the necessary extension of Baudrillard's attempt to circumvent familiar philosophemes and philosophical

manoeuvres. As the absorber of meaning and information it neutralises the operations of ideology. The thought of ideology, critical thought, is structured by the metaphysics of value. In the following description one can recognise how closely the mass mirrors Plato's nightmare of simulation:

Critical thought judges and chooses, it produces differences, it is by selection that it presides over meaning. the masses, on the other hand, do not choose, they do not produce differences but a lack of differentiation - they retain a fascination for the medium which they prefer to the critical exigencies of the message. (*SSM* p.35)

Critical thought works on the terrain of legitimation and this serves the system, attempting to re-invest the energy of the real. Baudrillard suggests that meaning is outraged by fascination and sets up an analogy between the requirements demanded of children and those of the masses. Children are caught in a double-bind. On the one hand they are asked to be autonomous, rational, responsible and free, while on the other hand obedience, submission and conformism is required. To the latter demand to be an object the response is revolt and disobedience and to the former it is infantilism, passivity and idiocy. One could say, amalgamating McLuhan and Baudrillard, that this heralds the reign of the global village idiot. However there is a serious point to be made here. Baudrillard is not valorising 'ignorance' over intelligence as such an opposition is determined by the perspective of meaning. This is crucial to understanding what is at

stake in the development of his writing. And I will show in the next chapter how Baudrillard attends more closely to the possibility of a strategy of the object.

Despite the fact that neither strategy (autonomous rationality vs. infantilism) is of more objective value than the other, Baudrillard suggests that at the level of the masses one strategy is valorised over the other. That of the resistance of the subject and in the realm of the political, emancipation and free expression are held to be valuable. What is ignored is the strategy of the object as a response to a demand that we be subjects who vote, produce and participate. The conformity he is talking about is not the obedient conformity to social convention. It is, as I will show, a *diabolic* conformity whose principle is not reconciliation but paradoxically irreconcilability. He advocates the latter strategy of hyper-conformist simulation of the system whose very mechanisms are refusal and non-reception. This would be a pataphysical solution:

The secret is to oppose to the order of the real an absolutely imaginary realm, absolutely ineffectual at the level of reality, but whose implosive energy absorbs everything real and all the violence of real power which founders there. (SSM p.118)

This is the key to Baudrillard's own conception of his theorising. His early work on use-value and the metaphysics of political economy and its critique have

lead him here. The only response of the theorist is to oppose, or more correctly, challenge the real with a pataphysics. Theory, like the mass and modern media, must attempt to absorb all the energy of the real and the perspective whereby it functions. If Baudrillard's work has been criticised for not bearing any relation to the 'real' world, by his own criteria, he will have succeeded. Baudrillard's desire to 'choke off' meaning begins to be expressed in terms of the disappearance of the theorist as subject. How to vanish...?

CHAPTER SEVEN: YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE.

Let not the reader be scandalized by this gravity among the frivolous; let him rather recall that there is a grandeur in all follies, an energy in all excess. (Baudelaire)

In these last two chapters I will be addressing the concepts of *seduction* and *fatal strategy*. With these concepts Baudrillard most explicitly shifts the economic problem of production onto the terrain of theory and its presentation. I would also argue that these concepts are developed as a means to avoid the easy essentialism of symbolic exchange as a beyond of exchange value. The latter manoeuvre he describes as the utopian dream of political economy. With the concepts of seduction and fatal strategy he is firmly committed to the question of the nature and status of theory.

In the previous chapters I drew attention to the moments in his work which link the question of theory and interpretation to the economic dynamics of meaning and use-value. However the concept of seduction is not just the result of a meditation on the *ratio* and violence of theory upon its object. It is not a question of hermeneutic efficacy for Baudrillard, as he is committed to what he understands as the seduction of appearances and consequent seduction and disappearance of meaning. His theorization of seduction is also an

attempt to offer a different context for the genealogy of signs to that offered in the *Orders of Simulacra*.

Until *Seduction* Baudrillard's consideration of simulation had largely been conceived as homogenous and indifferent. Baudrillard's response to the system of simulation has been either the possibility of symbolic exchange or hyperconformity, simulating the indifference of the system and thereby absorbing all the energy of production and the real. I would argue that Baudrillard is more theoretically innovative when he embraces this dystopia of simulation. However *Seduction* offers an alternative genealogy whereby seduction becomes, if not the condition of possibility of production, then at least the void at its centre. An implosive space into which all the forms, and the world, of production and the real are sent spinning in a vertigo of pure appearances. Baudrillard accounts for three phases of seduction which also display different features.

1) Seduction as Ritual: The *trompe l'oeil* and its elaboration in painting, architecture and the ritual of politics.

2) Seduction as aesthetic form: a nineteenth century form exemplified by Laclos and Kierkegaard. Baudrillard would qualify the notion of aesthetics by virtue that seduction absorbs subjectivity. The

concept of aesthetics is too tied to the hierarchy of values imposed by the idea of Art.

3) Seduction as the Political Destiny of the sign: the simulacrum of modernity.

It is enough to note here that seduction has a genealogy of forms or manifestations, and each form poses itself as a challenge to the governing logic of production and its reality principle.

But what exactly is seduction? A common definition of seduction understands it as a subtle deployment of strategies and techniques in order to achieve one's (sexual) ends. It can also mean a kind of charm. Baudrillard is interested primarily in the second sense. Baudrillard in fact gives it a variety of designations; a ritual; a secret circulation of seductive signs at the heart of discourse; an esoteric form; a challenge; the enchantment of illusion. Ultimately, Baudrillard would want to argue that it has no meaning and cannot be defined or classified.

One problem with the term seduction and its relation to theory is the ease whereby it could become either another hermeneutic device or the stylistic conceit of an aesthete. This possibility is a consequence of the fact that whatever else seduction is concerned with, it is primarily a function of

'appearances'. Hence the possibility of its being equated with something like Susan Sontag's *erotics of art* (as opposed to interpretation) or even Rorty's *ironics*. At one point Baudrillard approvingly describes Kierkegaard's seducer as 'playing with himself' (*SED* p.108). However what he describes as the 'objective irony' of seduction is not a function of subjectivity, not even the 'weak' subjectivity of Rorty. It is not a hermeneutic device or instrument. It will become clear that seduction for Baudrillard is that which seduces the identity and time of the subject as self-presence.

However a question still remains concerning the status of 'appearance' for Baudrillard. As I recounted in an earlier chapter on the simulacrum in both Derrida's and Deleuze's description of the simulacrum a gesture is made towards reinstating the empirical as an effect by which core philosophical values are threatened. In *Dialogues* Deleuze points out that empiricism is not the establishment of a first principle which would invert opposition of the intelligible over the sensible. It is not the basis for a new epistemology. It is rather the exteriorisation of relations between terms and the true empiricist produces an experimental construction of this geography. The latter is worth bearing in mind as Baudrillard rejects the value or criteria of truthfulness as a measure of his work.

For Derrida also the empirical does not denote just the realm of sense and appearance present for a subject but is a material force bearing the mark of difference and repetition. This problematising of the empirical must also be taken into account with respect to Baudrillard's analysis of appearance. For although the issue of empiricism is not expressly addressed by Baudrillard, his work only makes sense insofar as his treatment of the simulacrum is not framed by the opposition of the intelligible and the sensible. This refusal of the traditional axiomatics of metaphysics must be born in mind in this discussion of the concept of seduction.

Baudrillard's 'seduction of appearances' is a formula in which seduction is both active and passive. A useful touchstone from recent french philosophy can be provided by Derrida's analogy of *differance* and empiricism:

...a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics, or empirical wandering if the value of empiricism did not itself acquire its entire meaning₁ in opposition to philosophical responsibility.¹

Seduction is that which abolishes the ends of production in all its forms of use-value, meaning and direction. It is a diversion internal to the linear logic of production. Hence what is fundamental to

seduction is its deviation from all forms of interpretation designed to reveal/produce meaning or depth. Baudrillard invokes the etymology of production, to make visible, as the focus for the operations of seduction. Seduction is the seduction of appearances but it is not wedded to the visible as true. Seduction is a diversion but one that is immanent to any discursive revelation. Paradoxically the most self-sufficient, self-motivating and rigorously systematic discourse is a model of seduction:

Any system that is totally complicit in its own absorption, such that signs no longer make sense, will exercise a remarkable power of fascination. Systems fascinated by the esotericism which preserves them from their external logics. The absorption of anything real by something self-sufficient and self-destructive, proves fascinating. (*SED* p.77)

A certain reading might abstract a theory of language from this. With the concept of seduction Baudrillard seems to be committing himself to establishing certain fundamental features of language. In this instance, that language always diverts and absorbs the profundity of the true. Yet it must be born in mind that language is but one terrain of seduction. It can convey seductive effects.

The previous passage is an important clue to the direction of Baudrillard's work. It brings together the attack on production in his early writing with the

analysis of the simulacrum as the sign of a real given over to its own transparent, obscene reproduction. However it is also clear that all discourse, no matter how well founded it is, or how cogently and coherently it masters its arguments and concepts, is prey to the non-sense of seduction. In fact the quotation would suggest that the more self-contained and self sufficient the theory or discourse is, the less 'flawed' it is, the more likely it is that it will display the effects of seduction. This is essentially the absorption of the sense of the discourse by its own signs. Hence seduction occurs at the level of appearances. However appearance is not a function of a look or a gaze:

Seduction does not consist of a simple appearance, nor a pure absence, but the eclipse of a presence. Its sole strategy is to be there/not-there, and thereby produce a sort of flickering, a hypnotic mechanism that crystallizes attention outside all concern with meaning. Absence here seduces presence. (*SED* p.85)

It is not a function of a subject. It is not presence as meaning or project but its seduction. The point at which sense disappears giving way to appearance. It is this hypnotic mechanism which seduces *Narcissus*. Seduction is not a psychological event. It is not that he falls in love with his reflection but that he is seduced by the absence of depth which is the *superficial abyss*.

Seduction is neither side of this there/not-there. It is not an absence or a presence but the play of the two. Nevertheless, seduction is the creation of an implosive space - an initiation - which allows this 'flickering' to take place. Paul Virilio describes seduction as follows:

...seduction is a rite-of-passage from one world to another that implies a major departure for humanity, the beginning of a navigation of body and sense from something immovable toward another category of Time, a space time essentially different because it is sensed as instable, mobile, conductive, transformable, like the creation of a second universe depending entirely on this initial rite-of-passage.²

The flickering as described by Baudrillard flickering is in effect the implosion of perspective and the entry into a world ungoverned by the time of meaning. An example of how this works may be found in the contrasts Baudrillard makes between the seductive space of *trompe l'oeil* with the obscene space of hardcore pornography. Pornography is obscene not because it is an ideological device or because it is a corruption of sexuality but because it abolishes (as a simulacrum) the scene of the real. In this respect it is an extension of his analysis of the reduction of space by media which I recounted in the last chapter. It is the model of the current simulacrum. Baudrillard contrasts it with *trompe l'oeil*. The latter subtracts a dimension, depth, from the real, while pornography adds a dimension, it makes the real more real. He suggests that in hard-core there is an excessive over-

signification of the real. Sex becomes a burlesque and parody. The anatomical exactitude of the camera abolishes the space and perspective of sex. Therefore what is at stake in the viewing of hardcore pornography does not take place at the level of phantasy. It is not symptomatic of any particular psychic arrangement:

Pornographic voyeurism is not a sexual voyeurism, but a voyeurism of representation and its perdition...the dimension of the real is abolished, the distance implied by the gaze gives way to an instantaneous, exacerbated representation, that of sex in its pure state, stripped not just of all seduction, but of its image's very potentiality. Sex so close that it merges with its own representation: the end of perspectival space and therefore, that of the imaginary and of phantasy - end of the scene, end of an illusion. (*SED* p.29)

Now there are two senses of scene that Baudrillard attempts to account for. There is the scene of history and narrative which is the scene, or stage, of meaning. The other scene that Baudrillard attempts to account for is the scene of initiation as described by Virilio. This is not the scene of representation, or of the subject but of seduction. Precisely a scene of entry to another world:

The scene is about the possibility of creating a space where things have the capacity to transform themselves, to perform in a different way and not in terms of their objective purpose. It all comes down to this: altering space so as to turn it, as opposed to that other space without limits, into a space with limits, with a rule of play, an arbitrariness. (*ROC* p.29)

This is a useful way of conceiving Baudrillard's writing. The limit has no objective rationale other

than the dismantling of the limits of representation. This is not the case with the obscene. Yet given that it is destructive of the real and the imaginary why is this viewed so negatively by Baudrillard? Basically because even though it is ultimately destructive of representation its impetus is still grounded in the logic of representation. As he said earlier concerning the new novel, it is the death of representation, at the limits of representation for the sake of representation. Obscenity rather than being the transgression of reason or morality (which is its old sense) gives too many reasons. It is through seduction that obscenity can be challenged.

What Baudrillard means by 'sex stripped of all seduction' I will return to in a moment. However what is at stake in the *trompe l'oeil* according to Baudrillard is a questioning of the real by its imitation. It is an imitation of effects which attempted to undermine the reality principle as the dominant principle of Renaissance perspectivism. Hence seduction is another process which is engaged in the destruction of the reality principle though not on the basis of the perfection of representational technique. For this reason he regards *trompe l'oeil*, like surrealism, not as an aesthetic style but as a metaphysical question directed at the gaze or eye of representation for it is the latter that simulates reality effects. By a curious reversal the deception

and deviation of seduction returns the objects and processes of production to their originary illusion. According to Baudrillard what *trompe l'oeil* and surrealism reveal is reality as a principle. Furthermore, *trompe l'oeil* provides for Baudrillard a model of the abolition of perspective which is also in fact a model for the fundamental implosive process of his theory as seduction:

While the Renaissance organized all space in accord with a distant vanishing point, perspective in the *trompe l'oeil* is, in a sense, projected forward.. Instead of fleeing before the panoramic sweep of the eye (the privilege of panoptic vision), the objects "fool" the eye ("*trompent l'oeil*") by a sort of internal depth - not by causing one to believe in a world that does not exist, but by undermining the privileged position of the gaze. *The eye, instead of generating a space that spreads out, is but the internal vanishing point for a convergence of objects.*[My emphasis] (*SED* p.63)

The effect of *trompe l'oeil* cannot be measured in terms of the aesthetic pleasure it provides. Its most important effect for Baudrillard is that of the uncanny. It disturbs the reality effects of perspective. One could compare Baudrillard's description of the effects of *trompe l'oeil* with Freud's conception of the uncanny. He cites the tale of the Sandman to support his argument that the experience of the uncanny is not an intellectual experience. In the story it is understood to be the thought of losing one's eyes, which is what is at stake in the absorption of perspective. There is a second comparison to be made in terms of the sense of

architecture that Freud also attributes to the 'remote province' of the uncanny. *Trompe l'oeil* operates as a seductive space because its subtraction of a dimension opens a vacuum into which the signs of the real are absorbed. However, Baudrillard wants to argue that this seduction is not after the event, but is in some way the condition of perspective and the reality principle which it attempts to found. Or, more correctly, is its condition of possibility and impossibility, the 'play of presence and absence'. With respect to architecture, it is space turned inside out:

...the studiolo of the Duke of Urbino and Federigo da Montefeltre in the ducal palace of Urbino and Gubbio: tiny sanctuaries entirely in *trompe l'oeil* at the heart of the immense space of the palace. The latter exemplifies the triumph of an architectural perspective, of a space deployed according to the rules, while the studiolo appears as an inverted microcosm. Cut off from the rest of the structure, without windows, literally without space - *here space is, actualized by simulation.* (SED p.65)

In this secreted space Baudrillard finds an allegory of power and politics. If the palace is the architectural manifestation of power what it conceals is the fact of its own simulation. Politics would be merely an effect of the simulation model of perspective. This is the secret by which power is maintained. The simulated space of the studiolo is a perspectiveless space. This is not to say that the 'interior' space (the secret, the studiolo) determines the political space. It has no relation with the space

of architecture or the political. It is rather that this simulated space is an internal reversal the rules of the political order. Hence if Baudrillard is committed to a form of architecture, it would be that of the baroque and *trompe l'oeil* in general rather than a putative post-modern architecture. It is the artifice of *trompe l'oeil*, the power of the false, that commends it to Baudrillard:

The strategy of seduction is one of deception. It lies in wait for all that tends to confuse itself with reality. And it is potentially a source of fabulous strength. For if production can only produce objects or real signs, and thereby obtain some power, seduction, by producing only illusions, obtains all powers, including the power to return production and reality to their fundamental illusion. (*SED* p.70)

Production is fatally constrained and limited by being a function of the real. For this reason Baudrillard can argue that the seduction of the world through appearances is prior to the production of the world as value, meaningful, real or true. Hence the distinction between the disenchanted simulacrum of pornography and the enchanted one of seduction. Pornography is exemplary of the culture of *monstrosity*, the visible, or more correctly, the obscene. He calls it the 'truer than true'. It is the saturation of a space and the abolition of the dimension of depth:

Many things are obscene because they have too much meaning, because they take up too much space. They thus attain an exorbitant representation of the truth, that is to say, the *apogee of the simulacrum*. (*FS* p.57)

This over-extension of representation inaugurates a self-generating (like the DNA and protozoa) spiralling of effects. The resultant inertia and neutralisation of difference effects an ever increasing hysterical overproduction of reference and the real in order to compensate for this metastatic, cancerous indifference.

What is characteristic of this form of the 'real' is its hypervisibility. This is the transparency of the obscene in which the scene or context of value - the real - has been absorbed and gives way to the more visible than visible. The obscene supersedes the stage or the scene. It is a kind of inverted doubling of the scene whereby the (*mis-en*) scene is emptied of all content. The medium (context as pure index) becomes the message. The scene requires a stage, actors and the minimal distance from itself and the real so that it can represent. The obscene is the dissolution of image, representation, spectacle and the notion of subjectivity underwriting it (underpinned by the space and architecture of interiority and exteriority):

We no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. Obscene is that which eliminates the gaze, the image and every representation. (*EOC* p.22)

There is a doubling in obscenity, the truer than true. But it is not therefore the classical double of an other for an alienated subject.

In the obscene, representation is eliminated by over-representation rather than by its destruction. This is what distinguishes Baudrillard's notion of obscenity from the traditional one in which the obscene was repressed, unrepresented and unrepresentable. It is an exacerbation of representation. For that reason it was still capable of transgression and a certain violence. Baudrillard suggests the following genealogy out of which the current notion of obscenity is produced:

In the beginning was the secret, and this was the rule of the game of appearance. Then there was the repressed, and this was the rule of the game of depth. Finally comes the obscene, and this is the rule of the game of a world without appearance or depth - a transparent universe. White obscenity. (*FS* p.65)

This transparency can be represented by the television screen, a surface without depth, and this is why Baudrillard argues that the television, like the general system, has no imaginary because it harbours neither secrets, scene nor images.

Hardcore pornography is exemplary of this degree zero, the neutralisation of appearances in the name of the real, or more correctly the hyperreal. Sex in pornography is a function of the liberation of productive forces. Seduction on the other hand is a counterpoint to this apparent microscopic materialization of the labour of sex.

For this reason Baudrillard uses the concept of seduction to settle accounts with the disenchanting form of sex elucidated by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the perfect model of interpretation for Baudrillard, as it explicitly renounces the act of seduction. In fact this is obviously more than an after the fact rejection. The entire edifice of psychoanalysis depends on the constituting disavowal of seduction. In this way it is the model of all interpretation which depends on the restriction of the play of appearances.

Psychoanalytic interpretation moves along the familiar axes of latent and manifest meaning by which the errant but revealing symptom may be returned to its true source. The appearance, manifest discourse, only has truth insofar as it can be returned to its origin or cause. Seduction on the other hand is a diversion of truth, in which the sense of the discourse is absorbed in its own signs. Moreover there is no subject of seduction. There is no true subject revealed in seduction. No past history wedded to the revelatory and representational function of language. A seduction is not a moment of recognition of repression, or prohibited desire:

To be seduced is to be turned from one's truth. To seduce is to lead the other from his/her truth. This truth then becomes a secret that escapes him/her.³

Baudrillard, in a manoeuvre similar to the moves made by Derrida in his reading of psychoanalysis in "Speculer sur Freud",⁴ situates the exclusion and denial of seduction as fantasy as the motor of repetition which spectrally guides the entire edifice. But whereas Derrida's reading is directed by, among other things, a desire to show the particular economic network of restrictions and supplements at work in Freud's text, Baudrillard sees the accumulation of meaning in psychoanalysis as the movement of economy itself. Freud's attempt to establish a coherent and objective machinery of interpretation by virtue of an originary denegation returns as a debased form in the theory itself - in transference and counter-transference - and in its institutional internecine challenges and duels.

With respect to psychoanalysis, Baudrillard rightly recognises the temptation of making too easy a division of a theory and its institutional practice born of the same event and mirroring the inside/outside logic of the latent and manifest. Baudrillard cites Lacan's identification of the signifier as seductive force as a limited re-opening of the seductive space, the superficial abyss into which truth is absorbed:

That the most beautiful construction of meaning and interpretation ever erected thus collapses under the weight of its own signs, which were once terms heavy with meaning, but have once again become devices in an unrestrained seduction, terms in an untrammelled exchange that is both complicit

with and empty of meaning (including the cure) - this should exalt and comfort us. It is a sign that the truth at least (that for which imposters reign) will be spared us. (*SED* p.58)

This eruption of the primitive seduction of language is limited in the work of Lacan because it is harnessed to a law and a master who exercises it as a function of that law. Freud's imposture as denial returns as Lacan's imposture in re-opening the space of seduction only to bury it under the weight of the Law. Furthermore it is a restriction of seduction to the parameters of a particular linguistic theory.

Seduction is not a principle of language but a process of circulation without an object. It is a form of circulation moving through and beyond what he calls the static nudity of the truth of signs. It does not stop to accumulate meaning. This circulation opens up the space of the superficial abyss by which the depth of the subject is absorbed in the ritual of seduction:

To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion. It is to be taken in by one's own illusion and move in an enchanted world. (*SED* p.69)

This movement forecloses the logic of production and seduces its accumulative momentum. Seduction absorbs the reality principle - the truth of the sign, its meaning and its referent. With respect to psychoanalysis Baudrillard suggests that the productive impulse appears as the unconscious. In an obscene universe devoid of secrets, psychoanalysis produces the

hidden depths of the unconscious while at the same time furnishing itself the matrix by which to decode and liberate the subject from its repression. It makes it speak its truth. Moreover the unconscious is a psychological trait. Seduction on the other hand is a function of the secret and involves no psychology. It precludes subjectivity. The secret, in a way the unrepresentable, is that which allows the simulated space of seduction to appear, like the missing dimension of the Trompe l'oeil. It is the initiatory element of the play and challenge of seduction:

...Everything that can be revealed lies outside the secret. For the latter is not a hidden signified, nor the key to something, but circulates through and traverses everything that can be said, just as seduction flows beneath the obscenity of speech. It is the opposite of communication yet can be shared. The secret retains its power only at the price of being unspoken...(*SED* p.79)

The implosive effect of seduction is provided by the secret. There are however two forms of secrecy. The obscene secret which is the series of origins and causes attributed to and saturating the event while Baudrillard's conception of the secret is that it is not hidden - and in fact does not exist. So for example the secret of the real, of power, of sex, and most fundamentally, of the subject, is that they do not exist. Another example of this obscenity is the testing of the Mass, made to divulge their secret by polling and surveying despite the fact that they have

no secret. And there is the quintessentially modern form of the obscene secret - the unconscious.

In the game or the challenge the secret establishes a meaningless relation in the form of an initiatory rite. The duel and agonistics of the challenge is not bound by the Law but the rules of the game. Baudrillard's account of seduction is bound up with a response to the Law and the space and time it constitutes. In general, the Law represents for Baudrillard the contract with the real . There is a formal, abstract equality or equivalence before the Law. It produces the space of depth, of inside and outside the law. In particular with respect to the subject, the interiorisation of law and vice versa - the law of interiorisation:

Because the Law - whether that of the signifier, castration, or a social interdiction - claims to be the discursive sign of a legal instance and hidden truth, it results in repression and hidden truth, it results in repression and prohibitions, and thus the division into a manifest and a latent discourse. (*SED* p.132)

Unlike the duel agonistic process of seduction the law is an instance of individuation. One is not only equal under the Law but one is responsible before it. It constitutes the irreversible space of meaning which is not bound by the line of transgression, but traverses it. The Law as universal functions on both sides of the constraints and prohibitions it imposes.

Seduction however abolishes all relations contractual or economic:

....seduction's enchantment puts an end to all libidinal economies, and every sexual or psychological contract, replacing them with a dizzying spiral of responses and counter-responses. It is never an investment but a risk; never a contract but a pact; never individual but duel; never psychological but ritual; never natural but artificial. It is no one's strategy but a destiny. (*SED* pp.82-83)

This passage reveals a series of concerns determining Baudrillard's conceptualization of seduction. Seduction replaces the aura of meaning with the enchantment of illusion and pure appearances unfounded by sense or meaning. Hence the challenge as the undetermined event of seduction. The challenge puts into abeyance all forms of law. It is this which establishes the pact immanent to the game. It provokes a vertiginous escalation of response and counter-response and one might describe it as raising the stakes if it were not the case that stake as investment is excluded from seduction. In that sense it is akin to the bluff. In this way it is a form of circulation that is not tethered by any extraneous principle. It is without relation.

If the subject is constituted in conformity with specific laws of value, natural, commercial or structural it is the duel and the challenge which seduces the space of representation of the subject.

One can see this being played out in his analysis of transgression in the game through the psycho-economy of the cheater. Transgression is only possible under the law. One either observes or doesn't observe a rule. Transgression brings the player back within the ambit of the law for it is the law itself which establishes the line of transgression. And the player is no longer a player as such but a subject, having injected a psychological investment into the winning of the game. The cheater, he argues, becomes autonomous and subjects himself to his own law and moreover he is free. He treats the rules as truths, as ends in themselves, *and no longer has any stake in the game but rather an investment.* In this way value, transformed in and by the game through the challenge of the stake, returns as surplus-value. The stake in gambling is no longer an investment, for money no longer circulates according to an economy of representation. The cheater introduces the time of investment into the time of the game, which has no future.

For Baudrillard, what opposes the Law is not its transgression or its absence, but the Rule. The Rule is in fact a simulation of Law, or its parody. It demands obligation without credibility. No matter how arbitrary the rule is, once one is in the game it must be observed. Baudrillard counterposes the observance of the rule, in the game and the ceremony or ritual, to the constraints of the Law.

Seduction functions according to the rule of a game. It opens the space of a challenge bound by obligation to the rule. The challenge, the game and the duel all require an obligation to the rules. However because the rules are mere conventions they are neither transcendent nor universal. The rule has no exteriority, nor makes no claims outside the immanent functioning of the game. The recurrence of the rule is a revolution (in the sense of cycle) without meaning. Because it is arbitrary it has no reason and it occurs as a cycle rather than as a function of the linear finality of the Law. The obligation to the rule however is different to that implied by the law. One cannot choose not to abide by the rules, one either plays or one doesn't. While the law is universal, linear, transcendent, and irreversible. It confers responsibility, choice, freedom, and equality before the Law. The rule on the other hand is immanent and functions in the finite space of the game.

And contrary to the referential imperatives of the Law, rules contain only conventional, arbitrary signs. Conventional or ritual signs have no autonomous reference or sense and only appear and circulate without sense or foundation in the real. In contrast with the Law ceremonial signs circulate within themselves. This according to Baudrillard provides the pleasure of the game or ritual. Through conformity to

the arbitrary and conventional signs of ceremony we are delivered from the terrorism of meaning imposed by the law:

The Law is part of the world of representation, and is therefore subject to interpretation or decipherment. It involves decrees or statements, and is not indifferent to the subject. It is a text, and falls under the influence of meaning and referentiality. By contrast, the rule has no subject, and the form of its utterance is of little consequence; one does not decipher the rules, nor derive pleasure from their comprehension - only their observance matters, and the resultant giddiness. (*SED* p.132)

Baudrillard contrasts the obedience to the rule in Seduction with that of perversion. Seduction is close to perversion by virtue of the replacement of Law with the rule. The referent of sex is absorbed in perversion not through the transgression of morality but through adherence to an arbitrary Rule. Therefore the seducer and the pervert is not abandoned in sex but in the observance of the senseless signs of the ritual or game. However perversion, unlike seduction, can become a psychological (not pathological) event. This occurs when the rule becomes fetishized, as law, becoming an end in itself. It no longer retains its seductive necessity replacing it with the logic of cause and effect.

The ritual and ceremony constituted as play in seduction are fixed and frozen in perversion. The agonistic, dual relation of seduction becomes a polar relation in perverse seduction. The element of play is

no longer pleasure in itself but made meaningful symptomatic and linear, revalued in the fetish. Baudrillard is therefore suspicious of any philosophy or theoretical enterprise that puts the concept of *play* in general at the service of a theoretical agenda.

For this reason any psychology or strategy prohibits seduction. It introduces a narrative and causality. It has an origin and an end. Seduction is an event without history or future. It is an event of the rule and not of the law. It has no determinations. It is an initiation. For this reason Baudrillard contrasts our second birth in seduction with our first genital, psycho-analytic birth;

What psychoanalysis has not seen is that what happens to us is *without precedent* that inaugurates not a history but a destiny, and which, because it is without precedent, liberates us from this genesis and this history. This event without precedent is seduction; it is also without origin, coming from somewhere else and arriving always unexpectedly - a pure event that erases in one fell swoop all conscious and unconscious determination. (*FS* p.138)

Daedalus awakes from the nightmare of history. This event without precedence, this *pure event*, I would argue also refers to Baudrillard's conception of his own writing and I will address this in my last chapter. One point worth mentioning here is this liberation from history. Seduction is an attempt to save us from the determinations of history, narrative and linear time in

any forms that they appear. It could be said that it delivers us from the necessity of liberation.

With the concept of seduction Baudrillard therefore attempts to exorcise the spirit and irreversibility of history and its projects. After his elaboration of seduction his writing can no longer be said to have any historical purchase. Baudrillard by his own terms will have succeeded in that his writing no longer has the context of history or the real as a validation. If the mass, despite the precision and precautions of his account, could be understood to have some resonance with the historical failure of the political and rational project of the social his elaboration of the pure event of seduction forecloses this interpretation. Criticisms such as those proffered by Kellner that he is not dialectical enough, validate Baudrillard's theoretical manoeuvre.⁵

For Baudrillard seduction is an attempt to save us from the accumulation of memory and the determinations of causality. It is a destiny without a future or a past. With this in mind one can begin to consider Baudrillard's conception of his own theory.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE VANISHING

When you succeed not in destroying something but in obliterating its origins and its end, it disappears (the solution to the problem of the illusionist?). It is not, however, physically dead. It remains resplendent in a sort of state of grace which is that of disappearance. It inaugurates a second, pure and empty form of the event or person, which is the form of fate. (CM pp.91-92)

In his later work it is clear that Baudrillard is not pursuing a commentary or analysis, or engaging in the sociology of distinctions which sometimes frames his early work. He is, as I will show, proposing a different conception of theory linked to what he conceives as the *destiny of the object*. The subject can no longer be reconciled with his own ends, having surpassed them. Baudrillard accounts for this in a series of figures; more body than body (the obese); more social than social (the mass). This traversal of limits is not transgression. It is not the breaking of a law but the deepening of a logic, the movement towards extremes, whereby the essence of things exceed their necessary structural incompleteness. It is an absolute and excessive efficiency. For this reason he can announce the arrival of utopia.

However it is also worth noting a mythic element at work in Baudrillard's writing, specifically in relation to this utopia. It is not simply a fabular discourse opposed to a rational schematization.

Neither is it the citation of mythic or primitive practices which would be the model of a new project. While he often cites mythic practices of ceremony and sacrifice they are ultimately analogies. This is why I would argue that any appeal to symbolic exchange as a principle, or referent, is a moment of theoretical weakness. It is a recourse to a concept outside his own writing.

It is important to recognise the mythologising function that sometimes frame his simulations and fatal strategies for the rationalist and humanist utopias can only ever be understood at the level of myth (the real world become myth). In other respects McLuhan's definition of myth seems acutely pertinent in accounting for the process of simulation. It is almost synonymous with the process that Baudrillard describes and the manner of his description:

myth is the instant vision of a complex process that ordinarily extends over a long period. Myth is contraction or implosion of any process, and the instant speed of electricity confers the mythic dimension on ordinary industrial and social action today.¹

Myth has its own internal necessity and is not constrained by the demands of the true or the real. It absorbs and condenses the time of history and reason into its own framework. Hence it could be argued that when addressing the fatal strategy of the object what is being delivered is a challenge to the real in the

form of a myth. This mythic quality does not mean it is any less effective than critical theory or commentary which assumes a relation to the real. The latter requires distance and the time of reflection and in this way, by its own criteria, does not bear witness to the current dynamic.

Moreover unlike objective analysis, Baudrillard would argue that the theory he elucidates is an event in the world, without presupposing the world. Or put another way it has no relation to the world conceived as true or real. Rather than being a specular reflection of the world it takes the form of a challenge:

At a certain point I felt - if we suppose that the real, and social practices, are indeed there - that I was launched on a trajectory that was increasingly diverging, becoming asymptotic. It would be an error to constantly try to catch hold of that zig-zagging line of reality. The only thing you can do is let it run all the way to the end. At that point they can raise any objection they like about the relation to reality: we are in a totally arbitrary situation, but there is an undeniable internal necessity. From that point on, theory maintains absolutely no relation with anything at all; it becomes an event in and of itself. (FB p.127)

This issue of theory as event is bound up with his conception of seduction as a fatal strategy. In the previous chapter I attempted to outline the spatial features of seduction, of appearances, as *trompe l'oeil*, and as obedience to the empty forms of the Rule and ritual rather than transgression of the line of the

Law. I will address here that feature of seduction which operates on time, the *fatal*.

Baudrillard's concept of the fatal can be understood as the terminus of his ruminations on the object. The object is no longer the other of a subject or the modern object of the commodity. It is no longer useful at any level. In this we can recognise a reflection of the mass. It is the object, not the subject, which seduces. The fatal strategy of the object opens up a pataphysical, manicheistic, irreconcilable universe in which Baudrillard aspires to his own disappearance as theorist and subject. This strange universe is, as I shall show, the substitution of a fatal order for the banal order of the current simulacrum.

Like his work on seduction, Baudrillard is at pains to emphasise the fact that the fatal is a mode of *disappearance* (as opposed to production) of the subject. For this reason he contrasts the banal to the fatal. Though as will become clear the fatal is a particular vision of the banal. The banal strategy is a strategy conceived of and governed by the subject. It is an attempt to master a set of events, to provide them with a narrative, in order to achieve one's goals. The fatal on the other hand is governed by the object. One may recall here the difference between banal or vulgar seduction - which is seduction as a

psychological strategy of the subject - and the seduction of subjectivity. In the seduction of the game or challenge, for example, a condition of seduction is that the seducer is necessarily open to seduction by the object.

There is one other factor involved in the fatal which is fundamental to understanding Baudrillard's work. In the last chapter I attempted to show what was at stake in the distinction between the obscene and seduction. With the concept of the fatal there is a clear commitment to a form of *pessimism*.² This is to say that all is happening for the best in the best of all possible worlds. We are no longer in the time of crisis. We are no longer in a critical logic. We have passed the point in which the time existed for a narrative of failure, where the cause of crisis could be re-traced in time:

We are living in a brilliant epoch; no one knows what might happen. That is our chance, which at the same time is our chance to pick up on radical pessimism again, the basis of which is the fact that everything is continually improving, and on the hidden charm of provocative analysis. In dealing with the epidemic of visibility menacing our entire culture today, we must, as Nietzsche quite correctly said, cultivate mendacious and deceptive clear-sightedness. (AR p.45)

For this reason seduction is not opposed to the paradoxical movement towards extremes (of forms), and polar inertia, in the hyperreal. Seduction, as I will

show, is the cultivation of extremes, of irreconcilability, in the fatal strategy.

In this way the concept of the fatal can be considered an embracing of the dystopic world of simulation. Though this of course is not quite correct as Baudrillard understands the hyperreal to be the arrival of utopia. Every truth and essence achieves its absolute, abstract and empty universality. This situation marks the end of the political and the beginning of the *transpolitical*. The political would be a function of the linear time of history. Politics has a stake in the future. The *transpolitical* is a parody of politics at the end of time. The *transpolitical* is the generation of politics from models, and is a politics without consequences or finality. Though it does not have political effects, because it is without consequences it has *ecstatic* effects. Ecstasy is the sublime pleasure of an undirected escalation of forms. It is the experience of the supercession of limits to which I previously referred. I will return to the *ecstatic* later on. For the moment it is enough to note that the figures of the *transpolitical* are auto-parodic expressions. Baudrillard would hold that they are not his own theoretical products. Rather they appear as a result of the supercession of critical concepts of the political. However parody might not be quite the correct trope. Parody is still too instrumental. The

transpolitical is instead conceived as the *ironic* produce of the system:

The transpolitical is...the malicious curvature that puts an end to the horizon of meaning...the passage from growth to hypertely, from organic equilibrium to cancerous metastases. This is the site of a catastrophe and no longer of a crisis. (FS p.25)

A crisis can be understood as the failure to achieve certain goals. It is a matter of causality. By changing the arrangement of causes the desired ends may be achieved. However according to Baudrillard we are in a situation of *hypertely* - an excess of ends without the means to service them. The digital simulacrum of polar generation from the same model gravitates around its own inertia. Hence the metastatic redundancy of these ends. When everything has been achieved what is there to do? Or as Baudrillard puts it, *What are you doing after the orgy?* Baudrillard's response is a deepening of this process through seduction as a fatal strategy.

At the level of process, a good example of this is the current cinematic process. Commonly understood, cinematic and media images are measured and judged according to their fidelity to a real and a resemblance to the world. In a logic we can recognise in his analysis of the mass he argues that if there is a conformity to the world, it is a diabolic conformity. This is the conformity of absorption but also

seduction, which deviates and misdirects the illusory reference of that towards which the image conforms. He cites the central character in the Woody Allen film *Zelig*. The character renounces the banal subjective imperatives of difference and originality. *Zelig* pursues the fatal strategy of seduction, taking on the resemblance of those surrounding him. This conformity is not the conformity of a subject to his/her individuality nor the conformity to context. Hence it is not a question of the functional adaptation to the context. It is the seduction of 'the play of resemblances'. He suggests that the film itself seduces interpretations by its montage of various commentators and analysts which ironically conforms to the criteria and values of criticism and analysis:

More generally, the image is interesting not only in its role as reflection, mirror, representation of, or counterpart to, the real, but also when it begins to contaminate reality and to model it, when it only conforms to reality the better to distort it, or better still: when it appropriates reality for its own ends, when it anticipates it to the point that the real no longer has time to be produced as such. (*EDI* p.16)

His analysis begins here by depending on almost conventional accounts of the simulacrum as an image. It is semi-ideological. The image distorts a pre-existing reality. There is a gap in time between the real and the distorted image which represents it. The real is prior to the image. However this logic is superseded by the removal of this temporal difference. There is no longer competing claims between a real and

its image. In fact it can no longer be properly called an image, as it is not an image of anything. It is its own simulacrum.³

Baudrillard's analysis of time in the anticipation of the real by the model introduces the dynamic of speed and inertia. Speed, the distance travelled over time becomes a dominant characteristic of the hyperreal as the difference and distance between the model and the real collapses. The possible space and time of representation thus disappears.

How has this happened? He cites Canetti's observation that systems and history have surpassed a point beyond which events occur which are no longer real. Canetti argues that until we return to and recover this point we are engaged in a process of destruction. There is a sense of loss in Canetti's account and this marks the point of departure for Baudrillard from Canetti.

This point, to use an economic metaphor, of diminishing return may be called the *Vanishing Point*. It is the place of the disappearance of value. The idea of the vanishing point has in this instance some historical or temporal resonance. It is also the geographical figure of the *desert* form. It is the curvature on the horizon of meaning beyond which there

is no future and no return. It is, above all, the void into which all things are absorbed.

While agreeing with Canetti's diagnosis of the event Baudrillard does not share its nostalgic sensibility and sense of loss. Canetti's analysis is melancholic and sentimental. In this way he is curiously post-modern. He maintains linear time as the basis for this turning back. It is precisely because of the dispersal (into simulations) and therefore disappearance of time and history that Canetti's would-be project makes no sense:

History can no longer surpass itself, it can no longer envisage its own finality, dream its own end: it wraps itself in its own immediate effect, it exhausts itself in its own special effects, it falls back on itself, it implodes in actuality. Finally we cannot even speak of the end of history, for it will not have time to rejoin its own end. Its effects accelerate, but its sense slackens ineluctably. It will end by stopping and by extinguishing itself, like light and time at the outskirts of a mass infinitely dense. (Year 2000 p.38)

For this reason Baudrillard cannot even propose an end of history thesis. Besides being too sentimental it does not follow logically. We can never understand what history was before this vanishing point.

Canetti's analysis is still organised by a causal analysis. He wants to retrace the sequence back to its origin. For Baudrillard history can no longer be considered as anything other than an empty referent.

For this reason rather than being a narrative of progress and liberation it too is liberated from meaning. Each event in history is now a pure event. It becomes a satellite with its own trajectory. In this way the vanishing of history is also a pure event. There is no longer a causal logic or a narrative which holds sway over things or provides a linkage between events. The crucial point of such an event is that it marks the disappearance of causality (its dispersal into the appearance of the event):

When time is captured and swallowed by its own source, there is thus a brutal involution of time into the event itself. Catastrophe in the literal sense: the inflection or curve that has its origin and end coincide in one, that makes the end return to the origin and annul it yielding to an event without precedent and without consequences - pure event. (*FS* p.17)

History, for example, is still preserved, but cryogenized, as simulation. Nevertheless it still functions but no longer under its own motor and no longer as a hot medium, as context which provides meaning. Instead history is the soft seduction of an ambience. It takes the form of retro-effect. In this way it is like all concepts borrowed from the second order of simulation - representation - lacking any functionality and empty of meaning but artificially kept alive. This inertia is an effect of the general acceleration, and disappearance, of things through their diffusion and circulation in media networks.

The gravity of the real and the referent has been overtaken by the speed of their appearance. Baudrillard uses the image of bodies, detached from the real, no longer held in an orbit of circulation, propelled into *hyperspace*, never to return to the ground of meaning:

It is thus not necessary to write science-fiction; we have as now, here and now, in our societies, with the media, the computers, the circuits the networks, the acceleration of particles which has definitively broken the referential orbit of things. (Year 2000 p.36)

With the demise of this referential gravity we can begin to consider what is at stake in the *appearance* and *disappearance* of things. This process comes down to the removal of things from the order of time. Using Walter Benjamin's description of the aura it is a removal from objects of their historical testament and duration. Hence the process of appearance and disappearance can only occur as a *pure event*, without memory or future hope. This is in effect the loss of the work of the negative as the provider of sense, continuity and meaning which heralds the time of catastrophe.

The notion of catastrophe is a function of the process of reversibility. Reversibility is that aspect of seduction which sets in motion the implosion of the linear, accumulative logic of production and meaning. Reversibility is the operation of an object rather than

the subject. Furthermore it is internal to every irreversible process, it occurs at their limit, and is what constitutes their fascination. In metaphysical terms it is as if the realisation of the idea or essence of things is their point of reversal and collapse. This is, in effect, a deconstructive event without the schematization of logocentrism that Derrida provides.

Reversibility at its primary level reverses the relation of cause and effect. It inaugurates the precession of the effect or model. It is an instance of the always already but without the determination of the Law. It is the very definition of destiny. The temporal manifestation of reversibility is catastrophe through which there is an implosion of the real. Baudrillard defines the real as the coincidence in time of an event and its causes. The speed of catastrophe produces a delay of meaning, unlike reason and its product of meaning which produces a delay of things:

It is the eternal delay to which things are condemned by meaning: always invent causes so as to exorcise the illusion of their appearance, always invent meaning to exorcise appearances to delay their too rapid concatenation. (RI p.291)

This is also in effect an account of the precession of the model as simulacrum. The simulacrum in a reversal of causality is thought of as *anterior finality*.

When this occurs there is what Baudrillard calls the pure event. The pure event is one without beginning or end and has no meaning or causality. It is excessive of the latter order and is free of particular determinations and interconnections. It has no history and no future. This is also the definition of the fatal which is hopeless and therefore beyond crisis. Because it is predestined it has no future:

It is so much more fun to see our universe destined to fatality, which is not transcendent but immanent in our very processes, in their superfusion, in their overdrive, in their supermultiplication, immanent in our banality, which is also the indifference of things towards their own meaning, the indifference of effects towards their own causes. (EOC p.83)

As we have seen in the analysis of simulation, events without consequence, without a history and therefore a meaningful direction, lend themselves to a vertigo of causalities without the ground or criterion of real or true for choosing between them. Read through the perspective of the real, such events inaugurate a process of absorption of causality and meaning, producing the metastasis of equiprobability. Alternately, understood from the manichean perspective it is no longer a question of the cool statistic of equiprobability but a possibility for the acceleration and precipitation of a catastrophic logic of simulation. This precipitation is *objective irony*. It is the object's indifference to the meaningful world of the subject. Such events are inaugural in that they

have no cause or origin and no direction or end. For this reason they do not communicate anything and it is also why they are seductive. The object and the pure event are synonymous for Baudrillard. The appearance and disappearance of the object is the pure event:

Things make events all by themselves, without any mediation, by a sort of instant commutation. There is no longer any metaphor, rather metamorphosis. Metamorphosis abolishes metaphor, which is the mode of language, the possibility of communicating meaning. Metamorphosis is at the radical point of the system, the point where there is no longer any law or symbolic order. It is a process without any subject, without death, beyond any desire, in which only the rules of the game of forms are involved. (FB p.74)

There is no transport of meaning in metamorphosis. It is not a function of communication. Again it is clear that despite Baudrillard's reputation as a theorist of media and modern communications, he is describing a process whereby communication is rendered impossible. Furthermore Baudrillard again valorises a concept on the basis of its lack of any relation to a subject. In fact metamorphosis is only possible - like the difference between vulgar seduction and seduction - on its seduction and dissolution of subjectivity. In this way the space of this metamorphosis is a seductive implosive space (as opposed to the explosive space of production).

Baudrillard counterposes the escalation of obscene forms with that of metamorphosis. The metamorphosis of forms occur separately from the system of meaning

implied in the obscene secrecy of the hypervisible and hyper-representation. Metamorphosis of forms in seduction marks the passage of the subject world and all its metaphysical baggage, such as truth and reality, into the world of objects. This takes place in seduction through the escalation of stakes and the non-dialectical transformation or metamorphosis of the subject. There is no logic or narrative whereby the subject metamorphosises into object or seducer into seduced.

This metamorphosis is not a critical event. It does not displace the grounds of subjectivity. Returning to the inconsequential event we may recall the notion of reversible imminence which introduces into the system, the time of catastrophe. The contraction of causality and origin does not leave time for the longevity and meditation of crisis:

Interstitial collapse - that is the seismic effect (mental too) that waits in ambush for us. The dehiscence of the things most firmly attached, the trembling of things tightening and contracting over their emptiness. For at bottom (!) the ground never existed. (*FS* p.21)

It is catastrophe rather than crisis which is endemic to the third order of simulation and the model of this shifting ground, is the generalized fault-line of the earthquake. The earthquake itself becomes a pre-programmed event in the scenario Baudrillard cites, in which experts predicted that the evacuation

precipitated by an earthquake would cause more damage in the ensuing panic than the earthquake itself! This earthquake effect can be understood as panic. Panic is:

...the other form of the ecstatic, its catastrophic form, in the almost neutral sense of the term, in its mathematical extension. It is a completely alien response of the object world to the subject world, of a completely external destiny which occurs with an absolute surprise and whose symbolic wave strikes the human world. (FB p.99)

Therefore all the ecstatic figures that Baudrillard uses must be seen as panic concepts. We see in the figure of the earthquake that catastrophe is not an aberration of causality like chance or accident. It is the pre-programming in nuclear strategy which organises the system of deterrence and the politics of blackmail in what he terms the horizontal era of events that have no consequence. What replaces the consequence is the inflation and saturation of truth.

There is only the disenchanted modulation of the series as cool statistical morphologies. At the same time Baudrillard is not bemoaning the quantification of existence from any tragic perspective. In fact for Baudrillard this statistical disenchanted simulation is superior to the second order, because it empties the second order's simulations such as meaning of all their conceptual value, reducing things to quantifiable

phenomena. There is no alienation here. Alienation on his terms is ultimately a concept of history.

For this reason the figures of the transpolitical are effects of a system of anomaly. They have no historical or political context. They are statistical effects. Anomaly is an excess of finality. It is therefore the indifference of things to their causes. This is a consequence of their generation as model. Baudrillard's project of the fatal strategy is not to leave these models to their statistical indifference but bring them to extremes - from metastasis to metamorphosis. The figures of the transpolitical are a function of a *manicheistic* perspective. This is the complete irreconcilability of subject and object. The figures of the transpolitical designate the revenge of the object (or what he calls the crystal revenge). This is the complete indifference of the object to the subject and to value in general. Its features are displayed in the absolute object of the commodity of modernity as described by Baudelaire:

...here's the whole strategy of modernity, which constitutes for Baudelaire the entire perverse and adventurous seduction of the modern world - push to the absolute its division of value. No dialectic between the two; synthesis is a soft solution, dialectics a nostalgic. The only radical and modern answer: potentiate what is new, original, unexpected in the commodity - for example, its formal indifference to utility and value, the pre-eminence given to circulation. (FS p.117)

This is the object not as static value but as a principle of circulation. In this way Baudrillard poses the irreconcilability of the pure object to the logics which attempt to provide it with a relation or value. One way of understanding this irreconcilability is to refer back to his analysis of simulation and the strategy of the masses. Baudrillard's fatal strategy is to simulate the givens of the system, draw them out, exacerbate them:

The world is not dialectical - it is sworn to extremes, not to equilibrium, sworn to radical antagonism, not to reconciliation or synthesis. This is also the principle of Evil, as expressed in the "evil genie" of the object, in the ecstatic form of the pure object and in its strategy, victorious over that of the subject. (FS p.7)

The evil demon of the object is its silent, abject and meaningless compliance with the demands of the subject, like the mass and its response to pollsters. It is the object which seduces. In this way the mass for example becomes a pure object, which through its hyperconformity disappears from the horizon of meaning and utility of the subject. This silence constitutes a challenge to all the mechanisms of subjectivity and value like law, alienation etc. The pure object is essentially useless and indifferent to the world of the subject. For this reason its hyperconformity is *ironic*.

The evil demon that Baudrillard invokes is that of Manicheism. Manicheism sees God as the necessary

corrective to the evil demon who had created the world and reality. The world of Manicheism is a world of signs and illusion and the world as reality was understood to be heresy. Their guiding principle is therefore the unreality and irrationality of the world. The world is fundamentally an illusion and their theology operates as the negation of the real. This differs from the negation of the real common to philosophy in the belief that the world as solely made of signs:

This idea of the world as being constituted only by signs is, if you like, some sort of magic thinking - and indeed it was condemned as such. For it does entail that the 'real' and any sort of 'reality' - that one sees in the world is quite simply a absolute utopia. The rationality that one has to invoke in order to make the world 'real' is really just a product of the power of thought itself, which is itself totally anti-rational and anti-materialist (*EDI* p.44).

What is at stake for Baudrillard is the fundamental irreconcilability and antagonism between the 'illusion' and 'reality' of the world. He cites Freud's analysis of the principles of Thanatos and Eros as a model of this irreconcilability, for Freud's failure to integrate the two principles and the realisation of their irreconcilability clearly demonstrates the principle of Thanatos itself.

What has happened according to Baudrillard is that negation is no longer a function of the philosopher - subject or of critical thought, but of the things

themselves. It is not a moment in any dialectic. Now the object negates the reality principle refusing the demands and laws of the subject and its fellow traveller, meaning. This announces the end of philosophy, certainly as a privileged moment of negation and inaugurates the principle of hyperreality. This negation on the part of objects is described by Baudrillard as 'objective irony' (as opposed to commonly understood subjective irony).

Because the evil genie of the object is a function of a manicheistic principle it will only be conjured up through acceding to the antagonistic forces at work:

We will be looking for something faster than communication: challenge, the duel. Communication is too slow; it is an effect of slowness, working through contact and speech. Looking is much faster; it is the medium of the media, the most rapid one. Everything must come into play instantaneously. We never communicate. In the to-and-fro of communication, the instantaneity of looking, light and seduction is already lost. (FS p.8)

By the same token the inertia, indifference and auto-absorption of the system warrants a certain immobility and silence in the refusal of a dialogue, like the strategy of the Mass. This operation has as its dynamic the redoubling of a form. The accelerating hyperteleological finality absorbs its own limit in the inertia of its own emptying out. To return to the example of the mass, it is the point in which the banal

obedience of the Mass (as object) to the demands of the system becomes fatal to the system.

Baudrillard's commitment to seduction, to invite the spiralling of charmed sequences of events is a response to the inertia and indifferent simulacrum of the current order. As I have shown, the modulation and mutation of DNA provides the matrix for all series. It produces neutral signs. It is the simple repetition of pre-programmed combinations. He calls this the cold seduction of digitality. Cold seduction, following McLuhan's definition of cold media, is a low intensity medium. The Ludic play of digital models replaces the hot passionate play of aesthetic seduction. However cold seduction also absorbs the polarities of law, transgression and representation. As I recounted in a previous chapter the current simulacrum neutralises all difference and opposition through the genetic generation of models. All distance and difference is reduced to the terminals of a network. The world of the disenchanted simulacrum is characterised by dissuasion and deterrence of opposition:

the 0/1 of binary or digital systems is no longer a distinctive opposition or established difference. It is a "bit", the smallest unit of electronic impulse - *no longer a unit of meaning*, but an identificatory pulse. It is no longer language but its radical dissuasion. (*SED* p.165)

Metaphor is replaced at this degree zero of language and meaning by metastasis. No longer

generation by reproduction but through the simple repetition of the genetic matrix. DNA is a modern prosthesis in that it allows the body to reproduce itself indefinitely. The clone replaces the double, the other, the imago or the reflection in the *autotelic* code. It is the absolute realization of the imaginary double. There is no longer the psychological or historical scene by which the subject can be reflected and alienated, and therefore justified. The body is absorbed by its own prosthesis rather than being seduced by its appearance. Baudrillard calls it a digital Narcissus. He remarks that the Biblical imperative "Love thy neighbour as yourself" is no longer a problem as your neighbour is yourself. Self seduction as auto-tele.

If there is a body for the clone it is that of the obese. It is the transpolitical figure of the saturation of systems and information overload. The obese is the exacerbation of the body. It is a register of the body's superfluousness and redundancy. The latter awaits all productive systems. The obese also denotes the contraction of space by the obscenity of the hypervisible, the adding of an extra dimension. The body disappears through conformity to the empty space of the obscene. It abolishes all limits and the transcendence of all that the model of the body has latterly come to signify such as the point of refraction of the mirror for a subject or as a grid for

various psycho-political forces. Recalling Baudrillard's analysis of information *In the Shadow of Silent Majorities* the body's disappearance as the site and metaphor for subjectivity inaugurates its metastatic re-appearance as the bloated redundancy of information overload. This overload is another example of the overpotentiality of forms and systems for which no-representation is possible. According to Baudrillard it evokes the distended stomach of Pere Ubu without any of cruel irony or acidity unattainable in a cool universe of over-managed and over-invested systems given over to the smooth operationality and incessant reformulation of its own process:

Pataphysics or metaphysics, this pregnancy hysteria is one of the strangest signs of American culture, of this spectral environment where each cell (each function, each structure), is left with the possibility, as in cancer, of ramifying, of multiplying indefinitely, of occupying virtually all the space by itself, of occupying all the information unto itself (feedback is already an obese structure, the matrix of all structural obesities), of settling down into a contented genetic redundancy. Each molecule happy in the paradise of its own formula. (FS p.28)

The obese, as a function of a digital universe is a statistical anomaly rather than an anomic infraction of the law. Baudrillard perceives this anomie as an excess of finality. It is metastatic in its cell-like cancerous proliferation. It is due to the absence of a rule (as in ceremony) or scene (as in psychoanalysis for example) the body deregulates and neutralises the internal difference of its antibodies. The obscene is

an exteriorisation of this mono-cellular repetition which is the perfection and (hyper) realisation of the truth of all things. The obese is the body of the obscene - 'the fatter than fat'. It is an overpotentialisation and redundancy, and excrescence of things. It designates the essential waste and uselessness of things. No more dialectic of oppositions but the senseless wandering of pure forms, absolved of all negativity:

A form shoots off in a kind of relentless logic uncalculated, without any history, without any memory, the way cancer cells go off in an organic direction. (FB p.101)

Nevertheless there is an internal necessity to the meaningless concatenation of forms. Forms appear and disappear without traversing the system of meaning. The forms surpass their own causes absorbing their own origin. This rigorous movement to extremes is what commends it to Baudrillard.

The escalation of forms he describes as ecstasy. The ecstatic is the pure and empty form of objects and processes:

...ecstasy is the quality proper to any body that spins until all sense is lost, and then shines forth in its pure and empty form. Fashion is the ecstasy of the beautiful; pure and empty form of an aesthetic spinning about itself. Simulation is the ecstasy of the real. (FS p.9)

It is the perfection of systems to the extent in which they fold over, redoubling themselves in a

process whereby they are emptied of their content, like the media or information. This state of affairs therefore is not a dystopia but the realization of utopia. Everything has realized its own truth its own perfect form. No more negativity, no more difference or otherness in a universe without interiority. In a culture of monstrosity everything is extraverted and exteriorised into pure forms without negativity:

Something escapes us; we escape ourselves in a process of no return, we have missed a certain point for turning back, a certain point of the contradiction in things, and have entered a universe of non-contradiction alive, of blind rapture, of ecstasy, of amazement about the irreversible processes that nevertheless have no direction at all. (AR p.32)

This is not to be deplored. The time of contradiction and alienation for the subject has passed. I will presently show how this state of affairs can be understood as the fatal, ironic, strategy of the object but there is one more transpolitical figure of that marks the passage from the world of the subject to that of the object. The hostage.

The hostage is the subject held prisoner by the terrorism of having to have an identity, or personality or desire and having to realize the self or actualise desire. It is also the terror of being held responsible. At another level populations are held hostage by the strategy of nuclear deterrence and

dissuasion. The balance of terror is based on the indifference of equivalent values. It is a form of soft extermination. It is the result of the parcelling out of a certain moral responsibility producing the subject as final underwriter, taking out cover for risks, catastrophes and "acts of God" and for his/her own anomalous acts. This generalized responsibility is in fact the logic of terrorism which doesn't stand over and against the state and threatening it but is the very limit of its own logic. At any moment, despite our anonymity we may be held responsible for anything whatsoever:

It only carries to its extreme consequences the essential proposition of liberal and Christian humanism: all men are in solidarity; you, here are in solidarity with and responsible for the wretched poverty of the pariah of Calcutta. While asking ourselves about the monstrosity of terrorism, we should perhaps ask ourselves if it does not derive from a proposition of universal responsibility itself monstrous and terrorist in its essence. (FS p.36)

There is a terrorism of responsibility and the truth. Responsibility can only be imputed on the basis of establishing causality. The disappearance of causality only compels and heightens the need for attribution. The terrorist demands the revelation of the truth of the system while generating a network of responsibility. Previously, with regard to the events at Stammheim,⁴ Baudrillard had suggested that the lack of a meaningful logic insofar as any ideological content is concerned, is swept away by the brutal

spectacle of violence terrorism provides. As an event it contains no political message. This is the ambivalence of it as simulation. It has a certain charm in its ritual challenge: the taking of the plane with the hostages, the release of certain hostages; the negotiations; the storming of the plane.

In *Fatal Strategies* Baudrillard understands the terrorist act not as a spectacular challenge but as the medium of circulation of responsibility. Terrorism no longer as a scene of violence but a global space of the circulation of control. Dissuasion and deterrence rather than conflict. The hostage is less a ceremonial undertaking than the paradoxical model of the impossible exchange. The terrorist wishes to make of the hostage a commodity of inestimable value through the withdrawal of the subject from circulation - thereby producing a 'scarcity'. However the paradoxical condition of the hostage is that it is this withdrawal which also makes the hostage worthless. This is because of the annulment of the subject through becoming a hostage:

The hostage is himself obscene. He is obscene because he no longer represents anything (this is the very definition of obscenity). He is in a state of pure and simple exhibition. A pure object, without an image, deceased before being dead. Frozen in a state of decease. Cryogenized in his own way. (FS p.43)

Taken out of the reality an circuit of exchange value and raised to the stakes of the priceless, the

hostage is a non-convertible currency - non-negotiable. However, Baudrillard argues that if there is any efficacy to hostage taking it is the realization of non-negotiability. At bottom it still harbours the dream of use-value and therefore its necessary failure marks the illusion of this now 'impossible exchange'. It is now not just a question of the absence of use-value at the core of production but also the lack of a stage, or scene, whereby this impossible act might take place. The inexchangeability of the hostage marks the disappearance of rules of exchange, of an economic scene by which a rational exchange takes place. The situation is analogous to the orbital circulation of capital which bears no relation to a 'real' economy. In a system given over to generalized exchange the hostage is a model of the object not reducible to the process of exchange:

It all yields to a state of exception, a mad speculation which is more like a duel or a provocation. Hostage taking is a speculation of this order - ephemeral, senseless, instantaneous. It is not essentially political, but insists on identifying itself from the very first as the dream of a fantastic deal, the dream of an impossible exchange, and also as a denunciation of the impossibility of this exchange. (*FS* p.50)

For these reasons, and in spite of the interests of all concerned, the hostage comes to designate the pure object - beyond representation and therefore beyond equivalence and exchange.

The consequence of this ecstasy of the real is not the wholesale abandonment of all its traditional categories and values of determination (and indetermination), reference and causality. There is instead an escalation, a hysteria of causality and finality - a kind of generalised footnoting - with too many ends and not enough means, or in fact any means. The simple definition of ecstasy is that which proceeds (or appears) from a form or model and orbits around this model without being tied to its existence as a real or existing referent and therefore it moves towards complete de-referentialization. Hence there occurs an overpotentiality, one example of which would be nuclear weapons in their essentially excessive dissuasive redundancy.

The fascination that ecstasy exerts is a cool seduction. It offers the pleasure of the aleatory and the neutral. For this reason Baudrillard opposes the ecstatic to the aesthetic. The aesthetic requires a scene. The aesthetic pertains to appearance, the image and imagination. Furthermore the aesthetic contains a moral distinction between the beautiful and the ugly (and a reality principle in the difference between the true and the fake) whereas the ecstatic contains no value judgements and operates at the level of fascination and pure transparency. The ecstatic is an *immoral* form. It is the space of indifference. It absorbs judgement and distinction. Nevertheless the

transparency due to lack of depth or meaning is not a mere absence. When the feature is magnified it has an implosive force absorbing all meaning and reference:

Every trait thus raised to the superlative power, caught up in a spiral of redoubling - the truer than true, the more beautiful than beautiful, the realer than real - is assured of having an effect of vertigo independent of any context or quality of its own...Ecstasy is the quality proper to any body that spins until all sense is lost, and then shines forth in its pure and empty form. (FS p.9)

Nevertheless though the ecstatic is not related to the aesthetic it is a sublime experience. It is an indifferent sublime. Baudrillard gives the example of the definition of fashion - beauty that has absorbed all the energy of the ugly. Baudrillard understands this sublime to be any effect that appears without cause or origin. Another way of describing this is as special effects. One can regard all the retro-forms resurrected by the system such as reality, the social, history or the political as the appearance and disappearance into the special effect. This is the fatal. It is the undetermined but not accidental concatenation and metamorphosis of effects.

A useful model for understanding Baudrillard's conception of the fatal is through his analysis of the game. The player involved in the game is engaged in a seduction of chance. This does not involve covering all possibilities through the placement of bets. This would be a stake against chance and the attempted

restoration of equivalent values, of money and statistics. The player as seducer challenges fate, provokes chance in the game. Chance as neutral probability or statistic disappears in the game. Baudrillard argues that in this way chance becomes another player in the agonistics of the game:

Games of chance deny that the world is arranged contingently; on the contrary they seek to override any such neutral order and create a ritual order of obligations...They question the reality of chance as an objective law and replace it with an inter-connected, propitious, duel, agonistic and non-contingent universe - a charmed universe (charmed, in the strong sense of the term), a universe of seduction. (*SED* pp.143-144)

For this reason the arbitrariness of the rule and chance in the game are not objective determinants of seduction. The player seeks to seduce chance. Baudrillard sees it in terms of a challenge to the gods (of chance) to respond. In this way a sequence of numbers can be read as charmed signs or elective signs. This charmed sequence therefore is not a function of a rational sequence or equiprobabilities. Chance as necessary contingency or probability are abolished in the cycle of the game. In this way it affords the pleasure in the giddiness of vertiginous connections.

Chance and necessity occur in the game according to the cycle of the eternal return. This cycle of chance and necessity is not naturalistic in the game but fatal. This cyclical operation banishes causality and establishes reversibility as its rule. The

intensity of the game is not due to the statistical operation of chance. Chance as objective statistic or as law of change becomes destiny or fate in the game through the challenge. The eternal return is the rule of the game and it is that which excludes the line of causality and Law. It is a:

willed recurrence, as in games, of an arbitrary and non-causal configuration of signs, where each sign seeks out the next relentlessly, as in the course of a ceremonial. It is the eternal return demanded by rules - as in a mandatory succession of throws and wagers. (*Sed* p.147)

It is in this analysis that Baudrillard distances himself from Deleuze's formulations of chance and desire. For Deleuze the simulacrum produces a divergent and heterogeneous series in simultaneous play driven by pure chance. Baudrillard argues that in the duel of the game chance does not exist as a neutral factor. Baudrillard opposes the dynamics of change with the notions of fatality and destiny. It is fatality which provides interconnections not the causality of reason or the random indeterminacy of a chance sequence. He considers two hypotheses concerning chance. There is a natural order where everything is connected and has a cause but chance disrupts this order. Or secondly that everything is indifferent to everything else but chance produces connections and sequences from time to time. Baudrillard suggests that as chance has replaced determinism in the twentieth century as the

conventional or received wisdom concerning the underlying principle of things. On this reading desire is the law at the level of the molecular. In this way the worlds of chaos and reason describe a disenchanted universe.

Yet the conception of chance has also opened up a world (as in dreams for example) of non-causal sequences. For this reason we should not look to chance to provide us with the neutral world of determinism. Rather than understanding chance as aleatory with everything wandering aimlessly isolated from everything else, chance should be understood in terms of fatal sequences. Everything is in fact interconnected but not on the basis of a sequential, linear, rational causality:

Everything, on the contrary, is fatally, admirably connected - not at all according to rational relations (which are neither fatal nor admirable), but according to an incessant cycle of metamorphoses, according to the seductive rapports of form and appearance. Seen as substance in need of energy, the world lives in the inert terror of the random, it is shattered by chance. Seen as the order of appearances and their senseless unravelling, seen as pure event, the world is on the contrary, ruled by absolute necessity. From this angle, everything bursts with connection, seduction; nothing is isolated, nothing happens by chance - there is total correlation. (*FS* p.150)

The problem here is to put a break on the vertiginous interconnections of seduction. This, he says, is the world of magic and poetry. It is the work of reason to check this vertigo and supply the play of

signifiers with signifieds and reference. Reason therefore is not put to work in establishing interconnections and meaning but to check the cycle of seduction. The purpose of reason is:

...to manufacture the neutered, to create the indifferent, to demagnetize inseparable constellations and configurations, to make them erratic elements sworn finally to finding their cause or to wandering at random. (FS p.152)

He asserts that fatality and destiny disappeared in the 17th century at the very moment that Pascal and Torricelli produced the notions of chance and vacuum. In this way modernity announces itself as the world. The world understood as the universe of indifference and neutrality. It may appear odd that Baudrillard would want to provide a historical time-frame for fatality, for it is the latter which renders inoperative the time of history. However he understands modernity as less of an historical event and as more of a logic:

Modernity is neither a sociological concept, nor a political concept, nor exactly a historical concept...modernity is not an analytic concept, there can be no laws of modernity: there are only traits of modernity. (M p.57)

Nevertheless, to return to the paradigm of the game it is here through the play of chance in the game that it is no longer statistical probability. The gambler is not interested in calculated, contingent chance but in chance as luck to be cultivated. The activity of the player consists in de-escalating

rational interconnections and seducing the destiny of the game.

It is these fatal interconnections that Baudrillard invokes as his model for writing - how to seduce what may be unexpected but, nevertheless, necessary. Seduction, as I have shown is not just a matter of seducing the fatal. It is a destiny in the sense that it is not grounded on a rational sequences of causes. To seduce is to be seduced, to be led astray and diverted from one's strategy and illusory presence as subject. It is a pure event without (memory) traces of a past and without hope in a future. Hence when Baudrillard aspires to his disappearance as theorist and commends us to 'forget Baudrillard'⁵, he wants his writing to stand as a pure event or sign, to have effects but without consequences:

...what are the writings of Barthes, Lacan, Foucault (and even Althusser) but a philosophy of disappearance? the obliteration of the human, of ideology. The absent structure, the death of the subject, lack, aphanisis. They have died of these things and their deaths bear the characteristics of this inhuman configuration...A whole generation...will have disappeared in a manner wholly coherent with what it described, and what it sensed of the inhuman. (CM p.161)

For Baudrillard it is the work of 'disciples' to provide for these figures a memorial, a static project with a future. Yet what is admirable about these writers is the power they achieve through their disappearance, through their refusal of legacy. They

seduce others into occupying the space of truth of their writing. The art of disappearance that Baudrillard invokes is not simply the extermination of the subject that occurs in the hyperreal of modernity, in the clone for example. Though Baudrillard as I have shown appreciates this death it is either merely a mechanical effect or the 'body's abject disappearance into carnal non-existence.' The latter is still a question of the linear time and mortality of the subject. Disappearance is, as I have attempted to show, a strategy of the object and is completely inhuman. Disappearance is the abolition of origin and end.

In my introduction I referred to Paul Virilio's account of disappearance as that which ultimately lead to the unleashing of unforeseen forces. In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* he describes the two senses of desert in the Hebraic tradition. The *Shemama* is the tragic city-desert of laws, order and ideology. The *Midbar* is the desert of wandering and uncertainty. It is ultimately destroyed by the former. He cites the wanderings of *Simeon of Emesis*, a figure whom I think characterises in a certain way Baudrillard's modality of disappearance:

According to the chronicle, the desert had so tired him that he had attained *apatheia*, which may be translated as impassibility, and which will allow him to make a mockery of the city and its laws, by acting in it like an idiot. Always dressed in his monastic habit, he doesn't hesitate

to lift his skirts in public: he's a regular at the brothel, he goes to church to disturb the liturgy. Multiplying reprehensible acts, he puts his autism to the test by acting in the city as if it were a desert and no one could see him.⁶

If the space of architecture is often invoked as a model of the principles of post-modernity I would hold geological form of the desert to be a model of Baudrillard's disappearance. In *America*, the desert is the locus of disappearance of humanity, culture and civilization. He describes the experience of driving in the desert as an absorption of distance and the horizon of meaning. If the so-called death of the subject in post-modernity is registered in construction and the language of architecture so Baudrillard's desert space of disappearance is signless and silent, and empty of any human production, like the pure object in its disappearance from the real:

The desert is a natural extension of the inner silence of the body. If humanity's language, technology, and buildings are an extension of its constructive facilities, the desert alone is an extension of its capacity for absence, the ideal schema of humanity's disappearance...But the desert is more than merely a space from which all substance has been removed. Just as silence is not what remains when all noise has been suppressed. There is no need to close your eyes to hear it. For it is also the silence of time. (A pp.68-69)

Like the ritual or the game, in the desert, time has the time to disappear. The time of history, representation and of the sign is immobilised in the desert. It is impossible to focus on anything less than fifteen miles in front of you, and space is

thereby reduced by the proximity of distance. Natural deserts:

...induce in me an exalting vision of the desertification of signs and men. They form the mental frontier where the projects of civilization run into the ground. They are outside the sphere and circumference of desire. We should always appeal to the deserts against the excess of signification, of intention and pretention in culture. They are our mythic operator. (A p.64)

It is the transparency and emptiness of the desert form that appeals to Baudrillard. A vast absence of origin, depth, meaning and profundity. The desert is not just the absence of these signs of culture. It is a pure form of the fascination of indifference, it is an ecstatic form. Fascination itself is the gaze without an object of reflection or negativity for a subject. The desert is therefore the perfect object of fascination. We have already seen with respect to indifference how it functions as an ironic strategy of the object at the level of the mass. Its indifference to the time of culture constitutes a challenge to meaning. Travelling through the desert describes Baudrillard's theoretical journey. The anonymity and barrenness of the desert, without cultural referents, and its brutal geology save us from the time, meaning and history of the subject. In this way the desert form for Baudrillard is a sublime form. It is not aesthetic as it is not an object of beauty and is not predicated on its difference from the subject but its indifference as pure object. It does not mark the

limit of the subject but its complete dissolution. Frederic Jameson gives a definition that resonates somewhat with Baudrillard's - minus the 'hysteria' and 'the exhilarating of the gleaming surface':

It is a reduction of time to an instant in a most final punctual experience of all these things, but is no longer *subjective* in the older sense that a personality is standing in front of the Alps and knowing the limits of the individual subject and the human ego.⁷

The desert is without value. It is that which annihilates the possibility of judgements. In this way the desert is the vanishing point of all value, meaning and humanity. There is however yet another model of the desert form which has a certain affinity with that of Baudrillard's. That is Bataille's image of the desert as the place in which all human value and all sense founders:

Today, neither morsel, nor flavor. Nothing but non-sense, truth deserted, creating a desert, glimpsed as heart-breaking in the pale blue of the sky through the foliage of the trees (which is the absence of man and of all sense).⁸

It is not difficult to locate Baudrillard's conception in this - the place of the inhuman and the barrenness of sense. It is the place of complete silence. For Baudrillard the desert as the model of a theoretical journey therefore contests and challenges the values of the real. Baudrillard understands his theoretical journey, his disappearance, as a trip into the *desert of time*:

The only question in this journey is: how far can we go in the extermination of meaning, how far can we go in the non-referential desert form without cracking up, and of course, still keep alive the esoteric form of disappearance. A theoretical question here materialized in the objective conditions of a journey and therefore carries with it a fundamental rule: aim for the point of no return. This is the key. (A p.10)

Is there a lesson in any of this? Has Baudrillard got anything to offer? In the sense of a project or program clearly not. Or if he does, by his own criteria he has failed. In any case whether it is appropriate for philosophy to be offering lessons or programs is questionable. Is it simply a provocation as Kellner suggests? It is too elaborate for a simple provocation. Baudrillard has attempted a sustained working through of the problem of production that is more than a gesture. Yet it is precisely the latter which is in some ways problematic. In some respects contrary to Kellner's conception of Baudrillard's later writing as a work of indulgent 'aristocratic Nietzscheanism', it is almost too calculating, too methodical.⁹ In the final analysis Baudrillard's resilient anti-humanism precludes such a reading. A project is an instrument of the subject and he is thoroughly indisposed to this.

It is also clear that it is not an example of post-modern parody and pathos. There is no disappointment or nostalgia in his work. There is no bitterness at the historically or empirically perceived

failure of the 'grand narratives'. It is because of this that his work can begin to be conceived as philosophy rather than cultural studies or sociology. Baudrillard clearly rejects a particular vision of philosophy - philosophy as reflection or critical inquiry. That vision, of Platonism and metaphysics in general, which in a parodic and exacerbated form has come to pass. It is instead a philosophy of the impossible, of non-sense. It is not a simple valorisation of nonsense over rationality. Baudrillard's conception of the mass and his pataphysics are exemplary of this. It is not a simple embracing of irrationality. In some ways rather perversely, Foucault's account of thought at its limit provides a possible model for understanding Baudrillard as a philosopher. Thought is that which:

...confronts stupidity, and it is the philosopher who observes it. Their private conversation is a lengthy one, as the philosopher's sight plunges into this candleless skull. It is his death mask, his temptation, perhaps his desire, his catatonic theater. At the limit, thought would be the intense contemplation from close up - to the point of losing one self in it - of stupidity...¹⁰

This is the model of the philosopher as *Simeon*. For Baudrillard his writing is in the end an elaboration and elucidation of the useless without recourse to a principle of symbolic exchange. His work becomes increasingly like the chess game in Beckett's *Murphy*. All attempts at resolution or an end succumb to ultimate reversal. If there is a model for

Baudrillard's work it is that of the schizophrenic's endgame. It is a rigorous and exacting exercise in futility. Baudrillard is frustrating precisely because his work frustrates any attempt to extract a critical, rational or humanist project. Only in this way might it be a chronicle of insignificance, of that which refuses any attempt at integration or reconciliation. It is not an act of imagination. It is rather an attempt to seduce the impossible which lies beyond the projects of the subject or the prejudice and accumulation of a project. In this sense it is truly experimental rather than a provocation. For this reason, if for no other, Baudrillard merits our attention.

APPENDIX: THE 'MAKING DO' OF MICHEL DE CERTEAU

Michel de Certeau is cited by many who have written on Baudrillard (Mark Poster, Douglas Kellner and David Harvey) as a giving more convincing and differentiated analysis of certain features of what they conceive of as post-modernity. All the former critics regard Baudrillard's work on the 'political' to be deficient in some degree. For critics of Baudrillard, de Certeau seems to offer a more sensible account of how people act and offer resistance to systems of control. De Certeau focusses on the way such control is organised around the rational and technical efficiency of spatial and temporal organization. De Certeau's work is also motivated by the problem of production but, unlike Baudrillard, he will seek to resolve it through an alternative model of language - that of *poesis*.

De Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, is dedicated to 'the ordinary man' and seems to stake out a similar position to Baudrillard in his work *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, towards the philosopher and expert, both in terms of authority and in terms of moraliser/informer. Though where Baudrillard sets up the response of the mass in terms of duplicating and absorbing the functioning logic of

the system (as opposed to the political logic which is its nostalgic referent) de Certeau maps out a different trajectory. He is concerned with the nature of knowledge - both the objects of knowledge and what would constitute its practice. De Certeau wants to challenge received notions of what knowledge consists. His guiding imperative is provided by a double refusal. Firstly he rejects the conception of knowledge as an exercise in pure rationality. Secondly he refuses the idea of the practice of knowledge as an exercise in technique.

He attempts to map out what he calls a 'science of the singular', by which particular local practices 'poach and rent' from strategically organized space. Hence de Certeau is interested in particular 'uses' of knowledge. I would argue that it is this science of the singular which situates de Certeau within the concerns of recent french philosophy. The science of the singular is another attempt to describe the unmediated, different without the imposition of relation.

De Certeau's approach has been described as 'phenomenological' (David Harvey) and it does bear certain traits of phenomenology but what is interesting about *The Practice of Everyday Life* is its eclecticism which renders problematic the framework of one overarching style. So while he sets out his agenda as

being directed towards the examination of the practices of consumers, he maintains that;

1. Consumption is not a purely passive activity, a mere function of production

and

2. He rejects the atomistic conception of the subject. The subject he is attempting to schematise is not reducible to a simple rational agent:

...the question at hand concerns modes of operations or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. It concerns an operational logic whose models may go as far back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive, and which has in any cases been concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in Western Culture. (PEL p.xi)

Recalling Baudrillard's suspicions concerning science and theory, there is the trace of ethnology in this, or at least the metaphors of it. The operations of the 'culture' he is interested in correspond more to that of a bacteria rather than the expressions of a particular set of social or historically conditioned values. It is also worth noting that de Certeau does not account for these practices in terms of traditional subjectivity.

Without wanting to collapse the difference between Baudrillard and de Certeau, for they ultimately maintain analyses incommensurable with each other, there are points of convergence.

De Certeau's basic model is as I have noted the distinction between production and consumption. And though he characterizes consumption as at one level a combinatory set of procedures for survival he also designates the process of 'making do' as a form of 'poesis'. This is one example of the tension in de Certeau's work between a traditional phenomenological subjective oriented approach and the description he gives of the user's operations as a set of opportunistic tactical deterritorializations:

To a rationalized, expensive and at the same time centralized, clamorous, and spectacular production corresponds another production, called "consumption". The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by dominant economic order. (PEL p.xiii)

At first look one may say that in Baudrillard's view, de Certeau's analysis conforms to the logic of production and its myth of use-value. Yet it is also clear that what is intimated here is an alternative use than one which is tied to its exchange value, though this for Baudrillard would be nothing more than a sleight of hand. It is here that one can glimpse the possibly limited aims within de Certeau's larger

ambitious schematization. This is to say that what is at stake is not an activity threatening the stability of the dominant economic order (though there is the spectre of symbolic exchange haunting this) but an operation of resistance. De Certeau like Baudrillard, refuses to accept the analysis of 'ideology' as an encompassing process duping the ill-informed populace. What this resistance to ideology amounts to de Certeau states, is a microbe like series of anti-disciplinary operations and tactics of makeshift groups:

If it is true that the grid of 'discipline' is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also 'minuscule' and quotidian) manipulates the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them. [My emphasis] (PEL p.xiv)

What is interesting to note here is the concept of conformity. This relates to his distinction between strategy and tactics which conforms to a polemological model. A strategy can only be constructed from what he calls a 'proper place'. It is a space separated from an environment. From this place a calculus of forces can be directed to what is exterior. One can say it is governed by a natural teleology.

The tactic on the other hand has to make its own space within that delimited by the actions and engagements of strategy. Moreover it functions according to an entirely different economy and is a

momentary seizure of an opportunity. It is the result of a decisive act rather than a calculated rationale.

The tactic:

...has as its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time - it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. (PEL p.XIX)

The tactic is therefore a function of time in conformity to the objective and strategic calculation of spatial operation. The examples that de Certeau gives of this opportunism to seem to resonate with Baudrillard's conception of seduction, with, diversion, 'polymorphic simulations', and seduction itself. He also cites Sun Tzu on *The Art of War* as a manual for the operations of the 'weak' over the strong. He recognises the 'cancerous growth of vision' inherent in modern media. The consequence of which is the extension of visibility as the measure of the real. This however seems less an acknowledgment of the obscene than the analysis of the spectacle. One may also want to ask in what respects, if any, this phenomenon would be different to empiricism or indeed any metaphors of vision employed in the history of philosophy. It is worth noting however the move whereby the tactic doesn't capitalize time. In this respect it contrasts with the accelerated turnover time that capital demands in increasing profitability.

One such practice of 'going with the flow', not capitalizing time, is the reader. The model he suggests for the operation of reading is that of the poacher or the renter of space. The reader cannot protect him/herself against the erosion of memory through time. The reader both forgets himself and, later, what he has read. This process is a logic of situations, dependent on circumstance as opposed to the logic of science and technocratic rationality which delimits the autonomous space of its practice. It is flexible and is subject to constant mutation.

The distinction he makes between the tactic and strategy is reflected in the difference between the place and space. De Certeau's schema of place/strategy and space/tactic carries through to his analysis of theoretical discourse and various practices, and even more fundamentally, the difference between theory and its object and the operations of power encoded in this relation. This division can be seen in the difference firstly between two types of discursive method: one based on scientific method, the other theory or one could say by virtue of de Certeau's descriptions, a hermeneutics. Science:

...grants itself a priori the conditions that allow it to encounter things only in its own limited field where it can "verbalize" them. It lies in wait for them in the gridwork of models and hypotheses where it can 'make them talk', and this interrogatory apparatus, like a hunter's

trap, transforms there wordless silence into 'answers', and hence into language. (PEL p.61)

One may note here the procedure which accurately reflects Baudrillard's description of the testings of the mass through polling and statistical analysis. What is at stake here is a kind of generalized ethnology in which a specific set of practices, exterior to theory and irreducibly different, is corralled into the status of legitimation for this theory. This operation can be understood as isolation and inversion. The theorist first isolates and acts out a procedure or practice for analysis which is then inverted to become that which sustains the theoretical discourse. He cites Foucault's analysis of the panopticon as exemplary of this manoeuvre whereby Foucault's theoretical enterprise is panoptical itself, allowing him to see everything. The same procedure occurs in Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the *habitus* whereby various singular strategies of the inhabitants of Bearn and Kabylia become a model for the theory which sees the same order reproducing itself everywhere. Is this what Baudrillard calls the obscenity of the object being made to give up its secret?:

Reduced to the *habitus* which exteriorizes itself in these strategies which do not know what it is they know provide Bourdieu with the means of explaining everything and of being conscious of everything...they [Foucault and Bourdieu] transform practices isolated as aphasic and secret into the keystone of their theory, when they make of that nocturnal population the mirror in which

the decisive element of their discourse shines forth. (PEL p.63)

One may describe what occurs here as ideology slipping in through the back door. Even though both Foucault and Bourdieu reject ideology as any basis for their respective projects they give themselves knowledge of something which their objects do not have.

Ethnological studies operate on the distinction between two clearly defined fields. Studies of practices and studies of discourse. And whereas the first is apparently given over to description and takes its object at its face value, the analysis of discourse starts from the assumption that the discourse in effect tells lies, masks truths to be decoded by theory. Freudian psychoanalysis would be an example of the latter. Yet we can observe the collapse of this distinction in the work of Bourdieu and Foucault who maintain the descriptive perspective in analysis of practice while silently palming the card which allows them to tell the truth and obtain the knowledge of which the agents whose practices they describe are unaware of.

De Certeau invokes symbolic exchange as a diversionary tactic which can be found in the practice of *la perruque* - 'the wig'. It is a form of disguise in which the worker uses time on the job to do something else, like writing letters. Or borrowing

materials from work to make something at home. According to de Certeau it is a rejection of the competition which management try to instill in workers. This rejection is manifested and sustained by the communal complicity of the workers in *la perruque*. Competition is replaced by reciprocity. The market economy which operates at the level of the atomized individual (wage units) in the code of the generalized equivalence of money is diverted in the collective complicity in the borrowing of *la perruque*:

Because of this, the politics of the 'gift' also becomes a diversionary tactic. In the same way, the loss that was volunteered in a gift economy is transformed into a transgression in a profit economy: it appears as an excess (a waste), a challenge (a rejection of profit), or a crime (an attack on property). (*PEL* p.27)

The account de Certeau gives of symbolic exchange as '*la perruque*' attempts to prevent it from becoming an ideal form or utopian model that will replace the system of political economy. De Certeau doesn't isolate and invert symbolic exchange making it the truth of *la perruque* and of his analysis. It is something which already occurs and moreover is only one tactic in the ordinary art of practice.

It is ultimately this ordinary 'art' of practice that de Certeau is trying to engage with by dismantling the social and epistemological (though the two overlap) hierarchization of knowledge:

Like that of poets and painters, the know-how of daily practices is supposed to be known only by the interpreter who illuminates it in his discursive mirror though he does not possess it either. It thus belongs to no one. It passes from the unconsciousness of its practitioners to the reflection of non-practitioners without involving any individual subject. It is an anonymous and referential knowledge, a condition of the possibility of technical or scientific practices. (PEL p.71)

The example de Certeau gives of this set of relations is psychoanalysis. It is the patients who know, or more specifically the unconscious, but it is the analyst who provides the place of its articulation. What is curious about the psychoanalytic schema however is the hierarchical reversal of knowledge. The discursive rationality of psychoanalytic theory doesn't speak and is only an effect of the unconscious. Yet even though the unconscious is primary, it only exists as primitive knowledge, without its own place until such time as it is furnished by theory. The hierarchical schema here is the relation of production/consumption that pertains between the dominant system and the sheep-like populace. This assumption is not only the guiding principle of the system itself but also that of the expert or ideologist who would seek to criticize it. This criticism takes upon itself a moralizing imperative of informing the masses. Whereas we have seen how in Baudrillard's concept of the mass, which absorbs and neutralizes this will to inform, de Certeau suggests that a process of reappropriation occurs. Consumption not as passive reception but as an active *appropriation*. One can only

emphasise the problem that Baudrillard would have with this. Despite the invocation of symbolic exchange via *la perruque* this practice of consumption as appropriation must therefore at some point become part of an accumulative logic.

Nevertheless to return to the model of reading he suggests that it is a nomadic practice. Levi-Strauss concept of *bricolage* is invoked but if it is *bricolage* it functions without the attendant convergence towards a unified set. However it is hard equate de Certeau's commitment to the perspective of narrative without it deriving from or converging to a '*unified set*'.

The system functions smoothly in proportion to the degree of belief or investment that can be mobilized by its various parts. De Certeau charts a process whereby the old crumbling religious belief systems act as a reserve for political and economic forces. He defines belief as an investment, as a modality, separate from any content. This reserve is a source to be tapped by various marketing and advertising practices. However, in an observation similar to Baudrillard (the hyperreal: too many ends and not enough means), he suggests that there are too many objects of belief, and too little credibility to service them. The system attempts to control the mobility of belief, through various rationalizations of space:

As the result of this labor, the powers in our developed societies have at their disposal rather subtle and closely-knit procedures for the control of all social networks these are the administrative and 'panoptic' systems of the police, the schools, health services, security etc. But they are slowly losing all credibility, they have more power and less authority. (PEL p.179)

There are two positions which concern de Certeau's elaboration of credibility firstly he suggests a historical and social continuity between the investment of belief in religion and politics. The developed system of political economy attempts to retain and recuperate the value system of religious belief:

Shell oil produces the Credo of "values" that inspire its top administrators and that its managers and employees must adopt as well. The same sort of thing is found in countless other businesses, even if they are slow in getting in motion and still count on the fictive capital of a earlier family house or regional "spirit". (PEL p.180)

Secondly this manoeuvre is based on a misrecognition of the functioning of belief - that it is tied to objects. It is mobile. Furthermore the crucial place that the system attempts to direct credibility, is not really products per se, but the real itself.

According to de Certeau the place of this operation is the media. This account is more resonant with Baudrillard's conception of the obscene than Debord's spectacle:

The media transform the great silence of things into its opposite. Formerly constituting a secret the real now talks constantly. (PEL p.185)

Previously the real was the ground of battle in politics and theology. The real transferred from a body of doctrine to a code. No longer restricted to a particular place which gives it authority, authorizes it, it expands to fill all the interstices of life itself, motivated by its very lack of credibility.

There is a reversal in this of the traditional place of the real. Governed by a scopic drive, of science, the real is no longer invisible, but visibility itself;

The contemporary 'simulacrum' is in short the latest localization of belief in vision, the identification of the seen with what is to be believed...The simulacrum is what the relationship of the visible to the real becomes when the assumption crumbles that an invisible immensity of Being (or of beings) lies behind appearances. (PEL p.187)

It is clear then that the simulacrum is opposed by de Certeau to a real and he gives it the predicates of visibility. It is with his conception of the simulacrum that there is a danger of letting the notion of the ideological sneak in through the back door. He suggests that this simulacrum rests on two interdependent operations. Firstly the establishment of a simulated referent, such as public opinion via the survey. Secondly the credibility of this refinement is essentially a detour, the reality of the political for

example as attained from another place. For example, the citation of public opinion:

To cite is thus to give reality to the simulacrum produced by a power, by making people believe that others believe in it, but without providing any believable object. (PEL p.189)

Of course public opinion is but one element of simulation. The primary sustainance of simulation he argues is need. The production of need governed by the logic of production is the model for all discrete elements that surround and fill in the space opened up by it. This operation therefore is less a construction of objects or things, than the production of a functional space. Nevertheless the redundant ruins of the 'revolutions of history, economic mutations, demographic mixtures' cannot be wholly displaced. They are distributed as a series of palimpsests, mobile and interactive, seeping through the inertia of the *tabula rasa* which the technocratic system of production imposes. This heterogeneity survives the homogeneising processes of productive space. It is a model of power as a planning department, via the organization of space through the production of maps. This geometry can be observed by the difference in assumptions underlying the change from the tactile medieval map to the objective geometrical space of post-renaissance maps. What is at stake, according to de Certeau is the coding, organization and colonizing of perspective space. Medieval maps marked an itinerary or journey,

signified for example, by the drawing of ship on maritime maps of coastline. The story is replaced by a formal geometry:

The map, a totalizing stage in which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a 'state' of geographical knowledge, pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity, as if into the wings, the operations of which it is the result or necessary condition. It remains alone on the stage. The tour describers have disappeared. (PEL p.121)

There is a transformation here of the seen, from a narrative wandering, to a knowledge that is legible. The components of the two series operating here are strategy/place/map and tactic/space/story. De Certeau argues that the fundamental concern of the story is the articulation of a space and the delimitation and displacement of boundaries. The heterogeneity of the space he assumes is structured and differentiated. This is because the story, unlike the grid, is a performative, a practice. The story and formal description correspond to types of founding. The latter establishes a space of inertia, a bomb. It designates something inert. The story is constituted by operations of time:

Between these two determinations, there are passages back and forth, such as the putting to death (or putting into a landscape) of heroes into transgress frontiers and who, guilty of an offense against the law of the place, best provide its restoration with their tombs; or again, on the contrary, the awakening of inert objects (a table, a forest, a person that plays a certain role in the environment) which, emerging from their stability, transform the place where they lay

motionless into the foreignness of their own space.
(*PEL* p.118)

Accordingly, de Certeau argues that there is a dialectic between the itinerary and the map. He appears to be suggesting that they are both the conditions of the other's possibility. The moments of mapping punctuates the tour as limit, 'it's a one-way street', the 'toilet is on the right'. The tour indicates an effect, 'you leave the living room and enter the study'. The former is a tableau, an inventory whereas the latter is an organization and contraction of space. What appears to be at stake is a hermeneutic formulation of identity and difference. This structure organises the founding insofar as it is multiform and polyvalent rather than unitary. The story is flexible and heterogenous containing a variety of elements and pursues a multiplicity of vectors. What ultimately separates the flexibility of the story from the coding of the map is what he calls casual time. This time interrupts and connects matter rather than being pre-programmed. It is the engagement with the accidental and unforeseen. The latter is perceived in the bureaucratic schema as a fault to be corrected. In the story, it is a different path or opening to be explored. Furthermore this exploration is not purely aleatory, set against the knowledge of the map. It has its own theory and tactics of practice:

These times constructed by discourse appear, in reality, as broken and jerky. Subjected to 'servitudes' and dependencies, theoretical time is

in fact a time *linked*, to the improbable, to failures, to diversions, and thus displaced by its other. It is the equivalent of what circulates in language as a 'temporal metaphoric'. And, strangely, the relation of the manipulable to gaps is precisely what constitutes symbolization, which is a putting together of what coheres without being coherent, of what makes connection without being thinkable. (PEL p.202)

It is this analysis that authorises de Certeau's attempt to valorize the practice of the sheep-like mass. They negotiate everyday life with the flexibility and openness to the different. Such is the space of thinking. The accidental and the event in the domain of technocratic scientism occupy a space of resistance (in the electrical sense) to be overcome. Furthermore, it maintains itself in the illusion of its primary, founding propriety. Whereas it is in fact a point of legible inertia, a limit, within the graffiti of fragmented difference. Hence the 'making do' of *perruque* with the operation of casual time is a model of generalized poesis.

It is clear that though at times de Certeau's analysis deals with similar concerns as Baudrillard, the context for his investigation is utterly different. De Certeau's dominant system, of technocratic rationality and the process of production, has a beyond in the practices of everyman. Harvey's description of de Certeau's work as phenomenological seems correct. Therefore Douglas Kellner's appreciation of de Certeau, that his analysis is more plausible than Baudrillard is troubling given Kellner's criticism of Baudrillard. On

Kellner's reading Baudrillard's obsession with "signs" is indicative of a residual metaphysics. However de Certeau's valorization of the notion of poesis demands a commitment to a model of language as the basis for understanding the practices of everyman.

It is clear then that despite the interesting surface resemblances of Baudrillard and de Certeau they have different agendas. De Certeau's account is a hermeneutic elaboration of subjectivity against a system of technocratic rationality. In the end I think the reader will agree that any comparison is limited and that Baudrillard's work has an entirely different agenda.

FOOTNOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. Mike Gane, *Critical and Fatal Theory* (Routledge, London, 1991). In chapter 3 of this book Gane brutally but painstakingly disposes of Kellner's schematization of Baudrillard as a post-modernist. Though Kellner's commentaries are often helpful they are ultimately hindered by his overall perspective. Kellner is also weak on his uptake of Derrida's work, which he misuses in an attempt to show that Baudrillard is not 'sufficiently deconstructive'.

2. Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Post-modernism and Beyond* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989). Though Kellner does provide some solid systematic accounts of some of Baudrillard's writing, in the end this gives way to simple polemics of a rather bizarre nature. Here is but one example among many of Kellner's criticism of Baudrillard's lack of critical political analysis:

This view [of politics] may be comforting to a critical critic in his Paris apartment who no longer wants to go out and do battle in the public sphere, but it will not help the millions being harmed, even killed, as a result of the domestic and foreign policies of the Reagans, Bushes, Thatchers, Bothas, and Pinochets of this world. (p.215)

Kellner, like Norris, has very demanding expectations of theory. This commitment does detract

from his commentary in general. At many instances his analysis is reduced to an appeal to worthy causes. Moreover because Baudrillard is ultimately, and often firstly, condemned by his failure to measure up to the criteria of enlightened liberalism he does not examine sufficiently key ideas. For example:

It is never clear in Baudrillard's writing what a 'pure event' would be...(p.174)

This criticism is hard to justify as it is a central element of Baudrillard's later work. It forms the basis of his conception of theory that does not bear any relation to the real. Because Kellner immediately rejects such a proposition he fails to see what is at stake in this for Baudrillard and does not try to account for it. I hope to show that Baudrillard is more than forthcoming in his elaboration of this concept of the pure event.

3. Christopher Norris, 'Lost in the Funhouse: Baudrillard and the politics of post-modernism', in *Textual Practice* (3, no.2, Winter '89). Norris also uses Baudrillard as an opportunity to elaborate on his own political projects. This is essentially an updated enlightenment liberalism to which even Derrida is harnessed. Given this it would be unusual if both Norris and Kellner agreed with Baudrillard. My only objection therefore is not that they disagree with Baudrillard (or at least their particular picture of

his work) but that they fail to engage with his work at any other level than that of the 'progressive' politics they espouse.

4. Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (Macmillan, London, 1988), p.175.

5. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (Semiotext(e), New York, 1991), p.23.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER ONE

1. Donald Kuspit, 'The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism - Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Routledge, London, 1990), p.53.

2. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, (The Architectural Press, London 1927), p.12. cit. in, Charles Jencks, *What is Post-Modernism?* (Academy Editions/St. Martin's Press, London and New York, 1987), p.40.

3. Frederic Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or The cultural logic of late Capitalism', *New Left Review* 146 (1984), p.78.

4. Jencks, op cit. p.28.

5. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), p.69. Harvey's book is one of the most intriguing works on the general phenomenon of post-modernism. As a geographer he offers a historical account of the transformations in time and space wrought by economic and technological developments. His perspective is, on the whole, traditionally Marxist. However the range of his

inquiry, from geography to economics and the cultural, is consistently challenging.

6. Harvey, op. cit. p.232.

7. Jencks, op. cit. p.16.

8. ibid. p.43.

9. Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernity: A Marxist Critique* (Polity, Cambridge, 1989). The title speaks for itself. Callinicos' political commitments are clearly spelled out in this work (in the acknowledgements he thanks his *comrades* for their patience with his 'speculative reveries'). Nevertheless some of Callinicos' polemics are incisive. He also makes the distinction between the writings of recent continental philosophers such as Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault, and the various promulgations which attempt to constitute a theory of post-modernism.

10. Jurgen Habermas, 'Modernity - An incomplete project' in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Pluto Press, London, 1987), p.14.

11. Arthur Croker and David Cook, *The Postmodern scene: excremental culture and hyper-aesthetics* (Macmillan, London, 1988), p.8.

12. Harvey, op.cit. p. 303.

13. I am referring here to *The Wake of Imagination: Ideas of creativity in Western culture* (Hutchinson, London, 1988) and *Poetics of Imagining: from Husserl to Lyotard* (Harper Collins Academic, London, 1991). Kearney is concerned with saving the possibility of creativity from what he ultimately sees as the destructive anti-humanism of post-modernist impulses. In this way the corpus of so called post-structuralist philosophy is, through a sleight of hand, enlisted to the terrain of post-modernity. *The Wake of Imagination* in particular offers a comprehensive account of the cultural practices of post-modernity and also a genealogy of how it came to pass. Kearney agrees with the attack on 'the subject of modernity'. He sees the latter as the unified self-present subject of reason. He argues that the dismantling of this subject was necessary. However he is worried by what he understands to be the uncritical anti-humanism of post-modernity.

14. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester University Press, 1987), p.5.

15. ibid. p.34

16. ibid. p.xxiii.

17. ibid. p.46.
18. ibid. p.47.
19. ibid. p.61.
20. Richard Rorty, 'The contingency of a liberal community' in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.50.
21. Richard Rorty, 'The contingency of self' in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* op. cit. p.78.
22. Richard Rorty, 'The contingency of a liberal community', op. cit. pp.53-54.
23. 'An interview with Jean-Francois Lyotard', by Willem van Reijen and Dick Veermman in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 5, nos. 2-3, (1988), p.306.
24. Richard Rorty, "The Contingency of a liberal community", op. cit. p.43.
25. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, op. cit. p.65

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER TWO

1. This is the case with both Mark Poster and Douglas Kellner.

2. I would argue that to fail by this measure, Baudrillard ought to fall into the category of post-modernist.

3. Baudrillard's surrealist impulse would not be found in the confessional and psycho-analytic dream sequences of Dali for example, but in the object metamorphoses and *trompe l'oeil* of Magritte.

4. Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, op. cit. p.167. Though Kellner offers a comprehensive enough account of the range of Baudrillard's work his analysis is limited by his theoretical perspective. The title of his book, I would argue, is indicative of his missing what is at stake in Baudrillard's project. However as I have suggested in my first chapter Kellner is not alone in this.

5. However as soon as Baudrillard begins to dismantle the logic of political economy through his analysis of the simulacrum the time of the commodity-object will give way to the implosion of time in the pure object.

6. Baudrillard will always find fault with the concept of production, whatever way it is presented, because he conceives it as irresolvably teleological. The import of this will become clearer when I look at his conceptualization of seduction in a later chapter.

7. Kellner, op. cit. p.38.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER THREE

1. Though in this chapter I will only be concerned with the latter two, these points of contact will become clear throughout the rest of the thesis.

2. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.255.

3. ibid. p.256.

4. In the *Evil Demon of Images*, which I will draw upon in chapter 6, Baudrillard remarks that resemblance, is seductive and immoral because it prohibits the act of individuation. It opens up a world of *metamorphosis* in which things and events appear not according to a causal logic, determined and with a history, but as effects which anticipate the real which it thereby resembles.

5. Deleuze, op. cit. p.258.

6. ibid. p.258.

7. ibid. p.260.

8. In *Seduction*, where among other issues, Baudrillard is concerned with an analysis of the game as a form of initiation to the immanence of the rule and not the law (and as challenge), he takes issue with Deleuze's

account of the game in *The Logic of Sense*. He reads this *forced movement*, as a function of chance in the game through the desired simultaneous play of all series, as the return of political economy. According to Baudrillard this conception renders the moves in the game as statistical events. Ultimately he argues that Deleuze inverts the polarity of causality/contingency, thereby maintaining the linearity and time of causality. For this reason Baudrillard argues that games are not models of becoming:

Their true form is cyclical or recurrent. And as such they, and they alone, put a definite stop to causality and its principle - not by the massive introduction of random series (which results only in the dispersal of causality, its reduction to scattered fragments, and not its overcoming) - but by the potential return (the eternal return if one will) to an orderly, conventional situation. (*SED* p.146)

I have only noted this here as a point of interest and will deal more fully with Baudrillard's framing of the game in chapter six.

9. Deleuze, op. cit. p.261.

10. ibid. p.262.

11. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.63.

12. ibid. p.77.

13. ibid. cited p.89.
14. ibid. p.13.
15. ibid. pp.98-99.
16. ibid. p.105.
17. ibid. p.94.
18. ibid. p.108.
19. ibid. p.139.
20. Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Routledge, London, 1981), p.196.
21. *Disseminations*, op. cit. p.168.
22. ibid. p.107.
23. Richard Kearney, *The Poetics of Imagining*, op. cit. p.170.
24. It is worth mentioning here Susan Sontag's project in *Against Interpretation* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1967). This work which can be seen in some sense as a post-modern manifesto attempts to provide a

ground for the re-valuation of what constitutes aesthetic pleasure. Though the title of the book may indicate a certain affinity with the concerns of Derrida for example she still works within very traditional paradigms. Interpretation would be replaced by a more sensuous appreciation. In short aesthetic appreciation would now consist in the abandonment of the latent in favour of the manifest:

What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. ("Against Interpretation", op. cit. p.14.)

The beginning and end of this project is the valorisation of artifice over content. Hence her particular appreciation of camp. The latter has the added bonus of having its own *system of objects* whose value is not determined by the conventional aesthetic criteria of *high art*:

Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization. ('Notes on Camp', p. 277)

This kind of thought seems to me to be exemplary of post-modernism, such as it is, as a purely aesthetic phenomenon that leaves unasked any of the serious questions posed by recent continental philosophy regarding the subject and experience.

25. Milan Kundera, cited *Poetics of Imagining*, p.213.

26. E.M. Cioran, 'Civilization and Frivolity', in *A Short History of Decay*, trans. Richard Howard, (Quartet, London, 1990), p.8.
27. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989), p.280.
28. Scott Lash, 'Discourse or Figure? Postmodernism as a 'Regime of Signification'', *Theory Culture & Society*, 5, nos. 2-3 (1988), p.324.
29. ibid. p. 323

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

1. My presentation of Baudrillard's account of the simulacrum is framed by my general thesis concerning this 'vanishing'. For an analysis which draws out the sociological implications and influences in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (and in his other works), I would direct the reader to Mike Gane's impressive and comprehensive analyses in *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory* and *Baudrillard's Bestiary: Baudrillard and Culture*, (Routledge, London, 1991.). The latter in particular gives an informed account of Baudrillard's analysis in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, of what is at stake in the exclusion of Death in western society. In general, Gane's work marks a huge leap in the appreciation of Baudrillard in the english speaking world.

2. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p.6.

3. As in a recent car advert, 'The definition of an engineer always comes from nature'.

4. Harvey notes that this space is remarkably similar to the poetic mappings described and advocated by Michel De Certeau. I draw the readers attention to the appendix at the end of this thesis.

5. Harvey, op. cit. p.244.

6. Kellner, op. cit. p.74.

7. I will examine this in the following chapters on the *mass* and the media.

8. I would argue that Baudrillard's dystopic world is in many respects the actualization of the dreams of philosophy, of the true, meaning (senders and receivers) and the real which produces what he calls, 'the vertigo of a flawless world.' (*Sim* p.60.)

9. A recent example of the debate on the veracity of polling was the 1992 general election. Media polls were criticised for their apparent misjudgement of public opinion. Yet while refuting the truth of the opinion polls the same people accepted the truth of the final poll. In fact the apparent flaws of the media polls only served to support the truth of the 'only poll that matters'.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER FIVE

1. I would ask the reader to consider here the valorization of Michel de Certeau over Baudrillard by critics like Kellner and Norris. De Certeau is mentioned in tandem with Baudrillard by Poster, Kellner and Harvey. While there are similarities what is interesting is the fundamental difference. This is manifested in de Certeau's sophisticated and slippery rearguard action in defence of the subject in the service of hermeneutics.

2. Jean Baudrillard, 'When Bataille attacked the metaphysical principle of economy' in *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 11, no.3, p.57.

3. I discuss seduction in chapters six and seven.

4. *Forget Baudrillard*, p.84.

5. *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, eds. Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor (Methuen, London, 1965), p.193.

6. One could argue that Baudrillard is describing a kind of inverted phenomenology. Rather than productive and allowing for the play of perspective, it is absorptive of all perspective and marks the reversal of productive energy. It is worth referring to Jarry

again for an account of this reversion in terms of pataphysics:

Instead of formulating the law of the fall of a body toward a center, how far more apposite would be the law of the ascension of a vacuum toward a periphery, a vacuum being considered a unit of non-density, a hypothesis far less arbitrary than the choice of a concrete unit of positive density such as water. (Jarry, op. cit. p.193)

7. There is a more sophisticated version in the work of Michel de Certeau. A brief account of it will be found in the appendix.

8. I will address in the next chapter the relationship of media, fascination and terrorism.

9. Umberto Eco, 'Falsification and Consensus', in, *Faith in Fakes*, trans. William Weaver (Secker and Warburg, London, 1986), p.175.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER SIX

1. Cited in, Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, op. cit. p.324.

2. Marshall McLuhan, 'The Phonograph', in, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Abacus, London, 1974), p.302.

3. Mark Poster, *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988) p.1.

4. It is worth recalling the fact that for both Deleuze and Derrida, the simulacrum prohibits the communication of meaning.

5. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Rebel Press Publications, 1977), paragraph 24.

6. ibid. paragraph 34.

7. ibid. paragraph 48.

8. Marshall McLuhan, 'The Medium is the Message', op.cit. p.21.

9. This would be an example of 'cold' seduction. I will be examining his elaboration of seduction in the following chapters.

10. Marshall McLuhan, 'Media Hot and Cold', op. cit. p.35.

11. Marshall McLuhan, 'Roads and Paper Routes', op. cit. p.92.

12. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, op. cit. p.17.

13. ibid. p.53.

14. Brian Seitz, 'The Televised and the Untelevised: Keeping an Eye On/Off the Tube', in *Postmodernism - Philosophy and the Arts*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Routledge, London, 1990), p.205.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Harvester Press, Sussex, 1982), p.7.
2. Paul Virilio, *Aesthetics of Disappearance*, op. cit. p.77.
3. Vincent Descombes, cit. *Seduction*, p.81.
4. Jacques Derrida, 'Speculer sur Freud', in *La Carte Postale* (Flammarion, 1980).
5. Douglas Kellner, op. cit. p.131.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Marshall McLuhan, 'Media Hot and Cold', op. cit. p.24.

2. In the essay 'On Nihilism' - *On the Beach*, 6 (Spring 1984) pp. 38-39 - Baudrillard suggests that his work could be considered a form of radical nihilism. However he qualifies this arguing that it would be a futile gesture as she could not outbid the nihilism of the system:

...I am a terrorist and a nihilist in theory as others are in arms. Theoretical violence, not truth, is the sole expedient remaining to us...it would be admirable to be a nihilist, if radicality still existed - as it would be admirable to be terrorist if death, including that of the terrorist, still had meaning...[However]...opposed to this is the system's own, the nihilism of neutralisation. The system is also nihilist, in the sense that it has the power to reverse everything in indifferenciation, including that which denies it. (p.39)

The nihilism of the system is no longer energetic or productive. It is indifferent. In utopia, when everything has been fulfilled, there is nothing to hide (except possibly the absence of the real). The nihilism of the system rests in its transparency.

3. Allowing myself the laxity of thematic criticism it could be argued that in the film, Zelig's unpopularity are a result of his refusal of difference. In

particular his rejection of the critical distinction between patient and analyst. He refuses the value and relation of being an object for a subject. Instead he becomes a pure object that is irreconcilable to any subjective project.

4. The interrogation and trial of members of the Baader-Meinhof group, and the death in prison of Andreas Baader.

5. Not for the first time Kellner's account is somewhat flawed. He argues (p.132) that what Baudrillard means by the demand to forget Foucault is that Baudrillard believes Foucault's theory to be obsolete. This is true (especially with regard to the microphysics; see Gane *Critical and Fatal Theory*, p.122) as far as it goes. However it is not a simple challenge or provocation, which is the way Kellner largely understands seduction. Baudrillard admires the anti-humanism and fundamentally anti-subjective impulse of Foucault's writing and it is this that he sees as most worthy of attention.

6. Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, op. cit., pp.28-29.

7. Anders Stephanson, 'Regarding Postmodernism - A conversation with Frederic Jameson', *Social Text*, (1987, Fall, Vol.17), p.29.

8. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (State University of New York Press, 1988), p.172.

9. This pejorative term of 'aristocratic Nietzscheanism' as applied by Kellner is difficult to understand. I think it can be discounted that Baudrillard has aspirations to the nobility or landed gentry. Kellner seems to equate it with a new set of 'master' values. Given Baudrillard's fervent rejection of the notion of value this is not really plausible.

10. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Cornell University Press, New York, 1986), p.190.

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