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FRONTISPIECE

TITLE

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SYNOPSIS

This study stems from an interest in the hype and tension surrounding the coming of a new millennium. As this new millennium will be in a phase of technological revolution (such as much acclaimed virtual reality) just how influential is the rise of computers and 'the virtual'? This question should be seen as a backdrop against which the paper is written.

The paper firstly discusses Jean Baudrillard's themes in SIMULATIONS such as simulation theory and hyperreality. Then moving on from the three orders of simulacra, which is the basis to SIMULATIONS, a wider discussion of Baudrillard's move to a post-Marxist social theory is introduced. The question of whether the social is dead due to media input altering inter-personal relationships arises; i.e. do *virtual* relationships become a mode of existence? - is the hyperreal in existence *now* ?; and so is SIMULATIONS a *diagnostic* account of contemporary culture and thought?

In the latter half of the paper there is a critical investigation into Baudrillardian themes and an introduction of possible problems with the notion of hyperreality. A call for 'reality' to be viewed as an untouchable *presence* rather than a touchable, malleable *code* is made to challenge Baudrillard's sophisticated case. To further an opposition to SIMULATIONS a case study of a work of literature (American Psycho) is used as an analogy for the dangers of hyperrealism.

Finally this paper calls for a reading of SIMULATIONS as a *prognostic* account of culture and thought. That is a reading of hyperrealism as a phenomenon which is perhaps not yet in existence but maybe on the verge of existing. Now technological interventions (e.g. artificial intelligence, virtual reality, cybernetics) are competitively challenged with the power of 'the real'. Ultimately then, with this reading, Baudrillard's radicalism can be seen as a signal flare to warn us from floating into the waters of the virtual.

INTRODUCTION - THE BAUDRILLARDIAN UNIVERSE

My reason for choosing Baudrillard as a critical thinker to discuss centres around the following logical steps :

(i) He attempts to theorise a technocracy; an increasingly computer-oriented, media saturated and information overloaded society. Baudrillard sees this as a key feature of contemporary culture and, in the Western World especially, of great dominance. Also our status as individuals living within a mediascape has led to a situation whereby, according to Baudrillard, "we live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning." ¹

(ii) Theorising this situation Baudrillard proposes a new standpoint with which to assess and view (conceptualise) 'reality' and the 'real'. Baudrillard proposes that we live in a universe ruled by the 'orders of simulacra'. Each simulacrum has its own law or value which relates to a specific period in time - there are three orders of simulacra each one being termed as a **simulacrum** when in isolation. The present simulacrum (or third order simulacra) is that of **simulation** and can be viewed as the postmodern stage - as has been theorised by critics of Baudrillard but interestingly not defined as such by Baudrillard himself ². With simulation the 'real' has disappeared and been replaced with the more "real than real"³ - **hyperreality**. Hyperreality is a provocative concept; it challenges representation suggesting that the difference between real and imaginary has become clouded - there is no longer an external 'reality' or set 'real' to rely upon - the 'reality principle' has been dis-lodged as an epistemological assumption. Simulation presents "self-referring simulacra which feign a relation to an obsolete real"⁴. There is no longer a mirror we can hold up to reflect the 'real' but rather it is the surface reflections on the mirror which define the 'real', as Baudrillard himself states -

"it is reality itself that disappears utterly in the game of reality" ⁵

Hyperreality therefore effaces the contradiction between 'real' and 'imaginary' and in the current 'post-industrial'⁶ mediascape which the Western World is phased in (this Baudrillardian universe) reality as such has become just like another channel on the television and mutates into hyperreality - a more powerful, complex and provocative situation.

(iii) Because of this somewhat radical standpoint Baudrillard is a provocative writer (sometimes self-knowingly and deliberately). His ideas are challenging and need to be dissected and critiqued, however because of his provocative nature it is interesting to note that Kellner suggests in his introduction to Baudrillard: A Critical Reader,

"some of his provocations are silly and offensive....consequently a reader on Baudrillard

must be a *critical reader* to distinguish the useless from the worthless, the valuable from the foolish, the important from the unimportant.”⁷

(iv) Therefore as we approach the end of the millennium it seems important to try and grasp the worthy, progressive and *helpful* theories from the flunky, faddish, hysterical or regressive theories. Baudrillard, as an influential thinker in contemporary intellectual society, seems absolutely up to date, to me, and therefore relevant. His relation to the ‘mediascape’ and the ‘technosphere’⁸ is an important relation and the theorising which springs from Baudrillard’s mind *must* be critiqued.

In this paper I intend to centre around Baudrillard’s theory of the third order simulacra - that of simulation and hyperreality. This simulacrum presents a model and a new semiology with which we can try to understand our culture or indeed more importantly the *future* of our culture - the science-fiction elements which may become science-fact (consider virtual reality and cyberspace - how much does this computerised, digital, electronic space affect our experience and ‘realness’ of actual physical space (and vice-versa?)).

The first part of this paper (I) will be an assessment and dissection of Baudrillard’s main theories - an outline of the three orders of simulacra, his move from a neo-Marxist to a post-Marxist position (the relegation of ‘use-value’ and ‘exchange-value’ in favour of the promotion of the ‘sign-value’ of objects to a theory of ‘symbolic-exchange’), his semiotic system (originating from Saussure) which kills the referent and gives the sign autonomy, how he challenges ideas of representation, truth and the ‘real’ because of this new perspective.

The second part of this paper (II) will be a more critical study of the issues arising from this primary assessment and a *contextualisation* of the central issues (focusing on the third order simulacra). My contextualisation introduces a discussion of how *I* see simulation affecting Western culture and the human subject; how, for example, does the hyperreal manifest itself within a cultural practice like literature.

The third part of this paper (III) will be a conclusion arising from the discussions involved in I and II.

CONTEXTUALISING BAUDRILLARD

Writing from the late sixties to the present day Baudrillard has produced sixteen major writings⁹. Born in 1929 in Reims he was the first of his family to do intellectual work seriously and completed his thesis in sociology with Henri Lefebvre in Nanterre in 1966. Thus Baudrillard's writing strongly orientates around the social realm because of his sociologic background and 'philosophy' as such has not been of concern to him. Rather Baudrillard seems to like to undermine 'philosophy' (he terms himself as "an intellectual terrorist"¹⁰). In Baudrillard's early writings he has been greatly influenced by Roland Barthes's work, such as The Fashion System, and Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media. The semiological underpinning of Barthes's writing led Baudrillard to critique Marxism by encouraging a semiotic conception of the object which later leads to a rejection of Marxism itself as an antiquated ideology. And McLuhan's media theories which declared that "the medium is the message"¹¹ led Baudrillard to understand the mass media and to make his own comments upon this culture.

So Baudrillard's early writings were concerned with critiquing Marxist discourse and ideology and theorising upon the media age. Part of the reason for this was his dis-illusion with the aftermath of the events surrounding 1968 (the student uprising in Paris, the Vietnam war protests, the incidents in Prague). All of this supposedly revolutionary activity failed to change anything,

"The New Left and feminist movements which emerged in those times aimed to change the world. Baudrillard's retrospective response is to note the fluid and brilliant patterns of encoding represented by the 1960s and to insist fastidiously upon their absolute uselessness."¹²

However the anti-war groups, green activists, feminist and other 'splinter' political groups should perhaps not be so quickly dismissed. What these groups collectively signified was a fragmentation from a belief in centralised, government controlled, power organisations. New ways of organising groups emerged and with these new structures came new activist groups. Thus "the New Left and feminist movements", in displaying an antipathy for totalising authoritative power bases, challenged these power-based 'solutions' to world problems; e.g. the American troops being sent to war in Vietnam was reported as being a liberating force sent to rescue civilians from communism, *however* these new emerging groups rightly opposed this stance in seeing the war as being an *invasion* of Vietnam. So although 'revolution', as such, was never achieved these groups did draw suspicion into democracy, and politics has become a more fragmented affair.

In Baudrillard's later writings he becomes increasingly fascinated with America¹³. Due to the progressive Americanisation of Europe from after the Second World War to the present it is no wonder that Baudrillard, with his keen social awareness, should begin to assess American culture. Although writing predominantly in France the global economic climate is one fuelled by American corporate power and there is unquestioned anxiety about the implications of this power. Now Baudrillard proposes his simulation theories and contests previously held conceptions of 'reality' by theorising a situation where corporate identity affects *personal* identity - which, according to

Baudrillard, leads to the loss of the social ¹⁴. It is interesting to note that these later writings have had more popularity in America than France possibly because of their outlandish, bombastic character and their association and fascination with American culture (Baudrillard theorises Disneyland, the super-powers, American television, the mass media and the Gulf War). Perhaps Baudrillard's association with American culture stems from a fatalistic vision of the *universalisation* of 'Americanism'¹⁵ into the global situation and so accordingly it is relevant to assess this situation as McDonalds and Disneyland open in France.

Baudrillard's writings in this era have encouraged critics to read him as a sort of postmodern visionary. It would seem it is because of this that he is such an appealing writer,

"He has achieved guru status throughout the English-speaking world...as *the* supertheorist of a new postmodernity."¹⁶

As the present era is one explained by the idea of the postmodern,

"Baudrillard is a first-rate diagnostician of the postmodern scene."¹⁷

Perhaps then it follows that this is why he is so widely read and has therefore had so much influence. SIMULATIONS, written in the 1980's (1983), was written in an atmosphere where modernist values were being questioned, when,

"Perhaps the 1980s and the 1990s signal not so much the supposed *disappearance* or *termination* of modernist values, as their *reappearance* or *transmutation* through new eyes and new technologies.

Theories of the great 'divide' between modernism and postmodernism require more careful delineation."¹⁸

So having contextualised Baudrillard's era, which is also the contemporary era, or what some call the 'postmodern scene'¹⁹, it is necessary to site SIMULATIONS as Baudrillard's polemic. Within the text he confronts many guiding beliefs of philosophy and challenges epistemological assumptions (that is what one can know *á priori*). SIMULATIONS contests the difference between real and imaginary and in doing so provokes us to mostly extreme positions which are usually for or against Baudrillard - there is seldom a middle ground as Baudrillard's insightful writing focuses our beliefs.

THE THREE ORDERS OF SIMULACRA

SIMULATIONS concentrates on the third order simulacra - that of simulation which contributes to a condition of hyperreality - a concept which Baudrillard entertains again and again especially in later writings. However to get a grasp of this order of simulacra it will firstly be helpful to discuss all three the orders of simulacra.

1. **FIRST ORDER SIMULACRA - Imitation or counterfeit.** With this simulacrum we are in the classical stage from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution - objects which are produced are considered to be counterfeits/imitations of existing originals. Authenticity still governs because a *natural law* regards copies to be from an original source -

“there was a detectable difference between semblance and reality, and between objects and their signifiers.”²⁰

The semiotic features of this simulacrum promotes a direct link from signifier > signified i.e. the word **soft**, as a ‘sound-image’ or a signifier, gives the signified or ‘concept’ of **softness** - that is a fixed determinate *idea*. This follows a natural order of this classical stage - things *are* what they seem and the ‘reality principle’ is intact.

2. SECOND ORDER SIMULACRA - Production. This simulacrum exists in the industrial, modern age. Objects are produced serially with no distinction between them. With production thousands of indiscernible objects are made. A democratisation of meaning and value comes with mass identical production -

“the relation of objects and signs is no longer that of an original to its counterfeit, but of equivalence.”²¹

Production moves to reproduction of equivalent objects and masks the difference between semblance and reality because reproduction leads to an ‘original’, ‘authentic’ reality becoming lost. Now we have indirect signifier > signified links i.e. the word **soft** signifies perhaps **softness** at one moment, but shifts to **sensual** or **insubstantial** at another; the ideas or signified which the word or signifier conjures are constantly reviewed according to the *law of exchange* (the signified is always open to question because *exchange* value, not *natural* value, is the dominant law). Objects become icons which are terminally open to interpretation - the sign as an icon can stand for different things at different times depending on the context - the signified underneath the signifier is open to struggle as Tseñon illustrates in her essay on Fashion and Signification in Baudrillard,

“meaning is not fixed to a particular signified...as when environmental awareness to Green issues turns fur, once a symbol status of the rich, into a symbol of the morally insensitive and environmentally irresponsible.”²²

3. THE THIRD ORDER OF SIMULACRA - Simulation. This is the current order of simulacra and therefore exists in the post-industrial, postmodern stage. Objects are produced according to a **code** - this code is based upon a binary model of oppositions such as that of computers which translate all questions and answers into zero and one structures. Unlike imitation which copies reality, or production which feigns reality, simulation consumes the whole concept of reality and replaces it with hyperreality. With simulation the *law of structural value* leads to a situation whereby codes and models made of binary oppositions reproduce objects and signs in unison. Like a gigantic DNA strand which builds and dictates our complex biology - a massive strand of coding composed of binary segments (Adenine-Thiamine, Cyanine-Guanine) - which formulates a new human, so, too, is society / contemporary Western culture ruled by the code under *simulation*²³. The DNA strand which in the biological sense functions to produce new human-beings serves as a useful analogy, to illustrate in the social sense, a “reign of code”²⁴ which functions to produce a new conception of society. If the huge strand of DNA is to stand for the sign or object we can see that

the constituent elements of this sign / object are nothing but a series of binary oppositions (A - T, C - G).

The seemingly endless sequencing of these oppositions in a strand [e.g.:

A-T

A-T

C-G

G-C

T-A

C-G

etc.]

exemplifies how the code

dominates and reproduces objects according to its sequencing. These binary oppositions are what make the simulation model - i.e. the true/false opposition although redundant still exists in simulation. We can see with this 'reign of the code' how meaning is lost as signs become autonomous - the 'reign of the code' is unstoppable because it is "that which is always already reproduced"²⁵. Late capitalism has set into motion a codified productivist world which for the sake of itself keeps reproducing. There is no longer any referent attached to the sign rather there is just a play of signs. Consequently the sign is composed of signifier > signifier links. There is, like the DNA strand, a perpetual chain of signifiers which if they have any meaning only have it in relation to other signifiers in the chain. Thus: **soft** as a signifier gains meaning against **hard** as a signifier. It is the play of signs, the play of signifier > signifier, the play of binary oppositions which create meaning. This is a semiotic system which involves a metaphysics of *surface* rather than *depth*. The former system implies a **relational** concept of meaning the latter system an **absolute** concept of meaning. It is not a question of a complete loss of meaning, as many would say postmodernism brings, but rather meaning has shifted its focus from an attempt to find depth, to a reading of, surface > surface > surface ('channel-hopping') - this reading, in my opinion, can find meaning when correlated.

The 'reign of the code' doesn't try to seek out definitive reality - definitive meaning or truth - instead, because of its relational aspect, it plays with the idea of reality being open to question and meanings and truths come to bear, but with no one meaning or truth being dominant. However it could be argued that the proliferation of *meanings* leads to a general loss of actual meaning.

To summarise - periods 1 & 2 are both premised on the 'real'; with period 3 as Gane succinctly puts it,

"Baudrillard's aim here is to show that no adequate analysis of systems of representation can, simply, refer to the 'real' world (the referent), as if this was unproblematic."²⁶

Simulation in this age involves the resuscitation of models of difference which play at being 'real' because of the constant reproduction of signs through media input. Simulation challenges knowledge of a fixed reality as the technological interventions such as the media present 'truth' as a *concept* (and **only** a concept (i.e. 'concept' as a simulation model)) against 'false' and *nothing* to do with **facts** as such.

BAUDRILLARD - FROM NEO-MARXISM TO POST-MARXISM

The chronology of Baudrillard's orders of simulacra is valuable as it explains the shift from production to simulation and this in turn explains Baudrillard's shift from a neo-Marxist stance to post-Marxist stance. Baudrillard's final rejection of Marxism has led critics to accuse him of being apolitical. However before reaching this post-Marxist standpoint it will be helpful to outline Marxism as such or 'classical Marxism'.

Classical Marxism is centred around the use & exchange value of objects in a society of production. Marxism, in trying to explain the workings of capitalism, comes up with a system of understanding based around the use (need) and exchange value of **objects** - this is termed as 'political economy'. 'Political economy' theorises commerce where the satisfaction of needs, that is use and enjoyment of objects, validates production and composes the capitalist state - as a base this leads to a superstructure. This economic reading of Marx is perhaps the essence of Marxism and helps us understand the substance behind materialist historicism.

The economic base which produces objects for human need (use-value) and then profit (exchange-value) constitutes the *capitalist machine*. And this gives rise to the ideological superstructure - the workings of society - complex interwoven ideologies with money and power dictating laws and unwritten regulations - the *capitalist state*.

Classical Marxism as outlined above leads to the *political* structure of society which in turn regulates culture. With use and exchange value Marx theorises capitalist culture in its most basic terms. The problem with this is that Marx sees 'need' / 'use' as being an absolute given. That is it is the same for each individual. The human subject is presented as having basic needs which capitalism can exploit for profit via 'exchange value' and this homogenises individuals under a system into society. Perhaps in Karl Marx's time this was perhaps more true as there was less leisure time and the definition of 'work' was more exact (as opposed to the present day situation whereby often work and leisure time become the same.) Marx was certainly writing in harsher times, thus a theory which assumes basic 'need' is perhaps understandable.

With classical Marxism the politics of capitalism regulates culture; this fails to acknowledge the reverse situation whereby culture regulates political structure. This is where, I believe, neo-Marxism comes in and Baudrillard's stance.

With neo-Marxism being located in the post-war era we can see how the Western world has become a mass consumer society - the explosion of capitalism has made more and more people into consumers, not just for need, but for the *idea of need*. With the advent of television (an intervention Marx didn't live to experience and thus he didn't have the chance to theorise upon its cultural implications) society becomes even more commodified and advertisements for products proliferate at an alarming rate. In a highly competitive market it is not just the commodity being conceptualised as an object but also its form, content and what it is called (its 'label') which gives the commodity 'sign value'. The 'basic need' for objects isn't a straightforward given conclusion rather there are intrinsically complex ideas within 'need' which denote a social status. 'Need' now explains a situation where two products with different names and perhaps different prices, but

which are otherwise identical, are available for their respective consumer niche. The idea of need suggests that the concept of buying one product over another is not just for its use, but for the *idea* of being the person who owns "X" and not "Y" - it is the social decider of the individual - that which signifies rank, class or even personality. I must stress here that Marx was fully aware of this phenomenon, but rather than talking about semiotics as such he talks about **commodity fetishism** which for all intents and purposes perhaps touches on the same thing. We must therefore not underestimate Marx's realisations about the nature of capitalism and understand that Marx as a theorist would probably agree with the concept of 'sign value'; after all surely commodity fetishism explains the drive behind a semiological interpretation of objects without actually acknowledging 'semiotics' *per se*.

With advertising it is not just a product for sale but the social ideas that come with this product - the false promises of advertising which to the unaware consumer comes to redefine 'need' into 'idea for need'. 'Need' is not just that which is useful i.e. for warmth, for fixing; but it comes to denote a *status* and to *classify* people - prestige. In late capitalist society with widespread conspicuous consumerism, society constructs itself and makes the political via 'sign-value' which subsumes 'need', 'use-value' and 'exchange value'. 'Sign-value' of objects comes to designate the status and extent of social integration of an individual in society. Here I believe we come to a neo-Marxist perspective and this is Baudrillard's initial standpoint as a break from classical Marxism,

"Baudrillard claims that there is no such thing as pure use value or a pure subject with essential needs for whom objects have essential uses." 27

From a neo-Marxist position Baudrillard promotes the 'sign-value' of objects over 'use-value' and 'exchange-value',

"Against classical Marxism, Baudrillard argues that the object of political economy must be conceptualised as a sign as well as a commodity." 28

Where classical Marxism reads productivist society as a political venture and this is *socially mediated*; neo-Marxism reads a consumer society as a cultural venture and this is *socially constructed*. It is no longer a question of commerce and marketing of values and basic human needs which affects the state politically, but rather because of the homogenisation of society via an earlier capitalism, human needs (thus use-value) are embedded in the social realm and rather than being dictated *to* from politics, use-value becomes socially constructed and dictates the political underneath the governance of sign-value.

However it is crucial to note that the wealth of a culture dictates how leisurely the pursuits of the consumer can be. That is because most people can *afford* to choose is the reason why 'need' becomes secondary. For example in the Western world we can almost obscenely destroy perfectly nutritious grain to keep market prices running. A basic need for the grain has become lost from agricultural overproduction due to competitive market forces. In the same way consumers, in an environment of good economy (boom rather than slump), keep the market going via the purchasing of objects under sign value - a condition that Marx explains when *he* talks about commodity fetishism.

We, then, as consumers, compete for status. So with Baudrillard's writing we must recognise that it comes from an environment of economic boom, the supermarkets seem endlessly full, the grain-stocks of the American west are destroyed and market morals²⁹ reign over the populace rather than a basic struggle for survival within the populace. The horror of human struggle for survival, can be observed by the affluent West from the safe distance of televisual reportage; e.g. the Rwandan crisis or Ethiopian crisis or Cambodian crisis. The mass hypocrisy is that the West help create these situations through aiding and abetting civil strife via arms sales and mounting third world debt. Aid workers are employed, against all odds, to help the starving humans. The situation is ground in something much bigger and more sinister - the paradox of caring locally (feeding the starving) when being globally uncaring (it is 3rd World debt and the machine of capitalism which is the real killer).

'Sign-value' explains how consumer society controls individuals into continuing to purchase more expensive goods over cheaper goods of the same type because the name or label (as well as the form and content of the object) changes the object to being primarily read as a **sign** - the semiotic features of which can speak volumes about the purchaser. As a signification system becomes synonymous with 'need' we can see how Baudrillard has projected,

"the *fantasy* of capitalists - what we might call *the capitalist imaginary* ... Baudrillard describes precisely how capitalists would like the world to be."³⁰

Profit for the corporations is a steady flow as the various class strata will always have their objects with which to denote their status. As mass media distinguishes types in advertising via trends (what's 'cool' and fashion), rather than a primacy of basic need for things, we can see how 'the fantasy of capitalists' can come true as the consuming public have their needs coded for them.

Baudrillard's neo-Marxist perspective (which can be followed in his 1973 writing, The Mirror of Production), because of its cultural dimension with the introduction of semiology transforming 'political economy' into 'political economy of the sign', explains the continuation of capitalism and displays the symbiotic relationship between self and society (i.e. how the individual keeps the market going and how the market keeps the individual going).

Baudrillard's next shift from neo-Marxism to post-Marxism (a rejection of Marxism) is centred around his disbelief in the dialectics of Marxism. That is the language and concepts that Marx employs are seen as having no relevance and as being antiquated. Also the revolutionary theory which emancipates the workers from exploitation under 'exchange-value' giving them power has been proven a false realisation after the events of 1968. A new socialist society was not brought about by revolution and 'revolution' was proven to be an idea *within* itself which pertained to nothing outside itself. The problem Baudrillard has with the 'Marxian imaginary' (this *new* socialist society) is that it is *not* new as such. Rather it is still a productivist society which just has more worker control and it merely makes a good use of economy than using it for exploitation and profit. Baudrillard feels there are more "radical possibilities for liberation."³¹

To a post-Marxist position

Baudrillard next breaks from any form of Marxism whatsoever and proposes a system of 'symbolic exchange'. This system has nothing to do with use values, exchange values or sign values and thus "escapes domination by the logic of political economy."³²

Symbolic exchange promotes notions of gratuitous gift giving, sacrifice etc., any activity which doesn't have a specific use, value or purpose. Baudrillard suggests that in pre-capitalist societies symbolic exchange such as free giving and festival existed and was more *natural* than capitalism which promotes saving and utility. These modern / capitalist characteristics i.e. the accumulation of capital are, Baudrillard suggests, unnatural characteristics. Human nature would like to give and share gratuitously, however, capitalism is antithetical to this idea or in opposition to this nature.

In the era of symbolic exchange it is not the production of objects but the production of **signs**,

"Radical semigurgy has replaced the production of objects and is the new mode of social control."³³

Thus, according to Baudrillard, Marxism which has no space for semiology becomes inadequate to explain late capitalism. In short Marxism or even its sons such as neo-Marxism are not contemporaneous with postmodern culture which is a culture no longer based in objectification but **signification**. Marxist doctrine is always centred around materialist thought and the production of objects and even if these objects can be conceptualised in terms of sign value this is not enough as with symbolic exchange it is the exchange of signs *themselves*.

Therefore Baudrillard's rejection of Marxism is centred around his theorising of a media-oriented society with the mode of production being the production of signs in this society. Political change is found in different spheres to the antiquated Marxist ones of class struggle, the workplace or the state; now it is found in culture - in **semiotics**. It is the everyday situation which is limelighted as a stage for change, no longer the old, abstracted, segregated Marxian notions of workers unions which make change. Symbolic exchange is a difficult concept as the reign of code must be adopted to help its understanding - we are not dealing with differing ideologies and inequalities in value systems as a stream of signs, sort of almost viscerally, conduct change. As symbolic exchange is so ambivalent, value becomes hard to define. With this standpoint the autonomy of the sign and control by the code makes us, the consumer, a by-stander; we are channelled into certain behaviour modes through the signs we buy. The power of the sign - its autonomy - is what keeps society running. As consumers we don't just consume objects but more and above this a sign system as well. It is the production of signs which in a contemporary market-oriented society explain consumer choice.

With radical semigurgy one sign form breeds another and the actual object becomes secondary underneath flash packaging, presentation and cosmetics. Thus it is a relativist position to adopt, as signs relate to other signs and there is no absolute truth or meaning from which the signs originate - that is no fixed reality³⁴. There is a play of meanings which goes on in between signs - an intertextuality. If we chose to accept this we can agree with Baudrillard and then, *yes*, reality is

not fixed rather it is defined through the consumption and production of self-referential signs. And this is the postmodernist position of believing that identity is constructed through language and that culture is constructed through signs (**art changes life**). Or we can be against Baudrillard and decide that reality has a set base and that signs always have their referent - that is a reference to a knowable world which has been researched and explained through years of science and thus has an epistemological base. And this is the postmodernist position of believing that identity is constructed prior to language and that culture constructs signs (**life changes art**). Either position is tenable and it is a debate which still goes on within postmodern discourse.

Following Baudrillard, then, in an assessment of his theories - this situation - this post-Marxist standpoint, which is according to Kellner 'end of ideology rhetoric', leads us into Baudrillard's simulation theories and his domain of the 'hyperreal' (where "it is reality itself which disappears utterly in the game of reality"³⁵). Here we can see how Baudrillard uses a new language which rejects Marxist discourse as he employs fresh words such as 'cyberblitz', 'code', 'hyperreal', 'simulation'. Sometimes the language verges on becoming hyperbolic and obscure *but* with the text we are in a fresh domain and a very contemporary intellectual domain.

HYPERREALITY

In the domain of the hyperreal -

"Hyperreality is completely simulated, reproduced according to a model, instead of existing in an objective sense as separate from the model."³⁶

The difference between the object and the sign has been eradicated as Baudrillard declares that 'the precession of simulacra', the precession of the code/model in postmodernism, creates a situation whereby -

"the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced*. The hyperreal."³⁷

"The real that can be reproduced" refers to the modern stage where production through industry defined our concepts of the object - 'reality' was feigned. "That which is always already reproduced"; leads on from this and explains the transition from the modern stage to the postmodern stage - now the suggestion is that the 'real' has a coded structure intrinsic to it. As it is 'always already reproduced' reality *per se* becomes obsolete.

Baudrillard's interpretation of Disneyland within SIMULATIONS is perhaps the most helpful way of comprehensively understanding the concept of hyperreality. This interpretation is based around Disneyland not being an unreal place, but more than real - the order of hyperreal. In Disneyland's show of the imaginary it conceals that this *is* 'real' America. Outside the park things are actually just the same in a theoretical sense (not of course a material sense),

"Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation."³⁸

Disneyland thus serves to conceal that the real is no longer real through setting up its imaginary. Disneyland's imaginary world tries to save the reality principle - i.e. that there is a perceptible difference between real and imaginary which is still ascertainable. But this is sheer myth as the enlightened and insightful critic can see how it just purports to be an imaginary world when in fact it is a hyperreal world which has absorbed the real/imaginary opposition as part of a simulation. In fact Disneyland's coded structure and simulation models conceal the fact that reality is no more dependable outside the park than within. It is no longer a question of 'real' being a simplistic binary reversal of 'imaginary', but that simulation absorbs this binary opposition and creates a coded structure which is in every part of life. The loss of this 'sovereign difference' between real and imaginary is the *legacy of hyperrealism*. Walking out of Disneyland the same code reigns and the play of difference (simulation) between binary oppositions continues.

Disneyland tries to conceal the reality of simulation, in trying to distinguish between the park and the 'real' world we are given a false representation of reality. We are given an environment which bases itself in having truth claims because we are set against the *supposed* extreme falsification of reality in Disneyland. In effect Disneyland purports a myth and if we are to believe this myth then we must reject that all is in simulation and hyperreal - that real and imaginary, true and false are just building blocks of a simulation model which forms the code.

So it is an interesting theoretical position to hold. If Baudrillard is suggesting that there is no real world but rather that the real world is continually reproduced via signs which themselves are governed by a code (the play of simulations) how can ideology have any basis? To make a statement which we know to be *always* true is a tricky business in an age where the real has mutated into the hyperreal. With hyperreality it is Baudrillard's claim that the strong media effect recycles and cannibalises the 'real'; reality being constantly under review as "radical semigurgy"³⁹ makes the sign completely autonomous (without referent and with signifier > signifier links only) means that what is true or knowable equates with what is true or knowable for *present* purposes. There isn't solid room for truth; rather truth's 'atmosphere' is gaseous. It is a very debatable situation and I shall argue later as to why I think Baudrillard is wrong and over-emphasises or enjoys the provocations of his argument in exaggerating the importance of his 'media effect' assessment - this assessment is as exemplified in the Disneyland interpretation.

However precession of simulacra *is* an *interesting* idea. In SIMULATIONS Baudrillard illustrates the precession of simulacra (for an understanding of simulation) with an analogy: A cartographer tracing the boundaries of a territory and making a map abstracts the real to create his model. The cartographer's project is to accurately record information about the territory as a means of understanding it - his ideal is to represent the territory (the real) in his map (his model). This completed map is declared by Baudrillard to be a charming example of second order simulacra (as discussed earlier in this paper). Now Baudrillard states,

"Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance."⁴⁰

Now in fact the map *precedes* the territory itself. That is it now makes the territory obsolete - it is more 'real' than the territory. Conventionally, and with a sort of logic which Baudrillard seems to shun, we would expect that the territory of course precedes the map as it was there first - it was an original source which the map was drawn from as a copy. However, Baudrillard in locating the phase we live in, that is the postmodern phase, points at an era of high sophistication. We understand space through illustrations - models - from previous representation (i.e. from 2nd order simulacra - modern, industrial reproduction) we are in a situation of representation. It is the recurrence of models and models of models which in postmodern society destroys the ability to distinguish originary sources or rather we don't conceive things as having origin for the perpetual flux of imagery and information overload in our lives leaves,

"room only for the orbital recurrence of models."⁴¹

Thus it is contemporaneous to believe that,

"it is the map that engenders the territory...It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts."⁴²

, and also,

"it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm."⁴³

So simulation explains the recurrence of models and constitutes the hyperreal and it affects our culture as Norris rightly praises Baudrillard's notions,

"For it is impossible to deny much of what he says about the 'hyperreality' of present-day politics, the disappearance of truth as an operative standard and the failure of critical reason."⁴⁴

CRITICISING BAUDRILLARD

Having dissected Baudrillard's main theories within SIMULATIONS I want to discuss its merits and its downfalls. That is where I think Baudrillard's ideas have strength and where the weaknesses lie.

Within Baudrillard's conception of third order simulacra there can be read a somewhat radical note. With the hyperrealism of simulation we exist in a fatalistic structure where the code dominates. This domination is presented as all powerful ('reign of the code') and seems nihilistic - we cannot escape or interpret how our daily lives are affected by a bombardment of visual cues, sound cues and slogans. With simulation binary coded structures are presented as if to give difference, but rather than these oppositions being in direct discourse with each other they are circular and,

"'Circular' discourse must be taken literally: that is, it no longer goes from one point to the other but describes a circle that *indistinctly* incorporates the positions of transmitter and receiver, henceforth unlocatable as such."⁴⁵

Hyperreality effaces the contradiction between true and false, subject/object, real/imaginary, giving a co-existence of opposites; and the real is now defined as,

"*that which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction.*"⁴⁶, this is of course,

"the mutation of the real into the hyperreal."⁴⁷

Baudrillard contests that we shouldn't even try to search for 'truth' or the 'real' as these very concepts in themselves are lost in a circular discourse. They are now part of a *simulation model* in which they are respectively opposed to 'false' and 'imaginary'. Going back to the DNA structure we can reproduce simulation's coded structure in a similar fashion:

R - I	[R=real, I=imaginary]
T - F	[T=true, F=false]
S - O	[S=subject, O=object]
I - R	
O - S	
F - T	

etc.

The usefulness of this diagram is to show how the 'logic of facts' has become subsidiary underneath a coded structure which makes oppositions indistinct. If the idea of 'truth' becomes an impossible discourse to begin with (because it is merely a building block of a code, i.e. a participant in a complex code such as the DNA structure which I used as an analogy earlier in this paper), then in understanding this we can see that with simulation,

"we are in a logic which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons."⁴⁸

Facts in *dialectic* reasoning would assume a kind of sacredness of true over false, real over imaginary etc.; i.e. a search for truth being *possible*. However Baudrillard's new logic puts all these oppositions on a neutralising level - that is the sacred distinction between oppositions has been

undermined - neutralised. As a DNA strand results in a final piece of information so too does the 'simulation strand' constitute (merely?) information.

To Baudrillard the surface is all there is (the *vener*, which some thinkers would strive to go underneath to find meaning, is all). Now society, for the affluent Westerner, is formulated as a surface structure. On accepting the polemics of SIMULATIONS one must then accept the precession of simulacra and therefore then the proclamation that operational models govern 'the real' effacing the real itself into,

"a hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere."⁴⁹

However SIMULATIONS in including its very discussion of 'the real' (even if the notion is consumed in hyperrealism) has its problems and is a very arguable polemic. And this polemic does not necessarily have to be accepted as it is freighted with problems.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Baudrillard contends that the culture that most of us exist in (i.e. city culture) has become so sophisticated (mostly through a new media age) that we live in a hyperreal condition. However earlier in this paper I referred to the problem of Baudrillard over-emphasising the mass media's effect. Perhaps to an extent our experience of reality has become 'warped' but one mustn't over-estimate its influence. It is a problem for Baudrillard as in his very usage of the word 'real' he is in fact relating to a knowable referent which the media have obviously *not* obscured,

"This argument about the transformation of the nature of social reality is marked by epistemological confusion. By discussing the nature of reality, Baudrillard assumes that he can know what reality is, and that he can describe it to others. This assumption contradicts the substance of his argument that it has become impossible to distinguish between reality and its representation."⁵⁰

So there seems to be an inherent problem within Baudrillard's argument because in his declarative statements about hyperreality he has discussed the concept in regard to a 'real' or knowable reality. This reading of 'epistemological confusion' is notably shared with other critical readers of Baudrillard,

"So long as we do not read too carefully he can thus carry off the performative trick of conjuring away with one hand those same criteria (truth, reality, history, etc.) which he then summons up with the other for purposes of contrastive definition."⁵¹

, and,

"He (Baudrillard) suggests that the expansion of the imaginary and corresponding deflation of 'the real' is a recent historical event marking a transition from industrial > consumer, or modern > postmodern society. This argument is freighted with unacknowledged nostalgia for a kind of naïve positivism - the suggestion that human kind once lived in 'objective reality'."⁵²

The MacCannells conclude that human groups have never lived in 'objective reality' as *being human* partly involves living in "a symbolically mediated fantasy"⁵³ and this condition is,

“no less true for the savage or peasant than for the postmodernite.”⁵⁴

So it doesn't necessarily follow that because we are living in a media saturated age with widespread misinformation (fuelled by a transnational corporate capitalist culture which regurgitates signs of the real (simulation) by selling us back our desire via the commodity) that *therefore* all notions of 'reality' drop out of the picture.

The MacCannells in the above quotes (52, 53&54) would certainly take issue with hyperreality as they regard Baudrillard as having a naïve positivism about an earlier *objective reality*. The MacCannells rightly assert that 'reality' has always been a contentious issue open to question. Although we live under a codified culture with the media regurgitating signs of the real, i.e. lifestyles (simulations) to be consumed to make us feel 'real', it doesn't necessarily follow that 'reality' has become completely obfuscated. Thus the opposition between 'reality' versus 'simulation' has serious problems. The MacCannells contend that dialectics between truth/simulacrum, real/symbolic are acceptable but not real/simulacrum. In their view there is very little which is *actually real* e.g. death is 'real' in the sense that there is a part of death which cannot be symbolically appropriated; i.e. the fact that a sort of *presence* has gone. So the 'real' remains as a fixed referent and **cannot** be consumed as simulacrum (by hyperreality) because its crucial **presence** is sealed. Therefore we should maybe see 'reality' as a presence - a kind of gut-feeling, even in a seemingly confusing and *intense* media age which tries to sell us back this presence (our 'real') as if we had lost it.

Of course Baudrillard's position stems from his semiotics. Baudrillard destroys the referent by merging the difference between the virtual and the actual; i.e. 'traditional' semiotics such as:

sign 'PIG'	>	referent 'PIG'
virtual		actual
signifier	>	signified
'PIG' image	>	'PIG' idea
		mental
		physical manifestation of pig

; becomes under Baudrillardian logic:

sign 'PIG'	>	sign 'PIG'
virtual		virtual
signifier	>	signifier
'PIG' image	>	'PIG' image
		mental

Thus the physical embodiment of a sign (the actual object) is denied and seen as irrelevant. Baudrillard would like to believe that the play of images which circulate have come to abolish the importance or sovereignty of the actual *material* world.

Would Baudrillard then deny the physical world, and the unchanging laws which govern this world that come to inform our mental connection with it? Does he really consider our relationships to be virtual, and that, although,

“the subject/object relation (is) virtual, (it is) a virtual relation in which, none the less, we are imprisoned.”? ⁵⁵

In the end I feel that Baudrillard's virtual world (which exists only if we believe in a hyperreality governed by a signifying system of inter-relating **signs**) isn't comprehensively convincing as there are still,

“real and present facts of experience - inequality, deprivation, urban squalor, unemployment, massive and increasing differentials of wealth and power - which make nonsense of Baudrillard's sophisticated case that nothing exists outside the endless circulation of ungrounded arbitrary signs.”⁵⁶

IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Perhaps siding with Baudrillard leads to “ideological mystification.”⁵⁷ In *Lost in the Funhouse - Baudrillard and the politics of postmodernism* Norris is suggesting that Baudrillard is so convinced by his own rhetoric (become lost in the funhouse) he (Baudrillard) has missed a vital point - this is that truth is not necessarily a product *coming* from language and the social sphere, but rather that language and the social **can only be** constructed and developed in *relation* to the real/truth. Truth is thus,

“a kind of logical primitive, a starting point for any genuine attempt to comprehend what is involved in acts of translation, successful or otherwise.”⁵⁸

Perhaps ‘truth’ then like the ‘real’ has also an irrefutable presence. For *ideology* this concept of ‘truth’ is of paramount importance. As much as different ideologies give different orderings of reality (different ‘truths’ to make sense of the world) the arguments between ideological discourses are valuable and an attempt towards creativity.

If truth is seen as a ‘logical primitive’ (and thus ideology as a form) then hyperreality is nothing but an elaborate and foolish *game* which has forgotten its actual origin (fixed origins of truth). So ideologies such as Marxism, which would strive to theorise upon and ultimately represent what is going on, are still helpful pursuits. Baudrillard sees ideology as an antiquated discourse and he believes in the neutralising effect of simulation which suggests that we no longer live within this social structure (the death of the social) and that power doesn't really exist because notions of truth are constantly reproduced (and thus presumably power is circulated)? Baudrillard's critique of Marxism is in the end a critique of truth-claims,

“the critique of Marxism and other such ‘foundationalist’ or ‘epistemological’ paradigms”
 , leads to, “embracing a wholesale postmodernist creed where the ideas of truth, validity or right reason simply drop out of the picture.”⁵⁹

But it is because late Marxism is an ideological discourse that Baudrillard has attacked it,

“This is ultimately why power is so in accord with ideological discourses and discourses on ideology, for these are all discourses of *truth* - always good, even and especially if they are revolutionary, to counter the mortal blows of simulation.”⁶⁰

However Baudrillard has achieved his post-ideological standpoint partly by a handy transformation of Saussure’s structural semiotics when he,

“assumes that ‘reality’ is structured through and through by the order of signs or symbolic equivalences; that our knowledge of the world can amount to nothing more than our mode of insertion into this all-encompassing economy of signs.”⁶¹

Thus it *must* be noted that Saussure focused on the sign and its composites (i.e. signifier and signified) and did *not* relate this to the referent for pragmatic reasons. It has been Baudrillard’s mistake to conclude that this relation is a valid one. Saussure dealt with the sign practically and almost scientifically; not applying his findings directly to the ‘real’ world. When Baudrillard makes this application, assuming that the referent is dead, he bends Saussure’s semiotics unfairly.

Therefore we can sense how Baudrillard has pushed semiotics to its extremes (N.B. previous ‘pig’ example) by reducing all issues down to questions of symbolic exchange and stressing ‘the autonomy of the sign’ and ‘precession of simulacra’ (as discussed earlier). Simulation theory because of its semiological determinism then blasts at the bedrock’s of ideology. Ideology is interpreted as nothing more than a vain attempt to resuscitate meaning. Because with ideology one would need,

“a sense of positive and negative, a kind of dialectic...”

, and according to Baudrillard, “My way of reflecting on things is not dialectic.”⁶² Baudrillard should *not* be interpreted as promoting ideology.

Baudrillard’s performative aspect which sees a search for truth as a, “species of rhetorical imposition.”⁶³, makes it impossible to set him inside a ‘logic of facts and order of reasons’ and we must credit Baudrillard as he has acknowledged this within simulation theory.

I expect if Baudrillard was to be placed in a discourse it would preferably be within a circular discourse; as circular discourse means that ideas of progression from a linear history (Marxism (an ideology)) do not necessarily apply. This discourse would also seem to be the *radically* postmodern discourse.

DOES BAUDRILLARD’S STANDPOINT BECOME APOLITICAL?

I believe the above criticisms (problems with epistemology and notions of ideological mystification) collectively *allude* to the problem of Baudrillard’s apoliticism.

As ideology has become an effortless pursuit and as so many intellectuals according to Baudrillard,

“are all realists/socialists - the two terms are never far away from each other - concerned with morals, as if all that still existed. They are all in a state of reanimation, rescuing, sending out SOS messages.”⁶⁴

, we can understand that hyperrealism leads us into moral bankruptcy. If we really interpret the world as Baudrillard suggests then are we in a continuing cycle of hopelessness? If we cannot take belief in something and hold a moral ground how can we affect the social sphere effectively? Is there no room for revolution as we have all become anaesthetised and neutralised by the media? Does the explosion of ideas and meanings within postmodernism lead to a lack of direction for the individual; i.e. the resuscitation of meaning has exhausted itself and we all know it? Do we live in a virtual world where nature has become just a symbol - a sign for the real?

CASE STUDY - AMERICAN PSYCHO: exploring the novel as a metaphor for the manifestation of hyperrealism in society - simulation and the Western subject.

Contextualising the theories within SIMULATIONS I want to introduce a work of literature by Bret Easton Ellis - AMERICAN PSYCHO. The novel is a good example of how hyperrealism displays its apoliticism and apathy. The novel is also a warning signal with its explicate example of how corporate identity perverts personal identity into something altogether sinister.

AMERICAN PSYCHO (1991) is a book which is written about the eighties and projects forward to the nineties. As a work of art the book does, of course, project a mediated view (mediated through Ellis) of eighties American culture and thus we must be a little wary in believing this culture too much. As an artwork it is also *our* reading of the book which is relevant and this version of American culture is open to question and debate.

We are exposed to an affluent young man (Patrick Bateman) with absolutely no *material* problems what-so-ever. In *his* New York context - that of expensive gym clubs, posh restaurants, powerful and influential people (rich people) and plush apartments - he appears to be a model citizen. Revered by his peers, friends and family as a success (he earns \$XXXXXXX a year working high up in the stock exchange) Bateman has got the social standing and status of a model citizen. Bateman could be said to embody the 'American Dream', it's only when we see his dark-side that this dream becomes a nightmare.

Bateman consistently acquires commodities which have no value outside of their name (their sign-value). Bateman is an analogy for, arguably pointless, conspicuous consumerism (commodity fetishism). Thus AMERICAN PSYCHO becomes,

"A serious clever and shattering effective piece of writing...For its savagely coherent picture of a society lethally addicted to blandness." 65

Bateman is caught up in superficial existence with no hope for escape - 'bland' really does describe his response to his world. Bateman, as a heavy and obsessional consumer of commodities, is illustrated by Ellis brilliantly. By giving the cognition's in Bateman's mind (as the whole book is written in the first person) we get first hand introspection into this telling character,

"and then I run in place for twenty minutes while listening to the new Huey Lewis CD. I take a shower and afterwards use a new facial scrub by Caswell-Massey and a bodywash by Greune, then a body moisturizer by Lebriderm and a Neutrogena facial cream. I debate between two outfits. One is a wool crepe suit by Bill Robinson I bought at Saks with this cotton jaquard shirt

from Charivari and an Armani tie. Or a wool and cashmere sport coat with blue plaid, a cotton shirt and pleated wool trousers by Alexander Julian, with a polka-dot silk tie by Bill Blass. The Julian might be a little too warm for May but if Patricia's wearing this outfit by Karl Lagerfield....." etc. 66

The mundane descriptions of designer wear continue throughout the novel and this criticises the values of a society oriented around mass consumption and sign circulation. We can see from the above extract how Bateman's deliberations on what clothes to wear are based mainly around the labels. The make of clothing is primary in his mind. One could say that Bateman's mind works as a system of sign references comparable with the signifier > signifier system of third order simulacra? In fact it becomes evident from reading the book, from reading the neutral cognition of Bateman's mind, that it is difficult to distinguish between (i) names as labels, and, (ii) names as actual people who Bateman knows (and I use 'knows' in the shallowest sense as it becomes even more evident that Bateman can relate better to *The Patti Winter's Show* every morning than he can with people that he sees in physical manifestation ('real' people)). In short Bateman lives so much in the virtual world of commodity culture that he cannot recognise his own psychosis.

To conclude this extreme version of society (this *hyperreal* world of connecting commodity signifiers) delivers false-belief in everything (the state of apathy; i.e. *nothing* matters⁶⁷). Bateman's immense feeling of self-worth (balanced by immense self-loathing) has come from an unnerving and strong connection with the late capitalist system (postmodernism) which delivers **right** (and thus Baudrillardian 'truth'?) through consumption of signs.

Because of *this* reading I feel that the book can then become an *allegory* in which the apparent meaning (a critique of American culture and capitalist values etc.) in fact symbolises deep moral and spiritual problems with **hyperrealism**.

My suggestion would be that taking Baudrillard too literally would lead to an embracing of false-beliefs (maybe madness) - indeed Baudrillard acknowledges this at the end of SIMULATIONS as he refers to the state of simulation being akin to psychosis!,

"who could say what the reality is that these signs simulate? They no longer even repress anything (which is why, if you will, simulation pushes us close to the sphere of psychosis)." ⁶⁸

Of course I am not suggesting that with hyperreality and simulation we would literally end up 'psychotic' as one would need a disposition to this mental state to begin with. Rather that if we chose the pathway of hypereality we chose a pathway which takes us towards apathy and away from a very *helpful* connection with a real world and notions of truth.

With hyperrealism perhaps we too could end up like a Patrick Bateman character - if we choose to accept the Media's pandering and believe in a consumer lifestyle then surely this leads to a surface > surface progression? AMERICAN PSYCHO illustrates a real postmodern problem - this is that if everything becomes commodified and read as 'sign value' what values do these commodities hold and how can we penetrate the surface to find these values?

CONCLUSION

Baudrillard's vision of a hyperreal world is freighted with real problems. This statement may at first seem paradoxical but profoundly illustrates an unnerving apathy towards real problems (e.g. power mongering, exploitation (problems addressed by Norris and the MaCannells)) which is exhibited in hyperreality. Hyperrealism neglects serious issues such as inequality and even human suffering; foolishly Baudrillard proclaims,

“There is violence, but it is not real, it is virtual.”⁶⁹

, and so, “it is in siding and believing in the pretentiousness of the *simulacrum* that

Baudrillard makes his spectacular, aggressively enunciated errors;

‘Vietnam did not happen’, ‘The Gulf War did not take place.’ ”⁷⁰

Then accepting hyperreality, the smooth and heartless capitalist machine is kept well oiled as the simulacrum endorses insensitivity and rejects the existing hierarchical structures and power-games (ideologies) in favour of an idealistic *virtual* world.

What would hyperrealism really mean for the majority of Western human subjects; with its “irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere”⁷¹ meaning that value in anything has become lost from media reduplication and recycling (i.e. ‘combinatory models’ (various information packages (media messages)) ‘in a hyperspace without atmosphere’⁷²?

Baudrillard gives us a condition of despair, but whether we accept this is our own decision. On accepting Baudrillard’s implications we are unable to form a discourse as there has been an admonishment of truth and therefore ideology itself,

“Ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs; simulation corresponds to a short-circuit of reality and to its reduplication by signs.”⁷³

SIMULATIONS can then be used then as a sort of devils advocate’s guide book. But as a dogma or strategy for living I believe it encourages the human subject’s apathy and despair. Surely combative ideological discourse is preferable to meaningless radical semurgy? With radical semurgy we have the perfect ingredients for the perpetuation of the worst breed of government - controlled, greedy, ruthless, hypocritical, conservative, capitalist; and,

“It is a vision which should bring great comfort to government advisers, PR experts, campaign managers, opinion-pollsters, media watch-dogs, Pentagon spokesmen and others with an interest in maintaining this state of affairs.”⁷⁴

To counter the simulacrum we must view the all encompassing code, which would like to swallow up theory as simulation, as merely *a* code (not *the* code). We should remind ourselves that this code is *penetrable* and *correlative*. Baudrillard’s vision of the world is a new way of conceptualising; Baudrillard states,

“Dialectics are finished. Another regime has taken over. And what interests me is the analysis of this other regime.”⁷⁵

The analysis of this regime is what is happening in SIMULATIONS. SIMULATIONS gives a new vision of the world - a vision which claims to have consumed previous paradigms of meaning. SIMULATIONS is then helpful to the extent of *understanding* only and it is crucial to note the book as interpretation - a *prognosis*.

In a final analysis I feel that SIMULATIONS explains an apathetic, decadent, media-oriented, technocratic, pre-millennial position; which perhaps doesn't want to face up to actual reality (e.g. the insufferable violence of the state, social inequality etc.); and has thus created the notion of hyperreality.

However I feel that Baudrillard is not convincing by consuming the real with the hyperreal. I don't believe he has managed to subsume this originary concept ('the real'). He has not elevated reality's status to a more privileged position and he cannot ignore it (N.B: epistemological problems (such as Schoonmaker addresses)). Rather hyperrealism showingly claims to do this ('the more real than real') but in doing so reveals its pretensions and impotence and in fact tries to hide the real away and deny it.

Therefore, for me, the Baudrillardian position is too radical because I believe there is a crucial presence which humans daily know as *reality*. Metaphorically 'the real' is sort of nuclear waste which, although can be buried, insidiously remains as a presence and radiates from below. In an ideal world it would be wonderful if our nuclear waste (our problems / our reality) could be conjured away and our dreams let to live; and in effect it is this virtual scenario which hyperrealism lends itself to.

When Baudrillard claims that violence is virtual it is an absurd claim. It is an understandable claim only if one exists in a virtual 'cool' media zone. However in an actual 'hot' physical zone our humanity and compassion must be evoked and violence *is* real and felt. To return to my analogy: if hyperrealism is a social solution as nuclear power is an energy solution; what is to be made of the social waste, as to what can we do about nuclear energy's waste? Surely these unfortunate by-products of the dream cannot be ignored? These clean solutions are then anything but clean. It would be an ideal world if it was a world which floated on the surface of a perpetually smooth lake. However humankind's nature is such that it 'pollutes' and makes mistakes and therefore the virtual lake is actually a *deep* and *choppy* sea.

Thus, in the end, I would like to view and encourage Baudrillard's account in SIMULATIONS as a prognostic account. As a prognosis rather than a diagnosis the book highlights problems that *may* occur with the end of social life rather than problems which *have* occurred. This 'death of the social' is then an event which has *not* yet happened, but which is perhaps on the verge of happening and for me Baudrillard suggests that it *has* occurred in order to *provoke* the human subject to respond. Because of this Jean Baudrillard becomes *l'agent provocateur de le fin de siècle* - this status helps one cope with the hype and implications of hyperrealism. In this role his writing is most responsible and *helpful* and the ^{third} ~~second~~ millennium may seem less problematic and daunting than at first thought.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULACRA & SIMULATION, p.79.
2. "I have nothing to do with postmodernism", BAUDRILLARD 1990 quoted by Mike Gane in *Ironies of postmodernism: fate of Baudrillard's fatalism*, Economy & Society, no.19. However Nicolas Zurbrugg reminds us, "Considered in terms of his general arguments and assertions, Baudrillard has *everything* to do with postmodernism.", *Baudrillard, Modernism and Postmodernism*, BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, p.227.
3. KELLNER Douglas (Ed), BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, introduction, p.8.
4. BEST Steven, *Commodification of Reality and the Reality of Commodification*, BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, p.53.
5. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULATIONS, p.148.
6. By 'post-industrial' I am referring to the disempowerment of the workers due to technological advances and impositions which have enabled more accountability, regulation, monitoring, efficiency - beaurocratization. The 'industrial world' has been left behind with the advent of computerisation leading to, arguably progressive, information technology and information services.
7. KELLNER, op cit., p.20. N.B: the useless/worthless distinction is as in the text - that is it is not written *useful / worthless* as we might expect.
8. Mediascape and technosphere are provocative words often found in Baudrillardian critique. Basically they relate to a computer & information oriented culture which is perhaps the dominant culture of the West. I have used the words as they place the language arena which Baudrillard performs in.
9. John Lechte lists 16 major writings by Baudrillard including: Le Systeme des Objets (1968), The Mirror of Production (1973), Simulacra & Simulation (1981) and America (1986) - full list, p.237, 50 KEY CONTEMPORARY THINKERS by John Lechte.
10. Phrase from back cover of BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER in order to promote the book, "Self described 'intellectual terrorist', Jean Baudrillard is one of the most important and provocative writers of the contemporary era."
11. Used as a chapter heading in McLuhan's UNDERSTANDING MEDIA
12. ROJEK Chris, FORGET BAUDRILLARD?, p.xii.
13. As does Umberto Eco who is interestingly one of Baudrillard's idols - page xi FORGET BAUDRILLARD? - "Both men have been fascinated by America."
14. "The social has well and truly existed; but it does not exist anymore.", Jean Baudrillard from In the Shadow of Silent Majorities, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983, p.82. I will expand on the implications of this statement later in part II.
15. By 'Americanism' I am referring to the global economic situation whereby American corporations seem to be the most powerful as America is the only remaining superpower. Americanism explains the phenomenon of local cultures becoming increasingly Americanised (e.g. becoming more cosmetically aware, buying American brands, viewing imported American television, using American language which is mediated into the social sphere via cool media input). N.B. Dictionary definition: Americanism - (i) a custom, linguistic usage, or other feature peculiar to or characteristic of the United States, its people, or their culture. (ii) loyalty to the United States, its people, custom, etc.
16. BEST/KELLNER, Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations, p.111.
17. NORRIS, Lost in the Funhouse, WHATS WRONG WITH POSTMODERNISM, p.182.
18. ZURBRUGG N, *Baudrillard, Modernism & Postmodernism*, BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, p.233
19. A phrase initially used by _____ and which has stuck. The postmodern being a 'scene' suggests it is part of an ongoing play with more scenes (constituting acts) to follow.
20. SCHOONMAKER Sara, *Capitalism and the Code: A Critique of Baudrillard's 3rd Order Simulacra*, BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, p.170.
21. *ibid*, p.170.
22. TSEËLON Efrat, *Fashion and Signification in Baudrillard*, BAUDRILLARD: A CRITICAL READER, p.124.
23. Consider the film 'Blade Runner' by Ridley Scott - the premise of the film is the inability to distinguish between 'replicant' humans and actual humans because both the artificial and the authentic are the same under *coded* learning & structure. As we become adult we have assimilated knowledge & memory through experience. The film argues that this experience can be programmed as a series of coded learning i.e. to be able to play the piano we must know how to read music which is learning how to assimilate a code and decipher it. The film exemplifies a Baudrillardian theme such as to prove you are not a robot or an alien becomes impossible as it is impossible to tell the difference between replica and original under the production of signs - the simulation model.
24. By this I mean to illustrate what Baudrillard talks about in SIMULATIONS, "signals of the code", p.104 - he presents the 3rd order with the code at the forefront as a means of deciphering as, "That which is hypostatized in biochemistry is the ideal of social order by a sort of genetic code of macro-molecular calculation". This, although bordering pure hyperbole, reflects how Baudrillard consistently talks about the code as a regulating body.
25. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULATIONS, p.146.

26. GANE Mike, BAUDRILLARD'S BESTIARY, *Modernity, simulation and the hyperreal*, p.95.
27. KELLNER Douglas, JEAN BAUDRILLARD: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond, p.34.
28. *ibid*, p.40.
29. Considering the term 'market morals' I am referring to the excess & surplus of the West which can only exist from exploiting weaker cultures. Thus moral and ethical decisions are made via market forces. We are almost all like a slave to the monster of capitalism and it is a personal decision whether this monster is a god or a demon.
- An example of market morals in action could be the following:
- A desire to purchase cigarettes involves accepting i)perpetuating exploitation, perhaps slavery, of indigenous peoples in South America/Asia/Africa.
- ii)perpetuating land loss, pesticide control & erosion.
- iii)perpetuating corporate world power.
- Another example could be the mahogany market. A desire for this commodity, from ignorant fetishism (mahogany for some is extremely 'tasteful'), endorses deforestation and sustains the mythical aura of the wood as a sign of good taste. As the market can destroy that of value (i.e. the natural world) moral decisions are waged and decided for us; it is through what we consume that constitutes our responsibility.
30. KELLNER, *op cit.*, p.28.
31. *ibid*, p.40.
32. *ibid*, p.45.
33. *ibid*, p.48.
34. 'Fixed reality' - the knowable world. What Stephen Papsen talks about as "Everyday life refers to the world experienced as a taken- for-granted reality. Its structure is composed of the working definitions of reality which 'get us through the day'", *From Symbolic Exchange to Bureaucratic Discourse: the Hallmark Greeting Card, Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol3/No.2, 1986, p.99.
35. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULACRA & SIMULATIONS, p.79.
36. SCHOONMAKER, *op cit.*, p.171.
37. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULATIONS, p.146.
38. *ibid*, p.25.
39. KELLNER, *op cit.*, p.48
40. BAUDRILLARD, *op cit.*, p.2.
41. *ibid*, p.4.
42. *ibid*, p.2.
43. *ibid*, p.2.
44. NORRIS, *op cit.*, p.189.
45. BAUDRILLARD J, *op cit.*, p.76/77.
46. *ibid*, p.146.
47. *ibid*, p.55.
48. *ibid*, p.31/32.
49. *ibid*, p.3.
50. SCHOONMAKER, *op cit.*, p.185.
51. NORRIS C, *op cit.*, p.182.
52. MacCANNELL Dean/MacCANNELL Juliet Flower, *Social Class in Postmodernity (Simulacrum or return to the real)*, FORGET BAUDRILLARD?, p.131.
53. *ibid*.
54. *ibid*.
55. CUBITT Sean, *Laurie Anderson: Myth, Management and Platitide* , ART HAS NO HISTORY!, p.282.
56. NORRIS C, *op cit.*, p.188.
57. *ibid.*, p.191.
58. *ibid.*, p.187.
59. *ibid.*, p.165.
60. BAUDRILLARD J, SIMULATIONS, p.48/49.
61. NORRIS C, *op cit.*, p.188.
62. GANE M (ed.), BAUDRILLARD LIVE, p.82.
63. NORRIS C, *op cit.*, p.189.
64. GANE M (ed.), *op cit.*, p.182.
65. Quote from back cover of AMERICAN PSYCHO, John Walsh from *The Sunday Times*.
66. ELLIS Bret Easton, AMERICAN PSYCHO, p.76.
67. My contention here is that lots of things *matter*; that is many important things actually happen and affect culture and society - to contend otherwise is wrong - a false belief.
68. BAUDRILLARD Jean, SIMULATIONS, p.152.
69. GANE (M), *op cit.*, p.207.

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70. MacCANNELLS, op cit., p.132.
71. BAUDRILLARD J, SIMULATIONS, p.3.
72. (i.e. Western culture being a virtual culture - a cannibal culture which can consume other cultures and reduplicate them as styles or concepts - an example of this in marketing would be 'natural style' products. In the same way themes are adopted from global cultures and often trivialised under Western appropriation (see Postmodernism, Globalism and Orientalism).
73. BAUDRILLARD J, SIMULATIONS, p.48.
74. NORRIS C, op cit., p.190.
75. GANE M (ed.), op cit., p.91.
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