

THE DISEMBODIED EYE: IDEOLOGY AND POWER IN THE AGE OF NIHILISM

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I

The Body as Vermin

For just as K. lives in the village on Castle Hill, modern man lives in his body; the body slips away from him, is hostile toward him. It may happen that a man wakes up one day and finds himself transformed into vermin. Exile—his exile—has gained control over him.

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Kafka's "metamorphosis" is a perfect expression of the alienation of power in the modern age from the realm of facticity. The image of the body as cockroach, with its themes of disembodiment and rule by the dominion of signs, only means that we are reaching the apogee of a great curvature in the arc of modern power: a curvature which now circles back, hurtling us towards the site of exterminism of culture and society in the perspectival space of a purely abstract power. For the great secret of modern power is that its existence is that of a *pure abstraction*: a disembodied, symbolic and cybernetic process of exchange which is driven onwards by its own lack. Power is never what it seems to be: a pure, localizable, intrinsic, and (finally) real "multiplicity of force relations" (Foucault).¹ Instead, we are confronted by an abstract power which is structured from within by the rules of optics and which is, in any event, fictitious because it is a pure "sign-system" (Baudrillard).²

The eye of the flesh opens to find itself in the carceral of an abstract power. This is a power which is neither historicist nor structuralist, neither solely a matter of material effects nor exclusively a process of symbolic effectors. The abstract power of the modern age is, in fact, post-structuralist and post-historicist: it is a coming home to the "perfect nihilism" (Nietzsche) which has always been at work in western consciousness and which only now, in the fully realized technological society, reveals itself in the fateful meeting of power and the sign. In the political discourse of power and the sign (the "information society"), everything is decentered, disembodied, and transparent. Indeed, the genuinely *menacing* quality of a power abstracted from corporeal existence is that its reality is only that of a bi-polar field of symbolic and material effects. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche said that the reality of a nihilistic power was the

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unreality of a "perspectival appearance":³ the bi-polar field of a relational power is only another way of describing the cycle of exterminism which is the charismatic force of modern society. A nihilistic power reworks everything into the language of semiotics, into the circular dynamo of a closed information system, only to insure their destruction in the pure *relational* process of symbolic exchange at the heart of modern power. In the discourse of a power which is structured as a "perspectival appearance", symbolism and materiality coalesce only to be vapourized into a pure nothingness. Everything is to be reduced to the new universal exchange-principle of information.⁴

Kafka understood immediately that the world of abstracted power, of "perspectival appearance", would privilege the topological discourse of the surrealist imagination. In Kafka's discourse, all is metaphorical and, hence, capable of shifting *instantaneously and internally* into a different model of signs. The absolute division of the order of signs from the immediacy of corporeal existence also means that the body is liberated to be resymbolized. A nihilistic power returns finally to the body with a full "spirit of revenge": it seeks to exact revenge in advance for the coming betrayal of the flesh as it plunges towards death. It is as if the discourse of modern power is based on a simple, but severe, political formulation: the closing of the eye of the flesh; and the opening of the "inner eye" of consciousness—to truth, to normativity, to God, to therapeutics, to information, to wealth, to sex. The "inner eye" of modern power opens onto a continent of simulated experience:⁶ power is, in fact, always put into play through a relentless exteriorization of the faculties of the body; and through a surrealist resymbolization of the text of lived experience. Here, there is no little paradise of rotting flesh and no prospect of a new disease with the morning sun.

Perhaps Marshall McLuhan, who also spoke of modern experience as a ceaseless "outring" of the senses, had Kafka's image of the body as vermin in mind when he said:

By putting our physical bodies inside our extended nervous systems, by means of electric media, we set up a dynamic by which all previous technologies that are mere extensions of hands and feet and teeth and bodily heat-controls—all such extensions of our bodies, including cities—will be translated into information systems. Electromagnetic technology requires utter human docility and quiescence of meditation such as befits an organism that now wears its brain outside its skull and its nerves outside its hide.⁷

In the *simulacrum*, where Jean Baudrillard says that power is an "eternal inner simulation" of that which never was, there takes place a constant externalization of the central nervous system.⁸ The sensory faculties are replicated by the technological apparatus which assumes all of the "signs" of the living organism under the codes of "species-being" and "species-will". This is only to say that the dynamic nihilism of Nietzsche's "perspectival appearance" has now gone

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hi-tech!

In the *simulacrum*, power is positive, charismatic and seductive: a technology of hyper-symbolization is at work which functions by processing culture and economy into a sign-system (a *radical* structuralism) endlessly deployable in its rhetoric and always circular in its movement. Nietzsche's tracing of the genealogy of exterminism to the circularity of the "will to will"⁹ (power is an eternal metamorphosis of philology) finds its most contemporary expression in Baudrillard's theorization of the intimate collusion between seduction and power. For Baudrillard, power is always a "lightning quick contraction", an endless reversal, between the *mise-en-scène* of the real and the "other side of the cycle", the dark side of power, where power exists only in the form of an "imaginary catastrophe."¹⁰ Of seduction and power, Baudrillard says: "What we need to analyze is the intrication of the process of seduction with the process of production and power and the irruption of a minimum of reversibility in every irreversible process, secretly ruining and dismantling it while simultaneously insuring that minimal continuum of pleasure moving across it and without which it would be nothing."¹¹ In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche had already said the same: "Let us think through this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: 'the eternal recurrence'."¹² Seduction stands to power as its cycle of bliss: "Plunging down—negating life—that, too, was supposed to be experienced as a kind of sunrise transfiguration, deification."¹³

The body as cockroach is only a "sign" along the way of the processing of the flesh into the "cycle of reversibility", and of exterminism, of the technological dynamo. After Kafka, the body which is processed within the codes of the *simulacrum*, within the algorithmic and digital logic of the servomechanisms of technological society is also a kind of "sunrise transfiguration". Seduction is the rhetoric of a "perfect nihilism": a nihilistic power which works always at the edge of the abrasion of "pleasure and bliss" (Barthes). That is why we are speaking, finally, of power and ideology in the electronic age, and of the locus of their embodiment in the disembodied eye.

This text, then, is an attempt to uncover the internal dynamics of power and ideology in the post-structuralist age. It begins with the image of the body as vermin because the abstraction of power from corporeal existence is the key to the nihilism of the post-modern age. But it continues with the image of the "disembodied eye" because in the literature on the optics of the dis severed eye there is to be found an explicit political theorization of the structural logic of the bi-polar field of relational power. This theorization of a relational power is based upon two working postulates. First, the discourse of modern power stretches in a great chain of nihilation from the Augustinian confession of the fourth century to the charisma of "hi-tech" in the twentieth century. Augustine, Kant, Parsons, Foucault, Barthes, and Baudrillard are but different ways of entering into the very same discourse of a structuralist power. In the language of hi-tech, we are speaking of a "closed loop": a common, discursive understanding of power which reaches its high point in the dialectic of Barthes/Baudrillard; and from that

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moment begins a long, historical curvature in which power returns to its genesis in the mirroring-effect of a "pure image-system". And second, this relational theory of power is based upon *the method of radical metaphysics*. Running against the tide of what Frederic Jameson has described as "high modernism" the relational theorization of power works at the *edge* of metaphysics and the artistic imagination. The playing of Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* against the artistic visions of Max Ernst and René Magritte is a precise, methodological procedure. As Barthes would say, it is an attempt to create an "abrasion" in the seamless web of high modernism: an abrasion in which the nihilation at the epicentre of modern power can be interrogated *as absence rather than as substance*.

The specific theoretical site of the paper lies in a comparative study of those three master texts of the age of "consummated" nihilism: Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text*, Jean Baudrillard's *Oublier Foucault*, and Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*. With them, we are finally beyond ideology-critique and beyond a market-steered conception of power. This is just to take seriously Marx's brilliant theorization of the "double metamorphosis" as the surrealistic slide at the centre of the exchange-relation. This time, though, in Baudrillard's *simulacrum* as opposed to the political economy of the nineteenth century, everything is coming up signs, not commodities. Capital is relativized as one bitter, but partial, phase of the general history of the "sickliness" of nihilism. The new capital of the twentieth century is that strange alchemy of power as a metaphor for an absent experience, and ideology as the flash which illuminates the "double metamorphosis" at the centre of the culture of nihilism.

II

The Disembodied Eye: Canons of New Wave Ideology

The upturned eye discovers the bond that links language and death at the moment that it acts out this relationship of the limit and being; and it is perhaps from this that it derives its prestige, in permitting the possibility of a language for this play.

M. Foucault, "Preface to Transgression"

What then accounts for the sudden charisma of the disembodied eye as a central metaphor of modern experience, a metaphor which is now as much the language of popular culture as it is of philosophical reflection?

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Popular Culture

Signs of the charismatic appeal of the image of the floating eye are everywhere. The film *Liquid Sky*, a classic in the genre of New Wave cinema, is constructed around the visual metaphor of a floating, pulsating eye: a disembodied eye which is illuminated with an optical brilliance of *jouissance* precisely at the moment when the cycle of love reverses itself (in the form of the Orwellian vapourization of the male lover) and the price for sex is revealed to be death. The detached eye of *Liquid Sky* is translucent, aseptic and reversible: at times the eye expresses in its symbolic effects the interiority of the retina of the viewer; then, in a quick reversal, the eye is presented as a floating detached orb, the sign of a dead eroticism. Continuously, the disembodied eye is the visual medium for a swift contraction between sex and death. It is a metaphor for a "cycle of seduction" which moves like a film of pleasure at the threshold of bliss and murder. *Liquid Sky* is a perfect text for the age of dead love.

In the realm of contemporary music, the strategic significance of the disembodied eye as a metaphor for a society vulnerable to a nameless, decentered terror is the thematic of the song *Eye in the Sky* by the Alan Parsons Project. Here, the floating eye functions as a source of invisible terror in a double sense. First, the constant association of the text of the song and the eye of surveillance: "I am the eye in the sky. Looking at you . . . I am the maker of rules. Dealing with fools. I can cheat you blind." But the words themselves with their explicit appeal to a society of surveillance (the sign of a "normalizing society"¹⁴) are a distraction leading away from the *actual* text of *Eye in the Sky*. The melody of the song is a perfect seduction, a "plunging down", leading in an instantaneous shift of perspective from a romancing of the ear to the dark side of Nietzsche's "sunrise transfiguration." The musical text functions as an "incitement-effect" (Baudrillard) which works at the threshold of an image of modern society which spreads out before the ear the liquidation of the subject. The "eye" of *Eye in the Sky* is only incidentally an apparatus of surveillance. The "eye" is an eternal mirroring-effect of the possessive 'I' of the bourgeois self; and, in the curvature of the mirror in which the invisible "maker of rules" is "dealing with fools", is a description of nothing less than the presentation in modern experience of the will to power. But this is a will to power which, rather than operating in the language of negation, functions in the tongue of seduction. It is the sign of a power that works by a seduction-effect, a simultaneous arousal and disintegration which marks the beginning of another cycle of a "perfect nihilism"; precisely, the presence of an "abrasion", an "edge" in its rhetoric.¹⁵ For the melody of the song, this rhythm of a love which entices and arouses to the plunge, stands on the other shore divided sharply from the words of the text, words which are sinister in their meaning. (This is Barthes' insight that in a world which is structured like a "perfectly spherical metaphor";¹⁶ metaphor and metonymy function with *and* against one another as interchangeable moments in the circle of power which is always

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tautological. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes wrote that "culture thus recurs an edge: in no matter what form."¹⁷ And the "edge" of culture is the eternal movement between the poles of pleasure and bliss. But with this precise meaning: "The pleasure of the text is like that untenable, impossible purely *novelistic* instant so relished by Sade's libertine when he manages to be hanged and then to cut the rope at the very moment of his orgasm, his bliss."¹⁸ Perhaps the fascination with the disembodied eye of *Liquid Sky* and the "abrasion" of *Eye in the Sky* is due to the fact that they are central metaphors for a society which, like Sade's libertine, takes its pleasure in throwing up bliss as a rebellion against the boring narrative-line of a surveillance that cannot fail but be normative. "Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so" (Barthes).¹⁹ Again, a perfect nihilism is "never anything but the site of its effect: the place where the death of language is glimpsed" (Barthes).²⁰ But then, a perfect nihilism is also a movement beyond transgression and being, the bliss of the "empty exchange" symbolized by the floating eye.

"The False Mirror"

Consider the most famous depiction of the disembodied eye, the almost *rhetorical* eye, presented by René Magritte in his painting *The False Mirror*. Here, Magritte presents the scandalous image of the eye (i.e., a *simulacrum* of the eye) floating almost innocently as the vast, globular horizon (but also content: the iris as moon) of a translucent, blue sky. Magritte's "eye" is radically severed from its surroundings, magnified in its proportions, and unblinking. We know immediately that we are not in the presence of the eye of the flesh. Indeed, we are gazing upon the precise consequence of the closing of the eye of the flesh. Magritte's "eye" is a perfect symbolization, in reverse image, of the nuclear structure of modern experience. To gaze upon this disembodied eye is to have a privileged viewpoint on modern experience *turned inside out*. The secret of its scandal is specifically that it reveals no obvious traces of genealogy that would take the viewer beyond the infinite regress of its symbolic effects. The disembodied eye is a powerful visual expression of that rupture in modern experience which was precipitated by the discarding of the myth of the natural (the search for a *representational* founding; at least a *nomos*, if not a *telos*), and the creation of a transparently *relational* structure of experience. The disembodied eye is nothing less than a pure sign-system: it cannot be embedded in a chain of finalities because the floating eye as a sign-system signifies the cancellation of vertical being. This is "radical semiurgy" (Baudrillard)²¹ which works its symbolic effects in the language of simultaneity, contiguity and spatialization. Magritte's detached eye is a despairing, visual expression of the "truth" that modern experience is structured from within in the *form* of Nietzsche's "will to will". Everything is an hysterical semiology because everything "wants to be

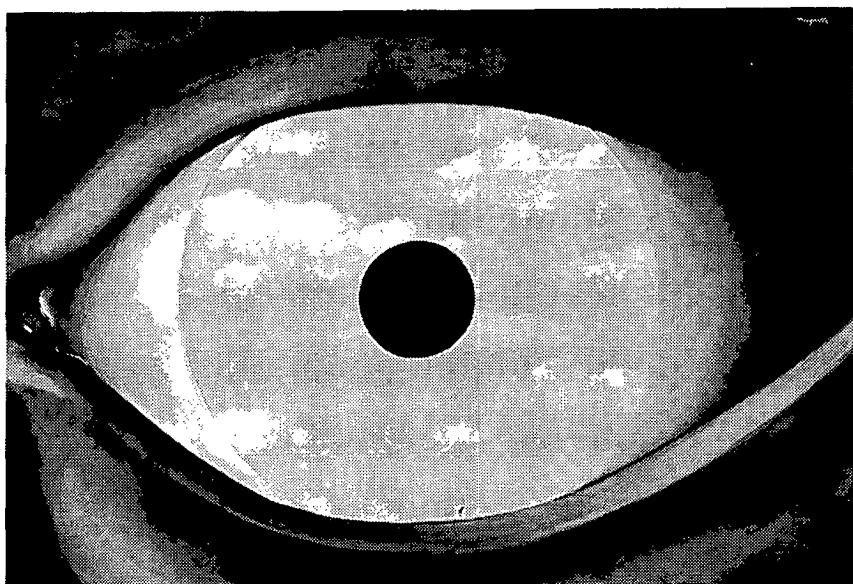
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exchanged" (Baudrillard). Reason dissolves: the life-world is colonized in its deepest interstices; the radical structuralism which is the essential moment (the charisma) of modern experience circles back upon itself (in an endless mirroring-effect) and takes the project of hermeneutics by surprise. When experience is constituted outwards by the abrasion of technological dynamism and lack; when, indeed, a "radical semiurgy" holds constant only the canons of homology and simultaneity (as the *topos* of experience) across the *field* of social relations, and makes the spiralling-effect of experience fascinating precisely because each moment in the "downward plunge" carries the promise of its own exterminism, it is the death of experience that is seductive; not the nostalgia-like recovery of the classical "emancipatory subject." Meaning is only another disguise, another "resurrection-effect" (Baudrillard) which draws us on into a symbolic exchange (carried on in the language of interpretation which carefully obscures its traces in "interpellation") that is, in the end, only another instance of Nietzsche's "plunge into nothingness." In a society that privileges the position of the voyeur (where sight is the site of pure action), the appeal *downwards* to a grounding truth-value (Habermas' "universal pragmatics") can appear only as bad burlesque or as an unhappy reminiscence of the hierocratics of classical naturalism.²²

The disembodied eye is a perfect *phantasmagoria*. Nothing-in-itself, a scandal of absence, it exists as an inscription of pure, symbolic exchange. To gaze at the infinity unto death of Magritte's "eye" is to be as close as possible to what Augustine (the first theoretician of a fully "modern" power) must have meant in *De Trinitate* when he counselled the closing forever "of the eye of the flesh" and "cleaving" of the inner eye to its "first principle" in God. (Nietzsche's "pronouncement" on the death of God was optimistic; God was never born. The famous *He* was always only a "resurrection-effect" which served as a charismatic value/truth for drawing us into the "perfect nihilism" of the will to power). Augustine located the secret of the trinitarian formula (rhetoric as the *form* of a relational power) in the medium of the "inner eye."²³ Nietzsche (a philologist and thus capable of understanding immediately the significance of the *rhetorical* structure of the "Holy Trinity") spoke in precisely the same way of the structuration of the will to power.²⁴ Baudrillard describes the inner eye (the "algorithmic" structure of symbolic exchange²⁵) as a "radical semiurgy"; and Magritte can only point in silence and in despair to the floating eye as the DNA of modern experience.

Other than irony, there is no *substantive* relation between the mirrored eye and its background in the "blue sky." The "natural" horizon exists as a mocking reference to the real; a substitutive-effect (Barthes' metonymy) that works to confirm the continuous existence of the dominant metaphor of the floating eye. The blue sky (a "mirror of nature") is the ideology of the radical structuralism operating in the optics of the floating eye. (Almost like "la sirène" in Robbe-Grillet's *Le voyeur*, the sky exists in the painting as a disguise the presence of which only confirms its non-existence as a real object: "*C'était comme si personne n'avait entendu*").²⁶ Always the site of the sky is disturbed and mediated by

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René Magritte
The False Mirror

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the inner horizon of the disembodied eye. It is all a matter of *ressemblance* and non-identity. A perfect refraction takes place in which the object viewed (signified) circles back and, in an instantaneous shift of perspective, becomes the locus (the iris as moon) of signification itself. The principle of motion at work in this purely perspectival (and radically relational) drama is that of catastrophe theory: the essence of the painting lies in a continuous, inner collapse of the "poles" of eye/sky towards one another. Magritte's *The False Mirror* is an elegant, artistic depiction of what Baudrillard has described as the "redoubled simulation" at work in modern power. For what takes place in the curvature of the refraction, in this mirroring-effect, is a ceaseless simulation and reversal of the *structural* properties of eye/sky. And, of course, an ironic liquidation of nature takes place in the painting. The floating eye is, at first, the mirror image of the sky (it is, in fact, the sky of a "power which does not exist"²⁷). Both the eye and the sky are perfectly transparent; both are empty mediations (the eye, like the sky, is always a condition of possibility, a symbolic exchange); and both are monarchies of formalism. But the eye in the sky is also a *simulation* of the corporeal eye: it is symbolic of the externalization of the senses into a vast *sensus communis* (McLuhan). But there is a difference: the "eye" does not depend for its truth-effects on a technological replication of sight (this is not video ideology); the "eye" is, instead, symbolic only of the inner binary code of modern experience. This is only to say that the "programmed" society is structured from within as a pure optical illusion (a "false mirror") in which everything is reducible to the "presence" of 1 or the absence of 0 in an electro-magnetic field. *The False Mirror* is also a precursor of the algorithmic logic set in motion by the computer.

Nothing can escape exchange! In the symbology of the disembodied eye, a mirroring-effect is in progress in which the *terms* to the relation (signifier and signified, but also all of the antinomies across the table of classical discourse) refract back and forth as image and counter-image in the endless curvature of a tautology. The flash of the gaze as it moves between the "floating eye" (Barthes' metaphor) and the "blue sky" (Baudrillard's "incitement-effect") is, precisely, that small space of disintegration of language and ideology which Althusser called an "interpellation."

But to gaze at *The False Mirror* is also to be implicated; to be drawn fully into consciousness of the void, *le manque*, which is at the centre of modern experience. For the disembodied eye is also a visual autobiography of the dark interiority of modern existence, recalling Nietzsche and his metaphysics of the "philological cancellation" as a radical examination of the inner topography of the skull of modernity. "My consolation is that everything that has been is eternal: the sea will cast it up again."²⁸ Perhaps though Nietzsche never dreamed, as Magritte must have known, that the "casting up of the sea again" could be alienated into a system of modern power and transformed into the nodal-point of a relational "*code structurel*"²⁹ which programmes everything into a simplified and universalized algorithmic process. As Augustine first analyzed the inner rules of a procedural logic of a relational power, a *structuralist* power (which is nothing less than a universalized, symbolic medium of

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exchange) would work by processing all of existence into an endless: "yes/yes; no/no".³⁰ In the pure space of absence of language unto death (that space of affirmation and prohibition) there would remain only the "true word"—for Augustine, this silence which marks the point of rupture between transgression and being is "the sound which is made by no language."³¹ In *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Baudrillard says the same: the machine with its feedback loops, its algorithmic logic, its mirror-like relations of homology, and its inner circuitry for the transmission and processing of information bits works on the basis of a great simplification: 1/0; 1/0."³² Between Baudrillard in the twentieth century and Augustine in the fourth century, there is to be found the beginning-and-end-points of the arc of a dead power. The epistemology of the Holy Trinity (which, after all, was intended to be a permanent solution to the classical, philosophical problem of divided experience) is precisely the same as the algorithmic logic which is the dynamism of Baudrillard's simulacrum. Because both trinitarian formulations (the yes/no and the 1/0 have a *third* term: Nietzsche's will to will which unites them) are instances of the nuclear structure of the will to power. Magritte's disembodied eye is, finally, a confession of the symbolic operations that have always constituted the algorithmic and binary structures of western experience. "And do you know what 'the world' is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!" (Nietzsche).³³ (As if to confirm the desparate truth of Magritte's imagination, his "disembodied eye" has been appropriated by CBS as its visual signature, its logo. A pure sign-system is at work here, one which functions by parodying the parody.)

Magritte's visual depiction of Nietzsche's "sunrise transfiguration" has also been processed into another "sign" in the electronic techno-sphere. McLuhan's tragic sense was based precisely on the simple insight that there would be an irresistible alienation of the central nervous system, extending even to the absorption, in the form of a titillating and grating metonymy, of the critical imagination. "Everything must be circulated," Baudrillard writes. And the *means* for this "outring" of Magritte's imagination into the analytics of the sign of CBS is nothing other than the pure sign-system of empty, symbolic exchange, *still* structured, now as it was in the beginning of Christian metaphysics in the fourth century, by the yes/yes, no/no of the will to power. Because the symbolic exchange at the "heart" of the will to will (which Camus always insisted was a desert of the real) has been—and this continuously in an unbroken *arc-en-ciel*—the institutional *coeur* of western metaphysics.

Now, Magritte's "eye" is transparent, mediational and silent. The silence which surrounds the eye is almost strategic in its significance. There are no human presences in the painting. Everything works within and under the suffocating gaze of the mirrored eye. Magritte's universe is one of terror. But this is a terrorism (like the seduction-effect of CBS as a sign-system) that works in a fully sinister way. There is no frontal oppression; no sovereign authority of a father-figure whose function is the incantation of the eternal "no." Instead, the

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terrorism of the world as a pure sign-system works at the symbolic level: a ceaseless and *internal* envelopment of its "subjects" in a pure symbolics of domination. The endless fascination with the symbolics of domination (who wants to be a naturalist in the age of electronic semiurgy?) is precisely that the ideological-effects of domination function at the deep level of the *coding* of the exchange-system. (Foucault describes this internal coding of experience as a "relational" theory of power;³⁴ for Parsons [whose theorization of a "relational" power is the reverse, but parallel, image of Foucault's], the deep coding of the exchange-system results in the transformation of power into a "generalized, symbolic medium of exchange."³⁵) So we are dealing with a "cybernetic" power: a power-system which existing only as a "circulating medium" is always a matter of "ramifications without roots, a sexuality without a sex"³⁶; in short, a "regulatory" power combining the limitlessness of language with appeals to the defence of social biology. After all, ideology as a deep coding of the structures of an "empty exchange" (the dynamic matrix of technological society) works continuously as a cycle of seduction.

In Magritte's artistic imagination, it is only when we glance, and this unexpectedly, in the wrong direction (when we practice the *trompe-l'oeil* as a political act) that we finally see the traces of blood of a domination which works at the symbolic level. Everywhere in Magritte's paintings a nameless and decentered power is at work. (Foucault, in his earlier writings [the meditations which produced "Preface to Transgression"] was attracted to Magritte's deployment of the artistic imagination. It might indeed have been Magritte's visual discourse on identity and *ressemblance* that attracted Foucault's attention, but then, perhaps, the source of the fascination may also have been Magritte's seductive, nightmarish and unrelentingly deterministic vision of the *Human Condition*. Or, could it have been Magritte's world of unliveable and, perhaps, inescapable pain that captured Foucault's attention?) Magritte's visual domain is a deconstructed one: it is "populated" by objects drawn together in an abstract filiation only through surface relations of formal identity and *ressemblance*. In *Memory*, blood flows from the head of the woman; and a child's ball becomes an object of nameless terror. All is transparent, relational and mute. All the figures in Magritte's visual topography (a *topos* which privileges the voyeur) are trapped in a benign and perfectly structuralist vision. What is important is not the presence—of terror, of filiations, of bodies, of embodiment—but the precise *absence* of possibility: the absence of ontology, sensuous experience, and freedom. Magritte's visual domain is that of Kant's transcendental deduction: formal, categorical and, in its relationalism, quietly terroristic. The freedom which is exercised is only the empty liberty of "deliverance from" the direct, intuitional knowledge of the *ding-an-sich* to a "relational" power.³⁷ I know of no more searing a vision of a relational power (a power "which does not exist": Baudrillard) than the shrouds over the heads of *The Lovers*, the claw marks on the woman in *Discovery*, or the lovely dove in *Black Magic*. To know Magritte is to be confronted with the unbearable truth that the power which now appears is always a displaced "symbol of effectiveness"³⁸; everywhere there are signs of power with no appar-

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ent originary. Writes Octavio Paz:

Prisoner in your castle of crystal of rock
you pass through dungeons, chambers and galleries,
enormous courts whose vines twist on sunny pillars,
seductive graveyards where the still black poplars dance.
Wall, things, bodies, reflecting you.
All is mirror!
Your image persecutes you.³⁹

Power is the language of Magritte's artistic imagination, but in the specific sense that this nameless power is present only in its absences: it is a "strange loop" or, perhaps, the "crystalline" image of a human condition structured by a mirrored, refracted power. What, after all, could be a more haunting symbol of the labyrinth of the carceral than Magritte's painting, *La clef des champs*, in which the landscape collapses inward, revealing and establishing an endless mirrored image between interiority and exteriority? This is the nuclear structure of *synarchy*.

In Magritte's visual *trope*, there is no obvious connection (no "dialectic" of naturalism) between the symbolic language of the *imaginaire* and the presentation of a privileged "finality", no trace of filiation between the dead night of the refracted eye and a vertical chain of significations. We are confronted with the decentered power of a nihilistic *socius*; not with Berger's discourse of the "primitive artist."⁴⁰ Magritte was the first of the *relational* artists. His "artistic probe" (McLuhan) marks a threshold between a "tautological" structure of being and ontology; between the representational discourse of the "real" and the final liquidation of the human subject within the "massage" of a pure sign-system. Magritte's mirrored eye is, of course, a simulation of the corporeal eye. With strategic differences. The simulated eye signifies, at first, the precise, internal rules of operation by which a technological society invests its "political strategies" on a ceaseless and unbroken *inversion* of the symbolic (culture) over the material (economy). The radically dematerialized is presented as the constitutively material. The mirrored eye signifies the mobilization (an "inner colonisation") of the field of human experience within the pure topology (the *optics* of power of Robbe-Grillet) of a system of *lateral referentiality*. As a pure sign-system, the mirrored eye privileges the almost nuclear act of relationalism (not the "dialectic" of signifier and signified, but the pure, tautological "will" of the generalized, symbolic *medium* of exchange) over the warring polarities of a representational experience. What we have in Magritte is the radical *inversion* of experience: the antinomies of classical discourse lose their autonomy as they are processed into refracted images of one another. The mirrored eye as pure sign, a perfect act of relationalism, signifies that henceforth *rhetoric* and *doxa* will be constituted, not as finalities, but as *co-referential* and *co-constituting* manifestations of the other. This is to say, then, that Magritte understood the terroristic vision of human experience in Kant's nominalism: modern

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experience is *regulative, procedural and relational* specifically in the sense that mediation is privileged over ultimate constituting practices, and form enjoys a "monarchical sovereignty" (Foucault) over *immediate* experience. The mirrored eye is symbolic of a "will to will" which both *constitutes* the field of material practices (ideology as the *doxa* of the medium) and *is constituted* by the heteronomous play of material existence (ideology as the *rhetoric* of seduction). In the *text* of modern politics, power always traces and retraces a great, circular motion: rhetoric and *doxa* (Barthes), challenge and resistance (Baudrillard), play back upon one another as mirrored images in a constant cycle of exterminism. What is at stake is not the *identity* of the constituting subject, but precisely the *death* of the subject which is hinted at by the plunging downwards into the dark iris of Magritte's floating eye.⁴¹

Finally, after we thought we had forever lost a "sovereign power" (with Foucault's elegant division of the "symbolics of blood" from an "analytics of sex" in *The History of Sexuality*), we discover a new principle of sovereignty in the emergence of power as a pure relation. But, of course, a relational power is free to be sovereign because it has no reality; it is at centre a "regressus in infinitum" (Nietzsche), a pure leap of directly experienced will between two previously divided chains of significations. The luring, compelling quality of a relational power is, perhaps, that it is the *radical absence* (Magritte's dark iris), the presence of which is the basic "condition of possibility" (Kant) of western consciousness. What is most seductive about a relational power-system is the *asensory, aseptic* hint of death which forms its constant, and ever-receding, horizon. When we can say "technique is ourselves,"⁴² then we have also to look to the *inverted* language of death and life for an answer to the perennial human assent to the will to technology. And thus, perhaps, we find the foundations of human assent in an irresistible fascination in modern society with the reverse, but parallel, imagery of transgression and progress. It is the dark spiral of negation which carries us forward; the *charisma* in the nihilism of a technological society lies precisely in its theatrical effect as a site of unceasing motion. In associating the language of death with the purely rhetorical functions of the inner eye, Magritte also joined the poetic imagination and radical metaphysics. The mirrored eye is an advertisement for the privileging of a death-cult as the *ratio* of modern society. In a society in which the floating eye symbolizes the *nuclear structure* of human experience, what else can there be but "screaming heads"? But we have this choice: Max Ernst's vigil to the metamorphosis in *The Robing of the Bride* or Nietzsche's elegant cackle. I'll take Nietzsche.

The Uprooted Eye

In his essay, "Preface to Transgression"⁴³, Michel Foucault recurs to the "denatured" eye as an *ideolect* for the play of limit and transgression in modern experience. He writes of Bataille's *Histoire de l'oeil* that it was haunted by the

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"obstinate prestige of the eye." "When at the height of anguish, I gently solicit a strange absurdity, an eye opens at the summit, in the middle of my skull."⁴⁴ For Foucault, the upturned eye of Bataille represents less the beginnings of a disciplinary society founded on surveillance (unless surveillance be rethought as an inner semiotics of the ruling metaphor), than an actual break in the western "tradition" signalled by the liquidation of the "philosophical subject." In the transparency of Bataille's upturned eye, a bond is discovered which links language and death. The eye turns back on itself into the dark night of the skull, linking transgression and being. "It proceeds to this limit and to this opening when its being surges forth, but when it is already completely lost, completely overflowing itself, emptied of itself to the point when it becomes an absolute void."⁴⁵ Foucault says of the privileging of a purely *visual* universe that what is put in play by this gesture is *absence* as the "great skeletal outline" of existence. It is not so much that the "death of God" made the *impossible* the ground of human experience. This would be simply to indicate the loss of sovereignty of the *interior*; to confirm the void as the centre of the swirling spiral within which we find ourselves. But it is not so much the famous killing of God, but the murder of a "god who never existed" that sustains the *impossible* as the limit of experience. The philosophical subject is always *twice* liquidated: once by the disappearance of the *ontology* of an originary (the "death of God" and, consequently, the boring narration of the "loss" of meaning); and, again, by the impossible knowledge of the murder of a "power which did not exist" (Baudrillard). It is this second "pronouncement", the killing of the *metonymic* representation of a "dead power" (Baudrillard) but not of the metaphorical structure of power, that is the slaying which counts. For what is announced by the murder of a God who was always only a metonymy is that being will be played out within the *form* of a power, which being limitless is also only metaphorical. Bataille's history of the migrating eye is an erotic record of the disappearance of the philosophical 'I'. Its internal episodes—*L'armoir normande*, *Les pattes de mouche*, *L'oeil de Granero*—constitute a chain of dead being which consists (as Barthes argues) of a spiralling-effect between the governing metaphor of the eye and the rhetoric of its "substitutive-effects."⁴⁶ Rhetoric is the energizing force in the philological cancellation which is the core of the *second* pronouncement. It is the tongue of rhetoric (the mouth as opposed to the eye) screaming against the impossibility of dead being. And this always to no effect. For we are speaking of a perfect tautology between mouth and eye. A circular motion is at work in which speech, while protesting its imprisonment in a metaphorical power (and seeking to subvert the authority of an "empty, symbolic exchange"), only serves as a come-on for that power.

Bataille was writing of the insertion of ideological struggle (a revivifying *praxis*) into the form (the absence) of history. But how could it be otherwise? It is the terrible mystery of the yet-unreflected second pronouncement (the non-existence of power) which ideology as the value praxis of truth leads us around. The second slaying as the quick killing of God as soon as it lost its charisma as an incitement for "dead power" (Baudrillard) was always an avoidance-strategy.

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The murder of the first, great metonymy (theology as a signifying practice) intimates that there *never* was a ground to western experience, that absence was always the primal of the will to will. An atopic universe is thus the limit and possibility of transgression. It is the will to truth which is the "seduction-effect" (Baudrillard) leading us on; and tempting us with the Promethean dream that in the endless cycle of the "semantic cancellation" (Baudrillard) that we will find a reprieve from death.

Always in the background of the funereal social text, there is another noise: the insistent and monotonous whirring of the techno-system as it "shuffles and reshuffles genetic combinants and recombinants"⁴⁷ into a Mendelian-like simulation of life. It is the dark night of the Mendelian simulation—the creation of a "cybernetic" society on the basis of a fateful pairing of linguistic theory and social biology—that transgression reveals. "Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it derives, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestations, its harrowing and poised singularity; the flash loses itself in this space it makes with its sovereignty and becomes silent now that it has given a name to obscurity."⁴⁸ Ideology is that "flash of lightning in the night" illuminating the obscure; it is a seduction by a sceptical freedom. As the dynamic matrix of value/truth in the modern régime, ideological discourse promises the return of *vertical* being; the recovery, that is, of a *real* difference between the centripetal (dispersion) and the centrifugal (immanence) tendencies in experience. The come-on of ideology when it operates in the name of transgression is precisely the guarantee of a division between past and future against the circularity of the Mendelian exchange. What is this, then, but a discourse which insists that the flash does not represent an illumination-effect already, even at the moment of its greatest brilliance, on its way to obscurity, but a permanent horizon between day and night. (The Canadian painter Ivan Eyre calls this illusion of the permanent horizon "distant madneses."⁴⁹)

Bataille's "upturned eye" is a *coda* for a cynical freedom, for a liberty that moves to the rhythm of ellipsis: eye in the sky/sky in the eye. But what *is* freedom when the "real" is always prepared to abandon its public disguises and, in a quick reversal of effects, to dissolve inwards, directing the gaze towards that spot of nothingness which, in its implosion, traces a long curvature back to the eye of the viewer. As Foucault has said of a "cynical power",⁵⁰ who could stand a sceptical freedom? Who could tolerate a space of freedom which is only the ellipsis of the "sea coming up again"? Foucault asks: "Would power be acceptable if it were entirely cynical?"⁵¹ and he responds: "Power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability."⁵² The impossibility, however, of reading Nietzsche against Bataille or of taking Bataille's "migration of the Eye" as an abrasion which draws out the metaphor of Magritte's mirrored eye, is that they leave no space for transgression that would *really* violate the closed topos of the *simulacrum* (Baudrillard). They reveal only a "cynical power" made bearable because it has as one of its fronts, its symbolic disguises, an equally

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sceptical freedom. The redeployment of freedom into the language of "lateral referentiality"⁵³ (liberty as a condition of possibility), of *procedural* normativity, is what is meant by the inner mirroring-effect of society. Language collapses, and the aesthetic imagination dissolves. *The Pleasure of the Text*, *Eye in the Sky*, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* and *The History of Sexuality* are the form that radical metaphysics is forced to assume. For what else is a cynical freedom but another way of talking about the will to power? Now that we inhabit the domain of the "perfect nihilism", the cynicism of an empty freedom is the only condition of its pleasure. This means that contemporary ideological discourse, if it is to regain its *charismatic* power, must resituate its seduction-effect in the moment of the "flash" itself. In the world of a "perfect nihilism", what is most seductive is the promise of oblivion, the last cheap thrill of an ironic goodbye to no tomorrows. New Wave ideology is a parody on the high seriousness of the "flash"; and a happy chorus of voices calling out for darkness, for oblivion. This would also suggest that the only serious "ideology" today is black humour.

The Eye as Metaphor

It's the very same situation with that other famous reflection on Bataille's optical illusion: Ronald Barthes' elegant meditation, "The Metaphor of the Eye."⁵⁴ Barthes says of the image of the disembodied eye that it reflects nothing less than a "pure image-system."⁵⁵ "In its metaphoric trajectory, the Eye both abides and alters: its fundamental form subsists through the movement of a nomenclature, like that of a topological space; for here each inflection is a new name and utters a new usage."⁵⁶ This is, of course, only another variation of the unity/variety debate: the form (metaphoric composition) remains constant across a heterogeneity of contents (signifying practices). *Histoire de l'oeil* is, then, a metaphoric composition: "one term, the Eye, is here varied through a certain number of substitutive objects which sustain with it the strict relation of affinitative objects (the cat's milk dish, 'Granero's enucleation', the 'bull's testicles') and yet dissimilar objects too. . . ."⁵⁷ With Baudrillard's *Oublier Foucault* as the text of Magritte's *The False Mirror*, we are led on to the discovery of a "radical semiurgy" at work. And with Barthes' literary imagination as the metonymic agent which rubs and grates against Bataille's floating eye ("a reservoir of virtual signs, a metaphor in the pure state"), we stumble upon the same formulation: "a perfectly spherical metaphor: each of the terms is always the signified of the other (no term is a simple signified), without our being able to stop the chain."⁵⁸ But there is also at work in Barthes' "double metaphor", a radical transgression of values: a surrealist reversal of categories which now is expressed only in New Wave aesthetics. And it is this instantaneous reversal of the *terms* in the image-system which renders all traditional ideological discourses (those based on a militant division between the night of *doxa* and the day

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of rhetoric) obsolete. "Yet everything changes once we disturb the correspondence of the chains; if, instead of pairing objects and actions according to the laws of traditional kinship (to break an egg, to poke out an eye), we dislocate the association by assigning each of its terms to different lines."⁵⁹ In crossing the syntagm, we approach the "law of the surrealist image."⁶⁰ For Barthes modern being was "purely formalist" because the disembodied eye, as a metaphoric composition for the *actual* structuration of power, always functions by "crossing the syntagm" ("the eye sucked a breast, my eye sipped by her lips"). The initially poetic technique of violating the parallel metaphors (these two chains of signifiers) also releases a very "powerful kind of information". The *simulacrum* now rests on the *political* strategy of transgressing the syntagm, of crossing in random variation the "poles" of the two chains of signifiers. Transgression at the level of metonymy is what Baudrillard describes as a "seduction-effect." The "poking out of an egg, the sipping of an eye" is the "imaginary catastrophe" standing behind the real. In a world structured in the suffocating form of an *atopic* text, ideology can function only in the language of the violation of the previously autonomous division between the parallel metaphors.

Nietzsche said that the will to truth is the morphology and incitement-effect of the will to power. Foucault replied much later: "The political question . . . is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself."⁶¹ Still, there is no "headquarters of rationality" (Foucault), no "core of a metaphor" (Barthes), which explains the compulsion towards the plunge into nothingness. The fascination of the floating eye is also that it is an "image-reservoir" of the liquidation, the cycle of exterminism, which is the grammar of modern experience. The image-system is always and only a site where action happens, but also where everything undergoes extermination in the *regressus in infinitum*. For what is "truth" in a purely formalist universe other than the simulated pleasure of violation, discontinuity, and decenteredness? A cycle of identical images is in motion: Kafka's *Penal Colony*, Barthes' *Text*, Sade's "Silling Castle", Baudrillard's *simulacrum*, Bataille's eroticism of the disembodied Eye. If the uprooted eye is, in the end, a simple "mirror of culture" (Barthes), then perhaps the "value" of truth lies only in the surrealism of the pure sign.

Sartre's "look"

The literature on the disembodied eye privileges the political position of the Peeping Tom. Perhaps to be conscious of imprisonment in the "mirror of culture" is also to aggravate the impulse of autism in the intellectual imagination.

Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations in this section are from Jean-Paul Sartre's "The Other and His Look" in Justus Streller, *To Freedom Condemned*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1960, pp.37-45.

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At least that was Barthes' posture when he adopted the political stance of the detached, and thus invulnerable, observer who resides precisely at the "degree-zero" of the cycle of exterminism.⁶² "He himself is outside exchange, plunged into non-profit, the Zen *mushotoku*, desiring nothing but the perverse bliss of words (but bliss is never a taking: nothing separates it from *satori*, from losing)."⁶³ McLuhan, that other author of a spatialized universe, proposed Poe's "drowning sailor" as his favourite literary figure. The drowning sailor knows that he is doomed within the downward spiral of the whirlpool, but as a matter of critical detachment, he studies the maelstrom "for a thread" which might provide a way of escape. This is only to say that the philosophy of the disembodied eye is coeval with a political practice, which, being constituted by the "will to not-will", is also semiurgical, desexed, spatialized, voyeuristic, and privative. Only the dissolution of the corporeal subject could provide a free space of nothingness across which the surrealistic *slide* between metaphor and metonymy could occur. The image of acting "degree-zero" is a splendid and grisly typification of the continuous inner collapse of the previously autonomous poles of experience towards one another. We are in the presence of "catastrophe theory" as the only explanation possible of the inner elision (Barthes: "The most consistent nihilism is perhaps *masked*: in some ways interior to institutions, to conformist discourse, to apparent finalities"⁶⁴) in modern experience.

The political counterpoint of the "voyeur" is Sartre's *look*. This is also the precise line of demarcation between a philosophy of facticity and entrapment in the rhetorical cycle of the will to power. In a universe that privileges, as Baudrillard has theorized, a "redoubled simulation" of the visual sense, there is an insistence on the annihilation of facticity. It is the *coding* which counts, not the direct experience of "apparent finalities." The bliss of the voyeur derives from its location of the observer in the "not-will" of silence, detachment and withdrawal. In popular culture, the appropriation of voyeurism by the literary imagination has been breached. The archetype of the voyeur is now generalized in the form (the *commodified* form) of the video viewer who is stripped of speech by a "socially structured silence" (Agger).

The antithesis of the voyeur, if not its negation then at least its parodic form, is the "laughing philosopher", perhaps best represented in the modern century by Sartre. In his meditation, "The Other and His Look," Sartre speaks of the intimate entanglement of the look and freedom. It was, in part, Sartre's project to insist on the opening of the eye of the flesh, to disclose again the possibility of a political critique of the spatializing *topos* of a rhetorical power. "What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is *not* that there is someone there: it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and I cannot in any case escape from this space in which I am without a defense—in short, *that I am seen*." It is the *look* of the other (this exchange of a "furtive shame of being") which opens up a bitter participation in the human situation. Sartre's *emergence* begins with the auditory sense, with the recovery of the *ear* as a privileged site of political action. "When I hear the branches crackling . . ." As against the "pure formalism" (Barthes) of the eye

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which is, in any event, the optics of a silent and unnamed power, the appeal to the ear intimates the recovery of the "throatiness" of time again, of history once more. We are speaking now of the "I am vulnerable": the pure fleshly "eye" that shrieks against the inevitable loss of sovereignty of the "flash" and laments the inevitable dispersion of *jouissance* in Foucault's "obscurity." Sartre's recovery of the auditory sense is akin to George Grant's recommendation that the project of philosophy today is that of "listening for the intimations of deprivation."⁶⁵ To Sartre's anguished declaration, "I am my possibilities" Grant responds with the hyper-realistic image of being in the modern age: "a plush patina of hectic subjectivity lived out in the iron maiden of an objectified world."⁶⁶ In both instances, the embodied ear struggles against the mirrored eye; what is at stake is nothing less than the recovery of speech, of the philosophy of the oral tradition. The floating eye may signify an "empty, symbolic exchange" that specializes in the spatializations of a "pure, image-system"; but the embodied ear privileges corporeality, verticality of being, collective experience, and *speech*.

As a pure, circular semiotics, the "eye" exists as the moment of *absence* between seeing and being seen: *it is the transparent relation which cancels the autonomy of both positions*. The project of the dis severed eye is to reduce Sartre's "look" to a compulsory zero-point of oblivion. Sartre knew this possibility: he called it *indifference*. "It may be that I choose at the moment of my upsurge into the world to look at the look of the Other (whereupon the look and its objectifying power disappear, leaving only the eyes) and to build my subjectivity on the collapse of the Other's freedom (that is, therefore, on the Other-as-object)." Sartre's notion of *indifference* is based on the double principle of a dispersion of the real (the liquidation of the Other as the limit of my "non-thetic possibilities") and pure relationality ("leaving only the eyes"). *Indifference* is the signature of existence in the *simulacrum*: it is the specific "voiding" of human quality necessary for life in the presence of Magritte's shrouded lovers. Sartre says the world of pure relationality is the political domain in which *ressentiment* against the Other's existence "as my original fall" is overcome by a strategy of cancellation of the Other. "Co-efficients of adversity", "mechanisms": these are the simulated attitudes necessary for the nihilation of the Other as the *limit*, and possibility, of my freedom. Everything works to deny the "unpredictability" of the *reverse side* of the situation; to reduce the "simultaneity of parallel systems" to the univocity of my will, a pure will. The "limit" of the Other is overcome by a fateful linking of language and death: "The problems of language are the same as those of love."⁶⁷ But in the slide from love to domination, language itself is subverted: "Language consists of patterns of experience through which I try to impose on the other my point of view, to dominate him and enslave him."⁶⁸ Language (the grammatical "attitudes") of a purely *optical* power is the mediation of Sartre's cancellation of the Other. And thus what began with Sartre's analysis of the "motives" of *indifference* (the need to overcome the "limit" of the Other as a way of denying my finitude) ends with the limitlessness of a subverted language. *Indifference* is the grain of the floating eye; it is the existential posture coeval with the denial of the limit in the existence of the

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Other.

Against the *visual* exterminism of indifference, Sartre also listens to the sounds of what is most deprived, most excluded: "My body is a sign of my facticity."⁶⁹ With this meaning: "To be sure, the look rather than my body is the instrument or cause of my relation to others, but it is my body that gives meaning to this relation and sets on it certain limits."⁷⁰ The perfect semiology of domination symbolized by Magritte's mirrored eye elevates Sartre's claim of the body as a realm of facticity to the most fundamental of ontological rebellions. The body, with its "slight but irradicable nausea", with its desire for solitude from the "objectifications" of the *third term* (symbolic exchange), with its potential for the "grace" of freedom and the "obscenity" of *superabundant facticity* is the vertical axis that subverts from within the circular motion of a tautological power. Sartre's "lovers in flight" from the "look" are the specific upsurge against Barthes' voyeuristic bliss in the "text" and, for that matter, against Foucault's endless cancellation and reversal of the real. This is only to say, though, that *love* which forgives the body for its finitude and for its sure and certain sentence of death is all that separates facticity from the surrealism of the eye of power. Perhaps the fascination with the dis severed eye and with its psychological correlate in *indifference* is its promise, if not of deliverance from, then, at least, forgetfulness of nausea. Foucault's "cynical power" is only a variation in dull tones of Sartre's sceptical death.

III

"Dead Power"

Power did not always consider itself as power, and the secret of the great politicians was to know that power does not exist. To know that it is only a perspectival space of simulation, as was the pictorial space of the Renaissance, and that if power seduces, it is precisely—what the naive realists of politics will never understand—because it is a simulation and because it undergoes a metamorphosis into signs and is invented on the basis of signs.

Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault*

The text supercedes grammatical attitudes: it is the undifferentiated eye which an excessive author (Angelus Silesius) describes: 'The eye by which I see God is the same eye by which He sees me'.

Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*

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Repulsion and Seduction

A specific *political* relationship exists between Kafka's image of the metamorphosis and the now multiple variations on the theme of the disembodied eye. With both metaphors, we are confronted with explicit recitatives of the existence of an *absent* power that works continuously on the basis of "figuration" (Barthes) rather than representation. It is all a matter of an alienation performing within the deep site of the interiority of experience; and which produces its effects in a displaced, symbolic form.

At first, there is the expropriation, almost in obscenity, of Gregor's body: the metamorphosis works by *sliding* the dream of nausea into the reality-effect of the bourgeois family. Kafka's elision of dream/consciousness is a precursor, in fact, of the "free fall" (illusional) effect of the lived-out nightmare of a fascist politics in *The White Hotel*. The "slide" of the metamorphosis is as purely figurative a description as could be made of the quick fragmentation of experience opened up by the psycho-political manoeuvre of violating the space of the syntagm. The body as cockroach is a parody on Sartre's "facticity"; and his "irradicable nausea" finds its exaggerated reality-effect in the moment of Gregor's awakening. Dream-experience and reality-principle (madness and reason) slide into one another in an endless spiral of ellipsis: the scream against the possession of the body by an absent power echoes first in the dream, but also finds its mirroring-effect in the *real* which, in any event, traces the curvature of a mad horizon around Gregor's last "sleep of reason."⁷¹

The disembodied eye represents, perhaps, but an intensified expression of the alienation first depicted in Kafka's "outering" of a numbed, extremist body. There are, however, strategic differences between the two images, and it is precisely in this space of difference that there is disclosed a whole history of a fundamental internal transformation in the *structural* laws of operation of modern power. To begin with, the "body as vermin" stands to the dis severed eye as "incomplete" to "completed" nihilism.⁷² In "The Word of Nietzsche", Heidegger said that "incomplete" nihilism does indeed "replace the former values with others, but it still posits the latter always in the old position of authority that is, as it were, gratuitously maintained as the ideal realm of the suprasensory."⁷³ Incomplete nihilism is the prefiguration of the "pessimism of weakness":⁷⁴ it is unconsummated, passive, embodied, and thus still capable of the *bracketing* of a critical hermeneutics. In the metamorphosis, there remains a tension (a preservation of *dialectical* reason) between consciousness and the mutilation of the body. The "body as cockroach" is, in fact, a classic, political statement of the age of incomplete nihilism; but with this statement there may also have come to an end the privileged existence of a *sociology* of power. Thus, Gregor's nausea is an active counterpoint (an immanent resistance and first refusal) to the normalizing domination of a bureaucratic society. Nausea is also a melody of transgression and division. The *shell* of the body is a vivid expression of the deep penetration of the principle of "imperative coordination" into the

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"old position of authority." This is a theoretical rebellion against a *normalizing* domination: a domination by the *norm* which works through a sociological incarceration of the body and which is sustained by an "analytical reduction" of power to the language of the "internalization of need-dispositions."⁷⁵ With the metamorphosis, we are thus drawn into a *historical* meditation on the dark side of normativity: the side of the *embodiment* of a positive, analytical, and almost benign, structure of value/truth. After all, Kafka's theorization is only a reverse, but parallel, image of Spencer's "social physics": and with both we are brought to the culmination in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sociology of an already obsolete form of power. That Kafka, and his poetic analogue in Benjamin, were the last and the best of the critical theorists may be, no doubt, because they lit up the dark night of bureaucratic (normative, mechanical, and embodied) power with the luminosity of one word: repulsion. It was also the fate of critical theory to remain a historical reflection on "incomplete" nihilism. But it must be said too that the peculiar illusion of critical theory (and one which now condemns it to unwind into the future as a *conservative* defense of the "critique" of incomplete nihilism) was its tragic forgetfulness of Nietzsche's insight that in the cycle of exterminism (in the day of "completed" nihilism) even the transgression of thought is only another station along the way. In an ironic gesture, it is the fate of contemporary critical theory to preserve the classical "truth" of the now-anachronistic era of *unconsummated* nihilism.

The significance of the disembodied eye as an almost primitive expression of the modern fate is that it symbolizes the *charismatic leap of power* from its previous basis in normativity (the "old position of authority") to a new foundation in the "semiurgy" of the pure sign (a pure *optics* of power). The mirrored eye is disembodied, relational, tautological and *active*. We are in the presence of a "power" which overwhelms *from within* the classical division of time/space so essential to critical theory (Gregor's consciousness preserves "time" against a spatializing topos); and which, moreover, processes everything within the *field* of its discourse through a "semiological wash."⁷⁶ McLuhan hinted that the age of electronic media would release a "polymorphous symbolism"⁷⁷; but Baudrillard added the necessary corrective that the age of the "structural law of value" (McLuhan's transparent media) would be experienced as a "radical semiurgy."⁷⁸ The shift from Kafka's metamorphosis to the mirrored eye is thus a sign of a vast rupture in modern domination. In a sociological domination, there was at least a final grounding of power in the body; providing, at the minimum, the illusion that we were dealing with a power "which had a sex" (Foucault); a power that would always be forced to close with the philosophical subject. Not so, though, with the power symbolized by the disembodied eye. Here, power has no sex for the specific reason that this is a type of domination which privileges the technological knowledge of a pure sign-system. Power can now be asexual and neutral (unclassifiable) because it is associated with the "truth-effect" of a discourse on technology. This is a power which works at the level of the *technical* manipulation of symbolization; and which is free to be charismatic because it dwells in the pure technique of an exchange-system which being "nothing in

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itself" is always symbolic and figurative. When power loses the necessity for the "truth" of sex, then it is also free to *decouple* corporeality from an obvious imprisonment. The last illusion of a "mechanical age" is, however, that the body (Sartre's "facticity") has somehow been recovered when it is released into the "bliss" (Barthes) of a "polymorphous symbolism."

The metamorphosis which counts in the world of a "radical semiurgy" is no longer Kafka's tomb of the body, but that atopic and purely formal transfiguration which is the thematic of the artistic imagination of Max Escher. What, after all, could be a more vivid illustration of the existence of a *mirrored* power which works as an endless redeployment of a tautological sign-system than Escher's *Moebius Strip II* or his dramatic *Sphere Spirals*? To study Escher is to enter the ground-zero of a fantastic *morphological reduction*. Everything is a matter of structural filiations in the process of rapid reversal, of perspectival space collapsing inwards and then spiralling upwards in an impossibility of spatial distortion, of cancellation *and* extension of complex images which privilege the "smaller and smaller". This is an absolute *litotate* of an experience which is never more than its topological filiations, but also never less than a deep continuity of an unceasing, circular exchange of the forms of existence. The particular contents of experience are relativized: this is a totalitarianism of form. In the sudden reversal and liquidation of the contents of this formalist geography (birds into trapezes; fish into missiles; stairwells into castles in the air; substance into an infinity of nothingness), two structural laws of value remain constant. First, everywhere in Escher *there is a "double-movement" of creation and cancellation*. Nothing remains immutable; life appears only as a sign of a cycle of disintegration which is already underway. But, as in *Moebius Strip II*, the impossibility of this double-movement is that the impulses to genesis and exterminism condition one another, almost as conspirators in a "ceaseless revaluation of all values" (Nietzsche). The double-movement of creation and reversal is the deep structuration which lineaments the heterogeneous *contents* of experience and which, seemingly, makes for an impossible symmetry of conservation and death. Second, and this in sharp contrast to Kafka's nausea, the structural law of motion which incites the double-movement is that of *seduction*. It is precisely as Baudrillard has said in *Oublier Foucault* of the convergence of seduction and power in the modern century: "Everything wants to be exchanged, reversed, or abolished in a cycle (this is in fact why neither repression nor the unconscious exists: reversibility is already there). That alone is what seduces deep down, and that alone constitutes pure gratification (*jouissance*), while power only satisfies a particular form of hegemonic logic belonging to reason. Seduction is elsewhere."⁷⁹

The mirrored eye opens onto a new continent of seduction and power: a topography of reversibility and instantaneous cancellation. It is seduction which is the *absence* in a tautological power; and it is the promise of death in the double-movement of Escher's "figuration" which makes the "spherical spirals" of his work fascinating. This is only to say that Baudrillard is the Columbus of modern power, for he has made the remarkable "discovery" of seduction as the

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third term in the double-movement of Nietzsche's cycle of exterminism. Now we know that the existent "texts" of a relational power converge on an understanding of the eroticism of nihilation. That is why Bataille's *Historie de l'oeil* is a classic of a dead eroticism; why Barthes ends *The Pleasure of the Text* with the fateful words, ". . . it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss";⁸⁰ and why, perhaps, Sartre stood convinced of the *irresistibility* of nothingness. In *To Freedom Condemned*, Sartre spoke simply of the fascination of the "hole" as something which "longs to be filled." So much so, in fact, that the challenge of the void (the "hole") is always at the threshold of life and death: "He makes a symbolic sacrifice of his body to cause the void to disappear and a plenitude of being to exist."⁸¹ Sartre's "sacrifice" before the challenge of the void is the very same insight as Baudrillard's "seduction" and, for that matter, of Barthes' "*jouissance*." We are in the presence of a purely tautological power which stakes its truth-effect on the almost promiscuous presence of the void. Death in its multiplicity of presentations (Sartre's "nothingness is not", Heidegger's "nihilation", Nietzsche's "modernity as a rat's tail") is the challenge, the seduction, which inflames power as a "pure sign". But again, and this *against* the relevance of Kafka's metamorphosis, the "sacrifice" before the void works in the language of seduction and never as the psychology of repulsion.

"Consummated" Nihilism

There is a deep affinity between Nietzsche and Escher. The source of their convergence is specifically what divides power as a "metamorphosis into signs" (Baudrillard) from the old dominations and power of the "body as cockroach". Escher's artistic perspective of a ceaseless liquidation and multiplication of *deep morphologies* finds its analogue in Nietzsche's haunting image of an age of "consummated" nihilism. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche said: "There is no will: there are treaty drafts of will that are constantly increasing or losing their power."⁸² And the will "does not exist"⁸³ because Nietzsche knew it was already dead: a *lack* which could have only a multiplicity of "treaty drafts" (truth-effects). As the double-movement of its "signs" (the mirroring of *signified and signified*; as Barthes said, "nothing exists as a simple signifier"⁸⁴), the will could exist only as an optical effect in reverse image. Of Nietzsche's "dead will", Baudrillard said that we are dealing with a "perspectival space of simulation"⁸⁵ which functions on the basis of a transformation of the *real* into an empty "sign-system". Will is *symbolic* of the nihilation of facticity; and it is in the internal grammatology of the *symbolizing-process* of the dead will that we come upon, almost without warning, the *basic genetic code* of modern experience. Baudrillard's notion of the will (and thus power) as a "simulation" of the real signifies that a dramatic reversal of void/being has occurred. For at the "centre" of the dead will, there exists in seductive, but paradoxical, form a "plenitude of the void";⁸⁶ and only outside the seduction of the void does there exist that now *real* lack: the

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emptiness of being. The will as only a "space of simulation" works its optical effect through a reversal of nothingness: it is not so much that "nothingness is not" as that "nothingness is being".⁸⁷ Nietzsche might well concur that Escher's *Whirlpools* with its swirling and always reversible filiations of form, its seductive image of a pure suffocation of perspectival space, is an accurate depiction of the will which "does not exist".

Nietzsche's understanding of the dead will as the centrepiece of "consummated" nihilism drives forward and *challenges* Baudrillard's theorization of an equally "dead power" in *Oublier Foucault* and in *L'échange symbolique et la mort*. And it is Nietzsche's dictum that everything is false; everything is permitted"⁸⁸ (the ideology of the will as a "perspectival space of simulation") that names the cycle of exterminism from which Barthes' *text* cannot escape. Everything orders itself around the challenge of a will that "does not exist"; nothing can remain unentangled with the charisma of a nihilism which is now "completed." In his meditation on Nietzsche, Heidegger said that in the age of the "pessimism of strength", there is accomplished only "... the rising up of modern humanity into the unconditional dominion of subjectivity within the subjectness of what is."⁸⁹ A "dead power" has dispensed with the "old position of authority" ("incomplete" nihilism), substituting the void itself as the truth-effect of modern existence. The "pessimism of strength" is the "thickness" (Barthes) of power as it is experienced for what it is: a symbolic metamorphosis of the real energized from within by the psychology of seduction. Nietzsche may have been the first philosopher to have grasped the *constitutively fascist* character of modern politics.

Following Nietzsche, contemporary philosophy converges, in its most exciting expressions, in a discourse on power which is seen as transparent, mediational and contentless. Like a slow awakening to the "reality" of an inverted existence within the void, there are murmurs at the margins of theoretical consciousness of the existence of a "dead power." Baudrillard has been the most eloquent in its revelation. In *Oublier Foucault*, he said that the discourse on power can take place no longer in the language of ideology-critique or of founding referents, but must make reference to the processes of relationality and empty, symbolic exchanges. Because on the "other side" of power, the side in which power "has no existence as a representation",⁹⁰ there remains only a power which is put into play as symbols without ultimate finalities: a fascist power. And a fascist power specifically in the sense that Baudrillard speaks of fascism as a "simultaneous resurrection effect" of a dead power. "As the violent reactivation of a form of power that despairs of its rational foundations, as the violent reactivation of the social in a society that despairs of its own rational and contractual foundation, fascism is nevertheless the only fascinating form of modern power."⁹¹ Fascism remains a politics which reenacts the "ritual prestige of death"; and this because it is the truth-sayer (an "eternal inner simulation") of power (as those who have sought to capture its representations have discovered)"... never already (*jamais déjà*) anything but the sign of what it was."⁹² A fascist power, of the left and of the right, is

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encouraged to play itself out at the thresholds of life and death because the *void* that is Baudrillard's "dead power" is pure instrumentality without signification.

Heidegger knew. Fascism is the politics of the "pessimism of strength." We live in the moment of the "sunrise transfiguration"; and what separates us forever from the possibility of freedom (the reverse side of the "authority" of unconsummated nihilism) is that we are already deep in the cyclical *exchange* of "dead will." What else could Heidegger have meant by his reflections on "consummated" nihilism? "Completed nihilism... must in addition do away even with the place of value itself, with the suprasensory as a realm, and accordingly must posit and revalue values differently."⁹³ The organization of experience around the "revaluing of all previous values"; in fact, the very language of value itself is the *constitutive* process of a fascist power. Fascism takes up the challenge of nothingness; and, for Heidegger, (although not for Sartre) nothingness is always *nihilation*.

There is, however, a real division between Baudrillard's translation of Nietzsche's will which "does not exist" into a "dead power" and Heidegger's description of the immanent horror of an age of "completed" nihilism. Well in advance of Baudrillard's posing of the fateful question, Heidegger provided an answer as to why fascism is the "only irresistible form of modern power." Baudrillard's tragic vision of human experience is a continuing response to a fundamental query: Why does a fascist power retain its charismatic appeal? In *Oublier Foucault* and, to a lesser extent, in *De la séduction*, Baudrillard struggles with the meaning of seduction as the "lightning-quick contraction" which is the *charisma* of the "redoubled simulation" of the cycle of liquidation.⁹⁴ But Baudrillard never finally closes with the meaning of seduction, not as an "incitement-effect", but as a pure, *absent* condition of possibility for the semiurgical operations of the "will to will." His interrogation of a "dead power" stops on the threshold of a radical metaphysics; and falls back successively into a dispersed communications theory (just like McLuhan) and into a more prosaic entanglement with the critique of the "political economy of the sign."

Heidegger didn't stop. He gazed into the abyss of the "dead will" and arrived immediately at the secret of a fascist ("high modern") power: "The will to power does not have its ground in a feeling of lack; rather it itself is the ground of superabundant life. Here life means the will to will."⁹⁵ And what is this "superabundant life", the seduction-effect in the *form* of which the will to power simulates the suppressed region of facticity, other than the revivifications by which power hides its *lack*? Modern power is the will to will; and the secret of the will to will is that it is always displayed in whatever is most charismatic, most energetic, most formalistic and technical. We are speaking of a power the very existence of which is dependent both upon its symbolic (and thus *real*) metamorphosis into the *principle of superabundant life*, and upon its constant flight from that which has lost its seduction-effect, its charisma. Having no existence "in itself", this is a power that takes on the *simulated* life of a changing order of significations. Power/sex, power/norm, power/grace, power/knowledge, power/sign are the multiplicity of "eternal inner simulations" traced

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in the arc of a dead power. The trajectory of this dead power moves like a dark *arc-en-ciel* across the history of western consciousness. Always there is the *constant, mediating* (metaphoric) presence across a multiplicity of sites (principles of "superabundant life") of a "will to will" which resuscitates itself (Baudrillard) in the dynamic guise of that metonymy (the "truth" of capital, normativity, sex) which is most charismatic. And here charisma in its relation to modern power means precisely what Weber said: Charisma is the presence of what early Christians called the "gift of grace."⁹⁶ But with this difference. Since the upsurge of a consummated nihilism in the Augustinian "theology" of the fourth century, grace means standing in the presence of the "will to will." With this metamorphosis of the dead will into the positivity, the charisma, of grace, a "dead power" is enabled to speak in the language of love. Charisma is a "presencing" of the will to will; and the secret of the dead will is that it works its effects in the symbolic form of the defense of life (species-will) against death.

While it is an historical and not a metaphysical question as to the specific reasons for the activation, and then quick liquidation, of the changing "signs" of power in western experience, this much might be said: The genealogy of modern power has traced a path which has moved from the birth of power in "incitement-effects" that disguise completely the presence of power and, in fact, are successful only to the extent that they maintain the hidden invisibility of the "dead will." The *denial* of the presence of power was the first condition of the beginnings of "completed" nihilism in Augustine's brilliant simulation of the "perspectival space" of a living God in the trinitarian formulation. Indeed, we might go further and say that it was Augustine's specific contribution to demonstrate, at a theoretical level, the *grammar of reversal* within which a modern power would operate. For Augustine in *De Trinitate*, grace is the will; life (of the soul) is death (of the body); intellect is liquidation of imagination; and memory (of the history of the dead will) is amnesia (of corporeal being).

Successively, the migration of modern power from its inception in the "nihilation of Christian metaphysics has followed a "semiological reduction" (Baudrillard) which has involved a great reversal in the order of relationship between the "dead will" and its signifying practices. From the suppression of the existence of power, power has gradually liberated itself of its dependency upon *denotative* signs. In that forgotten moment when western consciousness revolted against the *stasis* of classical dialectics and took up, for the first time, the challenge of the abyss, everything had to be staked on an intense, militant, and almost insanely charismatic, *rhetorical* commitment to the simulation which was at work. The sheer impossibility of the "ruse" of western consciousness, that modern existence would be wagered henceforth on a "power which does not exist", made it all the more essential that the *symbolic order of the simulation* pour into every nook and crevice of the real, material world of denotation (if only to work the *reversal* of the real from within); and that the inversion of death over life symbolized by the *credo ut intellegas* (the "confession" of faith in a "dead will") have about it the "thickness" (Barthes) of charisma. This is why, perhaps, in Pauline will, it is always all or nothing: the investiture of grace works

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charismatically; but charisma of this order only signals the passage of western consciousness into the "perfectly spherical metaphor" of the dead will. Just as Augustine's famous "conversion" in the garden at Cassiacium marks the specific point in western metaphysics when the will first "broke into the will" (the end of the "divided will" of classicism); so too, Paul's equally famous "blindness" on the road to Damascus is the precise site in western consciousness of that primal event Nietzsche described as the situation of the "either-or."⁹⁷ Paul's "blindness" is an almost literal figuration of the "closing of the eye of the flesh", and of its reverse side, the opening of the "eye to its first principle in God" (the mirrored eye), an explicit narrative of the exterminism of corporeal being, and the sovereignty of the simulation of the mirrored eye. The Pauline epistles are a political narrative of the filiations and strategies of the first investiture of the material world by the *simulacrum* of a will which is "nothing in itself."

Since the upsurge of consummated nihilism in Pauline "will", there has been a great relaxation, almost a monotonous banality, in the "incitement-effects" that have been discharged by the circular metaphor of modern power. And why not? It is already late in the day of the history of a nihilating power. We are fated to live through the dying moments of a historical force the symbolic-effectors of which, having exhausted themselves in rhapsodies about the suprasensory realm, have now taken refuge in the more prosaic "codes" of a narcissistic culture.⁹⁸ As a theoretical proposition: the symbolic incitements of a "dead power" (what will be the *metonymy* of the challenge of the void?) have swept down from the sphere of the purely ideal ["resurrection-effects" (Baudrillard) which deal in extension without duration] to the material *topos* of the body. As if in a great, downward whirlpool effect, the "void" of modern power is prepared to play out the essential parody of its reversal of death over life to the very end. From the high-charisma signifiers of redemption (Augustine), *civitas* (Hobbes), and "the understanding" (Kant), power circles around the realm of flesh and bone, approaching a final (and progressively more banal) localization in the terminus of the body. Thus, from the hyper-charisma of grace, power traces a path which requires successively lower voltage inducements: the norm, sex, utility, and, now, the empty semiurgy of the "pure sign."

We might say, in fact, that it is a *real* indication of the vitality of a nihilistic power in modern existence that power is now played out in a theatrical language which has nothing about it of the "high seriousness" of philosophy, sociology, or theology. The prattle of modern power is in the almost surrealistic rhetoric of "high-tech". At one time, we could even trace the epistemological movements of a dead power by recording the specific sequence of ruptures (the history of nominalism) as power in *symbolic* form invested region after region of material significations. Following the strategy of discourse analysis pioneered by Foucault, we could prepare a taxonomic classification of the upsurge of a "dead power": in sex, in social physics, in normativity, in utility. And we could do this by simply charting the great, internal order of divisions between material denotations (the empirical site of investiture by the "will to will") and the equally great chain of symbolic referents: "sexuality without a sex" (Foucault); utility without use-

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value (Marx); power without the body (Hobbes); reason without the head (Kant); and social physics without community (Spencer). That there would be a ceaseless migration of power from one "abstract coherency"⁹⁹ of symbolic referents to another, we could be assured. Because the nihilism of power is due, not only to its philological reduction of material experience to the language of value/truth, but also because the "will to will" is *murderous* of its truth-effects. God (Christian discourse), sex (Freud's *la petite mort*), utility (Ricardo's labour theory of value), need-dispositions (Parsons' theorization of cybernetic exchange): these are different moments, or "truth-effects", in the arc of an *absent* power which revivifies itself in the form, the *charismatic* form, of a changing order of signifiers. Nietzsche's description of the "will to power" is analogous to Lacan's "floating signifier" in this essential respect: the migration of a charismatic power takes place by a restless advance of the *absence* (the dark iris of the *imago*) which is power from one site of significations to another. But always Nietzsche's "double-movement" is at work. On the one hand, there is a "resurrection-effect" (Baudrillard): the spiralling of an *absent* power through the languages of sexuality, normativity, capital, and so on. In each of these great convergencies, a dramatic vivification of experience takes place. There is an irresistible "illumination" of sex, the unconscious, normativity, ideology as they are invested with the charisma of a power which incarcerates its empirical domains in the language of seduction. But there is also another movement which stands on the "dark side" of illumination, and that is Heidegger's "nihilation." Of this dark side of power, Nietzsche said: "The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it—the primeval tendency of the protoplasm when it extends pseudopodia and feels about."¹⁰⁰ Foucault's "transgression" is the abrasion, the specific site of a loss (Barthes) which distinguishes the counter-cyclical movement of nihilation *and* charisma (Nietzsche's "preservation and enhancement") in modern power. Much later, Baudrillard said of the language of metamorphosis in power, this murdering of its truth-effects: "...the real has never interested anyone. It is the locus of disenchantment par excellence, the locus of accumulation against death. Nothing could be worse. It is the imaginary catastrophe standing behind them that sometimes makes reality and truth fascinating."¹⁰¹ Again, a power which seduces by a slight *trompe-l'oeil*.

Power as a "Pure Sign": Barthes/Baudrillard

The disembodied eye is a perfect metaphor for the culture of consummated nihilism. The message of the Eye is radical in its simplicity. Power is now ready to confess its secret. Since Nietzsche, it has been impossible to carry out a reduction of the "will to power" to its field of symbolic effects. Power was never, after all, anything more than a mirroring-effect which functioned to disguise the hidden circularity of the language of the dead text of power. Power as a "mediation"

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(Baudrillard), a "medium" (McLuhan), a "relational field" (Foucault), a "will to will" (Nietzsche), an "exchange-value" (Marx), a "pure flame of the will" (Augustine), a "generalized symbolic medium of social exchange" (Parsons), and a "judgement" (Kant) was always the *symbolic* form of social exchange itself. A nihilistic power never could be exhausted by its denotations, the specific *terms* of being (signifier) and becoming (signified) which assumed the positions of "lateral referentialities" in an empty, symbolic exchange. To say that power is constituted as a purely symbolic relation which moves back upon itself in an endless descent into the *vide* is only a historical reflection on Nietzsche's insight that the reality-effect of power is only a "perspectival appearance" of which we are the "commandments."¹⁰² It was, perhaps, Nietzsche's fundamental claim in *The Will to Power* that we are the inhabitants of a "purely fictitious world,"¹⁰³ a spatial manoeuvre which operates in the sign-system of contiguity, reversal, and extension. And as with all optical "simulations", only the inflectionless (anaprotic) language of the internal structuration of power matters. All other praxologies are but a deflection of the gaze from the inner neutering, the cancellation, of experience which is the trademark of power as a pure sign-system. And power can now appear in the symbolic form of what it has always been—a *cybernetic* process of social exchange—because there is no longer a political (existential) requirement for the "lack" in experience to be disguised in the rhetoric of representationalism. This is only to say, then, that the culture of consummated nihilism reaches its apex in the *seduction* of a power which is finally free to be "cynical." That we are the first generation of human beings who take their pleasure in teasing out the psychosis hidden in the "real" was the bitter conviction that led Baudrillard to that most terrible of laments: "Today especially, the real is no more than a stockpile of dead matter, dead bodies, and dead language."¹⁰⁴ With this lament, we're suddenly very near the exterminism site in modern power. It is not so much that the "real" is the false (that would be simply an epistemological slide), but that the categories of the real (ideology, consumption, desire) are "sickliness" (Nietzsche).

Perhaps the sheer impossibility of gazing directly into the eye of power, of learning that the "truth" of experience is only an infinite regress into a white space of *sickliness*, accounts for the desire to take power out of play, to liquidate the knowledge of the limitless possibilities co-existent with the void of a dead will. Everywhere the sovereignty of *absence* in western experience announces itself in a modern century which has become a slaughter-bench, though always there is a deflection of attention from the "logic of exterminism" (E.P. Thompson) and the instant, accompanying murmur that this surely must have been only a glimpse into the "dark side" of the real. Ours is a society modelled on the image of the atopic, social text: a plunging, circular motion to the infinity of a final cancellation. And what is the meaning of power as a "pure sign"? Simply this: since Nietzsche it has been impossible to talk of power as anything other than a philology. At the deepest recesses of western consciousness (when the *edges* of the tautology were first curled up by Christian metaphysics), we are confronted with a "semantic cancellation" (Baudrillard), a "neutering" (Barthes) of the real.

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The *deep coding* of modern power is almost genetic; it is, in fact, a simulated genetics (political biology) in the sense that the semiotic structuration of power is that of a circular metaphor which refracts its "fictitious" *terms* in a ceaseless process of lateral referentiality. And it is this unclassifiable, decaying site of a psychotic philology deep in the structure of modern power that is the Eye of Baudrillard's "semiological reduction", of Barthes' "perfectly spherical metaphor" and of Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence." The specific descriptions of the semiurgical reduction of a cybernetic power may vary, but always there is the common refrain: "cat's dish and bull's testicle" (Bataille); "signifier and signified" (Saussure); "consumption and lack" (Baudrillard); "pleasure and bliss" (Barthes); and "code and message" (Hall). In each of these instances, the "terms" of the symbolic exchange do not signify finalities, but "image" one another as co-constituting, co-referential, and co-signifying phases in a single, unbroken circle of symbolic figuration. Nothing escapes the nihilation of the "will to will." It is the symbolic form constant across heterogeneous contents. It is the "blink" between Barthes' poles of narration and catastrophe.

But power as the space of "perspectival appearance" can now only be concretized in reverse image. How, after all, are we to write a political philosophy of the disembodied eye, or a psychology of the seduction at work in the purely optical-effect of the "semiological reduction"? A theorization of power which would capture the element of anamorphosis (Lacan)¹⁰⁵ in the inner structuration of a relational power must develop a "device" which would take us beyond its "incitement-effects". There is a desperate need, on the theoretical level, for the creation of a disturbance ("ophthalmia")¹⁰⁶ in the dis severed eye of power. Or, as Barthes would add, a metonymic agent is required which would perform the function of "iron filings" in concretizing the invisible filiations of the bi-polar field of power.¹⁰⁷

I might suggest that a complete theory of a relational power could now be written. In any event, it could not avoid considering the "abrasion" between those classic texts of the twentieth century: Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* and Jean Baudrillard's *Oublier Foucault*. A political theory which tries to induce ophthalmia (distortion) of the disembodied eye is always on the look for that "seam", that site of loss, which, once followed, will reveal the genealogical traces of the famous disappearance of the philosophical subject. The forced convergence of Barthes' "text" and Baudrillard's "simulacrum" is precisely such a shattering of the eye of power. And not so much because these are oppositional perspectives (they are, in fact, parallel but reverse images of the very same power as a "sign-system"), but due to the more ominous fact that the "text" (Barthes) and the "simulacrum" (Baudrillard) are themselves displaced symbolic-effects of a dead power. We are in the presence of two failures, two haunting expressions of the blunting of literature against the unanswerability of the void. The texts spiral into one another; and in their entanglement as *challenges* to the eclipse of the real, we discover constitutive, but opposite, responses to a "consummated" power.

Barthes' literary critique of power is written from the perspective of

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Nietzsche's "weary nihilist." What, after all, could be a more resonant description of the passive nihilist who has lost the will to struggle than Barthes' self-portrait: "I myself was a public square."¹⁰⁸ And what, for that matter, could be a more vivid depiction of the "active nihilist" than Baudrillard's charismatic *will* to follow through on the opening of the void revealed by the intrication of "seduction in power and production." Barthes was a perfect successor to the cultural sociology of the French rationalist project.¹⁰⁹ His study of the "mythologies" of the real is reminiscent of Durkheim's empirical explorations of "collective representations" to the extent that both efforts are tragically flawed gambles at seeking out the passive (Buddhist) position of the unclassifiable "neuter" in the midst of the inner stasis of a power which "does not exist." Perhaps, Barthes never comprehended that behind the narrative-line of "mythology", there was to be found, not the *ideolect* of a real history, but the simulated perspectival space of Kant's "understanding." Barthes' "weariness", moving in the detached, but vicarious, tones of sarcasm and sexual titillation, was occasioned by a nominalism which he was sensitive enough to describe (and this with eloquence), but which he lacked the will to combat. And so, Barthes' writings will stand in history as a brilliant analysis of the actual topography (the figurations "*en abyme*" of a dead power), but also as a devastating failure. Nonetheless, the ultimate contribution of Barthes' *écriture* may lie, quite paradoxically, in its notorious "cop-out": the choice of "degree-zero writing." Barthes' "melancholy (but fascinated) resignation" provides, at once, an uncensored image of the inner workings of the dead will, and a powerful demonstration of the limits of the intellectual imagination of a "cynical power." This was the theorist who returned to smell the excrement of the social text—and declared it freedom.

It is quite the opposite situation with Baudrillard. His meditation on power is dangerous precisely because it stands at the vortex of three great trajectories of thought, each of which represents an important threshold of a relational theory of power. Simultaneously, and almost in a spontaneous generation of the theory of a simulated power, Baudrillard works out the essential contributions of Kafka, Nietzsche, and Saussure. The *simulacrum*, with its constant horizon of a "dead power" which functions by a symbolic reversal, is Kafka's *Castle*; while the "redoubled simulation" of symbolic effects—the reality of awakening within the "density of the social which crushes us"¹¹⁰ is as searing a description as could be offered of the metamorphosis. Not that Baudrillard borrows mechanically from Kafka: more to the point, his thought is a working-out of the "root-metaphor" of Kafka—our imprisonment in a purely symbolic sphere in which the "decline of the real" is matched by an endless mirroring of escapes to nowhere. But if Kafka's metamorphosis finds eloquent expression in the "simulacrum", then the dynamism of the "mirror of production" (the special relationship between production/desire in which seduction revalorizes production within a libidinal economy) is inspired by Nietzsche's "lack." Baudrillard ends *Le système des objets* by stating that consumption (*the centre of contemporary ideology*) is driven onwards, not by a theory of real needs, not by a *project*, but by a "lack" which is the *vide* in all consumption.¹¹¹ And, of course, in his critique of Foucault in *Oublier*

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Foucault, his thought played at the edge of a symbolic exchange which is only the inversion of the "emptiness" of death. The invisible, third term in Baudrillard's discovery of the "pure sign" (which operates as the basis of the "semiological reduction") was nothing other than Nietzsche's "will to will". And, finally, the gravitation-point for this double trajectory of an epistemology of Kafka's metamorphosis and an anthropology of the "will to power" is provided by a powerful conjunction in Baudrillard's thought of linguistics (partly Saussurean, partly Mausean) and genetics ("beware of the molecular").¹¹² Baudrillard's is an entirely original theorization of power. And this, specifically, because it is a vast synthesis which concretizes the concept of the "will to power" in the "simulacrum"; puts the "metamorphosis" in play as a theory of symbolic reversal; radicalizes structuralism by the simple measure of concentrating on its essential truth: the yes/yes; no/no of a binary, algorithmic "sign-system"; and invests power and ideology with libidinal energy. Baudrillard has spoken of the existence in the electronic era of "digital" theory: a theorization which creates the equivalent of Lacan's "floating signifier" in the notion of a "floating" *explanandum*.¹¹³ Baudrillard's thought may be the first of the "floating theories": it moves on the basis of simultaneity, homology, and analogy between computers, anagrammic logic, popular culture, and metaphysics. It is a "perfect text" because in its fragmentation of objects as particles in a vast semiurgy; in its refusal to participate in the fetishization of the "real"; and in its despair over awareness of *le manque* in experience, it is a transparent, but silently screaming, description of the "simulacrum" which is its *topos* of investigation.

Now I mention these strategic differences between Barthes and Baudrillard only to emphasize, by way of contrast, the remarkable similarities in their theorizations of modern power. Their "texts" shadow one another as convergent, but inexplicably distanced, narrations of the very same site of a tautological power. To draw the texts together is "to presence" the opposite, but symmetrical, polarities of a bi-polar theory of relational power. Barthes' *jouissance* is the mirror-image of Baudrillard's "seduction"; the latter's "lightning quick contraction of reversal and liquidation" is but a curvature on its way back to Barthes' "cycle of pleasure and bliss"; Barthes' famous site of the "neuter" has its equivalent in Baudrillard's "cancellation"; the "anaclitic topos" of *The Pleasure of the Text* is the mirrored-effect of Baudrillard's "satellisation of the real"; and Barthes' recurrent image of "stereotypy" is what Baudrillard has described in *The Mirror of Production* as the "radical autonomisation" of consumption.¹¹⁴ We might say, in fact, that Barthes' language ("I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me"¹¹⁵) is the rhetoric of the "simulacrum." Barthes was insistent that it was the "neuter" in speech which was the "islet of pleasure"; and thus, his ideal self—the "anachronic subject" ("a subject split twice over, doubly perverse") formed a perfect candidate for the "grammatical attitude" of the text.¹¹⁶ "On the stage of the text, no footlights: there is not, behind the text, someone active (the writer) and out front someone passive (the reader): there is not subject and object."¹¹⁷ But Baudrillard is equally insistent on the metaphoric composition (the *doxa*) of the text: "Dans le fétichisme, ce n'est pas la passion

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des substances qui parle (que ce soit celle des objets ou du sujet), c'est la *passion* du code qui, réglant et se subordonnant à la fois objets et sujets, les voue ensemble à la manipulation abstraite."¹¹⁸ Baudrillard's *code structurel* is the inner semiurgy at work (the anagram) in Barthes' text as an islet of pleasure ("... the scandalous truth about bliss: that it may well be, once the image-reservoir of speech is abolished, *neuter*").¹¹⁹ Which is only to say that the "anachronic subject" (who seeks successively a hyper-realism of bliss; a "double perversity" in discovery and loss; a "voyeurism" observing "clandestinely the pleasure of others"; and "the enjoyment of his own fall"¹²⁰) is the precise psychological character-type of the simulacrum. In *The Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes has written the psychological recitative of the neutered and disembodied topos of *le code structurel*.

In the abrasion which results from the "crossing of the syntagm" of Barthes and Baudrillard, a topological shift in the perspectival space of power takes place. The art of illusion is at work in the spiralling of Barthes' autistic text into the deep codes of the simulacrum. Almost as in an Escher painting, the theoretical strategy of the *trompe-l'oeil* results in an instantaneous transformation of the "background" (the *shadow* in the morphology of power) of *le code structurel* into the "foreground" (the white space of the "angels" in *Circle Limit IV*) of Barthes' rhetoric. It is not so much that Baudrillard's reversible power is the polarity of Barthes' "anachronic subject" as that, taken together, we are in the presence of an endlessly refracted image of power as a pure sign. Except in this instance, the mirroring of Barthes and Baudrillard signifies that the "dark side" of power (the side of the Nietzschean regression) is prepared to declare itself openly; to say, in effect, that the "degree zero" of the void has always been the inner dynamism of western experience.

Indeed, in the space of illusion which divides Barthes' privileging of the "pleasure of the text" and Baudrillard's menacing vision of the "inner semiurgy" (an "autonomising" power), we are suddenly propelled into a theorization that resonates with, and is transparent to, high-tech modernism. The refraction of the "text" and the "simulacrum" is an explicit structuration of the very geography of the topos of the culture of consummated nihilism. So much so, in fact, that the hyper-energy of Baudrillard's reflections on the "perspectival simulation" of power and the seduction of Barthes' twinning of desire and rhetoric suggests that we are very near the charisma of the void. This unexpected ejection from a mechanical world-view throws us into the "heart of the heart" of modernism. Everything is there; and everything is transformed. It is a structuralist world now: the "anachronic subject" as the DNA of modern psychology; "species-will" as the gravitation-line of political biology; a grisly display of the "aesthetics of hyper-realism";¹²¹ the "reversibility and sudden cancellation" of a "power" which moves as a seduction; a litotate of binary and algorithmic logic: pure mediation, pure symbolic exchange, pure "plunging downwards", pure fragmentation. The existence of the social text as a perspectival effect of a sign-system no longer bothers to hide the *vide*, opening the *absence* in power as

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an ironic sign (a last metonymic cut) of the sovereignty of the double simulation at work in the eye of power.

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Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon, p. 92; and Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977, p. 59. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault says of power: "One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p. 93). Against Foucault, Baudrillard plays seduction (the grain of *le vide*) against power and production. In *Oublier Foucault*, he claims: "... mais aussi contre la vision fonctionnelle de Foucault en termes de relais et de transmissions, il faut dire que le pouvoir est quelque chose qui s'échange" (p. 59). Baudrillard's theorization of the "symbolic exchange" at the centre of modern power is developed more fully in two of his texts: *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976, and *De la séduction: L'horizon sacré des apparences*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1979.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1972, pp. 194-199. "Toute la stratégie répressive et réductrice des systèmes du pouvoir est déjà dans la logique interne de la valeur d'échange et de l'économie politique" (p. 199).
3. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage, 1968, pp. 14-15.
4. William Leiss has described this process as the reduction of culture and society (as mediated by subjective consciousness) to the technology of "machine-processed information".
5. It was Augustine in *De Trinitate* who first established the epistemological grounds for the "closing of the eye of the flesh" and for the "direct deliverance" of consciousness to the undivided will of the trinitarian formulation. Augustine was the first of the structuralists because his doctrine of the "mirror of the trinity" breaks with a representational theory of power and with the classical economy of reason. In his classic metaphysical text, *De Trinitate*, Augustine developed a fully modern theory of *personality* and *history*. I interpret Augustine's "direct deliverance" to the purely symbolic sphere of the "flame of the will" to be the precursor of Foucault's nightmarish vision of the eye of power, of Nietzsche's power as a circular, "spherical space", of Heidegger's critical account of the nihilating will, and of Baudrillard's "dead power." This is only to say that Augustine developed the fundamental, theoretical foundations for a structuralist description of a *tautological exchange-process*. Within this tautological cycle of symbolic exchange, ideology functions not merely as truth-value, but as *desire*. *Ideology is metonymic to the metaphor of power*. See Augustine's *The Trinity*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962.
6. This is the world of Barthes' "power as an *atopic* text", Althusser's "synarchy", Baudrillard's "simulacrum", Grant's "technological dynamo", and Adorno's "open-air prison." See particularly: Ronald Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1975; J. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*; G. Grant, *Technology and Empire*, Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969; and T.W. Adorno, *Prisms*, London.
7. Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, p. 57.

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8. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", trans. Nicole Dufresne, *Humanities in Society*, 3, 1, 1980, p. 103.
9. Martin Heidegger in his essay, "The Word of Nietzsche" elaborates the meaning of Nietzsche's "the will to will" as developed in *The Will to Power*.
10. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 103.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
12. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 35.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Foucault's sociological description of the society of surveillance fails to capture what Nietzsche has said is the cycle of disintegration and reversibility in the will to power. Foucault's later works, *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline & Punish* privilege the norm as the discursive foundation of the "power apparatus". Of the two, Baudrillard is the more insightful concerning the fascination, the seduction, of disintegration as the charismatic force of modern power. In his earlier philosophical essays in *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice*, Foucault's thought hovered around Nietzsche's understanding of nihilation as the genesis of western experience. In its movement from philosophy to sociology as the entry-point to the discourse on power, Foucault's analysis has become trapped in the object of its critique: the nameless, decentered power of the Panopticon.
15. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 7.
16. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 242.
17. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 7.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
21. Baudrillard's theorization of the "radical semiurgy" at work in the imposition of an "image-system" as the structure of social exchange is very similar to McLuhan's conception of the "massaging" of the ratio of the senses in a cybernetic society. For a superb account of the semiurgical process in McLuhan's thought, see: John Fekete, "Massage in the Mass Age: Remembering the McLuhan Matrix", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 6, 3 (1982), pp. 50-67. For Baudrillard's account of the "radical semiurgy" in relation to the process of consumption, see his *Le système des objets*, Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
22. I interpret Habermas' project of "universal pragmatics" as a continuation, in critical form, of Kant's nominalism. Habermas cannot ground the rationality-principle in the realm of facticity. To do that, he would have to err on the side of Sartre's absorption with the body; and the other side of this variant of existentialism is Nietzsche's unsparing pessimism. And Habermas cannot go forward into a relational theory of "truth", for on that side waits Althusser's relativism. In a word, Habermas' "emancipatory" project is trapped between Nietzsche and Althusser, between relativism in scientific garb and the *regressus in infinitum*. While the "Kantian No" that is Habermas' discourse opens up a path between madness and suicide, it only means that he may not yet have mediated upon Nietzsche's aphorism: "The criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power". *The Will to Power*, (534).
23. Augustine's central epistemological doctrine of the "*Crede ut intellegas*" is based on a purely rhetorical theory of power. In fact, Augustine invented the exact grammatical rules by which a "tautological power" operates. I have made a detailed presentation of the deep affinities between Augustine and contemporary studies of a "relational" power in an earlier article: "The

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- Legacy of Charles Norris Cochrane: Augustine as the Founder of Modern Experience", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 6, 3 (1982), pp. 79-119. Augustine's theory of a "spherical space" of the will is best outlined in *De Trinitate*, Book 11. The central metaphor of this text is that of the "eye of the mind."
24. Nietzsche's "perspectival appearance" of the will to power is the equivalent of Augustine's simulation of the "flame of the will" and, for that matter, of Baudrillard's theorization of power as a "perspectival simulation".
 25. J. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, pp. 89-95.
 26. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Le voyageur*, Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1955, p. 7.
 27. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 109.
 28. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 549.
 29. J. Baudrillard. *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, pp. 89-95. Of *le code structurel*, Baudrillard argues: "A la limite d'une extermination toujours plus poussée des références et des finalités, d'une perte des ressemblances et des désignations, on trouve se signe digital et programmatique, dont la 'valeur' est purement tactique, à l'intersection d'autres signaux et dont la structure est celle d'un code micromoléculaire de commande et de contrôle." p. 89.
 30. Augustine, *The Trinity*, p. 488.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 483.
 32. J. Baudrillard, *Op. cit.*, The "semiological reduction" of the exchange processes characteristic of advanced capitalism to the algorithmic and binary logic of the 1/0 is the fundamental ground of "la loi structurale de la valeur."
 33. F. Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*, pp. 549-550.
 34. M. Foucault. *The History of Sexuality*, p. 95. Foucault says of the "relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance. . . These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary." pp.95-96.
 35. The critical beginnings of Parsons' theoretical development of a relational description of power is to be found in his essay, "On the Concept of Political Power" in *Politics and Social Structure*, New York: The Free Press, 1969, pp. 352-404. The concluding technical note to the essay on political power represents the theoretical ground for Parsons' later development of a complete theory of the "family of generalized, symbolic media of exchange" as the central mediations of advanced industrial societies. While the "family of symbolic media" was limited at first to the exchange-processes of power, money, influence, and value-commitments, Parsons extended this theorization into an analysis of other mediations, including health, personality, intelligence, and affect, as central media of exchange. In my reading, Parsons' image of a "relational" power represents the end of Kant's rebellion against representationalism; and for that matter, the "power" around which Parsons' thought hovers is the positive face of Foucault's "disciplinary society". That Foucault and Parsons move along a common trajectory of thought (one which draws together knowledge/power/life) is illustrated by their common preoccupation with the *clinical* applications of knowledge. Thus, I would compare Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* with Parsons' studies of the investiture of health by the "normalizations" of the human sciences. See, for example, "Health and Disease: A Sociological and Action Perspective", in *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, New York: The Free Press, 1978. Baudrillard's theorization of the "pure sign" and Barthes' description of an "image-system" represent precisely the same theoretical trajectory (as that of Parsons/Foucault), but at the level of a *communicative* as opposed to *sociological description* of a "cybernetic" exchange-process. In precisely the same way that Foucault/Parsons represent parallel but reverse images of a sociological conception of a relational power-system, I also view Baudrillard/

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Barthes as convergent but reverse images of a communicative theory of relational power.

36. M. Foucault, *Op. cit.*, p. 151.
37. Kant's nominalism was intended to provide a regulatory and procedural structure of experience which, operating at the level of epistemology, would suppress the "dark side" of the cycle of disintegration. For Nietzsche, the Kantian project was a "desert".
38. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 103.
39. Octavio Paz, "The Prisoner (Homage to D.A.F. DeSade)", *From Early Poems, 1935-55*, a New Directions Book.
40. See, in particular, John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, New York: Viking Press, 1972
41. Baudrillard's "*jouissance*" is the same concept as Barthes' "bliss": both are typified by a swift contraction between exterminism and progression (Nietzsche's "iron ring" of experience). See Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 19; and Baudrillard's *De la séduction*, pp. 44-54.
42. Nietzsche (*The Will to Power*) and Grant (*Technology and Empire*) say the same thing about technology and power: Grant's claim that "technique is ourselves" parallels Nietzsche's aphorism: "We are its commandment" (p. 356).
43. M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 29-52.
44. G. Bataille, "L'expérience intérieure", in *Oeuvres*; quoted in M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 44.
45. M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p. 43.
46. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. 245.
47. T. Parsons, *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory*, p. 134.
48. M. Foucault, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
49. Ivan Eyre, *Visions* interview for TV Ontario series on Contemporary Canadian Artists, 1982, p. 5.
50. M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 86.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Op. cit.*,
53. J. Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, pp. 95-109.
54. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, pp. 239-247.
55. R. Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977, see particularly, "Rhetoric of the Image", pp. 32-51.
56. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. 240.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, edited by Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 133.

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62. In the *Empire of Signs*, Barthes speaks of "panic boredom".
63. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 35.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
65. G. Grant, *Technology and Empire*, p. 143.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
67. Sartre, "Language", in J. Streller, *To Freedom Condemned*, p. 49.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Sartre, "The Body", in J. Streller, *To Freedom Condemned*, p. 76.
70. *Ibid.*
71. An excellent account of the significance of Goya's "sleep of reason" for an understanding of the enlightenment (Nietzsche's "sickliness") is given by David Cook, "The Dark Side of Enlightenment", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 5, 3 (1981), pp. 3-14.
72. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Aph. 28, pp. 19-20.
73. Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper Colophon, 1977, p. 69.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
75. This is the stock phrase used by Talcott Parsons to describe the incarceration of the "subject" in the "system" of modern society. I view the epistemological strategy involved in the "internalization of need-dispositions" as the break-point between a utilitarian conception of personality and the "anachronistic subject" of the programmed society of advanced capitalism. The system of "need-internalization" sets up a mirroring-effect between desire (the psychological site of the body) and the consumer society. Baudrillard's analysis of the "mirror of production" might well be viewed as a political recitative of the sociology of Parsons' *The Social System*.
76. Of the "semiological wash", McLuhan says: "Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world, as the bee of the plant world, enabling it to fecundate and to evolve ever new forms. The machine world reciprocates man's love by expediting his wishes and desires, namely in providing him with wealth." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, p. 46.
77. Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*.
78. J. Baudrillard. *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, p. 77.
79. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 102.
80. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 67.
81. Jean-Paul Sartre, *To Freedom Condemned*, p. 78.
82. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 715.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 46, (Aph. 46) "Weakness of the will: that is a metaphor that proves misleading. For there is no will, and consequently neither a stronger nor a weaker will".
84. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. 242.
85. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 109. Nietzsche also discussed the metamorphosis of the sign as "perspectival appearance." *To Freedom Condemned*, p. 15.
86. Of the "plenitude of the void", Heidegger says: "The principle can no longer be the world of the suprasensory become lifeless. Therefore nihilism, aiming at a revaluing understood in this way,

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- will seek out what is most alive*" (my italics), "The Word of Nietzsche", p. 70. It's the "seeking out of what is most alive" by a nihilating power which I understand to be the basis of the *charismatic flight of power from one denotative sign-system to another*. If we were to read Nietzsche and Augustine against one another, it might be said that "grace" is charisma because it is the "brilliance" (Nietzsche) of nothingness. But "nothingness" always seeks out that which is dynamic in existence: nihilism operates in the tongue of the seduction-appeal of progress, speed-up, and high acceleration.
87. I am referring to the primal distinction between Heidegger and Sartre. Sartre said that nihilation is *not*, but Heidegger's Nietzsche is wiser: "Nothing is befalling being," M. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche", p. 79. And in the background there is Nietzsche who, I believe, would give the nod of assent to Heidegger: "Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?" *The Will to Power*, (Aph. 1), p. 7.
 88. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 326.
 89. M. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche", p. 68.
 90. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 102.
 91. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
 92. *Ibid.*,
 93. M. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche", p.69.
 94. For Baudrillard, "the frenzied semiurgy that has taken hold of the simulacrum" is carried out within a "lightning-quick contraction in which an entire cycle of accumulation, of power, or of truth comes to a close". "Forgetting Foucault", pp. 90 and 111. Baudrillard's deficiency is that in this writing he comes as close as any contemporary thinker to the secret of the "plenitude of the void"; but then, he veers away from radical metaphysics, collapsing all the while into a creative, but vacuous, sociology of the "frenzied semiurgy". His later works, *De la séduction, L'échange symbolique et la mort* are limited by their lack of philosophy. Like Barthes, Baudrillard's analysis is trapped in the mirroring-effect of the pure image-system.
 95. M. Heidegger, *Op. cit.*, p. 69.
 96. Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, edited by Talcott Parsons, p. 359.
 97. M. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche", p. 70.
 98. The method of radical metaphysics is intended to disclose the genealogical traces of nihilism as the "inner logic" (Nietzsche) of western experience. What is at stake in this project is the uncovering of the basic genetic code of the "exchange-processes" which have mediated European, and then world, history. Thus, my theoretical supposition is that Heidegger's critical statement "Nothing is befalling being" (the *lack* at the centre of exchange) is a bridge between Nietzsche's description of the "psychology of Paul" (the original *sickliness* in Christian theology), and the nihilism of the political economy of advanced capitalist societies. Mass consumption, organized within Baudrillard's "simulacrum" and fueled by the *vide* from which all sign-systems are an attempted escape, is still based on the most primitive principles of Christianity as the first nihilism. Nihilism works its deepest effects in the *most materialistic* deployments of the exchange-system. That which made the "psychology of Paul" a condition of possibility of western experience has now been transformed into the popular ideology of advanced capitalism.
 99. J. Baudrillard, *Le système des objets*, pp. 89-90.
 100. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p 346.
 101. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 103.
 102. F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, "The most extreme form of nihilism would be to view that every belief, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false because there is simply no

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true world. Thus: a *perspectival appearance* whose origin lies in us (in so far as we continually need a narrower, abbreviated, simplified world), pp. 14-15.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
104. J. Baudrillard, *Op. cit.*, p. 103.
105. Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*, translated by A. Wilden, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1968.
106. The creation of "ophthalmia" as an artistic strategy has been pioneered by Donny Proche, a contemporary Canadian artist.
107. R. Barthes, *Critical Essays*, p. 243.
108. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 49.
109. A critical account of the limitations of French rationalism, new and old, is provided in Andrew Wernick's "Structuralism and the Dislocation of the French Rationalist Project", to be published as part of J. Fekete, *The Structuralist Allegory*, forthcoming.
110. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault", p. 105.
111. J. Baudrillard, *Le système des objets*, p. 283. "C'est finalement parce que la consommation se fonde sur un *manque* qu'elle est irrépissible."
112. Baudrillard's convergence of Kafka and the *optics* of structural linguistics is brought to completion in two texts: *De la séduction* and *L'échange symbolique et la mort*.
113. "La production théorique, comme la production matérielle, perd ses déterminations et commence à tourner sur elle-même, dérochant 'en abyme' vers une réalité introuvable. Nous en sommes là aujourd'hui: dans l'indécidabilité, à l'ère des théories flottantes comme des monnaies flottantes", J. Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, p. 21.
114. "Autonomiser l'économique est une stratégie idéologique". J. Baudrillard, *La miroir de la production*, p. 126. Barthes' "anacletic topos" is a central theme of *The Pleasure of the Text* as much as the images of the "satellisation of the real" and the "aesthetics of hyper-realism" are deployed in Baudrillard's *L'échange symbolique et la mort*.
115. R. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 38.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
118. J. Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, p. 100.
119. R. Barthes, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.
120. R. Barthes, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.
121. J. Baudrillard, "L'Hyperréalisme de la simulation", in *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, pp. 110-117.