

CYNICAL POWER: THE FETISHISM OF THE SIGN

Arthur Kroker and Charles Levin

The whole chaotic constellation of the social revolves around that spongy referent, that opaque but equally translucent reality, that nothingness: the masses. A statistical crystal ball, the masses are "swirling with currents and flows", in the image of matter and the natural elements. So at least they are represented to us.

J. Baudrillard
*In the Shadow of the
Silent Majorities*

C'est le vide qu'il y a derrière le pouvoir, ou au coeur même du pouvoir, au coeur de la production, c'est ce vide qui leur donne aujourd'hui une dernière lueur de réalité. Sans ce qui les réversibilise, les annule, les séduit, ils n'eussent même jamais pris force de réalité.

J. Baudrillard
Oublier Foucault

Talisman

The representative problem of modern French thought is the problem of representation. The whole movement of thought in France has been toward the specification of representational features not reducible to subject and object; and then the rediscovery of energy (desire), force (differance) and power within the terms of the language paradigm itself. But, as the articles to follow all suggest, the structuralist and post-structuralist programmatic attention to representations has achieved only ambiguous insights into the power of representations as such. A synoptic review of the structuralist tradition indicates that the founding premises were never outlived and indeed that they always acted as the gravitational centre for later ventures. It is almost as if structuralism and post-structuralism together form a kind of closed universe of discourse in which questions are interesting but like Hegel's night the answers are indistinguishable. Once entered, such a universe is difficult to escape; yet the postmodern project has achieved the coherence of a hermeneutical tradition with the ineluctibility of a rite de passage. The journal has chosen the work of Jean Baudrillard as a talisman: a symptom, a sign, a charm, and above all, a password into the next universe.

New French Thought and the Metaphysics of Representation

The critique of the Metaphysics of Representation depends paradoxically on the assertion of the autonomy of representations. This peculiar turn of ideas takes us back nearly a century to Nietzsche's pragmatism: all world views are arbitrary because they are all equally motivated. The same problem emerges in the modern controversy of the sign. Where in the chain signifier-signified-referent-reality does one find the determinate link that guarantees communicable reference? Is it "reality" — so that language is reduced to a collection of

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tokens? Is it in the "signifier", reducing reality to a blurred hyle? Or is it somewhere in the middle, in the regions of the illusive concept or of naive realism? What gave Baudrillard his leverage in this debate was his awareness that the basic formalization of the meaning process (Saussure, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Althusser) was in fact a vicious circle of motivation-immotivation designed to exclude the act of reference while retaining the value of the referent. Post-structuralism saw this too, and proposed by way of solution the simple non-value of value and the non-meaning of meaning. Baudrillard's work was allied to this, but remained independent in certain crucial respects. He did not deny a certain necessity to the formal abstraction of the sign-logic, but he saw this as a historical concatenation (thematized in terms of the commodity), rather than as a universal condition of experience and language. From the vantage point of Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign, he was able to argue that the heirs of structuralism, in their haste to expunge the vestiges of naturalism, had naturalized the arbitrary, the aleatory and the contingent, thereby creating a new ideology, an ideology without content — an ideologist's ideology.

In the nineteen-sixties, the various attempts to formalize the logic of representations in social anthropology, linguistics, poetics, marxism, and so on, conveyed a markedly positivist ethos. Yet, however rigidly defined they were, the language models heralded as the unifiers of all science actually discouraged a complete regression to nineteenth-century Positivism. Perhaps it was this narrow and continuing scrape with the Positivist temptation that generated the most fruitful tension within the structuralist movement as a whole. Structuralism never succeeded in establishing itself as a purely formal method; yet the original project has remained implicit in the unshakable assumption that an exclusive attention to the problem of representation can produce a new, non-metaphysical, thoroughly agnostic paradigm. The sheer resilience of this belief-system has obscured the fact that structuralism could only save itself from the internal threat of positivism by returning to metaphysics — this time in the form of an intimate (d)enunciation of it. What has remained constant throughout, concealed in the rigor of its attention to representation, is the metaphysical desire to determine the nature of the reality alluded to and falsified in the representational systems under structuralist scrutiny. The specific concern with semiotic, differential, textual, oppositional, decentered, rhizomatic and molecular models is designed from the outset to guarantee certain statements about the nature of the context within which representation happens. Each model attempts to preclude the question of its context on the grounds that such a question can only be answered with another model — and so each model builds within itself as its own predicate the model of its context and possibility of reference. The result is a theoretical trope which declares that reality is always going to be a model and that this model will try to foster the illusion that it is grounded in or tending toward something outside itself. The general picture is similar to what Michel Serres called (without intending to raise any problem) "an isomorphic relation between force and writing."

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The critique of the Metaphysics of Representation is based on the assumption of a deductive (or structural) causality: the representer and the represented are always preceded as effects by their representations as cause. Thus, deconstruction, schizo-analysis and genealogy return us, in spite of their own warning, to the determinate linearity of the cause-effect sequence. Indeed, the more one looks at post-structuralist developments, the more one is impressed with the movement's failure to break with the past. Henri Lefebvre referred to structuralism as the "New Eleatism" because it resembled in its naive scientific phase the classical idealization of the concept as pure generative form. Ricoeur called Lévi-Strauss' structuralism "Kantism without a subject." And if there was a repudiation of the phenomenological and Hegelian traditions at the beginning, these soon returned, like the repressed, in the form of all the neo-structuralist problematics of the body and desire in the work of Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, Lacan, Deleuze and Barthes. This was not only a resurgence of dangerous materiality; it was felt that these issues could be accommodated within the generalized model of terminological combination and exchange. Everything fitted into a new Master Metaphor of production through marking or inscription (the body's action upon itself?). The Nietzschean revival opened a gap in social-philosophical discourse for the "return to Freud," and so Freud was quickly structuralized. The "seething cauldron" was turned from a 'content' into a 'form', from a drive into a signifier (which retained the force of a drive), and from something which is substituted into the principle of substitution itself. Yet in spite of the influential claims of the Lacanian language model, the post-structuralist version of Freud usually meant a recuperation of instinctual atomism and its attendant nineteenth century energy and engineering models. Those hoary representations of representation in general, tended to be exclusively epistemological efforts to discover the irreducible particles or "constituent elements" of Being. Lévi-Strauss's tabular cultural unconscious and Lacan's master-slave theory of desire were fused and generalized. Everything was seen in terms of the laws of combination and substitution. The microphysics of power, the primary polytextual perversity, and various speculative libidinal dynamics all participated in the original excitement of the Freudian scientific imaginary. The Deleuzian version is especially remarkable in that it presents a theatre of industrial strife in which the personalities of the actors are expressed as machine-like apparatuses whose experiences of others take the form of infantile part-object relations, breaks, flows, grafts, disjunctions and displacements. Any attempt to grasp the idea of another person out of all this is condemned as an Oedipal repression of the levelling flow of libido, whose ideal representation is the "rhizomatic" spread of grass. Like structuralism before it, the more recent French thought is a powerful agent of reduction. It tries to constitute a unified field in which all "effects" are in principle accounted for before they happen. There is something bureaucratic about this: indeed, the scribal models allude to the bureaucratic forms of power. Foucault's power is the omnipresent police state: Fascist, rigid, controlling. It appeals to social scientists. The Derridean model is more like a parliamentary democracy:

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ambivalent, flaccid, and obfuscating. It appeals to the literati. One is infinitesimally efficacious, the other, indefinitely absorptive.

Structuralism absorbs difference by making everything different in the same way and for the same reason. The post-structuralist gesture extends and realigns the structural field, but in so doing, it only intensifies the procedures of reduction and abstraction. In Derrida's deconstruction of Lévi-Strauss (*Of Grammatology*), post-structuralism performs this operation directly on the body of its predecessor. The redoubling of the method emerges as an effort to expunge systematically any residues of informality still apparent in the structuralist analysis. Thus, what appears to us in Lévi-Strauss as schematic rationalism and a naive realism of the concept, strikes Derrida as "anarchism", "libertarian ideology", and "Anarchistic and Libertarian protestations against Law, the Powers, and the State in general . . ." (131, 132, 138). In Derrida's example (*Tristes Tropiques*), Lévi-Strauss is trying, rather clumsily, to think the otherness of the Nambikwara: he does this in terms of the oppositions non-writing/writing, Festival/State, community/bureaucracy, speech/coding, etc. Derrida points out that these oppositions have already been absorbed, that writing is (always already) everywhere, and that the Nambikwara are consequently the Same. Every suggestion of their difference is dissolved into the metaphysic of presence. Against the thesis of colonial violence, Derrida advances the arche writing — the immemorial "unity of violence and writing." (106) The whole operation is achieved by what Derrida himself calls the "aprioristic or transcendental regression." (135) The terms of every problem are reduced to an a priori structure of indifference: a field of formal features is delineated and prepared for "incision." Henceforth, any hints of difference in the text to be constituted can be redesigned as the effect of the play of signifiers, so that reference is centripetally trapped. It is a method of "mimesis and castration." (*Positions*, 84)

Given the power of these uniform fields of seamless interrelationality, it is less surprising that Baudrillard, with one eye on the social terrain, the other on successive waves of metatheory, has begun to conceive the only possibility of difference, otherness and the symbolic, in terms of a violent eruption. Baudrillard has been too often misunderstood on this point, for it is natural to assimilate this commotion (as opposed to theoretical "conjuncture") of his work to the Gallic theme of the epistemological break, transgression, reversal and rupture. But there is an important distinction, which follows on the Baudrillardian conception of difference and otherness in the Symbolic. It is in these terms that we may be able to perceive, through reflection on Baudrillard, the outline of a group of important questions which perhaps only structuralism could have raised, but which it has also suppressed in the sameness of its answers. If the continuity of structuralism has been to establish a General Isomorphology, which can only be achieved through progressive formalization, whether positivistic or metaphysical, then the Critique of Logocentrism and the Metaphysic of Representation would appear to have been undermined from the start. In fact, insofar as the whole antilogocentric project came to be tied to a

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reflection on "ontological difference" (Heidegger), it was bound to fail, for difference and "alterity" are not likely to be secured ontologically, any more than they may be perceived or appreciated with the tools of formal epistemology alone. This problem arises in Lacan's work, where the symbolic is grasped through the ontic-ontological distinction of the Phallus, a kind of Ur-signifier which "inserts" the subject into the field of language by inaugurating a serial process of substitutions. Here Lévi-Strauss's idea of meaning as an instantaneously generated network serves to absorb the problem of the other (the symbolic) into the combinatory matrix (Patix?). In contrast, the theme of difference for Baudrillard is neither epistemological nor ontological in the schematic structuralist sense, but social and psychological. In order to secure this domain beyond the purview of formalization-rationalization, Baudrillard defined the symbolic in opposition to the substitutive logic of the sign. The "critique of the political economy of the sign" thus emerged from the standpoint of an irreducible social symbolic excluded from formal fields of coded signification. The uniqueness of this approach was that it allowed Baudrillard to resituate the critique of representation (and logocentrism) in terms of the suppressed question of the relation of the model to reality. Seizing on the ontological ambiguity of the language paradigm, Baudrillard answered this question by developing the theme of operationalization in terms of structures of social signification. (*L'Échange symbolique et la mort*)

The most powerful metaphor in Baudrillard is precisely the loss of metaphor with the advent of a science of "meaning". The ultimate representation, the apotheosis of the subject-object dialectic, then appears as the imaginary deflation of all symbolic tension — a kind of materialization of rationalism through the actualization of the model. In the radical form of this thesis, however, the difference of the symbolic is dissolved in the sign's absorption of otherness, a development which entails nothing less than the "end of the social" and the expiry of measured critique (*In The Shadow of The Silent Majorities*) Baudrillard is forced to shift the burden of his symbolic stance onto the category of ambivalence. This allows him to recover the expressive dimension of symbolic exchange, but at the cost of having to view the latter as the immanent principle of self-destruction at work in all social forms. This explains Baudrillard's return to the mode of a skeptico-transcendental critique of worldly representational illusions: a sort of theory and practice of anamorphosis. (*Les stratégies fatales*)

Baudrillard's Double Refusal

Baudrillard is like Nietzsche to this extent. Each of his writings are works of art which seek to arraign the world before poetic consciousness. In Baudrillard's theorisations, there is a certain return to a tragic sense of history, and this because his imagination moves just along that trajectory where nihilism, in its devalorized form as a critique of abstract power, is both the antithesis of and condition of possibility for historical emancipation. Baudrillard's tragic sense

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derives directly from his understanding of our imprisonment in the carceral of a cynical power, a power which works its effects symbolically; and which is, anyway, the disappearing locus of a society which has now passed over into its opposite: the cycle of devalorisation and desocialisation without limit.

But if Baudrillard can be so unsparing in his tragic vision of abstract power as the essence of modern society, then this is just because his theoretical agenda includes two great refusals of the logic of referential finalities: a devalorisation of the social; and a refusal of the autonomous historical subject.¹ More than, for example, Foucault's theoretical critique of a *juridical* conception of power which reaffirms, in the end, the privileged position of the social in modern culture, Baudrillard has taken structuralism to its limits. Baudrillard's thought seizes on the essential insight of structuralist discourse: the eclipse of Weber's theory of rationalization as an adequate basis for understanding modern society, and the emergence of McLuhan's concept of the exteriorization of the senses as the dynamic locus of the modern culture system.² Baudrillard's theorisation of the meaning of consumer society begins with a radical challenge to sociology as an already *passé* way of rethinking society as a big sign-system, and with a refusal of the privileged position of the politics of historical emancipation. The ambivalence of Baudrillard is just this: his culture critique (*la société de consommation, De la séduction*) is the degree-zero between the historical naturalism of Marxist cultural studies (Baudrillard's structural law of value is the antithesis of Stuart Hall's ideology as the "return of the repressed") and the sociological realism of critical theory. Against Habermas, Baudrillard (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*) reinvoles the sign of Nietzsche as the elemental memory of the tragic tradition in critical theory. Against Foucault, Baudrillard (*Oublier Foucault*) nominates a purely cynical power. And beyond Marxist cultural studies, Baudrillard breaks forever with a representational theory of ideological hegemony. Just like the bleak, grisly, and entirely semiological world of Giorgio de Chirico's *Landscape Painter*, Baudrillard's thought introduces a great scission in the received categories of western discourse. And it does so just because all of Baudrillard's cultural theory traces out the *implosion* of modern experience: the contraction and reversal of the big categories of the real into a dense, seductive, and entirely nihilistic society of signs.

1. The Devalorisation of the Social

A speechless mass for every hollow spokesman without a past. Admirable conjunction, between those who have nothing to say, and the masses, who do not speak. Ominous emptiness of all discourse. No hysteria or potential fascism, but simulation by precipitation of every lost referential. Black box of every referential, of every uncaptured meaning, of impossible history, of untraceable systems of representation, the mass is what remains when the social has been completely removed.

J. Baudrillard
*In the Shadow of the
Silent Majorities*

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Baudrillard is explicit in his accusation concerning the death of the social, and of the loss of the "referent" of the sociological imagination. It's not so much that sociological discourse, the master paradigm of the contemporary century, has been superceded by competing ensembles of *normative* meaning, but, instead, that the privileged position of the social as a positive, and hence normative, referent has suddenly been eclipsed by its own "implosion" into the density of the mass.

The social world is scattered with interstitial objects and crystalline objects which spin around and coalesce in a cerebral chiaroscuro. So is the mass, an *in vacuo* aggregation of individual particles, refuse of the social and of media impulses: an opaque nebula whose growing density absorbs all the surrounding energy and light rays, to collapse finally under its own weight. A black hole which engulfs the social.³

Two, in particular, of Baudrillard's texts — *l'effet beaubourg* and *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* — trace out, in an almost desperate language of absence, that rupture in modern discourse represented by the reversal of the positive, normalizing and expanding cycle of the social into its opposite: an implosive and structural order of signs. This is just that break-point in the symbolic totality where the "norm" undergoes an inversion into a floating order of signs, where strategies of normalization are replaced by the "simulation of the masses",⁴ and where the "hyperéalité de la culture"⁵ indicates a great dissolution of the space of the social. Baudrillard's theorisation of the end of sociology as a reality-principle, or what is the same, the exhaustion of the social as a truth-effect of a *nominalistic* power, privileges a violent and implosive perspective on society. "Violence implosive qui résulte non plus de l'extension d'un système, mais de sa saturation et de sa rétraction, comme il en est des systèmes physiques stellaires".⁶

In the text, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, Baudrillard provides three strategic hypotheses (from minimal and maximal perspectives) about the existence of the social only as a murderous effect, whose "uninterrupted energy" over two centuries has come from "deterritorialisation and from concentration in ever more unified agencies".⁷ The first hypothesis has it that the social may only refer to the space of a *delusion*: "The social has basically never existed. There has never been any "social relation". Nothing has ever functioned socially. On this inescapable basis of challenge, seduction, and death, there has never been anything but *simulation* of the social and the social relation". On the basis of this "delusional" hypothesis, the dream of a "hidden sociality", a "real" sociality, just "hypostatizes a simulation". And if the social is a simulation, then the likely course of events is a "brutal de-simulation": "a de-simulation which itself captures the style of a challenge (the reverse of capital's challenge of the social and society): a challenge to the belief that capital and power exist according to their own logic — *they have none*, they vanish as

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apparatuses as soon as the simulation of social space is done".¹⁰ The second hypothesis is the reverse, but parallel, image of the delusional thesis: the social, not as the space of delusion undergoing a "brutal de-simulation", but the social as *residue*, "expanding throughout history as a 'rational' control of residues, and a rational *production* of residues". Baudrillard is explicit about the purely *excremental* function of the social, about the social as the "functional ventilation of remainders".¹² It's just the existence of the social as itself "remainder" which makes of the social machine "refuse processing"; a more subtle form of death, indeed the scene of a "piling up and exorbitant processing of death". "In this event, we are even deeper in the social, even deeper in pure excrement, in the fantastic congestion of dead labour, of dead and institutionalised relations within terrorist bureaucracies, of dead languages and grammars. Then of course it can no longer be said that the social is dying, since it is already the accumulation of death. In effect we are in a civilisation of the supersocial, and simultaneously in a civilisation of non-degradable, indestructible residue, piling up as the social spreads."¹³ The third hypothesis speaks only of the end of the "perspective space of the social". "The social has not always been a delusion, as in the first hypothesis, nor remainder, as in the second: But precisely, it has only had an end in view, a meaning as power, as work, as capital, from the perspective space of an ideal convergence, which is also that of production — in short, in the narrow gap of second-order simulacra, and, absorbed into third-order simulacra, it is dying."¹⁴ This, then, is the hypothesis of the "precession of simulacra", of a "ventilation of individuals as terminals of information", of, finally, the death of the social ("which exists only in perspective space") in the (hyperreal and hypersocial) "space of simulation".¹⁵

End of the perspective space of the social. The rational sociality of the contract, dialectical sociality (that of the State and of civil society, of public and private, of the social and the individual) gives way to the sociality of contact, of the circuit and transistorised network of millions of molecules and particules maintained in a random gravitational field, magnetised by the constant circulation and the thousands of tactical combinations which electrify them.¹⁶

2. The Refusal of Historical Subjecthood

Baudrillard also has a hidden, and radical, political agenda. His political attitude is directed not against, the already obsolescent "perspective space of the social",¹⁷ but in opposition to the ventilated and transistorised order of the simulacrum. In the now passé world of the social, political emancipation entailed the production of meaning, the control of individual and collective *perspective*, against a normalizing society which insisted on *excluding* its oppositions. This was the region of power/sacrifice: the site of a great conflict where the finalities of sex, truth, labour, and history, were dangerous just to the

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extent that they represented the hitherto suppressed region of use-value, beyond and forever in opposition to a purely sacrificial politics. In the perspectival space of the historical, power could be threatened by speech, by the *agency* of the emancipatory subject who demanded a rightful inclusion in the contractual space of political economy. A politics of rights depended for its very existence on the valorisation of use-value as a privileged and universally accessible field of truth/ethics; and on the production of the emancipated historical subject as an object of desire.

With Baudrillard, it's just the opposite. His political theory begins with a refusal of the privileged position of the *historical subject*, and, what is more, with an immediate negation of the question of historical emancipation itself. Baudrillard's is not the *sociological* perspective of disciplinary power in a normalizing society (Foucault) nor the *hermeneutical* interpretation of technology and science as "glassy, background ideology"¹⁸ (Habermas). In this theoretic, there is no purely perspectival space of the "panoptic" nor free zone of "universal pragmatics".¹⁹ Baudrillard's political analysis represents a radical departure from both the sociology of knowledge and theorisations of power/norm just because his thought explores the brutal processes of dehistoricisation and desocialisation which structure the new communicative order of power/sign. In the new continent of power/sign (where power is radically semiurgical): the relevant political collectivity is the "mass media as simulacra"; the exchange-principle involves purely abstract and hyper-symbolic diffusions of information; and what is at stake is the "maximal production of meaning" and the "maximal production of words" for constituted historical subjects who are both condition and effect of the order of simulacra.²⁰ It's just this insistence on responding to the challenge of history which draws us on, trapping us finally, within the interstices of a vast social simulation: a simulation which make its *autonomous subjects* only the strategic counterparts of the system's desperate need, given its previous disfiguration of the *social* and of the *real*, for the surplus-production of meaning and of words.

Now, Baudrillard's world is that of the electronic mass media, and specifically, of television. His nomination of television as a privileged simulacrum is strategic: television has the unreal existence of an imagic sign-system in which may be read the inverted and implosive logic of the social machine. The "nebulous hyperreality" of the masses; "staged communications" as the *modus vivendi* of the power-system; the "explosion of information" and the "implosion of meaning" as the keynote of the new communications order; a massive circularity of all poles in which "sender is receiver" (the medium is the message: McLuhan's formula of the end of panoptic and perspectival space as the "alpha and omega of *our* modernity"); an "irreversible medium of communication *without response*": such are the strategic consequences of the processing of (our) history and (our) autonomous subjectivity through the simulacra of the mass media, and explicitly, through television. In a brilliant essay, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media",²² Baudrillard had this to say of the *intracation of the mass media in the social* or, more specifically, the "implosion of the media in the masses":²³

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Are the mass media on the side of power in the manipulation of the masses, or are they on the side of the masses in the liquidation of meaning, in the violence done to meaning, and in the fascination which results? Is it the media which induce fascination in the masses, or is it the masses which divert the media into spectacles? Mogadishu Stammheim: the media are made the vehicle of the moral condemnation of terrorism and of the exploitation of fear for political ends, but, simultaneously, in the most total ambiguity, they propagate the brutal fascination of the terrorist act. They are themselves terrorists, to the extent to which they work through fascination... The media carry meaning and non-sense; they manipulate in every sense simultaneously. The process cannot be controlled, for the media convey the simulation internal to the system and the simulation destructive of the system according to a logic that is absolutely Moebian and circular — and this is exactly what it is like. There is no alternative to it, no logical resolution. Only a logical *exacerbation* and a catastrophic resolution.²⁴

Baudrillard's refusal of the "reality" of processed history is based on this hypothesis: the new information of the electronic mass media is "directly destructive of meaning and signification, or neutralizes it."²⁵ Information, far from producing an "accelerated circulation of meaning, a plus-value of meaning homologous to the economic plus-value which results from the accelerated rotation of capital",²⁶ dissolves the possibility of *any* coherent meaning-system. Confronted with this situation of the "doublebind" in which the *medium is the real and the real is the nihilism of the information society*, our political alternatives are twofold. First, there is "resistance-as-subject", the response of the autonomous historical subject who assumes the "unilaterally valorized" and "positive" line of resistance of "liberation, emancipation, expression, and constitution . . . (as somehow) valuable and subversive".²⁷ But Baudrillard is entirely realistic concerning how the "liberating claims of subjecthood" respond to the nihilistic demands of the information order of mass media.

To a system whose argument is oppression and repression, the strategic resistance is the liberating claim of subjecthood. But this reflects the system's previous phase, and even if we are still confronted with it, it is no longer the strategic terrain: the system's current argument is the maximization of the word and the maximal production of meaning. Thus the strategic resistance is that of a refusal of meaning and a refusal of the word — or of the hyperconformist simulation of the very mechanisms of the system, which is a form of refusal and of non-reception.²⁸

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Against the emancipatory claims of historical subjecthood, Baudrillard proposes the more radical alternative of "resistance-as-object"²⁹ as the line of political resistance most appropriate to the simulacrum. To a system which represents a great convergence of *power and seduction*, and which is entirely cynical in its devalorisation of meaning, the relevant and perhaps only political response is that of *ironic detachment*.

This is the resistance of the masses: it is equivalent to sending back to the system its own logic by doubling it, to reflecting, like a mirror, meaning without absorbing it. This strategy (if one can still speak of strategy) prevails today because it was ushered in by that phase of the system.³⁰

Baudrillard thus valorizes the position of the "punk generation": this new generation of rebels which signals its knowledge of its certain doom by a *hyperconformist simulation* (in fashion, language, and lifestyle) which represents just that moment of refraction where the simulational logic of the system is turned, ironically and neutrally, back against the system. Baudrillard is a *new wave* political theorist just because he, more than most, has understood that in a system "whose imperative is the over-production and regeneration of meaning and speech",³¹ all the social movements which "bet on liberation, emancipation, the resurrection of the subject of history, of the group, of speech as a raising of consciousness, indeed of a 'seizure of the unconscious' of subjects and of the masses"³² *are acting fully in accordance with the political logic of the system*.

Notes

1. Baudrillard's theoretical agenda in relationship to French post-structuralism and critical theory is further developed in A. Kroker's "Baudrillard's Marx", mimeo.
2. Michael Weinstein in a private communication to one of the authors has suggested this important insight into "exteriorisation of the mind" as the structuralist successor to Weber's theory of rationalisation.
3. J. Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, New York: Jean Baudrillard and Semiotext(e), 1983, pp. 3-4.
4. *Ibid*; p. 6.
5. For Baudrillard's most explicit discussion of the simulacrum, see "L'hyperréalisme de la simulation", *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, pp. 110-117.
6. "C'est l'euphorie même de la simulation qui se veut abolition de la cause et de l'effet, de l'origine et de la fin, à quoi elle substitue le redoublement". *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976, pp. 114-115.
7. J. Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, p. 68.

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8. *Ibid*; pp. 70-71.
9. *Ibid*; p. 71.
10. *Ibid*.
11. *Ibid*; p. 73.
12. *Ibid*; p. 77.
13. *Ibid*; pp. 72-73.
14. *Ibid*; pp. 82-83.
15. *Ibid*.
16. *Ibid*; p. 83.
17. *Ibid*.
18. Baudrillard's refusal of the "perspectival space of the social" is aimed directly at Foucault's theorisation of the closed space of the "panoptic". Baudrillard's closing of the ring of signifier/signified or, what is the same, his theorisation of simulacra in conjunction with the structural law of value breaks directly with Habermas' hermeneutical interpretation of ideology.
19. Against Habermas and Foucault, Baudrillard theorizes a non-representational and non-figurative *spatialized* universe.
20. J. Baudrillard, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media", as translated in *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, pp. 95-110.
21. See particularly, "Requiem for the Media", *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, pp. 165-184; and "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media", p. 101.
22. *Ibid*.
23. *Ibid*; p. 103.
24. *Ibid*; pp. 105-106.
25. *Ibid*; p. 96.
26. *Ibid*; p. 97.
27. *Ibid*; p. 107.
28. *Ibid*; p. 108.
29. *Ibid*.
30. *Ibid*; pp. 108-109.
31. *Ibid*.
32. *Ibid*; p. 109.