

JEAN BAUDRILLARD,  
Art and Artefact

*edited by Nicholas Zurbrugg*

HELSINGIN  
KAUPPAKORKEAKOULUN  
KIRJASTO



SAGE Publications  
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

© Nicholas Zurbrugg 1997  
Chapters 1, 2 and 3 © Jean Baudrillard 1997  
Chapters 5 and 6 © Rex Butler 1997  
Chapter 7 © Alan Cholodenko 1997  
Chapter 8 © Graham Coulter-Smith 1997  
Chapter 9 © Gary Genosko 1997  
Chapter 10 © Paul Patton 1997  
Chapter 11 © Anne-Marie Willis 1997  
Chapter 13 © Richard G. Smith 1997  
All photographs © Jean Baudrillard  
All translations © Nicholas Zurbrugg and associates

First published 1997

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Publishers.

This edition is not for sale in Australia and New Zealand



SAGE Publications Ltd  
6 Bonhill Street  
London EC2A 4PU

SAGE Publications Inc  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd  
32, M-Block Market  
Greater Kailash - I  
New Delhi 110 048

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0 7619 5579 8  
ISBN 0 7619 5580 1 (pbk)

Library of Congress catalog record available

Typeset by Mayhew Typesetting, Rhayader, Powys  
Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press Ltd,  
Broughton Gifford, Melksham, Wiltshire

# CONTENTS

Notes on contributors	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
<b>INTRODUCTION: 'Just What Is It That Makes Baudrillard's Ideas So Different, So Appealing?'</b> NICHOLAS ZURBRUGG	1
<b>1 OBJECTS, IMAGES, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF AESTHETIC ILLUSION</b> JEAN BAUDRILLARD	7
<b>2 AESTHETIC ILLUSION AND VIRTUAL REALITY</b> JEAN BAUDRILLARD	19
<b>3 THE ART OF DISAPPEARANCE</b> JEAN BAUDRILLARD	28
<b>4 THE ECSTASY OF PHOTOGRAPHY</b> Jean Baudrillard interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg	32
<b>5 BAUDRILLARD'S LIST</b> Jean Baudrillard interviewed by Rex Butler	43

	<b>Allegory of Representation</b> REX BUTLER	51
7	<b>'OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR': The Virtual Reality of <i>Jurassic Park</i> and Jean Baudrillard</b> ALAN CHOLODENKO	64
8	<b>BETWEEN MARX AND DERRIDA: Baudrillard, Art and Technology</b> GRAHAM COULTER-SMITH	91
9	<b>WHO IS THE 'FRENCH McLUHAN'?</b> GARY GENOSKO	104
10	<b>THIS IS NOT A WAR</b> PAUL PATTON	121
11	<b>AFTER THE AFTERIMAGE OF JEAN BAUDRILLARD: Photography, the Object, Ecology and Design</b> ANNE-MARIE WILLIS	136
12	<b>BAUDRILLARD, BARTHES, BURROUGHS AND 'ABSOLUTE' PHOTOGRAPHY</b> NICHOLAS ZURBRUGG	149
	<b>FOLLOWING BAUDRILLARD: A Bibliography of Writings on Jean Baudrillard</b> RICHARD G. SMITH	168
	Index	180

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*Jean Baudrillard* visited Australia from 17 April–8 May 1994, to contribute to the symposium *Baudrillard in the Nineties: The Art of Theory*, and to attend the exhibition of his photographs, *The Ecstasy of Photography*, both held at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia.

*Rex Butler* is Lecturer in Art History, The Department of Art History, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia and is the editor of *What is Appropriation? An Anthology of Critical Writings on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s* and the author of *An Uncertain Smile*.

*Alan Cholodenko* is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies, The Department of Fine Arts, The University of Sydney, Australia and is the editor of *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (1991) and of *Mass Mediauras, Essays on Form, Technics and Media* (Sydney, 1996).

*Graham Coulter-Smith* is Lecturer in Art Theory, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia and is the author of *Mike Parr: The Self-Portrait Project* (1994) and associate editor of *Eyeline* art magazine.

*Gary Genosko* is an independent Canadian researcher living in Kingston Ontario, Canada. He is editor of *The Guattari Reader* (1996) and author of *Baudrillard and Signs* (1994).

*Paul Patton* is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, The University of Sydney, Australia and has translated several of Baudrillard's works, including *Simulations*, with Paul Foss and Philip Beitchman (1983) and *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995), is the author of *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory* (1993) and editor of *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (1996).

*Richard G. Smith* is Research Associate in the Department of Geography, University of Loughborough, England. He is currently working on a book entitled *Jean Baudrillard: The End of Postmodernism and Poststructuralism*.

*Anne-Marie Willis* is Assistant Director of the EcoDesign Foundation, New South Wales, Australia and is the author of *Picturing Australia: A History of Photography* (1988) and *Illusion of Identity: The Art of Nation* (1993).

*Nicholas Zurbrugg* is Professor of English and Cultural Studies, The Faculty of Humanities, De Montfort University, Leicester, England, and is the author of *Beckett and Proust* (1988), *The Parameters of Postmodernism* (1993) *Critical Vices* and *Positively Postmodern: The Multimedia Muse in America* (1998).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of the essays in this book were first presented in April 1994 at *Baudrillard in the Nineties: The Art of Theory*, a symposium held at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, in conjunction with the opening of *The Ecstasy of Photography* – the first comprehensive retrospective survey of Jean Baudrillard's photographs – prior to its subsequent exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne.

Neither this exhibition and symposium nor their resultant publication would have been possible without the visionary collaboration and complicity of Nicholas Tsoutas (then Director of the IMA, now Director of the Art Space, Sydney), a fellow 'art warrior', with whom it was the greatest pleasure and privilege to co-organize and plan these projects.

Particular thanks are also due to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, and to Monsieur Francis Etienne and the Cultural Section of the French Embassy at Canberra for generously supporting every aspect of these initiatives; to Eva Assayag and the Galerie Gerald Piltzer, Paris, for facilitating this exhibition; to the valued solidarity of Professor Ian Howard, Provost and Director, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Associate Professor Mark Finnane, Dean, School of Humanities, Griffith University, and Associate Professor Terry Smith and Dr Alan Cholodenko of the Power Institute, the University of Sydney; and more generally, to the velocity of Brisbane – a city still making things happen.

Finally I would like to offer special thanks to all of the contributors to this book; to Annabelle Brooks, Marine Dupuis, Wayne Hudson and Diana Solano for their editorial assistance; to Karen Yarrow and Jennifer Hamilton for word-processing its pages; to Steven Alderton for formatting its design; to Michael Snelling, Director of the IMA, and to Chris Rojek, Robert Rojek and Vanessa Harwood of Sage, for expediting its publication; and last but not least, to the generosity of Jean Baudrillard (without whom . . .) to whom this celebration of his insights and provocations is offered with great gratitude and admiration.

Nicholas Zurbrugg  
De Montfort University  
Leicester  
June 1997

## INTRODUCTION: 'Just What Is It That Makes Baudrillard's Ideas So Different, So Appealing?'

NICHOLAS ZURBRUGG

Somewhat like the English pop artist and post-Duchampian, Richard Hamilton, one might well ask the question: 'Just What Is It That Makes Baudrillard's Ideas So Different, So Appealing?'<sup>1</sup>

Why is it, after all, that – as Baudrillard himself remarks – it is not so much Derridean concepts of deconstruction, as his own notions of simulation 'that have been taken up by artists'?<sup>2</sup> For his part, Baudrillard admits, 'Well, I don't know' (*BL*, 166), conceding that from many points of view he is both 'a very bad aesthetic analyst' and some sort of theoretical 'terrorist' (*BL*, 168).

A theoretical *terrorist*? Surely not. For what one confronts in Baudrillard's writing is the kind of catalytic, provocative *anti-terrorism* that one witnesses in the best writings and artwork of the Dadaist poets and painters; resistance, in a word, to the undoubtedly terroristic repression imposed by stagnated, over-conventionalized cultural and intellectual orthodoxies.

It is not so much the margins which are the site of terrorism as the mainstream; a romantic perception to be sure, but one which Goethe's 'Werther' nicely summarizes when remarking that if 'genius so rarely . . . bursts upon us like a raging torrent',

it is because of the sober gentlemen who reside on either side of the river, whose precious little summerhouses, tulip beds, and vegetable gardens would be ruined by it, and who know so well how to build dams and divert all such threatening danger in good time.<sup>3</sup>

To quote from *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in this way is not so much to advocate naive concepts of genius, as to gesture towards the real dangers of naive sobriety, or the incapacity to acknowledge functional exceptions to well-built rules. As Burroughs suggests in his essay 'Just Say No To Drug Hysteria', 'The measure of competence is performance'.<sup>4</sup>

When told that General Grant was a heavy drinker, Lincoln said: 'Find out what brand of whiskey he drinks, and distribute it to my other generals.'

In much the same way, rather than casting doubt upon Baudrillard's ideas in so far as they seem too distant from c.r. (communicative rationality) or too close to c-p s-f (cyberpunk science fiction), it perhaps makes more sense to ask, firstly:

*To what extent are Baudrillard's ideas relevant to and illuminating of their subject matter?*

and secondly:

*If Baudrillard's brands of ideas work effectively, how best can one make such ideas work effectively within one's own investigations?*

However much Baudrillard may deny the issue of whether his ideas have referential relevance, it seems evident that the remarkable impact of his work derives from its double or treble-edged specificity as a systematic anti-system, suggesting alternative ways of thinking about things in general, and elaborating specific ways of reconsidering both past culture and those ongoing cultural practices stretching from the present to the future.

There are therefore two Baudrillards. On the one hand, we have the angel of extermination: the evil genie of cultural termination, announcing the death or disappearance of every imaginable aesthetic or ethical value. On the other hand, we confront the angel of cultural annunciation: the benevolent genie identifying and encouraging the investigation of those 'profound stakes' (BL, 57) that Baudrillard associates with: 'little stories . . . little things which start and which have often been the sites of emergence: situations, wit, dreams, Witz' (BL, 56).

Spotting sites of cultural disappearance among the latest manifestations of trash culture is – as Baudrillard suggests – something altogether too trivial; something too close to the ritual of proving the *déjà vu* and thereby compounding 'a complacency in the truth which one knows where nothing will ever put itself in question, self-verification . . . a tautology' (BL, 63).

As Baudrillard's most rigorous writings remind us, the game of 'legislating' cultural decay is 'no longer interesting' (BL, 166), whereas

the challenge of identifying inspiring sites of emergence is often 'magic' (BL, 44). Hence Baudrillard's enthusiasm for 'going straight on to the year 2000', erasing the nineties, as it were, in order 'to play the game on the other side through excess rather than through lack' (BL, 22). In Brion Gysin's terms, 'Who cares what "advances" were or were not made in the last ten years. It's always the next ten that count.'<sup>5</sup>

To examine the impact of Baudrillard 'in the nineties' is thus an ambiguous exercise in so far as the emphasis of Baudrillard's vision alternates with alarming unpredictability between the positive and negative extremes of past, present and future, towards . . . what? At best, towards new sites of conceptual emergence, new sites of theoretical emergence, new sites of creative emergence. The most redemptive characteristic of Baudrillard's frequently contradictory analyses of contemporary cultures is his willingness to be surprised; a willingness to undergo, undertake and to engage with the turbulence of contradiction, reversal, self-doubt, self-questioning, and the anguish and elation of re-definition, re-consideration, re-vision; a kind of existential experimentation, which leads one to reflect: 'I've done – or I am doing – such and such, and therefore I'm beginning to re-think who I am'.

Consider, for example, Baudrillard's comments upon the exhibition of photographs, 'The Ecstasy of Photography', which occasioned the symposium at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, from which most of these essays have eventuated. Asked what his first impressions were before this exhibition and whether it was something of a shock, Baudrillard replied:

Yes. It was a great pleasure, and in a certain sense a shock, because it was the first time that I had seen so many. Twenty works were exhibited in Paris and about twenty in Venice. All at once I was conscious that there was something there – it was something new for me. On the one hand, I was disappointed because they seemed more aesthetic and more beautiful than I had believed them to be – and I didn't really want this aesthetic quality. On the other hand I became conscious of building a new vision of my own strange world. I hadn't been conscious of doing that, but I perceived a certain continuity in my work of the last three or four years. Before it was nothing, but over the last three or four years there's a continuity maybe indicating something else – I don't know – and then it became very interesting.<sup>6</sup>

At some level, and perhaps at a different level to that of his theoretical writing, photography clearly revealed the unexpected possibility of 'something else' – 'a new vision of my own strange world' – to this most reluctant of artists. 'I'm not an artist in the usual sense, and I'm not intending to do any particular kind of work . . . it was – and remains – for me a strange practice and is cultivated as such.'

As Baudrillard indicates, he is not so much interested in the ritual of reasserting the banality of the banal, as in locating unexpected traces of enigmacity and charm within the banality of the mass media.

I was always interested in the balance between the extreme banality of objects and their enigmacity. I was always concerned not to integrate them, but to challenge one with another – the intimacy and strangeness of objects or beings or situations or politics or media. The media are something very banal, very intimate and very domestic in everyday life. But they are at the same time for me something strange, and I'm searching for this strangeness of the media. It's their only charm, since when we take the media as media they are very deluding, very very deceiving. But we can take them as another strange world.

It is precisely this emphasis upon the 'strangeness' of the media and of contemporary cultures, and this attempt to make both photographic and theoretic practices into some kind of strange art or 'strange practice', which most disconcerts Baudrillard's more conservative readers, prompting the conclusions that Baudrillard is either post-theoretical or pre-cyberpunk-fictional, but in neither case altogether *serious*.

To caricature Baudrillard in this way and, ultimately, to discredit Baudrillard in this way, is both to neglect the specific question of determining the relevance of Baudrillard's accounts of the postmodern condition and, reciprocally, to neglect the more immediate dilemma of evaluating the relevance of one's own critical approaches to contemporary culture. Put another way, the decision to 'forget Baudrillard' may well disguise one's own fear and abdication before the task of coming to terms with those disquieting debates and issues which his 'strange practice' attempts to rescue from the terrorism of complacent 'tautology' and 'self-verification' (*BL*, 63), by somehow passing 'through all the disciplines' (*BL*, 81) towards what he describes as the conceptual liberation of some 'initiatory space' or 'enchanted space' (*BL*, 61).

To return to Burroughs' distinction regarding intimidatingly innovative practices, 'The measure of competence is performance' (*HR*, 73), it seems evident that Baudrillard's theoretical *competence* is quintessentially a process of *performance*; a juggling or shuffling of concepts and values – now seen, now not seen – now under this shell, now somewhere else, beneath that hyper-shell, perhaps. No wonder Baudrillard's live presentations of his ideas are so captivating, because in a very real sense, what one hears is both semantic *son et lumière*: enlightening concepts, as it were, heightened and lightened by seductive sonic play echoing the trails and traces of their conceptual dislocation and relocation.

Not surprisingly, then, Baudrillard strikes many of his contemporaries as a semantic cardsharp, if only because he doesn't 'deal' logically, in the

c.r. manner. As Brion Gysin points out, such musical modes of performance invariably antagonize the French establishment:

New Philosophers, *et al*, have always abominated music. Music is not rational. They prefer ratiocination to which the French language lends itself only too easily *and* utterly unmusically owing to the uniform terminal stress on all French words.<sup>7</sup>

To suggest, then, that there is something poetic, something performative, something musical, in both the structure and the sonic substance of Baudrillard's words is in other words to acknowledge their heuristic significance as a provocative alternative to the more familiar theoretic and phonetic register of 'ratiocination'. *Breaking out* of more orthodox theoretical conventions, Baudrillard frequently initiates what Gary Genosko defines as stimulating kinds of 'break-in' into innovative areas of cultural investigation beyond the parameters and purview of more cautious discourse. To contemplate such distinctions is perhaps also to begin to explain why so many of the essays in this collection are themselves marked by an undaunted performative impulse, an attempt, perhaps, to play the Baudrillardian game in a manner more (or less) Baudrillardian than Baudrillard; or at least, to entertain, to interrogate, to adopt, to adapt, and perhaps to extend – the advantages of Baudrillard's 'strange practice'.

One way or another, by patient analysis, by analogy, by oblique comparison, by formal play or by informal variation on Baudrillardian themes, all of these essays suggest the ways in which Baudrillard's 'strange practice' is – against all odds – of central relevance to the intellectual, social and cultural climates of the 1990s, if only as the site of so many processes of conceptual 'emergence' from past assumptions, past conventions and past orthodoxies.

In many respects, I sense that what we read here are readings-in-progress of Baudrillard's writings-in-progress; readings with Baudrillard, and readings against Baudrillard, but in either case, attempts to respond 'on the scale' (*BL*, 125) of the Baudrillardian wager, openly and audaciously, rather than conservatively and defensively. Such catalytic responses to Baudrillard's catalytic provocations can only be advantageous when compared with the cautious ossification and prejudice of so much that passes for *contemporary* cultural cartography.

# OBJECTS, IMAGES, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF AESTHETIC ILLUSION

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

1 I refer of course to Richard Hamilton's painting, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956).

2 Jean Baudrillard, *Baudrillard Live*, ed. Mike Gane, London: Routledge, 1993, p.166. Henceforth abbreviated as *BL*.

3 Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* [1774], translated by Catherine Hutter, New York: Signet, 1962, p. 31.

4 William Burroughs, 'Just Say No To Drug Hysteria', in *High Risk*, eds Amy Scholder and Ira Silverberg, New York: Plume, 1991, p.73. Henceforth abbreviated as *HR*.

5 Brion Gysin, letter of 15 August 1979, *Stereo Headphones*, no. 8-9-10, 1982, p. 76.

6 Jean Baudrillard, interview with Nicholas Zurbrugg, Brisbane, 22 April 1994. All subsequent unreferenced statements by Baudrillard are from this interview.

7 Gysin, letter of 15 August 1979.

Aesthetic disillusionment. It seems that the most contemporary art culminates in an effort of self-deterrence, in a process of mourning the death of the image and the imaginary, in an aesthetic mourning, that cannot succeed anyway, resulting in a general melancholy in the artistic sphere, which seems to survive by recycling its history. (But art and aesthetics are not the only domains devoted to this melancholic and paradoxical destiny – of living beyond their own finalities.)

It seems that we have been assigned to conduct infinite retrospective analyses of what happened before. This is true for politics, history and ethics, and for art as well, which in this matter has no special privilege. All the movement in painting has been displaced towards the past. Employing quotation, simulation, reappropriation, it seems that contemporary art is about to reappropriate all forms or works of the past, near or far – or even contemporary forms – in a more or less ludic or kitsch fashion. What Russell Connor calls 'the abduction of modern art'.

Of course, all of this remaking and recycling claim to be ironic; but this form of irony is like a threadbare piece of cloth – a by-product of disillusion – a fossilized irony. The trick that consists in juxtaposing the nude in Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* with Cézanne's card players is only a publicity stunt, part of the irony, or the *trompe-l'oeil* criticism which characterizes publicity today, and which is about to submerge the artistic world.

It's the irony of repentance and resentment against our own culture. But perhaps repentance and resentment constitute the ultimate phase of art history, just as, according to Nietzsche, they constitute the ultimate

phase in the genealogy of morals. It's a parody, and at the same time a palinody of art and art history, a self-parody of culture in the form of revenge, characteristic of radical disillusion. It's as if art, like history, was recycling its own garbage and looking for its redemption in its own detritus.

Consider, for example, the way certain films (*Barton Fink*, *Basic Instinct*, Greenaway's works, *Sailor and Lula*, etc.) leave no place for criticism because, in some way, they destroy themselves from within. Quotation crazy, prolix, high-tech, they carry with them the cancer of cinema, the internal *excroissance*, proliferation of their own technique, of their own scenography or of their own cinematographic culture. We feel as if these directors were repelled by their own films, that they couldn't stand them (whether through excess of ambition or lack of imagination). Nothing else justifies the orgy of means and the efforts to cancel films through an excess of virtuosity, special effects, megalomaniac angles – the technical harassment of the images – by exhausting their effects to the point of making a sarcastic parody out of it, a veritable pornography of the image. Everything seems to be programmed for the disillusionment of the spectator, for whom no other choice is left than that of enduring this excess of cinema, this end to all cinematic illusion.

What can one say about the cinema, if not that now – almost at the end of its evolution, of its technical progress, from silent movies to talkies, colour, high technology and special effects – its capacity for illusion, in the radical sense of the word, has vanished. Current cinema is no longer related to allusion or illusion; it connects everything in a super-tech, super-efficient, super-visual style. No void, no ellipsis, no silence – nothing more than what you get on television, which film resembles more and more as it loses the specificity of its images. We're going more and more in the direction of high definition, that is to say, towards the useless perfection of the image – which is no longer an image. The more it becomes real, the more it is produced in real time, the more we approach absolute definition, or the realistic perfection of the image, the more the image's power of illusion is lost.

Just remember the Peking Opera, and how with only the movement of two bodies on a vessel, it brings alive the whole space of a river. How two bodies struggling in a duel, avoiding each other, moving near each other without touching, in an invisible copulation, can mime the physical presence of darkness on the stage where this fight takes place. Here the illusion is total and intense, more than aesthetic, a physical ecstasy, because it eludes all realistic presence of the night and the river, and only the bodies assume the natural illusion. Today we would bring tons of real water on to the stage, the duel would be filmed in infra-red and so forth. We confront the misery of the over-technical image, like the Gulf War on CNN. Pornography of the image in three or four

dimensions, or of music with four – always by adding to the real, by adding the real to the real with the objective of obtaining a perfect illusion (that of the perfect realistic stereotype), that we kill profound illusion.

An image is an abstraction of the world in two dimensions. It takes away a dimension from the real world, and by this very fact the image inaugurates the power of illusion. On the other hand, virtuality, by making us *enter* into the image, by recreating a realistic image in three dimensions (and even in adding a sort of fourth dimension to the real, so as to make it in some way hyperreal), destroys this illusion (the equivalent of this operation in time is 'real time', which makes the loop of time close up on itself instantaneously, and thus abolishes all illusion of the past as well as of the future). Virtuality tends toward the perfect illusion. But it isn't the same creative illusion as that of the image. It is a 'recreating' illusion (as well as a recreational one), revivalistic, realistic, mimetic, hologrammatic. It abolishes the game of illusion by the perfection of the reproduction, in the virtual rendition of the real. And so we witness the extermination of the real by its double.

By contrast, *trompe-l'oeil*, by taking away a dimension from real objects, highlights their presence and their magic through the simple unreality of their minimal exactness. *Trompe-l'oeil* is the ecstasy of the real object in its immanent form. It adds to the formal charm of painting the spiritual charm of the lure, the mystification of the senses. For the sublime is not enough, we must have the subtle too, the spirit which consists in reversing the real in its very place. This is what we have unlearned from modernity – subtraction is what gives strength; power emerges from the absence. We produce, we accumulate. And because we can no more assume the symbolic mastery of absence we are plunged today into the inverse illusion, the disenchanting proliferation of screens and the profusion of images.

It is very difficult to speak of painting today because it is very difficult to see it. Because generally it no longer wants exactly to be *looked at*, but to be absorbed visually without leaving any traces. In some way modern painting could be characterized as the simplified aesthetic form of the impossible exchange. So that the best discourse about painting would be a discourse where there is nothing to say, which would be the equivalent of a painting where there is nothing to see. The equivalent of an object, the object of art, that isn't an object any more.

However, an object which isn't an object is not nothing. One becomes obsessed by its immanence, its void and its immaterial presence. The problem is to materialize this nothingness, at the very limit of the void, to trace the mark of this void, and within the limits of indifference to play the game according to the mysterious rules of indifference./

Art is never the mechanical reflection of the positive or negative



...of the world; it is its exacerbated illusion or hyperbolic mirror. In a world ruled by indifference, art can only add to this indifference, by focusing the void of the image or the object that isn't an object any more. Thus the cinema of Wenders, Jarmusch, Antonioni, Altman, Godard or Warhol explores the insignificance of the world through the image, and by its images contributes to the insignificance of the world – they add to its real or hyperreal illusion. Whereas recent cinema like that of the latest Scorsese, Greenaway, etc. with its high-tech machinery, and its frantic and eclectic agitation, only fills the void of the image, and thus adds to our imaginary disillusion.

Exactly like the Simulationists of New York who, by hypostasizing the simulacrum, are only hypostasizing painting itself as a simulacrum, as a machine defeating itself. In many cases (Bad Painting, New New Painting, installations and performances) painting denies itself, parodies itself, rejects itself. Plasticized, vitrified, frozen excrement, or garbage. It does not even justify a *glance*. It doesn't look at you, and so in turn you don't need to look at it; it is no longer your concern. This painting has become completely indifferent to itself as painting, as art, as illusion more powerful than the real. It doesn't believe any longer in its own illusion, and so it falls into the simulation of itself and into derision.

Abstraction was the great adventure of modern art. In its 'irruptive', primitive and original phase, whether expressionist or geometric, it was still part of an heroic history of painting, of the deconstruction of representation and of the object. By volatilizing its object, the subject of painting itself advanced towards the limits of its own disappearance. By contrast, the forms of contemporary abstraction (and this is true also of the New Figuration) have passed beyond this revolutionary acting out, beyond this act of disappearance – they simply reflect the undifferentiated field of our daily life, the banality of the images which have informed our social practices. The New Abstraction and the New Figuration oppose each other only formally – in fact they both equally retrace the total disincarnation of our world, no longer in its dramatic phase, but in its banal phase.

The abstraction of our world is a matter of fact now, when all the art forms in an indifferent world are assigned to the same indifference. This is neither denigration nor depreciation; it's simply the state of things. Authentic contemporary painting has to be as indifferent to itself as the world is once the essential issues have vanished. Art is generally nothing more than the metalanguage of banality. *Can this anti-dramatic simulation evolve or revolve, or last for ever?* Whatever forms it takes, we are already on the way towards the psychodrama of disappearance and transparency. We must not be lured and trapped by a false continuity in art and the history of art.

To rephrase Benjamin, there is an aura of simulacrum – just as for him

there was an aura of the original. There is an authentic form of simulation as well as an inauthentic form of simulation. This may seem paradoxical but it's true. When Warhol painted his Campbell Soups in the 1960s, this was a breakthrough for simulation, and for all modern art. All at once the merchandise-object and the merchandise-sign were raised up to an ironical consecration, which is indeed the only ritual left to us, the ritual of transparency. But when he painted the Soup Boxes in '86, he only reproduced the stereotype of simulation.

In '65 he attacked the concept of originality in an original way. In '86 he reproduced the unoriginal in an unoriginal way. The year 1965 witnessed the aesthetic traumatism of the entry of merchandise into art – in short the geniality of merchandise. The evil genie of merchandise raised a new geniality in art – the genie of simulation. Nothing of this in '86, when the genie of advertising merely illustrated a new phase of merchandise. Once again official art fell back into the cynical and sentimental aestheticization that Baudelaire stigmatized.

Would it be any superior form of irony to do the same thing twenty years later? I don't believe so. I believe in the evil genius of simulation, but I don't believe in its ghost. Or in its cadaver, even in stereo. I know that in a few centuries there will be no difference between a real Pompeian villa and the Paul Getty museum in Malibu, nor any difference between the French Revolution and its Olympic commemoration in Los Angeles in 1989, but *we* are still referring to this difference.

Here is the dilemma – either simulation is irreversible and there is nothing beyond simulation, in that simulation isn't even an event any more, but is our absolute banality, our everyday obscenity, so that we are now in definitive nihilism, awaiting the future rewriting of all pre-existing forms and also waiting for another unforeseeable event – but from where will it come? Or, on the other hand, there is an art of simulation, an ironic quality that evokes the appearances of the world in order to let them vanish again. If not, art won't be anything other than aesthetic harassment, as so often happens today. We must not add the same to the same, and then to the same again: that is poor simulation. We must expel the same from the same. Each image must take something away from the reality of the world; in each image something must disappear.

But this disappearance must be a challenge, and that's the secret of art and seduction: it must never totally succeed. In art – in contemporary art as well as in classical art – there is a double postulation and thus a double strategy. A compulsion to nothingness and to erase all the traces of the world and reality, along with an inverse resistance to this impulse. According to Michaux, the artist is 'he who resists with all his strength the fundamental impulse to leave no traces'.

Art has become iconoclastic. Modern iconoclasm no longer consists in

oreaking images, but in producing images, a profusion of *images where there is nothing to see*. These are literally images which leave no traces. Properly speaking, they are without aesthetic consequence. But, behind each of them, something has disappeared. Here is their secret, if they have one. And here is the secret of simulation. On the horizon of simulation, not only has the real world disappeared, but the very question of its existence no longer makes sense.

This was the very problem of Byzantine iconoclasm. The Iconoclasts were subtle people who pretended to represent God for His greater glory, but who, in reality, simulated God in images, and through this dissimulated the very problem of His existence. Each image was a pretext to not confront the problem of God's existence. Behind each image in fact, God had disappeared. He was not dead – He had simply disappeared. That is, the problem no longer needed to be raised. The problem of the existence or the non-existence of God was resolved by simulation.

But perhaps it was the strategy of God Himself to disappear behind His images, and perhaps God uses his own images in order to disappear, Himself obeying the impulse to leave no traces. Thus the prophecy is realized; we live in a world of simulation, in a world where the highest function of the sign is to make reality disappear, and at the same time to mask this disappearance. Art does nothing else. The media today do nothing else. That is why art and the media follow the same course, and often become confused with one another.

Behind the orgy of images something is hidden. The world is hiding behind the profusion of images; perhaps it's another form of illusion, an ironic one. As Canetti suggests in his parable about animals, behind each of them it seems that someone human is hidden and is secretly mocking you.

The illusion which proceeds from the capacity, through the invention of forms, to escape from the real, to oppose another scene to the real one, to pass to the other side of the mirror – the illusion which invents another game with other rules – is now impossible, because images have passed over into things. They are no longer the mirror of reality, they are living in the heart of reality – aliens, no more reflecting, but haunting reality – and have transformed it into hyperreality, where, from screen to screen, the only destiny of the image is the image itself. The image cannot imagine the real any longer, because it has become the real. It can no longer transcend reality, transfigure it, nor dream it, because it has become its own virtual reality.

In virtual reality it's as if things had swallowed their mirrors, and then become transparent to themselves. They no longer have any secret, and they cannot create illusion (because illusion is linked to the secret, to the fact that things are absent from themselves, withdrawing themselves in their own appearances). Nothing remains here but transparency, with

things totally present to themselves in their visibility, in their virtuality, in their perfect transcription (in numerical terms, in the newest technologies), on a screen, on millions of screens, on the horizon of which the real, but also the image, has disappeared. All the utopias of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have, by realizing themselves, expelled the reality out of reality and left us in a hyperreality devoid of sense, since all final perspective has been absorbed, leaving as a residue only a surface without depth. Could it be that technology is the only force today that connects the sparse fragments of the real? But what has become of the constellation of sense? And what about the constellation of the secret?

The end of representation, the end of aesthetics, the end of the image itself in the superficial virtuality of the screen. But here is a perverse and paradoxical effect. It seems that while illusion and utopia have been eradicated by the impact of all our technologies, by virtue of these same technologies, *irony itself has passed into things*. There appears to be a counterpart to the loss of illusion of the world, namely the irruption of *objective irony* in this world. Irony as the universal and spiritual form of the disillusion of the world. Spiritual in the sense of *Witz*, of spirit arising from the very heart of the technical banality of our objects and our images. The Japanese feel a divinity in every industrial object. For us this transcendental feeling is reduced to a little ironic glimmer, but even so it is still a spiritual form. For we pagans and agnostics, irony is all that is left of the sacred.

It's no longer either a subjective irony or a romantic one. It is no longer a function of the subject, a critical mirror where the uncertainty and irrationality of the world is reflected. It is the mirror of the world itself, of this objectal and artificial world around us, wherein is reflected the very absence and transference of the subject. After the critical function of the subject comes the ironic function of the object. Since they are produced as objects, artefacts, signs, merchandise, things assume an artificial and ironic function by their very presence. No need to project irony into the real world, no need for a distorting mirror to hold up the image of its double.

Our universe has swallowed its double, and it has lost its shadow. The irony of this double breaks through at each moment, in each fragment of our signs, our objects, our images, our models. It is no longer even necessary, as the Surrealists did, to highlight functionality, to confront objects with the absurdity of their function, in a poetic unreality. Objects highlight themselves ironically by themselves, they get out of balance without effort. There is no need to emphasize their artifice or their nonsense. This is all part of their interconnection, of their superfluity (i.e. overfluidity), which creates an effect of parody.

After physics and metaphysics we deal now with a pataphysics of

objects and merchandise, a pataphysics of signs and operations. All things, deprived of their secret and their illusion, are assigned to a radical visibility, to the objective make-believe assigned to publicity. Our world is publicity-oriented in its essence (or rather in its transparency). Such as it is, it is as if it has been invented for advertising, promoting itself for another world. We must not believe that advertising came *after* merchandise. In the heart of merchandise and by extension, at the heart of our entire universe of signs, there is an *evil genie of publicity*, a trickster, who has integrated the buffoonery of merchandise and of its scenery. A genial scriptwriter (perhaps capitalism itself) has involved the world in a phantasmagorical game where we are all fascinated victims and gamblers at the same time.

All objects wish to present themselves today, just as human beings, technical objects, industrial objects, media objects, artefacts of all kinds want to signify, to be seen, to be read, to be recorded, to have their own look, to be photographed. You believe you are taking a photograph for your own pleasure. In fact it's the object that wants to be photographed, and you're only a medium in its reproduction, secretly attracted and motivated by this self-promoting surrounding world. Here is the irony of the situation, what I would like to call the pataphysical irony of the situation.

All metaphysics is in effect swept away by this reversal of situation where the subject is no longer at the origin of the process, and no longer anything but the agent, or the operator, of the objective irony of the world. The subject no longer provides the representation of the world (I will be your mirror!). It is the object that refracts the subject, and subtly, through all our technologies, imposes its presence and its aleatory form. The subject no longer determines the rules of the game. Something happened, like a reversal in the relationship. The power of the object breaks through the game of simulation and simulacra, through the very artifice that we have imposed upon it. Here we see something like an ironic revenge; the object becomes a *strange attractor*. Here we have the limit of aesthetic adventure, of the aesthetic mastery of the world by the subject (but at the same time, the end of the adventure of representation, of the mastery of the world by will and representation). For the object as a strange attractor is no more an aesthetic object. Stripped by technique itself of any secret and illusion, stripped of its origins (since it has been generated by models), stripped of all connotation of sense or judgement of value, the object, exorbitated (i.e. escaped from the orbit of the subject) becomes in some way a *pure object* reintegrating the immediacy, the immanence of earlier forms, before or after the general aestheticization of our culture.

All these artefacts, all these artificial objects and images exercise a form of irradiation, of fascination, upon us. They re-become a kind of

material evidence, like fetishes perhaps, at once completely depersonalized and desymbolized, and yet, of maximal intensity, directly invested as a medium, just as the fetish-object is, without aesthetic mediation. It is here perhaps that our most superficial objects, our most stereotypical ones, assume the power of exorcism like sacrificial masks. Exactly as masks absorb the identity of the actors, of the dancers and of the spectators, they provoke a sort of thaumaturgical (traumaturgical?) vertigo.

Thus all these modern artefacts, from publicity to electronics, from the mediatized to the virtual, objects, images, models, networks, have a function of absorbing the identity of the subject much more than a function of communication or information, as is usually said. Barbara Kruger: WE SHALL BE YOUR FAVOURITE DISAPPEARING ACT!

Thus, very much beyond the aesthetic form, these objects join the aleatory and the vertiginous form of games that Caillois contrasts with games of representation, whether mimetic or aesthetic. Objects, these modern simulacra, thus reflect the society in which we are living as well, a society of paroxysm and exorcism. That is, a place where we have absorbed our own reality and our own identity to the point of vertigo, and where we try to eject it with the same force – where all reality has absorbed its own double – and struggle to expel it at any price.

These banal objects, these technical objects, these virtual objects, thus seem to be the new strange attractors, the new objects beyond aesthetics, transaesthetic – fetish-objects, without signification, without illusion, without aura, without value – the perfect mirror of our radical disillusion of the world. Pure objects, ironical objects, just like Warhol's images.

Andy Warhol worked with any image available, in order to eliminate the imaginary and to make a pure visual product of it. Unconditional simulacrum. Steve Miller (and all those who are reprogramming the video-image, the scientific cliché and the synthesized image 'aesthetically') does exactly the opposite. They make art with anti-art material. They *use* the machine to remake art. He (Warhol) *is* a machine. The true technical metabolism is Warhol; Steve Miller only simulates the machine and he uses technique in order to make illusion. Warhol gives us the very illusion of technique – *technique as radical illusion* – far superior today to that of painting.

In this sense, even a machine can become famous, and Warhol never aspired to anything but this mechanical celebrity, without consequence and without trace. A photogenic celebrity simply related to the demand of everything, of every individual to be seen, and to be selected and acknowledged. That is what Warhol does; he is only the agent for the ironic disappearance of things. He is only the medium for this huge publicity which the world makes for itself through technique, through images, forcing our imagination to surrender, breaking the mirror that we are holding up to it, hypocritically, in order to capture it for our profit.

through images, through technical artefacts of all sorts, of which those of Warhol are the modern ideal-type, it is the world that imposes its discontinuity on us, its fragmentation, its stereophony, its artificial instantaneousness. Evidence of the Warhol machine, this extraordinary machine filtering the material evidence of the world. Warhol's images are not banal because they reflect a banal world, but because they result from the absence of any claim by the subject to be able to interpret the world. They result from the elevation of the image to pure figuration, without the least transfiguration. No transcendence any more, but a potentialization of the sign, which, losing all natural signification, shines in the void with all its artificial splendour. Warhol is the first to introduce modern fetishism, transaesthetic illusion, that of an image as such, without quality, a presence without desire.

But what are modern artists doing, anyway? The artists of the Renaissance believed that they were making religious pictures while in fact they were creating artworks. Are our modern artists, who believe they are producing artworks, not doing something completely different? Could it be that the objects they produce are something completely different from art? Fetish-objects for example, but disenchanted ones, purely decorative objects (Roger Caillois would say: hyperbolic ornaments). Objects that are literally superstitious in the sense that they no longer assume the sublime nature of art nor a belief in art, but which nevertheless keep the idea and superstition of art alive. The same process as sexual fetishism, which is itself sexually disinvolved. The fetishist denies both the reality of sex and sexual pleasure. He doesn't believe in sex, only in the idea of sex (which itself of course is asexual). In the same way we no longer believe in art, but only in the idea of art (which for itself of course is not aesthetic, but ideological).

This is why art, being nothing more than an idea, is now working on ideas. The bottle rack of Duchamp is an idea; the Campbell's box by Warhol is an idea; Yves Klein selling air for a blank cheque in a gallery, this is an idea. All these are ideas, signs, allusions, concepts. This no longer means anything at all; but it signifies anyway. What we call art today seems to witness an unavoidable void. Art is tranvested by ideas, and ideas are tranvested by art. It's our form of transexuality, of tranvestism enlarged to the whole field of art and culture. Equally transexual are those kinds of art crossed by an idea, crossed by the empty signs of art, and by the signs of their own disappearance.

All modern art is abstract in the sense that it is crossed by the idea far more than it is crossed by the imagination of forms and substances. All modern art is conceptual in the sense that it fetishizes the concept, the stereotype of a cerebral model of art, exactly as that which is fetishized in merchandise is not the real value, but an abstract stereotype of value.

Dedicated to this fetishist and decorative ideology, art no longer has an existence of its own. In this sense we might say that we are on the way to the disappearance of art as a specific activity. This may lead us either to a reversion of art into technique and pure artisanal quality, possibly transferred into the sphere of electronics, as we can see everywhere today. Or towards a primary ritualism, where everything will be used as an aesthetic gadget, and art will end up as universal kitsch, exactly as religious art in its time ended up as Saint-Sulpicien kitsch. Who knows? Art as such may only have been a parenthesis, a sort of ephemeral luxury of the species. The distressing thing is that this crisis of art will probably last for ever. And the difference between Warhol and all those who comfort themselves in this perpetual crisis is that with Warhol the crisis of art is over and virtually obsolete.

Is there still any aesthetic illusion? And if not, is the way open to a transaesthetic illusion? To a radical one, that of the secret, of seduction, of magic? Is there still, within our hypervisibility, transparency, virtuality, a place for an image? A place for an enigma? A place for the real events of perception, a place for an effective power of illusion, a true strategy of forms and appearances?

Despite the modern mythology of a liberation of forms, we must say that forms and figures cannot be liberated, cannot be free. Our task is not to free them, but to capture them, to make them relate to each other and to generate each other.

Objects whose secret is not in the 'centrifugal' expression of their representative form (or deformation), but on the contrary, in their attraction towards the centre and in their subsequent dispersion into the cycle of metamorphosis. There are two ways of achieving, of going beyond representation: either that of its endless deconstruction where painting looks at itself dying, in a sort of umbilical nostalgia, always reflecting its lost history. Or, simply to give up representation, forgetting all the trouble of interpretation, forgetting the critical violence of sense and counter-sense, in order to join the matrix of the appearance of things and the matrix of the distribution of forms.

This is the very form of illusion, the very concept of playing (*illudere*). Going beyond a form is to pass from one form to another, whereas going beyond an idea is to negate the idea. This second strategy defines the intellectual position of illusion and is often that of modern painting's challenge to the world, whereas the former strategy exemplifies the very principle of illusion for which there is no other destiny of form than the form itself.

In this sense we must have illusionists who know that art and painting are illusion, and are as far from intellectual criticism as from aesthetics properly speaking (which already supposes a discrimination between the beautiful and the ugly). Illusionists who know that all art is

first a form of *trompe-l'oeil*, a 'life trick', just as all theory is a 'sense trick' – *trompe-le-sens*, and that all painting, far from being an expressive version of the world, and thus pretending to veracity, consists in setting up snares in which the supposed reality of the world may be naive enough to become trapped. Just as theories do not consist of having ideas (and thus of flirting with the truth), but consist of setting up traps into which meaning naively falls. Of finding, in short, a form of fundamental seduction.

A dimension beyond aesthetic illusion, which I would call anthropological, in order to designate the generic function of designing the world just as it appears to us long before it makes sense, long before it is interpreted or represented, and long before it becomes real. Not the negative and superstitious illusion of another world. But the positive illusion of *this* world, of the operatic scene of the world, of the symbolic operation of the world, of the vital illusion of appearances about which Nietzsche spoke – *illusion as a primitive scene*, acting and happening long before and much more fundamentally than the aesthetic scene.

The sphere of artefacts goes largely beyond art. The realm of art and aesthetics is that of the conventional management of illusion, of a convention that neutralizes the delirious effects of illusion, which neutralizes illusion as an extreme phenomenon. Aesthetics constitutes a sort of sublimation, a mastery of the radical illusion of the world. Other cultures accepted the evidence of this original illusion by trying to deal with it in a symbolic balance. We, the modern cultures, no longer believe in this illusion of the world, but in its reality (which of course is the last and the worst of illusions). We have chosen to exorcize this illusion through this civilized form of simulacrum, which we call the aesthetic form.

Illusion has no history. Aesthetic form has one. But because it has a history it also has an end, and it may be now that we can see the fall, the failure, the fading of this conditional form, of this aesthetic form of the simulacrum – in favour of the unconditional simulacrum, that is, of the primitive scene of illusion, where we may join again with the rituals and phantasmagories of symbolic cultures, and with the fatality of the object.

## AESTHETIC ILLUSION AND VIRTUAL REALITY

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

There is always a camera hidden somewhere. It may be a real one – we may be filmed without knowing it. We may also be invited to replay our own life on a television network. Anyway, *the virtual camera is in our head*, and our whole life has taken on a video dimension. We might believe that we exist in the original, but today this original has become an exception for the happy few. Our own reality doesn't exist any more. We are exposed to the instantaneous retransmission of all our facts and gestures on a channel. We would have experienced this before as police control. Today it is just like an advertising promotion.

Thus it is irrelevant to get upset with talk shows or reality shows, and to criticize them as such. For they are only a spectacular version, and so an innocent one, of the transformation of life itself, of everyday life, into virtual reality. We don't need the media to reflect our problems in real time – *each existence is telepresent to itself*.

TV and the media have left their mediatized space in order to invest 'real' life from the inside, infiltrating it exactly like a virus in a normal cell.

We don't need digital gloves or a digital suit. As we are, we are moving around in the world as in a synthetic image. We have swallowed our microphones and headsets, producing intense interference effects, due to the short-circuit of life and its technical diffusion. We have interiorized our own prosthetic image and become the professional showmen of our own lives. Compared with this, the reality shows are only side-effects, and moreover mystifying, because in indicting them as manipulation, the critics assume that there is somewhere an original form of life, and that reality shows would be no more than its parody and simulation (Disneyland).

This criticism is over, as is every Situationist criticism of the 'spectacle' and the concept of 'spectacle', as also in substance all criticism of 'alienation'. Unfortunately, I would add. Because the human abstraction of the spectacle was never hopeless; it always offered the chance of disalienation. Whereas the operation of the world in real time, its unconditional realization, is really without alternative. Radicality has changed, and all negative criticism, surviving itself, actually helps its object to survive. For instance, the critic of religion and of its official manifestation misses the fact that religion is in practice far more realized in many other forms – irreligious, profane, political or cultural – where it is less easily recognizable as such.

It is the same thing with the virtual. Current criticism engaging with new techniques, new images, masks the fact that its concept has been distilled throughout real life, in homoeopathic doses, beyond detection. And if the level of reality decreases from day to day, it's because the medium itself has passed into life, and become a common ritual of transparency. It is the same for the virtual: all this digital, numerical and electronic equipment is only the epiphenomenon of the virtualization of human beings in their core. If this can overwhelm people's fantasy to such a degree, it is because we are already, not in some other world, but in this very life, in a state of photosynthesis. If we can today produce a virtual clone to replace Richard Bohringer, it is because he has already replicated himself, he has already become his own clone.

But anyway the reality show can be used as a micromodel for the analysis of all virtual reality. Whether it's the immediacy of information on all screens, the telepresence, or presence on TV, in all actings and happenings, it is always a question of 'real time' – of the collapse of the real and its double. Live your life in real time (live and die directly on the screen). Think in real time (your thinking is immediately transferred on the printer). Make your revolution in real time (not in the street, but in the broadcasting studio). Live your love and passion in real time (by videotaping each other).

This conversion of the mediatized into the immediatized, that is, into an immediate catalytic operation of the real by the screen, this immediatic revolution is already implied in McLuhan's formula 'The Medium is the Message', which has never been analysed in all its consequences. McLuhan remains the prophetic theoretician of this collapse of the medium and the message, and thus in some way the prophet of the vanishing process of information and communication (whose significance he emphasized at the same time!). 'The Medium is the Message' remains as the *Mene Tekel Epharsim* of the communication era, its password and the sign of its end.

But there is another predecessor for all technologies of the virtual: it is the ready-made. Again, for example, the reality show: all those human

beings, literally extracted from their real life to play out their AIDS or conjugal psychodrama on the TV screen have their prototype in the bottle rack of Duchamp. The artist extracted the bottle rack from the real world in the same way, displaced it on another level to confer on it an undefinable hyperreality. A paradoxical acting-out, putting an end to the bottle rack as a real object, to art as the invention of another scene and to the artist as the protagonist of another world. To all aesthetic idealization Duchamp opposes a violent desublimation of art and of the real by their instantaneous short-circuit. Extrematization of the two forms: the bottle rack, ex-inscribed from its context, from its idea, from its function, becomes more real than the real (hyperreal), and more art than art (it enters into the transaesthetics of banality, of insignificance, of nullity, where today the pure and indifferent form of art is to be seen).

Any object, any individual, any situation today could be a virtual ready-made. For all of them might be described in much the same way as Duchamp implicitly categorizes his ready-made object: 'It exists, I met it!' This is the only label for existence. Graffiti – another form of ready-made – says nothing other than: 'I exist, here I am, my name is so and so'. The pure and minimal form of identity: 'I exist, I met myself'. The ready-made always seems like these stuffed animals, vitrified as if they were alive, hypnotized in the pure form of appearance – 'naturalized'. But I would say that today art in general also looks like a naturalized species, vitrified in its pure formal essence.

Duchamp's coup has since been repeated indefinitely, not only in the field of art, but in all individual and social functions, especially in the mediasphere. The last phase being precisely the reality show, where everybody is invited to present themselves as they are, key in hand, and to play their live show on the screen (with all its obscene connotations), just as the ready-made object plays its hyperrealistic role on the screen of the museum.

All these mediatic events relate to this crucial phase in the world of information and communication – a phase that art, politics and production have known before. The drama of the mediatic class is that it is starving on the other side of the screen, in front of an indifferent consuming mass, in front of the tele-absence of the masses. Any form of tele-presence will be good enough to exorcize this tele-absence. Just as it was a vital necessity for capital to have workers and producers transformed into active consumers, and even into direct stockholders in the capitalist economy (this doesn't change anything in business, the strategy being as always to remove the tablecloth without changing the organization of the table), the telespectator has to be transferred not in front of the screen where he is staying anyway, passively escaping his responsibility as citizen, but on the screen, on the other side of the screen. In short, he must undergo the same conversion as Duchamp's bottle rack,

when it was transferred to the other side of art, thus creating a definitive ambiguity between art and the real world. Today art is nothing more than this paradoxical confusion of the two. And information too is nothing more than the paradoxical confusion of the event and the medium, including all forms of intoxication and mystification connected to it.

So we have all become ready-mades. Objects transposed to the other side of the screen, mediumized (we don't even enjoy the good old status of passive spectator any more), hypostasized as if transfigured *in situ*, on the spot, by aesthetic or mediatic decision, transfigured in their specific habits and ways of life, as living museum exhibits. Thus we become cloned to our own image by high definition, and dedicated by involution into our own image to mediatic stupefaction, just as the ready-made is dedicated to aesthetic stupefaction. And just as Duchamp's acting-out opens on an overall aestheticization, where any piece of junk will be promoted to a piece of art, and any piece of art demoted to a piece of junk – so this immediatic conversion opens on to a universal virtuality, that is to say the radical actualization of reality through its acting-out in real time.

All cultural spaces are involved. For example, some new museums, following a sort of Disneyland processing, try to put people not so much in front of the painting – which is not interactive enough and even suspect as pure spectacular consumption – but into the painting. Insinuated audiovisually into the virtual reality of the *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, people will enjoy it in real time, feeling and tasting the whole Impressionist context, and eventually interacting with the picture. The masses usually prefer passive roles, and avoid representation. This must change, and they must be made interactive partners. It is not a question of free speaking or free acting – just break their resistance and destroy their immunities.

It is a question of life and death. When the indifference of the masses becomes dangerous for the political or cultural class, then interactive strategies must be invented to exhort a response at any price. In fact, the interactive mass is still a mass, with all the characteristics of a mass, simply reflecting itself on both sides of the screen. But the screen is not a mirror, and, while there was some magic in passing beyond the mirror, there is no magic at all in passing beyond the screen. It's impossible anyway – there is no other side of the screen. No depth – just a surface. No hidden face – just an interface.

Besides, the masses were not without an answer. Their answer was silence, the silence of the silent majorities. This challenge of silence is now cancelled when people are forced to ask their own questions, when they are assigned to speech. If they had some questions, these would never be autonomous but would surely be programmed in a

schedule. But even this implication *en trompe l'oeil* doesn't save media and information from inertia, from proliferating fatal inertia. Mass media or micromedia, directive or interactive, the chain reaction of the images is the same. It is simply materialized in real time and in everybody's head.

Now what exactly is at stake in this hegemonic trend towards virtuality? What is the idea of the virtual? It would seem to be the radical actualization, the unconditional realization, of the world, the transformation of all our acts, of all historical events, of all material substance and energy into pure information. The ideal would be the resolution of the world by the actualization of all facts and data.

This is the theme of Arthur C. Clarke's fable about the names of God. In this fable, the monks of Tibet devote themselves to the fastidious work of transcribing the 99 billion names of God, after which the world will be accomplished, and it will end. Exhausted by this everlasting spelling of the names of God, they call IBM computer experts who complete the work in a few months. This offers a perfect allegory of the completion of the world in real time by the operation of the virtual. Unfortunately this is also the end of the world in real time. For with this virtual countdown of the names of God, the great promise of the end was realized; and the technicians of IBM, who left the site after work (and didn't believe of course in the prophecy), saw the stars in the sky fading and vanishing one by one.

Maybe it is an allegory of our technical transfiguration of the world: its accelerated end, its anticipated resolution – the final score of modern millenarianism, but without hope of salvation, revelation, or even apocalypse. Simply accelerating the process of declining (in the double sense of the word) towards a pure and simple disappearance. The human species would be invested, without knowing it, with the task of programming, by exhausting all its possibilities, the code for the *automatic disappearance of the world*.

Rather than the ideal transformation of the world, the ultimate end of this transfiguration would be that of building a perfectly autonomous world from which we can retire and remove ourselves. In order for us to step out of it, the world must be brought to completion. As long as we stay here as alien beings, the world cannot be perfect. And to be perfect it must be constructed and artificial, because there is no perfection in the natural state. The human being itself is a dangerous imperfection. If we want to achieve this sort of immortality, we must also treat ourselves as artefacts and get out of ourselves in order to move on an artificial orbit, where we can revolve eternally.

We all dream of an *ex-nihilo* creation, of a world emerging and moving without our intervention. We dream of perfect autonomous beings who, far from acting against our will as in the fable, *The Sorcerer's*

*Apprentice*, would meet our desire to escape our own will, and realize the world as a self-fulfilling prophecy. So we dream of perfect computers, of auto-programming artificial intelligence. But if we allow artificial beings to become intelligent, and even more intelligent than we are, we don't allow them to have their own will. We don't allow them what God finally allowed us – the intelligence of evil. We cannot bear real challenge from another species; and if we concede intelligence to other beings, then this intelligence must still be the manifestation of our desire. While God permitted us to raise such questions about our own liberty, we don't allow artificial beings to raise such questions about themselves. No liberty, no will, no desire, no sexuality. We want them complex, creative, interactive, but without spirit. By the way, it seems that these 'intelligent' machines have found, if not the way to transgression and freedom, at least the byways to accident and catastrophe. It seems that they have an evil genius for dysfunctions, electronic viruses and other perverse effects, which save them – and us, in the same way – from perfection and from reaching the limit of their possibilities.

The perfect crime would be to build a world-machine without defect, and to leave it without traces. But it never succeeds. We leave traces everywhere – viruses, lapses, germs, catastrophes – signs of defect, or imperfection, which are like our species' signature in the heart of an artificial world.

All forms of high technology illustrate the fact that behind its doubles and its prostheses, its biological clones and its virtual images, the human species is secretly fomenting its disappearance. For example, the video cassette recorder connected to the TV: it sees the film in your place. Were it not for this technical possibility of devolution, of a vicarious accomplishment, we would have felt obliged to see it for ourselves. For we always feel a little responsible for films we haven't seen, for desires we haven't realized, for people we haven't answered, for crimes we haven't committed, for money we haven't spent. All this generates a mass of deferred possibilities, and the idea that a machine is there that can deal with these possibilities, can stock them, filter them (an answer-machine, a memory bank), and progressively absorb and reabsorb them, is very comforting. All these machines can be called virtual, since they are the medium of virtual pleasure, the abstract pleasure of the image, which is often good enough for our happiness. Most of these machines are used for delusion, for the elusion of communication ('Leave a message . . .'), for absolving face-to-face relations and social responsibilities. They don't really lead to action, they substitute for it most of the time. So with the film on the video cassette recorder: maybe I'll see this film later, but maybe I won't do it at all. Am I sure I really want to see it anyway? But the machine must work. Thus the consumption of the machine converges with the consumption of the desire.

All these machines are wonderful. They give us a sort of freedom. They help us to get free from the machine itself, since they interconnect one with another and function in a loop. They help us to get free from our own will and from our own production. What a relief all at once to see twenty pages erased by a caprice of the word processor (or by an error of the user, which amounts to the same thing). They would never have had such a value if they hadn't been given the chance to disappear! What the computer gives to you, too easily perhaps, it takes away just as easily. Everything is in order. The technological equation amounts to zero. We always hear about negative perverse effects. But here the technique assumes a positive (homoeopathic) perverse effect. The integrated circuit reverses itself, performing in some way *the automatic writing of the world*.

Now let us consider some different aspects of this virtual achievement, of this automatic writing of the world. High definition. High fidelity. Real time. Genetic codes. Artificial intelligence.

In high definition, the (electronic, numerical or synthesized) image is nothing more than the emanation of the digital code that generated it. It has nothing more to do with representation, and even less with aesthetic illusion. All illusion is abolished by technical perfection. It is the same with the three-dimensional image: it is a pure disillusion, since the magic of the image lies simply in the subtraction of one dimension from the real world. In the hologram's perfection of the virtual image, all parts are microscopically identical to the whole, generating a fractal deconstruction of the image, which is supplanted by its own pure luminous definition.

High fidelity. Disappearance of the music by excess of fidelity, by the promiscuity of the music and its absolute technical model. Holographic music, holophonic, stereophonic, as if it had swallowed its own genetic code before expelling it as an artificial synthesis – clinical music, sterile, purged of all noise.

Real time. The equivalent of high definition for the image. Simultaneity of the event and its diffusion in information. Instant proximity of oneself and one's actions at a distance. Telepresence: you can manage your business *in situ* at the other end of the world, by the medium of your electronic clone. Like the space of the image in high definition, each moment in real time is microscopically coded, microscopically isolated, in a closed and integrated circuit. As in the hologram, each parcel of time concentrates the total information relative to the event, as if we could control the event from all sides at once. No distance, no memory, no continuity, no death: the extreme 'reality of time' is in fact extreme virtuality. All the suspense, all the unforeseeability, of time is over.

Genetic coding. What is at stake here is the simulation of a perfect human being, of a body of high definition, through the controlled



engineering and dispatching of the genome. The construction of a virtual body outperforming the original – plastic genetic surgery. The genetic code itself, the DNA, which concentrates the whole definition of any living being in a minimal space and a minimal formula, is the ideal type of virtuality.

Last, but not least: artificial intelligence. Something like an artificial brain-recording, adapted to an artificial environment. Thinking almost instantaneously inscribed on the screen, in direct interaction with data, software and memories – intelligence in real time. Thinking becomes a high definition operation, suppressing all distance, all ambiguity, all enigmatic eventualities, suppressing the very illusion of thought. Just as the illusion of the image disappears into its virtual reality, just as the illusion of the body disappears into its genetic inscription, just as the illusion of the world disappears into its technical artefacts, so the natural intelligence of the world disappears into its artificial intelligence. There is no trace in all of this of the world as a game, as a fake, as a machination, as a crime, and not as a logical mechanism, or a reflex cybernetic machine, with the human brain as mirror and model.

Artificial intelligence is everything except artificial. It is definitive 'rethinking' (as we speak of *realpolitik*), fully materialized by the interaction of all virtualities of analysis and computing. We could even say that artificial intelligence goes beyond itself through too high a definition of the real, through a delirious sophistication of data and operations – but this is only the consequence of the fact that artificial intelligence is a matter of the hyperrealization of thinking, of the objective processing of thinking.

There is not the slightest sense here of illusion, artifice, seduction, or a more subtle game of thought. For thought is neither a mechanism of higher functions nor a range of operational reflexes. It is a rhetoric of forms, of moving illusions and appearances. It reacts positively to the illusion of the world, and negatively to its reality. It plays off appearances against reality, turning the illusion of the world against the world itself. The thinking machine masters only the computing process. It doesn't rule over appearances, and its function, like that of all other cybernetic and virtual machines, is to destroy this essential illusion by counterfeiting the world in real time.

Curiously, all the above traits rely upon paradoxes. 'Real time' is in fact a purely virtual time. 'Artificial intelligence' is nothing like artificial. 'Virtual reality' is at the antipodes of the real world. As for 'high definition', it is synonymous with the *highest dilution* of reality. The highest definition of the medium corresponds to the lowest definition of the message. The highest definition of information corresponds to the lowest definition of the event. The highest definition of sex (in pornography) corresponds to the lowest definition of desire. The highest

definition of language (as computer coding) corresponds to the lowest definition of sense. The highest definition of the other (as computer coding), corresponds to the lowest definition of exchange and alterity. Everywhere high definition corresponds to a world where referential substance is scarcely to be found any more.

Such are the stakes involved in the virtual realization of the world. And we must take it as irreversible. This logic leads to the end, to the final solution, or resolution. Once performed, it would be the equivalent of a perfect crime. While the other crime, the 'original' crime, is never perfect, and always leaves traces – we as living and mortal beings are a living trace of this criminal imperfection – future extermination, which would result from the absolute determination of the world and of its elements, would leave no traces at all. We would not even have the choice or chance to die, to really die. We would have been kidnapped and disintegrated in real time and virtual reality long before the stars go out.

Artificial intelligence, tele-sensoriality, virtual reality and so on – all this is the end of illusion. The illusion of the world – not its analytical countdown – the wild illusion of passion, of thinking, the aesthetic illusion of the scene, the psychic and moral illusion of the other, of good and evil (of evil especially, perhaps), of true and false, the wild illusion of death, or of living at any price – all this is volatilized in psychosensorial telereality, in all these sophisticated technologies which transfer us to the virtual, to the contrary of illusion: to radical disillusion.

Fortunately, all this is impossible. High definition is 'virtually' unrealizable, in its attempt to produce images, sounds, information, bodies in microvision, in stereoscopy, as you have never seen them, as you will never see them. Unrealizable also is the fantasy of artificial intelligence. It is too intelligent, too operational to be true – this brain-becoming of the world, this world-becoming of the brain, as it has never functioned, without a body, autonomized, inhuman – a brain of high definition outlining a universe of high definition. Something like an ethical and technical purification. It will never succeed, fortunately. Not that we trust in human nature or in a future enlightenment, but because there is in fact no place for both natural and artificial intelligence. There is no place for both the illusion of the world and a virtual programming of the world. There is no place for both the world and its double.

When the virtual operation of the world is finished, when all the names of God have been spelled out – which is the same basic fantasy as the declining of the human genome or the worldwide declining of all data and information – then we too shall see the stars fading away.

## THE ART OF DISAPPEARANCE

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

It is not so much a question of producing (a text or an image). Rather, everything pivots upon the art of disappearance. But nevertheless, this process of disappearing has to leave some kind of trace, be this the site at which the other, the world or the object appears. This is moreover the only way in which the other can exist – on the basis of one's own calculated disappearance (according to the rules of the game of disappearance). Whatever one brings into being in the domain of production will never be more than the image of oneself, an extension of the same. Only that which comes from the domain of disappearance (from one's disappearance), is truly other.

The stupefying power of the photograph is far superior to that of writing. It is rare that a text can offer the same instantaneity, the same tangibility, the same magic, as a photographic object (shadow, light or material) – least of all the realist text, which plays upon resemblance (the ideology of the same), rather than upon the evident (the unintelligible, dazzling, manifestation of the other). Even photographs seldom offer this magic tangibility. And yet one senses it in Nabokov and in Gombrowicz. When their writing rediscovers the traces of primal disorder, the plastic vehemence of things without qualities, the erotic energy of a worthless universe.

Every photographed object is simply the trace left behind by the disappearance of everything else. It's almost a perfect crime, an almost total final solution, as it were, for a world which projects only the illusion of this or that object, which the photograph then transforms – absent from the rest of the world, withdrawn from the rest of the world – into an unseizable enigma. From the height of this enigmatic object – which, as a radical exception, bears no resemblances, and has no meaning – one has an unobstructed vision of the world.

Photography, then, is the art of eradicating everything that interposes itself between one and the world – the absence of the world presented in each detail, reinforced by each detail (it's the same thing for the face: it's the details of the face which render tangible the absence of the subject, this absent subject, without which there can be no good photographs). Like concern for fine sentiments in literature, considerations for resemblance or for expression in the image are inconsequential.

This disconnection of detail can also be brought about by a kind of mental gymnastics, a subtlety of thought. But in this case, the technique operates without encountering any resistance, and is perhaps some kind of trap. In so far as it exists within the realm of concepts and discourse, the object is related to all things around it. In so far as it is quite simply an object, it is an unidentifiable illusion.

It's difficult to focus on people who are not psychologically 'well focused'. The object makes the lens/*l'objectif* tremble. Thus it is that I have only very rarely, and very unsuccessfully, focused upon a human being. Over and above my personal inhibitions, this is perhaps because any human being is the site of such a complex scenario – even the most simple among them – the site of such a complex construction, that instead of transfiguring and idealizing the image as the camera usually does, the lens disfigures and decimates its character. The human being is masked, and the most difficult subject to capture is not so much their reality or their resemblance, as their mask, or in other words, their secret identity or alterity.

One's inability to photograph human beings is clear proof of the manipulation of the photographic subject by its object. One feels the same uneasiness when being photographed oneself. On several occasions, I've experienced proof of the object's sovereign influence, of this secret influence or manipulation: having taken an entire roll of images of a woman one day on a beach – she posed reluctantly, not wishing to be photographed – nothing appeared when the roll of film was developed. On another similar occasion, the roll of film mysteriously disappeared in the photographer's apartment.

The only profound desire is the desire of the object, which is to say not for that which I lack (something trivial and conventional, and well worthy of the subject, which always lives in the world of lack), nor for she or he who lacks me (something still more subtle), but for he or she who does not lack me, for that which is perfectly capable of existing without me. Desire is always for this kind of foreign perfection, and at the same time, perhaps, wishes both to shatter it and to demolish it. This perfection is the perfection of the object: it alone is truly other, and one only really yearns for alterity, for something whose perfection and impunity one wishes both to share and to shatter.

Photography has an obsessional, idiosyncratic, ecstatic and narcissistic quality. It is a singular, even expressly solitary activity. The photographic image is instant and irreversible, unlike that of painting, or of the text, or of any other art foregrounding continuity of expression, of resemblance or of meaning. It is irreversible, and thus to some extent fatal, given the instantaneity of the shooting. Irrevocable, it offers tangible evidence of the world at a certain given moment. Any attempt to retake, or to artistically retouch the photograph, or indeed any kind of preliminary scenography, appears abominably aesthetic.

The discontinuity of the subject in time and space, its solitude, and its disjunction from the world, are all correlative with the discontinuity of the object itself and with its obsessional character. For the 'good' object is distinguished by its obsessional character, by that which no longer needs the desire of the other. The best possible photographic subjects are those which have found their obsessive form, their idiosyncratic identity, their narcissistic figuration. Those which have objective impact and which the lens/l'*objectif* – like the face of Medusa – will immobilize with all their objective impact.

The moment of the negative. The photograph is not an image in real time, it's not a virtual image, or a numerical image, etc. It is analogical, and it retains the moment of the negative, the suspense of the negative, this slight displacement which allows the image to exist in its own right, in other words, as something different to the real object; in other words, as illusion – in other words, as the moment in which the world or the object vanishes into the image, which synthetic images cannot do because they no longer exist as images, strictly speaking. The photograph retains the moment of disappearance, whereas in the synthetic image, whatever it is, the real has already disappeared. This slight displacement gives the object the magic, the discrete charm of a previous existence.

The objective magic of the photograph – a quite different aesthetic form to that of painting – derives from the fact that the object has done all the work. Of course, photographers never admit this, and maintain that any originality derives from their inspiration, and from their photographic interpretation of the world. It is for this reason that they take bad (or excessively good) photographs, confusing their subjective 'vision' of the world with the miraculous reflex action of the photographic process.

It's not a question of being objective, it's a question of becoming an object. In the photographic process it's not a question of considering the world as an object, of acting as if it was already there as an object, but of making it become an object, in other words, of making it become other, of exhuming the alterity buried beneath its alleged reality, of making it appear as a kind of basic, disintegrative strange attractor, through its every element, of holding this primitive strange attraction in an image.

It's commonly said: 'Even the most banal, the most insignificant persons always present one particular (photographically seizable) instant when they are most singular, when they reveal their secret identity.' This is not accurate. For the only interesting thing about a person, or a face, is their radical alterity, and rather than seeking their identity behind appearances, we must try to detect this secret alterity behind their identity.

Put another way, we must reveal the mask or the figure which haunts a person, and withdraw it from their identity – the masked divinity which inhabits every one of us, even the most insignificant, for an instant, one day or another.

In the case of objects, savages and primitives, this alterity is unambiguous, this singularity is unambiguous (according to physics, the term singularity refers to an object, or a micro-universe, which escapes all of our co-ordinates). The same is true for animals. Likewise, the most insignificant of objects is always 'other'. In the case of subjects, it is much more ambiguous, however. For the subject – and many will consider this to be the hallmark of its humanity – often succeeds, frequently at the cost of almost incalculable efforts, in annihilating its singularity, in existing utterly within the limits of the law and of its identity. It is to be hoped that this success is never absolute, that this crime is never perfect.

Photography, among other forms of 'estrangement', can help to reveal this massacre, this process by which the subject exterminates its own alterity – *Selbstentfremdung*. A process, in other words, by which one simultaneously expropriates and eradicates oneself.

Once again, immanently, become 'a thing among things', all strangers one to another, all familiar and enigmatic, rather than a universe of subjects communicating one to another, all transparent one to another.

The silence of photographs. Without really being able to explain why, this is one of the most valuable and one of the most original qualities of the photographic image, as opposed to cinema, television, etc., which one always tries to silence, albeit unsuccessfully.

The silence not only of the image which escapes, eludes, all discourse, commentary, in order to be perceived and read 'inwardly' as it were – but also the silence into which the image plunges the objects that it seizes, wrenching them from the thunderous context of the real world. Irrespective of the violence, the speed or the noise of its surroundings, the photograph restores the object to the immobility and the silence of the image.

In the very centre of the city, in the very centre of turbulence, in the very centre of visual and auditory stress, it recreates emptiness, it recreates the desert, the equivalent of the desert – the equivalent also of a sense of isolation, of phenomenological isolation, or rather, a phenomenological immobilization of appearances. The only way to cross cities in silence. The only way to cross the world in silence.

## THE ECSTASY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Jean Baudrillard interviewed  
by Nicholas Zurbrugg  
(Paris, 4 June 1993)

*Perhaps I could begin by asking you how you began taking photographs?*

Oh, it's only relatively recently that I began – about ten years ago. Before that I was rather indifferent towards photography. Then, on one of my trips to Japan, I was given a camera, and I began to try it out a bit, taking photographs from the plane on the return journey, for example. But for quite a few years I only had a very simple little auto-focus camera, which in fact was the one that I used for most of the photographs in my recent exhibition in Paris. Since then, I've had other more sophisticated cameras. But I'm not a technological or a professional photographer, I make no claims to any of that. I know a little bit about photography, but all things considered, I don't really know very much – I came to photography as a kind of diversion or hobby, something like that. And yet at the same time it was also something serious, in the sense that it offered an alternative to writing – it was a completely different activity which came from elsewhere and had no connection with writing. Later, when people saw my photographs, they said, 'Oh yes, of course, we can clearly see the same sort of thing that you're writing about'. But it's not true at all. For me, there was no connection between the two.

*That surprises me a bit, in the sense that some of your writings on photography seem quite compatible with your more general analyses of contemporary technology. In The Transparency of Evil, for example, you suggest that*

*photography lacks any sense of intention or personal vision, and that the most remarkable early photographs are those of American Indians who seem to be confronting death and who seem to evoke what you term 'that most essential of exoticisms, the exoticism of the Object, of the Other'.*

Yes, that's to say that at such moments their quality of otherness is objective rather than subjective – it's that in particular which interests me. By contrast, in writing, it is the subjective dimension which prevails, which guides interpretation, and so on, whereas in photography the objective dimension is presented in all its otherness, and imposes its otherness. In that respect, the first photographs were of exotic, altogether 'other' human beings, which seem quite fascinating. I've no specific photographic agenda, but for me, photography has nothing to do with finding a particular vision or a subjective style in order to interpret the world. Rather, it is a process of capturing things, because objects are themselves captivating. It's almost like trapping things – like trying to catch the primitive dimension of the object, as opposed to the secondary dimension of the subject and the whole domain of representation. It's the immanent presence of the object, rather than the representation of the subject.

*Does this imply that your writings are more subjective than your photography?*

No, not really. I think that in my theoretical writings as well, I tried to make the object appear or disappear as a concept, and to make the concept appear or disappear as a subject. I tried to defy the concept as an object, so that I would no longer be the subject of knowledge, and to remove myself from the position of the subject. I tried all that, it's true, but discourse is something that always replaces you in the position of the subject. There's always this repositioning within discourse – it's impossible not to be a subjectivity and a producer of meaning. With discourse, it is difficult to produce both meaning and appearances. With photography it is considerably easier to make the object appear, and to disappear as a subject. Obviously, that's rather a utopian ambition – to disappear as a subject, and to reappear as an object. To be sure, one is always there, but in this case one's mediated by an insignificant object – it's in this way that one appears.

*I think that you've also written about the pleasure of photography. Is this pleasure a symptom of subjectivity?*

No, it's much more of an objective pleasure, rather than a process of self-realization. When I take photographs, I do so while walking, while crossing cities – doubtless, like many other photographers. It's a kind of

'travelling' or 'acting-out', and in this respect, a way of escaping oneself, of being elsewhere, a form of exoticism too, perhaps. It's for this reason that I'm not really a photographer. It's not really the image that I produce, even if it's a beautiful photograph, that interests me primarily – rather, it's this kind of activity, this kind of exoteric excursion.

*Could one say that this is a kind of meditation – but an objective meditation, rather than a subjective process?*

Yes – a predominantly objective meditation, if one could call that a meditation. In a way an object creates a sense of emptiness, as it were. When one finds something like that, an object imposes itself – suddenly, one sees it, because of certain effects of light, of contrasts and things like that, it isolates itself and it creates a sense of emptiness. Everything around it seems to disappear, and nothing exists but this particular thing, which you capture technologically, objectively. It's a mental process – *una cosa mentale*. Finally, I realized that there was a relation between the activity of theoretical writing, and the activity of photography, which at the beginning seemed utterly different to me. But in fact it's the same thing – it's the same process of isolating something in a kind of empty space, and analysing it within this space, rather than interpreting it. I don't interpret anything. Rather, I isolate something in an empty space and then it irradiates this emptiness – there's the irradiation of the object within this emptiness. It's for this reason that – without specifically planning to do so – I've never photographed faces, portraits or human beings. I can't do that, I don't know how to do that – because there would be an excess of meaning. That's to say, I only became defined as a subject when faced with another subject. Therefore I avoid other subjects, and photograph objects.

*Doesn't one of your photographs depict a young couple sitting in the rue Sainte-Beuve?*

Yes, but it's not so much a photograph of human beings. It's of two Americans, I think, who were sitting there.

*Who, by definition, aren't human beings?*

Yes, quite so, agreed! But it's altogether like a painting by Edward Hopper, don't you think? They seem completely translucent and hyperreal. It's the only photograph in which I have two figures, but it's not a portrait of human beings as human beings – not at all. I like Hopper a lot – I have a lot of admiration for his work. I wouldn't say I'm influenced by Hopper, because it's not the same thing – but there's

something of Hopper in that photograph, in the oblique lighting perhaps. I like that kind of effect.

*Do you feel that your work has any particular affinity with the work of any other artists or writers?*

Yes, there are some affinities, but not in terms of any specific references. My photographs don't make any sort of references. To be sure, I know the work of the great photographers quite well, but I'm not at all influenced by them. I don't make any claim to be a part of the history of photography or to be a part of photographic culture – this isn't my problem.

*I suppose that what I had in mind were the affinities between certain artistic or literary styles and certain of your images, such as the photograph of the draped chair. Was that your particular chair? I seem to remember seeing it here.*

Yes, it was. But it's broken now, and is in another room. But it was there, yes.

*It seemed to me that this photograph is almost a self-portrait in the manner of Magritte.*

Exactly, yes, it traces a particular form. That's to say, that at certain moments, objects suggest this sort of hollowed form. But it's not so much a projection of the subject on to them. Rather it's the absence of the subject – absence modelled within a certain form. Yes, one certainly has the impression that there is someone there.

*In another of your photographs, the image of the petrol pump reminded me of a description in Aragon's novel, Paris Peasant, in which Aragon describes petrol pumps as a kind of contemporary idol.*

Yes – they're very much like totem poles. But I wasn't making any kind of reference. One can find these correspondences retrospectively, but when I'm taking photographs I don't have any kind of references in mind. It's more a question of a particular moment, a detail, an object, a particular instant, that kind of thing. Now of course, I often go to the major international photographic exhibitions, but all of these photographs – with the possible exception of press photographs, and even these – are very aestheticized, very calculated, very carefully composed and so on, and that sort of photography is really of no interest to me. There's no unity of coherence in my photographs, except perhaps at a secondary level. They're all taken according to my caprice or my pleasure.

*I have the impression that they offer a series of traces of contemporary ruin or decay. I'm thinking for example of your images of torn posters in New York.*

Yes – I've taken a lot of that sort of thing, particular posters. But that's all rather banal, everybody does that now. There's no particular analytical impulse, but it's true – that sort of subject matter interests me.

*There seems to be a sort of taste for catastrophe.*

Yes, yes – a taste for absence or for decline. It's not so much a destructive vision – but there's certainly a sort of fascination for the object that is no longer there, the object that is lost – for absence. In a way there's a kind of strategy of absence or of disappearance.

*A sense of disappearance in process?*

Yes, yes, undoubtedly. But this was never a preconceived idea. I never said to myself, 'I'm going to take some photographs – I've got this idea about disappearance – I'm going to take some photographs based on that idea.' It didn't happen like that.

*Perhaps your photographs of America are rather different in emphasis to the celebratory tone of your writings in America – there seems to be more emphasis upon decay, and also perhaps an element of nostalgia for the ruins of the previous century.*

Yes, perhaps. In any case, while I've taken many photographs in America, the best ones perhaps are not those of America. Initially, I thought that they were – images of the desert and of the big American cities and so on. But finally, in the course of selecting work for the exhibition, I realized that the ones which seemed to work best were usually those which related to a more intimate, closer domain. On the one hand, there are the American photographs, but there are also others which simply emphasize ordinary objects. Some of my objects are very, very close, others are very distant, as in the American images.

*Some of your photographs made me think of poems by Pierre Reverdy which similarly evoke half-opened doors and situations in which something has just taken place – in which one senses the absence of any immediate event.*

Yes, it's that – the capturing of some kind of non-occurrence at the very limits of its moment of disappearance or appearance – something like that. That's one sort of argument, perhaps. But as a rule I say nothing about photography – I've got nothing much to say about photography.

There are two pages in *The Transparency of Evil* but that's all, and that was written well before I began exhibiting photographs. It had nothing to do with my personal practice – rather, it was in the context of a book – it was something quite different, with no relation to my particular photography. Obviously, one can now relate the two, but I feel no obligation to do so. Personally, I prefer to consider my photographic work as an exotic, foreign, different activity – as a diversion, in other words.

*All the same, in so far as it is an activity which offers you a certain form of escape, it seems to me that your photographic aspirations have something in common with what you describe in your interview with Guy Ballavance as the 'small miracle' of identifying an 'enchanted' or 'initiatory space', beyond the constraints of conventional space. In another interview with Guillemot and Soutif, you similarly propose that when writing really works, there are more or less magical moments as one travels into another mental zone.*

Yes, that's true.

*Has your photographic work confirmed the possibility of this process?*

Yes, totally, it's much more evident in photography. I enter into this second state – this kind of rapid ecstasy – much more often in my photography than in my writing. The ecstasy of photography – the projection into the image and so on – is much stronger, much more spontaneous and automatic. For me, photography is a kind of automatic writing – it's something quite different to the controlled writing of my texts. I can become much more enthralled or fascinated in a photographic work, than in the act of writing. When I'm writing, I know much more about what I'm doing, I'm in control, I'm able to direct or redirect my work. And yet I've experienced what I'd have to call my greatest sense of pleasure – and indeed, my strongest sense of passion – in the realm of images, rather than in the realm of texts.

*All this seems rather curious, because I think that you've argued in *The Transparency of Evil* that generally speaking, photography lacks any sense of passion or vision.*

Yes, but there's a fascination. There's not a sense of vision – or at least not an interpretative vision in my work. I don't impose any system of vision. It's more a question of the way objects make themselves visible – of the way in which objects make themselves seen through the observer. That's something else, I think, to what you mean by 'vision'. Obviously one cannot escape from one's own point of view. But so far as possible,

one allows oneself to be viewed by the object, rather than attempting to capture the object. I suppose one could claim that writing does the same thing to some extent, but to a much less significant degree. It's really very different. So in a sense, photography verifies the same principles, but much more easily and automatically.

*The notion of photography's automatic quality points perhaps to the problem of evaluating technology. When you discuss technology in The Transparency of Evil it's almost always in rather a scornful or negative way. You don't seem to have a very positive view of the technocultural mentality.*

Yes, of course, I offer a very critical account of technology and of technology's impact on the world. I'm not the only one to do this – everybody speaks of technology in this way. But now, having reconsidered technology in terms of photography, I'm beginning to formulate another hypothesis – I'm asking myself if technology isn't the site of an inversion of the relationship between the subject and the object. Rather than thinking of technology as the site of a subject which, by means of technology, masters the world, captures the world and so on, I'm beginning to wonder if – almost ironically or paradoxically – technology may not prove to be the site where the world or the object plays with the subject. In other words, there's a difference of vision. Let's say that the rather critical or pejorative vision of technology represents a first position. But now, from a second position, I'm more interested in seeing technology as an instrument of magic or of illusion – an illusion of the world, but also a positive kind of illusion or play of illusion. Perhaps this is the ultimate way of playing with reality.

Up to now I think that technology has been analysed in too realistic a way. Accordingly, it has been typecast as a medium of alienation and depersonalization. That's what we've done, and that's what we're continuing to do in analyses of virtual reality – it's possible to continue for ever in this sort of direction. But I sense now that a sort of reversal of focus is taking place, and that we now need to see things in terms of a kind of strategy of illusion. Seen in this context, the photographic object suddenly becomes a microscopic paradigm of this process. Starting from the basis of this kind of process or play within the very restrained domain of photography, we can perhaps extrapolate the general way in which all technology functions as the site of the disappearance of the subject. This is not to suggest that one is taking the side of the object, but rather to say that at the limits of the subject and the object, the metaphysical opposition between the subject and the object has perhaps been destabilized in some way by technology. I don't feel particularly committed to either one of these hypotheses. I'll always continue to offer a radically critical analysis of media and technology – one's obliged to

do this. But it's also necessary to identify another form of analysis – a more subtle form of analysis than that one.

*Perhaps there are two levels of analysis possible, in the sense that you argue in The Transparency of Evil that while the world in general may be 'a great disappointment', its details have 'a stunning clarity' when 'caught by surprise'. That made me think a little of the transition in Barthes' Camera Lucida from an initial interest in the general social conventions of 'studium', to subsequent emphasis upon the domain of 'punctum' and a more personal scale of values.*

Yes, I'm considerably in favour of 'punctum', in the sense of the singularity of the object at a given moment. Or the singularity of the instant outside of its interpretative context, at the point where things have no meaning – or do not yet have meaning – but appear all the same.

*That's extremely interesting, because it's almost exactly what Barthes said when he remarked that he couldn't explain why a certain photograph of Robert Wilson attracted him, observing that there was something in the photograph which he couldn't analyse.*

But which fascinated him. Yes, all that seems quite relevant to any analysis of such materials. Moreover, in all contemporary photography – this very sophisticated, technological professional work – the one thing that's nearly always missing is 'punctum'. It's all very, very well made, very beautiful and so on, but there's nothing interesting there.

*In one of your essays that I like very much – 'Xerox and Infinity', which appeared in Traverses – you begin by proposing that technology is impossible to understand, and then defy anyone to claim that technology leads to any real communication. But at the end of the article, instead of abandoning the whole problem, you rather unexpectedly assert that the very uncertainty of technology's impact is fascinating. In this respect I feel tempted to compare your critique of contemporary culture with that of Huysmans in Against Nature, in the sense that his hero, Des Esseintes, declares that the old gods are dead, that the old values have disappeared and that the old stars have lost their light, and concludes by calling for pity for 'the unbeliever who would fain believe'. I think your work similarly offers a radical critique of the old values, or of the formulations of the old values, but at the same time – throughout writings such as The Transparency of Evil – you also contrast trivial values and strong values, or false and fundamental problems. In other words, despite your seemingly negative personal logic, your writing continually seems to display an aspiration towards something more flexible and more positive – an analysis of 'rules', perhaps, as opposed to 'laws', if I understand this*

*distinction. I think you suggest that laws are brutalizing – in the sense that you condemn 'the brutalizing effects of rationality', whereas you relate rules to more mysterious and more liberating forms of process and play.*

Yes, that's right. Rules are arbitrary, whereas laws are necessary. Rules are arbitrary, a game, something more aleatory – yes, it's true, it's that which frequently interests me. And so when I consider technology I'm curious to know whether over and above technology's functional and rational laws, there may not also exist certain rules of a kind of game which we still don't know – which still remains secret – which constitutes the basis of a kind of technological illusion. In other words, at the same time that technology functions rationally – and seems a kind of rational and objective corpus and so on – it is perhaps also a kind of radical illusion.

*What do you mean by 'radical illusion'?*

Illusion in the literal sense – the fact that things are never what they seem to be or what they believe themselves to be. Accordingly, the world, likewise, is never what it seems. It presents itself as one thing, but it's something else – and so, once again, there's a game of illusion. In other words, the world plays with us, in a manner of speaking, and we have a subjective illusion – the illusion of being a subject. Whereas the objective illusion derives from the fact that the world presents itself as one thing, but is not really this at all. It allows the subject to believe that it is understood by the subject, but in fact the subject doesn't understand it at all. At this point, technology can be seen as a whole domain within which the subject thinks they can seize the world, transform it, interpret it and so on, but from which the world escapes. At present, scientists have been forced to admit that they no longer know what the object is, that they no longer know what the position of the subject is, and that there's a kind of unseizable interplay between an irrecoverable subject and unstable and aleatory laws.

*I found it rather curious that you associated these arbitrary laws with a principle of evil – with 'le mal' – and that you personified such laws as this or that kind of 'evil genie'. Isn't this a rather negative terminology?*

No, not at all. For me evil – 'le mal' – is not a moral or religious term. It's the principle which destabilizes the good – 'le bien'. 'Le mal' is that which is irreducible – which resists any systematic opposition with 'le bien', in the sense that 'le bien'/'le mal' is a dialectical opposition, and is thus 'bien'. 'Le mal' is that which resists this opposition, which is not analysable – which is something else – something irreducible. My vision

isn't at all religious or moral. I'm interested in whatever subverts rational or real systems – the enigmatic, the secret, seduction, and so on. Unfortunately, the fact that I call this kind of thing 'evil' – 'le mal' – can lead to the erroneous assumption that there's something nihilistic or moral in my work. If I use the term 'le mal', it's because from my point of view 'le bien' doesn't really exist in reality.

*On the last page of The Transparency of Evil you seem to use rather more positive terminology for the irreducible or vital quality that you associate with the destabilization of rational and dialectical systems, when you refer for example to 'the scintillation of being'. That seems a fairly optimistic concept.*

Yes, but I use the term 'scintillation' in terms of the way that it is used with reference to stars – for very distant stars which perhaps have died, but which still seem to scintillate or shine. In other words, there are two alternatives, there seems to be light, but perhaps there isn't any light, and perhaps it's just an apparition.

*So it's not really an existential affirmation.*

No, it's not an affirmation. It's not so much something positive, as something alternative.

*I was also struck by another term which seemed to be positive, but which may similarly turn out not to be so. In the essay in The Transparency of Evil entitled 'Radical Exoticism', you refer rather surprisingly to 'the pataphysical delicacy of the world'. You write: 'The joy of taking photographs is an objective joy, and anyone who has never felt the objective transports of the image, some morning, in some town or desert, will never understand the pataphysical delicacy of the world.'*

Yes, well this is a bit like the suggestion that the world in general may be disappointing, but that each detail can be ecstatic, or whatever. It's the same sort of argument – that if one extricates oneself from metaphysics, from the interpretation of the world and so on, one discovers a sort of delicacy in the non-meaningful, in the domain of the pataphysical – to use rather metaphysical terminology. In other words, one enters a kind of empty space – the delicacy of emptiness and the delicacy of objects which became lost in their own emptiness. They don't have any centre, they're not in the process of gravitating towards any centre. Rather, the pataphysical dimension is a kind of explosion within empty space, a kind of attraction by peripheral emptiness – that is the pataphysical condition.



For me the subject is predominantly a concentric force, whereas the object is an extrinsic force – that's more or less how I conceive of the pataphysical. Within this domain there are certain sensations, a certain sensibility, and certain forms of joy which can accompany any number of experiences. Finally, though I don't associate the term 'pataphysical' with any particular doctrine, I have had certain associations with the Pataphysics group, but I broke away from them because they reduced everything to a pataphysical dogma or doctrine – I can't think of anything more stupid. So I dropped pataphysics, although I'm still very sympathetic towards Jarry's definition of pataphysics as the science of imaginary solutions. I find the idea that pataphysics is as distant from metaphysics, as metaphysics is distant from physics, a very appealing hierarchy. It's not a hierarchy of values, but in terms of the game as a whole – I'm attracted to a pataphysical vision of the world. It's not really very far from the game of appearances – from a kind of ironic metamorphosis of the world.

*Would it be fair to suggest that you sometimes identify what appear to be quite positive kinds of transformation or metamorphosis? I'm thinking of your references in The Transparency of Evil to certain ambivalent or catalytic gestures or phrases which can be said to alter meaning in the sense that they seem to engender new kinds of reality at the same time that they 'transcend their determinations', and in your terms, 'come closer to their raison d'être'. There seem to be similar references to this kind of tendency in the work of Proust – the sort of thing that Deleuze discusses as certain privileged kinds of word or gesture. With this in mind, there seem to be two kinds of tendencies in your writing – firstly, that of defining general paradoxes and of demolishing preceding beliefs, and secondly, an interest in exceptions, and in those moments when systems malfunction and paradoxically produce new kinds of reality and experience.*

Yes – it's at that point that one can consider such systems in reverse, and can judge them according to their own logic.

*Do you think it probable that your own evasive systems may eventually undergo a similar revision and reversal?*

Yes, it's quite possible! Absolutely! Indeed, I hope this will be the case! I hope that they'll undergo the same process of reversal!

## BAUDRILLARD'S LIST

Jean Baudrillard Interviewed  
by Rex Butler  
(Brisbane, 24 April 1994)

*How would you respond to the idea that your work has always been about the essential paradox of representation, which is that the copy cannot get too close to the original without it no longer resembling it at all? In The System of Objects, the same sign both completely expresses and does away with the thing it refers to. In The Society of Consumption, too much production leads to waste. In The Transparency of Evil, it is the perfection of any system which leads to its collapse. Has this paradox or circularity been a constant feature of your work?*

Yes. I mean I don't know exactly, I have no perspective on my own work. This cycle of things, it was more the term reversibility that interested me. Yes, it was there from the very beginning. I started with critique, and yet it was a classical traditional critique from the position of the subject. Then I began to destabilize this position of knowledge that is always universal. And then I began to use this term reversibility, at first in an analytical but then in an ironic way – ironic in that it would always be able to be itself reversed. But not in an Oriental, not in a Zen way.

*But does all this take place specifically around the logic of the sign, the idea that when you get too close to something you are further away than ever?*

---

The following interview was conducted at the Heritage Hotel, Brisbane, during the 'Baudrillard in the Nineties' Conference. Alan Cholodenko and Nicholas Zurbrugg were also present and at times their questions are included.

Yes. And maybe this reversibility and this circularity meet in the figure of the asymptote, I don't know. But this reversibility remains something like a utopia, a form of nostalgia. It is a matter of waiting for the world to reverse. We must explore the monopolistic and universalizing ways of the world at their limit and wait to see whether – according to the hyperlogic of things – they will flip over into seduction.

*Do you think that all your terms like 'seduction', 'reversibility', etc., are all tropes – metaphors – at their deepest level for this fundamental logic of the sign?*

Yes, I think that. The sign is the epicentre of this attraction. But the problem is that I never analysed the sign in a transhistorical manner. I always tried to analyse it in its actual setting. This is very difficult, of course, because the sign is, on the one side, caught up in the reality of things and, on the other, it is subject to a very abstract logic. The sign is without doubt a very fragile fact, and it is very hard to force its logic into a hyperlogic without losing the sign itself along the way.

*So your work was never really about semiotics as a discipline, but just about the sign?*

No, I went this way – Marxism, semiotics. But they were only media. I will never resolve this confrontation of both hypotheses – of whether the sign makes possible or destroys – there is a kind of reversibility and antagonism between the two that's indestructible. It's the same in the final stages of things with illusion. All you can do is take part in the illusion of the world and challenge it with the perfect crime, with the radical substitutability of things. But I haven't explored – not yet, anyway – whether this technologization into virtuality maybe itself leads into illusion again. The radical illusionality of technique – maybe technique at its limit also leads to illusion. Or maybe this whole technological apparatus does not change anything in the world, the radical illusionality of things. But I cannot choose. The whole thing is very irrational because the two possibilities are not exclusive.

*Because of this logic you're interested in, you always examine systems in their own terms. It's in terms of their own logic that you try to unravel them. Do you think, therefore, that we as readers of your work should likewise attempt to understand your work within its own terms and not according to some real object it might be seen to be accounting for?*

That is something that was discussed yesterday. I look at the auto-rationality of systems and my system is their obverse. Why should not

my own system also be vulnerable to this logic, be driven to its own end? Except that I also try to be or to explain beyond this point. But, of course, there is a homogeneity between my system and the one I am examining that implies its mortality. There is an analogical affinity between my system and its object, the world – but without the two completely corresponding. But I ask the question: if there is a problem with my logic it must also be your problem.

*This would be because there is a double-bind you impose on your readers. On the one hand, we can compare your system to another object or methodology. Douglas Kellner, for example, in his book offers a Marxist critique of your work, but you have already critiqued Marxism. So there is a kind of begging of the question there. On the other hand, we can take your system up in its own terms, but then we mightn't be able to ask the hard questions of it because we have already agreed with your suppositions. There is therefore a problem: we can either stay outside your system and beg the question or come inside but risk not asking the right questions.*

Yes. Maybe my system, as anyone's, is reversible and it can and must be reversed. But I cannot do it myself, I need other people to do it for me. But it also cannot be reduced and Kellner was very reductive. I cannot agree with that. I have no general desire to defend myself, but there I have no chance to defend myself. Certainly, I can always be reduced, but Kellner does not take into account the writing, the form, of my work. Never. However, the price of this illusion is that it is reduced. But in the end I have nothing against this.

*The problem for us, though, is that you say: 'Reverse my system!' But in so far as we do that, we are only following you yet again.*

Yes! Yes! But let's consider the words 'imitation' and the 'real'. The real is a most ambiguous word – it is at the same time unreal and the limit to every theory of the real. And I would not say that I use this word rigorously. It would make no sense for me because it at once potentializes hyperreality and is the real as such. But that word imitation, I have never used the term. You see a problematic of imitation in my work. But I cannot see this theorization of imitation and mimesis. They have never interested me.

*NZ: Very generally, then, you seem to confront us with the choice of either going back into Marxism or forward by a process of reversibility into something else. Do you think art in general or something like photography in particular offers us a way out of this double-bind, something beyond the anti-logic of more or less mechanical reversibility?*

I don't know what is at stake in my photos. I feel this reversibility in my writing, in the use of language there, always. The word reversing: that I'm used to, from the very first texts I published, which were, remember, poetic and not theoretical. I was acting out this reversibility for the sake of an analysis of the object – of images and signs. As for photography – this acting-out through images perhaps takes place in a reversed way itself from that of writing.

NZ: *Is it simply a matter of reversing language? Weren't you saying the other day that you were interested in the way photography might capture the 'secret life' of objects? Can one capture the secret life of objects by reversing language? Would you say it is easier to identify the secret life of things in language or in images?*

On an obvious level, it is easier with images. It is more immediately attractive because with images you can immanently determine the presence or absence of an object. It is either there or not there – it is visual, which is more direct than the conceptual. But with the use of language, you become so familiar with the ambiguity of language, the anagrammatical use of language. For myself, I am more familiar with language. I don't really know what I do there. But I like it for this reason because you discharge the responsibility of existence onto objects and from one object onto another. With both perhaps, something circulates without you, but with you hidden behind it. The technical medium is something that permits you to stay hidden behind something.

*You talk in your work about self-contained systems, for example, the social which produces its own other in the form of the masses. The social is therefore an irrefutable hypothesis. To this irrefutable hypothesis of the social, you must oppose another, which is also that of the masses, but this time read another way. The social is self-contained, you might be saying, but only because of the masses. Are all your analyses trying to 'double' the systems they examine in this way, both completely accounting for them and providing an absolutely different explanation for them at the same time?*

Yes. I agree with this idea of the circularity of the idea of the masses. They are a strange concept, neither realistic nor conceptual. And some people will say that they are tautological and that one's analysis does not have a use. I agree with this, to an extent. Tautology is a circularity in a void. But my circularity creates a void; it is a kind of annulment by logic. The clash of words and concepts creates a void – and in this void maybe something will happen. In a real tautology nothing happens because the circle is closed.

*So you are in fact saying that the social cannot be tautological?*

The social is closed to the outside. People say we cannot enter it. But it is very open to the inside. When you agree to enter it on its own terms, of course.

*When you examine a system in its own terms, you say you are doing this because any alternative to it would only be possible because of it. We have to look at the system in its own terms because it is already like that. But the risk you take is that the system wasn't like this until you actually came to it, that you are the one who makes it self-contained. It's a risk you are undertaking, is it not, this exclusion of empirical alternatives to the system when you see it as perfect?*

It's a risk I'm very conscious of. My analysis takes up the risk of things that are too perfect and my analysis will also be subject to the same risk. They are both too perfect to be true. But here I would say that this risk of perfection is good, this disappearing by going beyond the limit. It must be understood as a risk.

*But how did you judge that this risk was the way to go? Why didn't you decide to be empirical? Why not consider alternatives? Things could be just the way they are, but you make them the way they will be.*

I cannot say. Nothing begins as a project. It was never a decision or a choice between this and that. It all develops regardless of any finality. It takes place in parallel with consumption, production, seduction, the feminine, illusion, and so on. It was all a metamorphosis of one into the other. It proceeds not by linear articulation, but otherwise. I was never programmed. But I also could not deprogram all these things. It had to be so. But, fundamentally, I have had the same idea from the beginning. We all have just one idea all our life.

*But, again, why this decision to exclude the empirical? Why choose this metaphysical approach? Why things not as they are but as they will or might be?*

Not as they would be, but as they already are behind their own appearance. But, in point of fact, I was empirical. I started from the object and therefore from this point of view. In the beginning, I was phenomenologically oriented, you know, with Barthes and all that. I never started from the outside idealist world of concepts. And I was never assigned to any discipline. However, maybe this has changed. Perhaps I was obliged to go this way according to the heritage of pataphysics.

NZ: *Towards the end of The Transparency of Evil, you talk about the current state of things and say that you are in an apocalyptic state where you can only be melancholy. Isn't this a sort of personal – or even global – apocalyptic empiricism?*

I will not try to analyse myself psychologically. It would not be interesting either for me or for other people. Something must remain about what you do without you knowing what it is. Because things always come from somewhere else. I don't pretend to create concepts and so forth from the inside. They come from other things or other people. They must be fated in this sense – not in the sense of being mystical, but in the sense of coming from elsewhere. The world itself is very definitely strange. And we are in a state of things which is not that of alienation but that of the deprivation of the other. Freud has two words in German: *Verfremdung* and *Entfremdung*. The first means 'one's alienation by the other; the second the end of this, when there is no other any more. To become other is a good thing. But in *Entfremdung* there is no other any more. This is the worst state of things, much worse than alienation. And in this state, nothing any longer comes from the outside, from another world. And now the question is: what to do to maintain or keep this connection with otherness?

AC: *And this answers the question of how you choose one or the other of those two alternatives. This choice has always already been made. It is always a question of the other. You were asked: how did you choose? But the fact was, you were chosen.*

Exactly.

*In that case, is your work both a description and a prescription of things? Yesterday, you said that all you have to do is follow the radical irony of the world itself, which is already out there. But it could be asked, if there really is this radical irony already in things, why do we need you to point it out to us? And the answer, of course, is because you are also putting it there. You are not just describing this radical irony but prescribing it.*

Again, of course.

*Then, in order to make a good argument about the world you have to 'double' it, in the sense that, after you say it, you cannot but see it. It is in this manner too that you propose a virtual world. Your criticism wants to make another world. You seem to see your task as that of doubling things. To this actual world, you desire to add another virtual world. So that there is an actuality and a virtuality at the same time.*



Paris, 1985



Rome, 1994

Yes, but illusion doesn't mean another world behind or beyond this one. Illusion is simply the fact that nothing is itself, nothing means what it appears to mean. There is a kind of inner absence of everything to itself. That is illusion. It is where we can never get a hold of things as they are, where we can never know the truth about objects or the other. Illusion is this distance, this almost physical, objective – cosmological – distance. It is where the subject is not a subject for himself. But all this is not another world. And it applies not only to distant objects, but to near objects, even objects in the mirror!

*You say that these two worlds are somehow immanent, simultaneous, but I think you would be arguing in your work that it is that other world which 'allows' this one to be realized. It is this illusion which allows the reality of this world. What would the relationship of that other world to this one be? Perhaps it doesn't so much allow it as 'double' it, but what would this mean? Is it a kind of Kantian transcendental that you are talking about here? How does it actually impact on this world? How can we become aware of it?*

You can't know it. It remains a hypothesis. You can only know that things here are not stable, are not true, are not real. But perhaps it is the very acting-out of this hypothesis that has made them so.

*AC: What do you mean by the expression 'virtual illusion'? Isn't there a danger of confusing it with this virtuality you have spoken of, in that one seems to be a real or realizing principle, and the other an unreal or derealizing principle?*

Yes, this is a good point and an ambiguity in my text. But let me say this. Many other cultures – but not ours – deal with illusion as a form or a symbol. They are in direct connection with the illusion of the world. They never deal with the so-called reality of the world. But we only deal with this reality. However, maybe our culture through its technological array ends at the same point. Both cultures may ironically end up at the same point, the same 'end'. The first through seduction; the other through the very excessiveness of production. In both cases, there may be the same reversibility. It is a pure hypothesis on my part, but it is a very interesting one because it would be the counterpart to Heidegger's hypothesis that technology puts us on the path to the ontological truth of the world, is the ultimate stage of metaphysics, and so on. Here, on the contrary, technology takes us on an unknown detour – but, again, in some way, different paths would lead to the same end: to become radically absent from oneself.

to use a philosophical expression, then, could we say that illusion is the 'enabling condition' of this world? That this world is not possible without its alternative? If this is so, then, why in such recent books as *The Transparency of Evil* and *The Illusion of the End* do you rhetorically ask the question: will we be saved by illusion or will we be allowed to perish? Because both alternatives are necessarily true. They are in fact not alternatives, but simultaneous.

Yes, but if we ever attain an identity with ourselves we are dead. It is only in sleep or in death that we are identical with ourselves.

*But we can never die in this sense because illusion will always save us.*

On the contrary, illusion is a form of death. When we lose the possibility of death, of the end, of playing with the end, then we are very dead. And the whole system has managed to deprive us of this possibility. It is the state of things beyond the end, a kind of extermination beyond either an end or origin. To be exterminated means that you cannot find your own end and you are nothing any more. It is a state of things beyond the end. It is interminable and without co-ordinates. It is an extermination that is the very contrary of death. And it should remind us of that other extermination where people were deprived of the possibility of their own death.

NZ: *Isn't that rather a spectacular hypothesis, if you're actually saying that our own collective condition in 1994 is somehow akin to the experience of the concentration camps in the 1940s? Presumably some of the survivors from these camps would take exception to this and read it as a trivialization of their experience - somewhat as Haacke and Bourdieu's dialogues in *Libre-Echange* argue that such hypotheses abandon the world of political realities.*

The difference is that perhaps one is an inaugural event and the other is a historical condition, but I do think that the problem is the same. We might compare the concentration camps and the atomic bomb in this regard. Both irradiate this extermination with a virality that is also a virtuality. But all this, of course, must be explained more factually or precisely.

NZ: *Does this make you a sort of Schindler wanting to help your readers escape the exterminating angel of viral virtuality?*

Yes! I'll put you all on my list!

## JEAN BAUDRILLARD'S DEFENCE OF THE REAL: *Reading In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities as an Allegory of Representation*

REX BUTLER

Is it possible that all of the work of Jean Baudrillard is nothing more than the endless playing out of a paradox first stated more than 2000 years ago by Plato in his dialogue *Cratylus*? Plato writes in this dialogue:

*Socrates:* Let us suppose the existence of two objects: one of them shall be Cratylus and the other the image of Cratylus, and we will suppose, further, that some god makes not only a representation such as a painter would make of your outward form and colour, but also creates an inward organisation like yours, having the same warmth and softness; and into this infuses motion and soul and mind, such as you have, and in a word copies all your qualities, and places them by you in another form. Would you say that this was Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, or that there were two Cratyluses?

*Cratylus:* I should say that there were two Cratyluses.<sup>1</sup>

Plato's point here is that when two things resemble each other too closely they no longer resemble each other at all. There is no longer a relationship of original to copy, but of two separate originals. The copy only resembles the original in so far as it is different from it.

The relationship of resemblance is inherently paradoxical, therefore, in that it cannot be pushed too far without turning into its opposite: a bad imitation is a good imitation and a too-good imitation is a bad imitation.

It would also have no essence in so far as it is where it is not and is not where it most appears to be. To put it another way, we cannot say what imitation is because we could resemble it only by being ourselves different from it. There would always be a prior relationship of imitation implied in any attempt to speak of it – and that is precisely that imitation which allows us to imitate it.

We do not have to go too far to see something like this in Baudrillard. Take, for example, the following passage from his essay 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place':

We are all obsessed (and not only in music) with high fidelity, obsessed with the quality of musical 'reproduction'. Armed with the tuners, amplifiers and speakers of our stereo systems, we adjust bass and treble, we multiply tracks, in search of an impeccable technology and an infallible music. I still remember a sound booth in a recording studio where the music, broadcast on four tracks, reached you in four dimensions so that it seemed unreal, secreted from the inside, with a surreal depth. . . This was no longer music. Where is the degree of technological sophistication, where is the 'high fidelity' threshold beyond which music as such would disappear? For the problem of the disappearance of music is the same as the disappearance of history: it will not disappear *for want of* music, it will disappear for having exceeded that limit point, vanishing point; it will disappear in the perfection of its materiality, in its own special effect (beyond which there is no longer any aesthetic judgement or aesthetic pleasure, it is the ecstasy of musicality and its end).<sup>2</sup>

In the same way as Plato, Baudrillard is arguing here that it is in coming too close to its original music that stereo would no longer resemble it at all. There is a limit point – a 'threshold' – beyond which the increasing perfection of stereo, instead of bringing music closer, actually drives it further away. There is a limit to the technical perfectibility of stereo, a point beyond which it cannot go except at the risk of no longer being stereo, of no longer reproducing its music. Beyond this point, stereo would no longer resemble its music, but only itself. It would no longer resemble its music, but would be only – a word that comes from Plato, but which is not used in quite the same sense by Baudrillard – a simulacrum of it.

This is Baudrillard's constant argument throughout his work. In his interviews, Baudrillard says that he does not have a method as such, but that his only strategy is one of reversibility.<sup>3</sup> By this, he means that he takes the basic axioms of the system he is examining and pushes them to the point where they begin to turn upon themselves, to produce the opposite effects from those intended. This is what we can see Baudrillard doing here. He does not directly oppose stereo; he does not speak of

some real technical limit to its progress. Rather, he pushes it to its furthest extent, drives its essential tendency to the point where it has no limit and is absolutely identical to its music. But it is at just this point that what is shown is that stereo cannot complete itself in this way, cannot exactly reproduce its music while still reproducing music at all. What Baudrillard discovers is not an *external* but an *internal* limit to stereo, a limit which it is not *prevented* from going beyond but which it *cannot* go beyond.

We have here an entirely original idea of criticism, of how criticism works. Baudrillard does not – as is the usually understood role of criticism – oppose the technical development of stereo, propose some empirical reason why it is not perfect. He does not name something excluded from it (we can no longer hear the difference between stereo and its original music;<sup>4</sup> whatever limit we give to stereo, it is always possible that some future development of the medium will take us beyond it). On the contrary, Baudrillard entirely agrees with stereo, says that it has no limits – but this only because of, this only to lead to, a completely different explanation of stereo than the one stereo gives itself. This limitlessness leads to the end of stereo or this limitlessness is only possible because of the end of stereo. Or, to put this in terms of that Platonic paradox of imitation we looked at earlier: it is resemblance (stereo) pushed too far which leads to difference (the end of stereo) and difference (the end of stereo) which allows resemblance (stereo).

And, as we say, we can see all of Baudrillard's work as the endlessly varied elaboration of the necessity for this 'aesthetic illusion'. It is this, I would argue, that must be grasped first of all about his work; it is this that his work is fundamentally about. It is this, as we have seen with stereo, that allows Baudrillard to speak of the limits to any system actually becoming identical with the real. Although the real is only ever a function of its system (as music today can only be heard through stereo), there still remains a certain 'real' left out of any attempt by this system to speak of it (just as real 'music' is left out of stereo). This real might be understood as the very difference between the original and the copy, what the original and the copy both resemble and what therefore allows them to resemble each other. It is this real that Baudrillard speaks of throughout his work, beneath all the different names he gives for it (death, seduction, the masses, the fatal object, evil, reversibility, illusion, etc.). It is this real, excluded by any attempt to speak of it, that is the limit to every system – it is this Platonic paradox that Baudrillard means by the real.

How different this is from the usual readings of Baudrillard! In them, we find two seemingly opposed, but in fact identical, mistakes. First of all, they either judge Baudrillard's work according to some pre-existing real or compare his work to that of other theorists as though they were discussing the same real. This is a mistake because Baudrillard's point is

that each system he analyses (and the work of any great thinker) creates its own reality, sets out the very terms in which it must be understood. This is the argument he makes with regard to stereo: there is no sense in simply speaking of some real music excluded from it because music today is only possible because of stereo. We can contest stereo only in its own terms, by pushing its fundamental postulates to their limit and watching them reverse upon themselves.<sup>5</sup>

The second mistake Baudrillard's commentators make is that they speak of his work as simply doing away with the real: Baudrillard as the great contemporary thinker of the end of reality, of reality as a simulacrum, etc. In fact, as opposed to this, Baudrillard's work offers a defence of the real against the efforts of all systems (including his own) to turn it into a simulacrum, a way of thinking the real as the unsurpassable limit to all systems. Baudrillard is a thinker not at all of reality as a simulacrum, but of the possibility of reality when all is simulacrum.<sup>6</sup>

The complex position of Baudrillard, then, is at once to argue that all reality is a simulacrum, that any attempt to speak of it can only turn it into a simulacrum, and that reality is the limit to all attempts to speak of it, to turn it into a simulacrum. But the real question is – it is the only way we have of judging Baudrillard in his own terms – how well is Baudrillard able to speak of this outside to all systems without actually being able to speak of it? What relationship is he able to form to that which forbids all relationship? How is he able to use a certain 'effect of the real' against those systems he contests while recognizing that he is himself unable to say what this real is? In short, how is he able to defend the real without also attacking it? We can see Baudrillard in the following excerpt from an interview trying simultaneously to hold on to all of these options:

But I hold no position on reality. Reality remains an unshakable postulate towards which you can maintain a relation either of adversity or of reconciliation. The real – all things considered, perhaps it exists – no, it doesn't exist – is the insurmountable limit of theory. The real is not an objective status of things, it is the point at which theory can do nothing. That does not necessarily make of theory a failure. The real is actually a challenge to the theoretical edifice. But in my opinion theory can have no status other than that of challenging the real.<sup>7</sup>

This is what we mean by speaking of Baudrillard's 'defence of the real' as an alternative to those usual interpretations of his work. It is important to realize that before reading him in terms of the real, his adequation to some pre-existing reality, he must be read in his own terms. That is to say, fundamentally, in terms of that Platonic paradox of imitation which is his constant critical method and his only real subject.

What we perhaps discover at the end of this is that we can *never* read Baudrillard in his own terms, that there is always a certain disorganization or contradiction in his thought. In one way, this is contingent, a result of Baudrillard's human failure as a thinker. In another way, however, it is unavoidable: it is the very limit of Baudrillard's own system to become real, to become strictly equivalent to the real. Those other analysts of Baudrillard's work are right – he can be compared to some pre-existing real, to the work of other thinkers – but, if we can say this, only as a result of first of all reading him in his own terms, only for the reasons Baudrillard himself gives. As with all great thinkers, it is only by turning Baudrillard against himself that we are able to criticize him; it is only by remembering the lessons he has to teach us that we might forget him.

\* \* \*

In order to try to make some of this clearer, we might give here a more detailed interpretation of one of Baudrillard's texts, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, first published in 1978. In a sense, the book is a continuation of Baudrillard's earlier criticism where he actually named what was excluded from the system he was examining (for example 'function', 'drives' and 'needs' in *The System of Objects*, 'waste' in *The Society of Consumption*); but it is also a major advance towards this new style of criticism where he acknowledges that he cannot name what is excluded from the system he examines, that the system itself is the very definition of what is real. In other words, the paradox of *In the Shadow* – the paradox we shall be exploring here – is that the object Baudrillard names as outside the system (what he calls there the 'masses') is at once before and only after the system, at once a real limit to the system and only a function of it, at once a real phenomenon able to be described and only an effect of Baudrillard's own critical prescription.

In fact, *In the Shadow* constitutes one of Baudrillard's earliest and most elaborate discussions of his own methodology and the position of the critic. We can trace there an intricate analysis of that 'double strategy' or double position the critic must take with regard to his object or the real,<sup>8</sup> the way he must at once be outside and inside the system he contests, oppose some real to it and speak only in its language. There is a whole discourse there on conformity as both that difference which allows resemblance and that difference which arises from a too-close resemblance. *In the Shadow* perhaps is best seen as an expression of Baudrillard's endlessly inventive rephrasing of that Platonic paradox of representation – and in this it belongs to those other great 'fictions' of our modernity: Borges, Calvino, etc. Baudrillard's *In the Shadow*, in short, is one of our great allegories of representation.



What, then, is the nature of this allegory? Who or what are these masses? In the first instance, the masses are the masses of sociology and of all theories of the social. The masses are what all of these are based on, take for granted. The masses are to be educated, inoculated, covered by social benefits; the masses are to be liberated. The opinions of the masses are what all polls, statistics and surveys seek to find out. The masses are society's image of itself, the mirror, as it were, in which society sees itself reflected.

At the same time, however, if the masses are the most real, always in the actual, they are also strangely nebulous, hard to pin down. There is a sense that the concept of the 'masses' is too vague, but that in specifying it further we lose what we are trying to get at. Indeed, it might be that the very attempt to define the masses is a mistake, that the masses can never be made actual but must always remain virtual, on the other side of analysis. As Baudrillard remarks:

To want to specify the term 'mass' is a mistake – it is to provide meaning for that which has none. One says: 'the mass of workers'. But the mass is never that of the workers, nor of any other social subject or object . . . The mass is without attribute, predicate, quality, reference. This is its definition, or its radical lack of definition. It has nothing to do with any *real* population, body or specific social aggregate. Any attempt to qualify it only seeks to transfer it back to sociology and rescue it from this indistinctness which is not even that of equivalence, but that of the neutral, that is to say *neither one nor the other*.<sup>9</sup>

But Baudrillard's point is very specific here. If the masses are difficult to analyse, resist definition, it is not because they are a real body out there waiting to be discovered, because an improvement in our analytical skills is necessary. Rather, it is because analysis destroys the very object aimed at, because the very gesture which creates the masses (for they would not exist in their nebulousness before analysis) also destroys them (for it is just this nebulousness, their resistance to definition, that *is* the masses, that defines them). We could say that it is the 'masses' which are excluded to allow us to speak of the masses, that the 'masses' are a name for that which is excluded to allow sociology to resemble its object, to speak of the masses and to formulate its opinions regarding them.

And this enigmatic limit might be put another way. As Baudrillard suggests, all theories of the social are predicated on the masses. The social itself is an Enlightenment concept based on the idea that there is a mass out there waiting to be informed, democratically represented, liberated – in a word, to be socialized. Yet, after more than four centuries of this socialization, there are more masses than ever before. Again, this could be understood as a merely *external* limit to the social:

the masses as not yet socialized, but given enough time and better directed resources inevitably being so.

Baudrillard, however, sees it differently. The masses are not an external, contingent limit to the social, but an *internal*, necessary limit. They are not opposed to the spread of the social and the spread of information, but are precisely an effect of them, what in fact allows their infinite expansion. The masses are what is necessarily excluded or produced by the social and by information; not opposed to or outside of them, but simultaneous with, inseparable from, them. As Baudrillard writes:

Official history only records the uninterrupted progression of the social, relegating to the obscurity reserved for former cultures, as barbarous relics, everything not coinciding with this glorious advent. In fact, contrary to what one might believe, resistance to the social in all its forms has progressed *even more rapidly than the social itself*. It has merely taken other forms than the primitive and violent ones which were subsequently absorbed . . . For example, with medicine: frontal resistance has been replaced by a more subtle form of subversion; an excessive, uncontrollable consumption of medicine, a panicked conformity to health injunctions. A fantastic escalation in medical consumption which completely corrupts the social objectives and finalities of medicine. What better way to abolish it?<sup>10</sup>

But it is at this point that we must read Baudrillard very carefully and perhaps even against himself. For what could he mean here by saying that 'resistance to the social in all its forms has progressed *even more rapidly than the social itself*', by speaking of the masses as a simple *end* to the social? Elsewhere, as we have just seen, Baudrillard avoids speaking of the masses as a merely external limit to the social in this way, as something unequivocally opposed to it. Were this the case, he argues, this resistance in the end would only be possible because of the social, could only lead to a further extension of the social. Rather, if the masses constitute a limit to the social, it is a limit *at the same time as* the social, not so much opposed to or outside of it as what arises when there is *nothing* opposed to or outside of it. On the one hand, that is, it is the masses – the resistance or difference of the masses – which allow that infinite extension of the social whereby the social is realized, becomes equivalent to the real. And, on the other hand, it is also the masses – the resistance or difference of the masses – which ensure that the social is never realized or becomes real because this is only possible due to the masses, this can only lead to more masses.

In this sense, then, the masses are neither simply before nor after the social, but simultaneous with it. Or, to put it another way, the masses

are the very relationship between the masses and the social, for it is just these masses which allow the social to reach them, which allow the social to socialize them. The masses would be both that difference between the social and the masses which allows the social to resemble the masses and that difference between the social and the masses which results when the social gets too close to the masses – a difference which ensures that the social could *never* entirely resemble the masses. The masses, then, are not merely what they appear to be, but the very relationship between the social and the masses: this is their real paradox. And the question involved in speaking of the masses from the position of the social as we do is: how to speak of that which allows you to speak of it? How to speak of that relationship which allows you to speak of the masses, which relationship, of course, would not exist until after you *had* spoken of them? This is the problem Baudrillard summarizes in *In the Shadow* as that of the masses' conformity. What does he mean by this conformity and why is it this conformity – this relationship – which is the real quality or characteristic of the masses?

To begin to answer this question, let us go back to what we said a moment ago about the masses, the way we have the feeling that something is excluded when we speak of them. There was something excluded, we said, not because there was something real out there which was left out, not because our analysis was inadequate, but because there was *nothing* left out, because our analysis and its ability to discriminate between the various types of masses using notions of class, social relations, power, status, institution, etc., was, if anything, too good. Or, again, in the idea that the masses constitute our image of society through polls, questionnaires and surveys, we get the feeling that they are a little *too* typical, a little *too* much themselves, fulfil our expectations about them a little *too* perfectly. We get the impression that there is something we are not getting at in the very match between question and answer. And we might have the suspicion that this is the result of a certain mental reservation or *arrière-pensée* on the part of the masses, a deliberate withholding of something. The masses, in other words, might be deliberately conforming to our expectations of them all the better in the end to escape from them.

But, again, it is just here that we – and Baudrillard – must be careful. We can understand the masses' conformity as a deliberate strategy on their part undertaken before the polls, as, Baudrillard says, 'a silence which *refuses to be spoken for in its name*'.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the masses and their conformity are only an effect of these polls; as Baudrillard also says, the polls "produce" the masses in the form of anticipated responses, of circular signals, which seem to circumscribe their existence and bear witness to their will'.<sup>12</sup> And both of these – perhaps something Baudrillard does not emphasize enough – must be borne in mind at

once: the masses' conformity is both that difference which allows the resemblance of the polls to them and that difference which results from the polls' too-close resemblance to them. The masses' conformity is both a real, conscious strategy on the part of the masses, masses that exist before these polls, and a virtual, involuntary effect that is attributed to what we call the 'masses', 'masses' that are themselves only an effect of these polls. (All this a little as we speak of music being excluded from stereo in two different senses in 'The Year 2000': both as a real, physical property that can actually be heard and as a purely virtual essence that is only an effect of discourse.)

We might try to put this paradoxical status of the masses' conformity still another way. We say that the quality which defines the masses is their conformity, their ability to imitate the various descriptions we give of them – it is this which all their analysts (including Baudrillard) attempt to describe. The masses, when summoned to respond, 'send back the same *conforming* signals, the same coded responses, with the same exasperating, endless *conformity*',<sup>13</sup> as objects in the natural sciences; they send back 'to the system its own logic by doubling it', 'reflecting, like a mirror, meaning without absorbing it'.<sup>14</sup>

But it is perhaps not quite so simple as this. For if the masses conform to the various theories about them, the masses are also not the masses, there is nothing for these theories to describe, until *after* the masses have something to conform to, that is, until after those theories have attempted to describe them. The paradox here is that, if these theories imitate or describe *something* – those masses which conform – at the same time they imitate or describe *nothing*: for those masses which conform would not exist until after those theories' attempt to conform to them.

In other words, in order to explain how the masses conform to their theory, we already need a theory that has tried to conform to the masses. In order to explain how theory conforms to the masses we already need masses that have tried to conform to their theory. In any attempt to explain how conformity takes place, we already need a conformity before this. Conformity, thus, if it is always too early as what precedes you and allows you to conform to it, is also always too late because it would exist only *after* you have attempted to conform to it.

All this is to suggest that what *In the Shadow* – like all of Baudrillard's work – is finally about is imitation. What Baudrillard is trying to describe by the masses in *In the Shadow*, is not so much anything (the masses) as the relationship between things (between the social and the masses, between the masses and their analysts); he is trying to imitate imitation. For what are these masses? They are neither simply real nor the various accounts given of them, but the very relationship between these two, what allows these accounts to resemble them. They are

precisely what allows us to make an equivalence to the real. The real masses, we might say, are not so much the masses we describe – the real masses are always both before and after this – as what is between us and those masses we describe.

And, as we will see later in Baudrillard's discussion of what he calls seduction, the paradox of analysing the masses is that you must try to occupy that space between you and the masses, that difference or distance between you and the masses – which is just what the masses themselves are also trying to do.

The question, however, to be asked of *In the Shadow* is: to what extent does Baudrillard himself understand all this? To what extent does he realize that the masses are always both before and only after every description of them, that it is not possible to imitate the masses directly (even by speaking of their conformity) without the masses conforming to this? To what extent does he realize that in speaking of the masses (even of their meaninglessness and inability to be defined) he necessarily excludes them (that he gives them a meaning and defines them)?

With regard to these questions, there is in *In the Shadow* a way of reading Baudrillard as proposing a more complex relationship to the masses than the one we have looked at so far. It is not a question of directly copying or imitating the masses (the masses would always be both before and after our description, would both exclude themselves and be excluded to allow our description of them). Rather, if we are to imitate the masses it might be by *not* imitating them: just as the masses imitate nothing, come before and bring about their own reality, so too must any discourse on them. A discourse on the masses, that is, would resemble them not by comparing itself to them – for then what allows this comparison (the masses) would be excluded – but by resembling only itself like those masses it seeks to imitate, by being incomparable. The relationship between the masses and any discourse on them would not be that between two comparable things but that between two incomparable things, each resembling the other in its very incomparability.

It might be this 'different' relationship to the masses that Baudrillard is trying to gesture towards in *In the Shadow* when he speaks of the affinity between the masses and terrorism. Terrorism, in one way, of course, is only the most exacerbated attempt to make the masses speak, to speak for the masses. And to this extent it would always fail. This is terrorism in its bad sense. But in its more profound sense, terrorism does *not* simply attempt to represent the masses, either literally or politically. Instead, through its very denial of representation, through its refusal to signify, it might somehow – Baudrillard's word is 'blindly' – form a relationship to them.

Good terrorism not only attempts to represent the masses, but also tries to think through the limits of every attempt – especially those of

our present-day societies of security – to represent the masses. Good terrorism, like good theory, defends this paradoxical 'reality' of the masses against all attempts to speak for them, including in a way its own. It does not aim directly, literally at the masses, but only indirectly, metaphorically. It does not try to *produce* the masses, we might say, but *seduces* them. As Baudrillard writes:

Indeed, the only phenomenon which may be in a relationship of affinity with the masses is terrorism. Nothing is more 'cut off' from the masses than terrorism. Power may very well try to set one against the other, but nothing is more strange, more familiar either, than their convergence in denying the social and in refusing meaning . . . Terrorism does not aim at making anything speak, at resuscitating or mobilising anything; it has no revolutionary consequences. It aims at the masses in their silence, a silence mesmerised by information. It aims at the white magic of social abstraction by the black magic of a still greater, more anonymous, arbitrary and hazardous abstraction: that of the terrorist act. It is the only non-representative act. In this regard, it has an affinity with the masses, who are truly the only non-representable reality. This is definitely not to say that terrorism would *represent* the silence and the not-said of the masses, that it would violently express their passive resistance. It is simply to say: there is no equivalent to the blind, non-representative, senseless character of the terrorist act but the blind, senseless and unrepresentational behavior of the masses.<sup>15</sup>

Baudrillard proposes here the Platonic paradox that it is precisely in not representing the masses that terrorism would best represent the masses. Or, to put it another way, what terrorism realizes is that there is no point in simply representing the masses because the masses would not exist before being represented (if the essence of the masses is their conformity, they would not exist until *after* terrorism's attempt to represent them). This is why, in the passage above, it is impossible to decide whether it is the masses which arise in response to terrorism or terrorism which arises in response to the masses. Each responds to the other, but neither exists before the other.

This is the risk of terrorism – and of a theory like Baudrillard's. Its strategy is not to fight directly against the repression and anonymity of the social, but on the contrary to exaggerate them, maximize them, to drive the social to its furthest point. To the violence of the system of the social, it responds with an equal and opposite violence – or, as Baudrillard puts it, to the 'white magic of social abstraction', it opposes the 'black magic of a still greater, more anonymous, arbitrary and hazardous abstraction'.

But the risk here is that this abstraction of the social did not exist before terrorism, that its repression only arises in response to the threat of terrorism. In other words, it is possible that the dramatic solution of terrorism which sees the only possible response to the social as that of driving it to its limit in fact excludes real, empirical alternatives to the social. If this is the risk terrorism runs, however, it is also a risk for the social itself: the possibility that, without knowing it, it is responding to a strategy that completely goes against it, that it has been forced to enter into the terrorist's game (just as, secretly, resemblance is only possible because of difference and stereo only because of the exclusion of music).

This, finally, would be the miracle of theory, of writing, for Baudrillard: that, by imitating nothing, by following only its own rule, it is somehow able to 'catch' a system that similarly owes nothing to anything, is completely able to account for itself. Against the irrefutable hypothesis of the social, against its undeniable reality and realization of the world, it is able to oppose an equal and opposite hypothesis which somehow 'doubles' it, is able to explain how it arises for reasons absolutely different from the ones it gives itself: the masses.

What Baudrillard thinks is real about the world, what Baudrillard understands as the true key to and meaning of this world is this fundamental illusionality. For him, the world can resemble itself, can realize itself, only because of or to lead to an entirely 'other-worldly' explanation: the very difference between the world and itself, the real and its copy. It is this point – already two – at which absolute resemblance and absolute difference come together (death, seduction, the masses, the fatal object, reversibility, evil, etc.) that Baudrillard means by the real. It is this Platonic paradox – unrepresentable, unthinkable – that for Baudrillard is the most real thing in the world. If we can say this, it is the necessity of 'aesthetic illusion' which saves us from the 'disillusionment' of the world.

## NOTES

1 Plato, 'Cratylus', *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. II, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1875, p. 257. This passage has also been commented upon by Jacques Derrida in his 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, London: The Athlone Press, 1981, p. 139.

2 Jean Baudrillard, 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', in *FUTUR\*FALL: Excursions into Post-Modernity*, ed. E.A. Grosz et al., Annandale: The Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, 1986, p. 21. Baudrillard also speaks of stereo in these terms in *Cool Memories I*, London: Verso, 1990, pp. 82–3.

3 See on this 'Game with Vestiges: Interview with Salvatore Mele and Mark Titmarsh', in *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 82.

4 As Baudrillard writes in 'The Year 2000': 'We can no longer discover music as it was before stereo (unless by an effect of supplementary simulation)', *Futur\*Fall*, p. 22.

5 Examples of this first type of mistake might include Douglas Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Post-Modernism and Beyond*, Cambridge: Polity, 1989, which offers a Marxist critique of Baudrillard; Julian Pefanis', *Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1991, which compares Baudrillard's work to that of Bataille; and Mike Gane's *Baudrillard: Critical and Fatal Theory*, London: Routledge, 1991, which places Baudrillard's work in the context of a number of French intellectuals who began to write immediately after the Second World War.

6 The most egregious example of this second type of mistake is undoubtedly Christopher Norris' 'Lost in the Funhouse: Baudrillard and the Politics of Post-Modernism', *Textual Practice*, vol. 3, no. 3, Winter 1989.

7 Jean Baudrillard, 'Forget Baudrillard: Interview with Sylvère Lotringer', in *Baudrillard Live*, p. 122.

8 On this 'double strategy', see Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983, p. 107.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 46.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51–2.

**'OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE  
CLOSER THAN THEY  
APPEAR': The Virtual Reality  
of *Jurassic Park* and  
Jean Baudrillard**

ALAN CHOLODENKO

Cinema is fascinated by itself as a lost object just as it (and we) are  
fascinated by the real as a referential in perdition.

Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*<sup>1</sup>

The revolution of our time is the uncertainty revolution.

Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*<sup>2</sup>

I

In the beginning to discover you've been preceded by another – the end – would be an unwelcome event, an uncanny, fatal turn of events themselves rendered 'no more' (nor 'less') than special effects. Such a seductive turn is for me never not in play and makes any embrace of the notion of a safe harbour – an artificial paradise – utopian. Such a 'No Parking' sign I see posted in the architecture, or, if you will allow, the 'parkitecture', of play, of the game, of the theatre, of the simulacrum – in a word (German) the *spiel* – that is always a way of *ent-bergung*, of releasing from shelter, of unsecuring, even as it sets up that which it will at the same time upset. Again, if you will allow such 'liberties', the *Spielberg* – the play mountain – at play in the theme parks *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park*. But my story is already getting ahead of me . . .

Let me render an account – the account of the account – of what in the necessary accounting of can never be accounted for, can never add up, can never, in a word, compute, is always irreconcilable: Seduction, Illusion, the Principle of Evil of Baudrillard; the animatic; and Chaos, as in *Jurassic Park* chaotician Ian Malcolm's/Jeff Goldblum's/Seth Brundle-fly-in-the-Amber's pivotal words, 'Life will not be contained. Life breaks free, crosses all barriers, expands to new territories, dangerously, perhaps even painfully, but life finds a way'. For me, that final line also scans as 'life we'll find away', 'aweigh', 'anchors – anchorage – aweigh!', departed from the harbour, departed from the shelter! Life is always already posted: *envoi*, or rather, *renvoi*.

Such would be for me the uncontainable, uncontrollable, uncanny, fatal hyperlogic integral to all systems – including the genetic and computer codes of DNA and digitality – as predicted by Chaos Theory and operating obedient to Baudrillard's Principle of Evil, and given singularly compelling demonstration in *Jurassic Park*. From the opening sequence's display of the insufficiency of apparently sophisticated human systems to control the barely glimpsed deadly non-human creature in the case – what will turn out to be the first 'appearance/disappearance' of the quick seizer – the Velociraptor; to the parodic 'dinosaur and egg' aporia – which came first?<sup>3</sup> to the bugging and overriding of the computer system controlling, and therefore all electronic systems operating in, the park, unleashing the deadly T-Rex on the children and adults, devouring the lawyer Gennaro alive and fracturing Malcolm's leg; to the 'end' with the returned T-Rex triumphant over the returned for the second time but only for the first time seen Velociraptors and their 'decentring' of the fossil display that is the centrepiece of the Visitors Centre, ironizing thereby the slogan of that display – 'When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth'; to the crepuscular flight of the humans toward a horizon which perhaps they are already on the other side of, with all the apparently unpredictable, haphazard, anomalous, accidental, coincidental, chance turns of events happening at the largest and most minute levels *en route* that prove fatal to the human mastery of the park added to the account, Universal Chaos might be thought to always already rule *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park*.

Such a 'rule' is already announced in the 'beginning' of the film, what might even be thought of as the film before the film, in the virtually apparent Julia set astrally encrypted in the upper left quadrant of the image of the Universal Studios logo with the name of the corporation itself moving as a satellite around the Earth – the Universal in orbit.

And superior even to Chaos Theory's unpredictability of predictability and predictability of unpredictability is the fatal necessity of Baudrillard's Principle of Evil. *Jurassic Park* is a ferocious example of that Principle, exemplifying, as Baudrillard quotes Hegel, that we are

amid 'the life, moving of itself, of that which is dead',<sup>4</sup> which would be 'a vital principle of unbinding (*déliation*)',<sup>5</sup> the virulent vitality of the virus of the virtual. It is for Baudrillard 'a principle of instability and vertigo, a principle of complexity and foreignness, a principle of seduction, a principle of incompatibility, antagonism and irreducibility'.<sup>6</sup> Its hyperlogic: what is 'realized' – be it representation, simulation, the system and its oppositions – will turn out to have been seduced by that which has 'realized' it – Seduction, Illusion, Evil – as that which has 'realized' it will 'itself' have been seduced. The fatal must be fatal to itself, or it is not fatal.

And let me also say that all I will say about *Jurassic Park* – perhaps no more than what I have already just now said – is for me encapsulated and fractualized in the uncanny, dreadful, vertiginous, delirious, turbulent, fascinating, aporetic 'image' but one shot long whose all too familiar caution forms the title of this essay: 'OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR', the 'image' in and of the side show side-view mirror of the Jeep of the T-Rex – its jaws wide open and forming an all-absorbing void/black hole as they double the frame of the mirror and of the film – accelerating at an incredible pace coming closer and closer to the Jeep's occupants, a 'vanishing point of view' shot of the driver-hunter Muldoon hunted/haunted by the terrifying, implacable, uncanny revenant: the return/reanimation with a vengeance of the living dead cryptically incorporated in the anamorphic, parallaxic, necrospectival, virtual mirror-image-object of film. What would be the revenge of the crystal of film instantiated in the most intense, eruptive, explosive and implosive animation in the film, the most 'realistic' animation, the computer-generated animation: the shock, the bite, the grab that arrest us in its virtual death sentence, as in the Dead Point, Blind Spot, Strange Attractor of that virtual mirror.<sup>7</sup>

In my Introduction to and essay in *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation*, 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit, or The Framing of Animation', as in the paper I presented at the 1991 Society for Animation Studies Conference, 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton', I develop the concept of the animatic (and its) apparatus – an uncanny, disseminative, seductive, turbulent apparatus of lifedeath which indistinguishes not only cartoon animation and live action film, animation theory and film theory but film and 'the rest of the world', thereby giving 'film' and the 'world' no rest, as it likewise gives all other binary oppositions no final reconciliation.<sup>8</sup>

In this essay I propose to focus on *Jurassic Park*, addressing the relation of computer animation and live action film, including consideration of computer animation and special effects. Among the many points to be raised, I will suggest that *Jurassic Park* is a hyper-realist film that 'takes a place' in the tradition as old as the animated

film itself – that of the hybrid cartoon animation/live action film (the 'lightning sketch') – uncannily returning to one of its first examples – Winsor McCay's *Gertie* – to push it and that tradition beyond their limit, ecstacizing and indistinguishing cartoon animation and live action, animation and film – fatal even to itself as to that tradition – even as it pushes beyond the horizon of the human to the 'history' of the world before the advent of the human – a 'Close Encounter' with the prehistoric, primeval world of the dinosaur – embodying in that return not only the contemporary systematic reversal and annihilation of history (even and especially in the utopian efforts to rehabilitate, cleanse, purify, preserve and rejuvenate it as authentic, what might be called 'Hammond's "Last Crusade"') but also the fatal destiny of the world: virtual reality.<sup>9</sup>

*Jurassic Park* pushes the modern, the historical, the constitutive human subject, meaning, truth, reality, etc., beyond their horizon, beyond their vanishing point, beyond Elias Canetti's Dead Point,<sup>10</sup> beyond André Bazin's point of integral realism, into the virtual reality of the post-modern, the hyperreal, the posthistorical, the evacuation of the constitutive subject, the catastrophic explosion and implosion of the polarities heretofore sustaining meaning in and through the mass media – the medium of film, but especially television and the computer as media: the realm of special effect where all is ex-orbitant, in orbit, satellized, on and in the short-circuit of the (dé)tour. In that very hypertelic, ecstatic, maximalizing process, the hypercinematic telematic tourism of the theme parks *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park* marks the spiralling, ironical and paradoxical 'turn' of the posthistorical into the prehistorical, marking the uncanny post-mortem return, the raising up, reanimating and ostensible rehabilitating of the dead – the extinct non-human (the dinosaur) – to thereby render dead, extinct, the living – the human – as well as the sciences and technologies of the human, including the science of palaeontology (as the Tasaday did to the science of anthropology).<sup>11</sup>

*Jurassic Park's* live action characters interact with a live action world, or rather livedead action world, of simulation dinosaurs that the 'reanimators' in the film and the 'reanimators' of the film have (re)engineered in part through the most sophisticated techniques of computer-generated simulation and processes of (*Jurassic Park*) or analogous to (*Jurassic Park*) biogenetic molecular DNA techniques, grafting in the former the DNA of the 'dead' dinosaur with that of frog DNA and in the latter 'grafting' the live action human with the animated non-human, producing in both cases an indistinguishability of one species from another, in the latter case an indistinguishability at the level of the reality of the illusion of life. As ILM (Industrial Light and Magic) Visual Effects Supervisor Denis Muren declares, 'these dinosaurs are absolutely unlike anything you've ever seen before'.<sup>12</sup> Unlike *Gertie*, whose hybrid

character is perceptible in the difference between live action human and classically drawn and stop motion animated non-human dinosaur, *Jurassic Park* confuses, trans-figures, ecstacizes and ex-terminates the hybrid form.

By means of computer animation techniques operating not at the old 'mechanical' level of the exotechnical but at the level of the esotechnical, *Jurassic Park* ecstacizes the process which it declares to be at work in 'cinema' 'itself', pushing the special effect to its limit, its fulfilment and annihilation.<sup>13</sup> *Jurassic Park*, the 'film' that shows that film is everywhere except in film, puts the special effect everywhere except in the special effect. 'Pushing the envelope'<sup>14</sup> of the state of the 'art' of animation – past the thrills of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and the morphing astonishments of *Terminator 2* – *Jurassic Park* is the vertiginous, delirious ecstasy of special effect 'as such', as it is 'specifically' for the genre of which it is likewise the latest example and of which *Gertie* would be the first: the dinosaur film, *Gertie* acknowledged as such in the sighting first of the brachiosaur (tellingly, a brachiosaur indifferent to the humans, unlike the playful *Gertie*).<sup>15</sup> ILM Visual Effects Co-Supervisor Mark Dippe states:

Dinosaur films have always been the classic effects films. A lot of effects techniques have been developed through the years in dinosaur movies – stop motion, Claymation, men in rubber suits, cable-driven puppets, radio control puppets, go-motion . . . and now, full-motion computer animation. With *Jurassic Park*, we've created something that is in a direct line of the evolution of creature work.<sup>16</sup>

The history of special effects, of which the dinosaur genre has been a privileged testing ground, is the history of animation as the mechanism for the incorporation of the special effect in the cinema. *Jurassic Park* turns the cinema inside out, making it more special effect than special effect, more animation than animation, as it simultaneously makes animation more cinema than cinema, more live action than live action, in the process rendering traditional animation extinct. So too it turns inside out – short-circuits, telescopes, makes reversible and uncertain – the pro-filmic and filmic, the diegesis and the film, (the) film and reality – each contaminating and incorporating the other (as the presence of the book *The Making of Jurassic Park* by Don Shay and Jody Duncan on a shelf of merchandise 'in the film' amply declares: the introversion of the exterior and the extroversion of the interior), all such implosions begging the question: which is which?<sup>17</sup>

Like the Velociraptor, which rips the insides of its victims out, devouring them while they are still alive, and like the T-Rex, which rules the park and returns to Rule the World, *Jurassic Park* is a *deinos* – an

uncanny fearful, terrifying – *saurus* (lizard), a *deinos-saur*, an evil demon, a terminator – a T-Rexterminator – which exterminates the term and determination, replacing them with indetermination and the impossibility of measure, impossibility of the rule.<sup>18</sup> Uncannily, *Jurassic Park* terminates film and reality, making both 'special effects' – viral, vital virtualities – like 'itself'. Such a catastrophe would ostensibly mark a mutation from the aesthetics of attraction of cinema's 'beginnings' to the anaesthetics of distraction of cinema's hyperreal 'end' in its redoubled retroversion to its (and the world's) 'beginning' – Hammond's 'future attractions' from the lost world of *Gertie* (and the impossibly remote past).<sup>19</sup>

Such a process raises up, revives, reanimates cartoon animation and live action film, animation and film, film and reality, nonhuman and human as lost referentials, the dead reanimated as the living dead that will never have to die again because death is itself surpassed – in a word, death is dead. What is thus 'raised up' – living simulations – would be immortal, not the immortality that comes from the inescapably physically defeating but spiritually victorious heroic challenge to death but the automatic immortality that is microgenetically engineered, not a fatally uncanny immortality of the human but a banally uncanny immortality of the nonhuman – that of the clonal body, which resembles nothing so much as the originary protozoa that Freud postulated as the uncanny end to which the Death Drive would return the human – clonal bodies that reappear to disappear but can never reappear nor disappear as such only once and thus for forever.<sup>20</sup> No, condemned to eternal asexual celibate reproduction and reiteration of the identical – the hell of the same – this would be the endlessness of the end: the transfinite. The dinosaur that will die no more, that will not die because it already has. I take it that Muren's declaration gestures toward such a hypertelic metastatic modelling: cold clonal immortality.

Of this catastrophe, one could say, after Baudrillard, 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', because it already has and does so repeatedly, interminably.<sup>21</sup> In computer animation terms we could call such living dead clonal creatures, such zombies, vactors:<sup>22</sup> virtual (reality) actors, actors of the vacuum of the void, or fractors – fractal actors. As we could call what is regenerated 'cinema' or the animatic telecinematic: digital film. We watch this epidemic animatic telecinematic exterminate the sciences applied in *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park* as well as the sciences of film theory and animation theory insofar as they all futilely seek to rehabilitate themselves by reversing and undoing their own extinction by seeking to describe, interpret, account for, reconcile and thereby control, contain, encrypt and/or render extinct once again what they themselves have systematically unleashed, decrypted, from within themselves.<sup>23</sup>

In this process one has passed from the double that guaranteed one's immortality to the double that guaranteed one's mortality – the doubles of the cinematic image, doubles now lost – to the clonal 'double' that cannot be lost so that one can die or in dying transcend to life eternal but rather that 'lives on',<sup>24</sup> guaranteeing at once 'one's' immortal mortality and mortal immortality – the lost 'double' of a 'cinema' lost. A 'double' everywhere except in the double for a 'cinema' everywhere save in cinema. The symbolic experience of the horror film – the wish at once to die and to not die but to outlive our deaths as immortals – is in *Jurassic Park* ecstasized in its contemporary catastrophic mutated viral form/genre – terror – a predator (pre-dator) to which the viewer is held hostage (and vice versa, for which is which?). This would be the terrorism of a project – André Bazin's – that seeks to make cinema coincident with the real, the achievement of which could only ever be simulacral, virtual, hyperreal, the simultaneous fulfilment, death and reanimation of cinema as 'cinema' – the ironizing of Bazin's notion of film's goal of integral realism, *the myth of total cinema*.<sup>25</sup> The necromancer Spielberg may declare, 'I'm going for total realism as opposed to anything that hypes the wonder',<sup>26</sup> but any attempt at total realism cannot escape the hype of the hyperreal.

Baudrillard writes: 'Our Apocalypse is not real, it is *virtual*. And it is not in the future, it is taking place *here and now*'.<sup>27</sup> 'After the Orgy', once freed of its substance and resurrected, regenerated, be it by film and/or computer, the animatic is all the more virulent and vital for having been freed of its essence and liberated into its contemporary simulacral hyperreal form: the virtual form of the viral, the fractal, the clone.<sup>28</sup> The Special Effect. Not only does *Jurassic Park* play out for the 'cinema' in all its registers all the rituals and modes of transparency that Baudrillard has articulated: the terrorist and the hostage, the obese, the obscene (what would be the too great proximity – closeness – of the world), the artificial paradise, Telematic Man, hi-fi, etc.<sup>29</sup> It represents and 'is' 'itself' a metastatic viral epidemic of cinema at once hyperproliferating and satellized around itself, more and more only deliriously resembling, absorbed and disappearing in itself – more *Andromeda Strain* than *Andromeda Strain*, more *Westworld* than *Westworld*, more *Jaws* than *Jaws*, more *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* than *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (as well as more *King Kong* than *King Kong*, more *Citizen Kane* than *Citizen Kane*,<sup>30</sup> more *The Birds* than *The Birds*,<sup>31</sup> more *Dr Strangelove* than *Dr Strangelove*,<sup>32</sup> more *Dr Dolittle* than *Dr Dolittle*,<sup>33</sup> more *Family Plot* than *Family Plot*, more *Apocalypse Now* than *Apocalypse Now*, more *The China Syndrome* than *The China Syndrome*,<sup>34</sup> more *Blade Runner* than *Blade Runner*, more more!, etc., which is simultaneously more less) – as it simultaneously more and more infects and in-distinguishes 'itself' from 'reality', 'reality' 'itself' already and increasingly 'cinematized' – more

artificial paradise than artificial paradise, more Disneyland, Disneyworld than Disneyland, Disneyworld, more Biosphere 2 than Biosphere 2, more Universal Studios Park than Universal Studios Park, etc.<sup>35</sup>

*Jurassic Park*, the 'film' that shows that film is everywhere save in film – and everything else is everywhere except in 'itself' and is therefore incorporated in film – is a viral epidemic where relations of contagion, confusion, contamination, proliferation, dispersal, extenuation, total substitutability, stasis and digitality operate (yet surprisingly there are no digital watches to be seen in *Jurassic Park*).<sup>36</sup> *Jurassic Park* is an example of at once exponential instability and exponential stability, at once acceleration and inertia.<sup>37</sup> *Jurassic Park* puts the special effect everywhere save in the special effect, itself transparent, nowhere to be seen (except perhaps in the bad special effect: the 'human', whose woodenness recalls the last resource of the eighteenth century magician who, fabricating a perfect automaton, had himself to perform mechanically to preserve the game of illusion).<sup>38</sup>

In such artificial paradises as *Jurassic Park*, the always already dead are regenerated in the metastatic form, 'torn from the dead in order to be cryogenized in perpetuity',<sup>39</sup> by means of cloning to exist eternally in a state of suspended animation: Disney's cryogenic orbitalization in an artificial paradise awaiting the Second Coming.<sup>40</sup> The state of Special Effect. Akin to the Seth Brundleflymachine, *Jurassic Park*, a 'virtual machine', is an ecstatic example of recombinant cinema, the film itself a form and event demonstrating and performing what the film narrativizes: artificially generative film techniques analogous to those of recombinant DNA in combination with the technology of the computer – the cutting and splicing and grafting and sequencing of cine-gene fragments with each other and with computer-gene fragments – in both cases introducing the viral into cinema as into the artificial paradise of Hammond's more Disney than Disney *Jurassic Park*, not only in the form of the dinosaur but in that of Virtual Telematic Telecomputer Man – the obese Dennis Nedry – the computer virus who holds the park and its human inhabitants hostage as he is in turn held hostage to it and its non-human inhabitants.<sup>41</sup> *Jurassic Park* as virtual, viral, vital, obese, obscene, livedead 'body'. Like Charles Foster Kane's fractal imaging to infinity in the doubling mirrors of Xanadu – from *in vivo* to *in vitro* – in *Citizen Kane*, one is dealing in *Jurassic Park* with an apocalypse of the virtual, with Coppola's/Coppelius's archaeopterics of the uncanny,<sup>42</sup> with cinema as cryogenic cryptic incorporator and incorporation. Clonal Galli-mimesis without end.

A Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind, that is, with the contemporary viral form of simulacra, *Jurassic Park* would be a 'cinema' whose organic metabolism would make of it today a vast historiosynthetic machine of special effects lacking but one thing: the particular hallucination that



makes cinema cinema.<sup>43</sup> This would be, like 'reality', 'cinema' both more cinema than cinema and less cinema than cinema at the same time: simultaneous acceleration, inertia and absorption in 'its' 'own' void. This would be, as my Baudrillard epigraph declares, a 'cinema . . . fascinated by itself as a lost object just as it (and we) are fascinated by the real as a referential in perdition'. This would be the fascination with 'cinema' and 'reality' as special effects. *The Evil Demon of Images* concludes:

Today, there is an inverse negative relation between the cinema and reality: it results from the loss of specificity which both have suffered. Cold collage, cool promiscuity, asexual engagement of two cold media [film and reality now both media!] which evolve in asymptotic line towards one another: cinema attempting to abolish itself in the absolute of reality, the real already long absorbed in cinematographic (or televised) hyperreality.<sup>44</sup>

Coiling at once around themselves and around each other in their asexual engagement, these two cold spiralling media of cinema and reality for me cannot but mime the double helix of DNA as cloned by Hammond, who would be the whiter than white ADN (Adonai) of Jurassic Park while at the same time dedicated to the AND of indefinite seriality.<sup>45</sup>

Indeterminate and generating viral indeterminacy in epidemic proportions, hypercinema – the livedead 'cinema' – resembles for me nothing so much as the organic metabolism of the Thing from John Carpenter's *The Thing from Another World* or the inorganic metabolism of the T-1000 of *Terminator 2*, hypersaturated, indifferent, formless forms which can simulate, absorb and short-circuit all forms, 'themselves' never given nor givable as such, instead 'remaining' virtual. These dreaded voracious metamorphs are sublime protean plasmatic forms in their metastatic expression, protean plasmaticness that which Sergei Eisenstein declares to be the essence of Disney animation, an essence to which Eisenstein's own work aspires, an 'essence' whose 'ultimate' form would be DNA itself, its double helix like two strips/strands of film winding about each other.<sup>46</sup> But in their metastatic form, they enwrap Disney's enchanting, seducing metamorphosing forms in a disenchanting, disenchanted, simulacral shroud, the 'winding sheet' of 'cinema'.<sup>47</sup>

Such films offer us the necrotic fascination for a 'cinema' whose special effect is that it lives beyond its own vanishing point, beyond its own finality, which in so doing means that in ending, it can never end: the impossibility at once of arrival at or departure from the crypt of *Jurassic Park: stazione ex-terminale*. No resolution of life nor death, rather the viral processes of the eclectic, of retro-'aesthetics', the necrospective, where the films of the past are 'raised', revived, reanimated, as lost

referentials in the reiterative, wildly hyperbolic replay or endless variations on all earlier forms'.<sup>48</sup> In the face of this irreconcilability, any palaeontology, archaeology (including Indiana Jones'(!)) or genealogy of cinema must confront the evil genie of cinema, the evil demon of cinema, setting us forever on the tour, the track, of the cinema looped as the Moebius Strip: in the wake of its turbulence, its eddy, its spiralling whirlpool.<sup>49</sup> No Raider could ever redeem cinema's Lost Archive.<sup>50</sup>

Computer animation and special effects set one upon the case of the CASE (Computer Animation and Special Effects), set one in the virtuality of the *chez*, the case, *casa*, casino, cassette, casket of the case, which is an uncanny haunted place – the house of the living dead, the revenant – the ghost, the zombie, and now the clone.<sup>51</sup> It is to be where the movement of media 'in themselves' and 'as they move together' in formation, in packs like Velociraptors (VRs, VCRs, Video Cassette Recorders!) – hyper-telic film, tele-vision, the computer – uncannily bring farness (the tele-, marked in the abbreviation 'tellie'),<sup>52</sup> strangeness, the unfamiliar, the wild, the exotic, closer and closer, making them more and more familiar while at the same time drawing the close, the familiar, the home(y), the domestic, further and further away, making them more and more unfamiliar in exponential maximalizing modes of simultaneous acceleration and inertia: from telos to the more telos than telos – the hypertelos, the hyper-telic – of the tele- – the virtual brought ever closer.<sup>53</sup> An evil demon tempts me to describe this state of things as the 'film-iliar'. In this case *Jurassic Park* shows us that 'the modern media have a viral force of their own, and their virulence is contagious'.<sup>54</sup>

*Jurassic Park* turns us around on this tour that would be of the order of the Principle of the Good, what would be a squeaky clean new Eden, the Peaceable Kingdom, populated with genuine dinosaurs, in a detour that returns us to rediscover that which we thought we were discovering only for the first time: the uncanny return of the dead as living dead – a devil's tour of hell,<sup>55</sup> perdition, Pandaemonium, a detour of the virtual, of the simulacral dinosaur, on which tour we move forwards backwards, or is it backwards forwards? – who could tell? – Moonwalking around Nedryland (Neverland?), arriving before we left and leaving before we arrive. In *Jurassic Park* it is the Strange Attractor, or rather the Principle of Evil, that rules.

Through this process of tele-scoping, short-circuiting, exterminating and cryptically incorporating, *Jurassic Park* shows that any attempt to track backwards through history, even and especially to history's own prehistory, to rewrite and rehabilitate a good (pre)history cleansed of evil so that one can enter the millennium reconciled falls prey to the fact that what is resurrected and rehabilitated is always already hyperreal, simulated, virtual, as it demonstrates the inevitable unleashing of that

in/excorporated element resident 'within' and integral to any system – any artificial paradise – which will destroy the system.

## II

Crucially, once posited, once assumed, the Dead Point and its crossing means that all that existed before the crossing into the hyperreal, the postcinematic, is by that crossing forever contaminated by it so that one could just as well suppose that all before that crossing accorded with all coming after it.<sup>56</sup> In 'taking a place' in the tradition as old as the animated film itself, uncannily returning to one of its first examples – *Gertie* – to push it and that tradition beyond their limit, *Jurassic Park* turns us seductively, fatally, from the showmen Hammond and Spielberg and the end of cinema's finalities to the showman Winsor McCay and cinema's beginnings to rediscover at cinema's origins its originary diversion, death and reanimation as lifedeath: the essence of film is always already its non-essence.<sup>57</sup> Film's 'end' is always already in its 'beginning'! The 'event' of the 'death' of cinema always already doubles the 'event' of the 'birth' of cinema.

Such would be cinema's asymptotic 'development' – the form of the spiral, the loop, the Moebius Strip, of 'film' – pushing cinema beyond Canetti's Dead Point and Bazin's point of integral realism to return to cinema's 'beginning', in that very turn/tour/detour exterminating the idealist Euclidean model of the linear with the asymptotic line as curve that describes a spiralling return to what in leaving one always already started to return to, which would be the death of the linear modelling of cinema as it would be of 'cinema' as such from its 'very' 'beginning', what might be called, ironizing Bazin, 'The Oncology of the (Filmic) Image!'<sup>58</sup> Cinema's 'end' and 'beginning' reverse, moving forwards backwards and backwards forwards at the same time. They spiral, leading to inevitable indetermination as to which comes before which. The spiral makes any point at once a beginning and an end. The spiral makes what follows precede and what precedes follow.

*Jurassic Park*, itself dead and resurrected in advance, a film-clone, film virus, film-fractal, tells us that all cinema is dead and resurrected in advance. It tells us that science and technology, even and most crucially their micro-arena in which everything, including 'identity', is played out today – the genetic and computer codes of DNA and digitality – have themselves never not aimed at uncertainty, with 'presenting us with a definitively unreal world, beyond all criteria of truth and reality'.<sup>59</sup> The virtual/viral/vital is never not integral to the system, including that of the codes. The vertiginous hyperlogic of the code: 'it' executes, i.e. performs, 'itself' even in executing, i.e. 'undoing', 'itself', as the

'spontaneous' transformation of females to males in *Jurassic Park* attests, marking the impossibility of total command and control over the human genome and its processes. 'It's a hell of a system', says Arnold of the computer command control centre of *Jurassic Park* – a hell of a system for a hell of a place.<sup>60</sup>

If cinema (and film theory) have sought to escape animation, ostensibly *Jurassic Park* returns cinema (and film theory) to animation (and animation theory) as it returns animation (and animation theory) to cinema (and film theory) presuming cinema can control animation, as Hammond regenerates the dinosaur DNA presuming he can control it; but animation returns with a vengeance to seduce and outbid cinema, uncannily turning into cinema the better to perfect and annihilate it: the animatic is internal and integral to stable systems. This is the fatality of the system.<sup>61</sup> *Jurassic Park* tells us, as I suggest in the Introduction to *The Illusion of Life*, that film was never not simulation. Never not a virtual body. Never not lifedeath. Never not an uncanny, dynamic, turbulent form. Film would never not live beyond its own end, as it never not lives before its own beginning. Film is always 'before the beginning, Mr Thompson' (to quote Bernstein from *Citizen Kane*) – 'its' 'own' beginning – and 'after the end' – 'its' 'own' end – at the same time. Film is not reconciled, not reconcilable. Film is animatic.<sup>62</sup>

In all these senses, the film, like the dinosaurs it regenerates, is a catastrophic, apocalyptic, superconductive event, an 'event' passing beyond the horizon of film (as it tells us that film is 'itself' always already beyond the event horizon), passing beyond by means of its asexual engagement with the computer (another celibate reanimatic machine), digital film the offspring of their contiguous 'coupling'. To pose the question of whether, like the relation of the mass and the medium, the computer has seduced film, as the dinosaur has seduced the human, making it enter a field of metamorphosis despite itself, or film has seduced the computer, playing the illusion-preserving game of the magician, would be impossible to calculate, to compute. Any answer that would 'reconcile', including simply opposing, them would exclude that which enabled such a 'reconciliation': the virtual radical excluded Other – Seduction, Illusion, the Principle of Evil.<sup>63</sup> Film and computer – at once isomorphic and radically incompatible – enter into viral relations with each other, contaminate, confuse and indetermine each other, as they infect every sphere, generating uncertainty, itself infectious.<sup>64</sup>

In the wake of *Jurassic Park*, 'OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR', or as it uncannily appears in the epigraph to 'Vanishing Point', the opening essay of Baudrillard's book *America*: 'Caution: Objects in this mirror may be closer than they appear!' 'May be' – more uncertain yet! The animatic would be the vital virtuality at once not only at work within but coming between film and computer, enabling them to 'coil'

around each other, bind to and mime each other, hyperconform and hyperproliferate, as it at the same time forms the milieu for their unlinking, unbanding, their *déliasion* in a (dis)integrated and (dis)integrating circuit.

So too the animatic as vital virtuality of *déliasion* would be not only at work within but coming between Baudrillard's work and its subjects/objects, as it must likewise be not only at work within but coming between this essay and its subjects/objects, making it analogously a piece of theory-fiction, a special effect, that comes to pass between the theory-fictions, the special effects, that are *Jurassic Park* and the work of Baudrillard, uncannily turning the relations among all of them likewise into relations of analogy, virality and virtuality 'closer than they appear'.<sup>65</sup> In *La Transparence du mal*, Baudrillard writes:

Once certain limits have been passed there is no longer a relationship from cause to effect, there are only viral relationships from one effect to another, and the whole system is driven entirely by inertia. The film of this increase in strength, of this velocity and ferocity of the dead, is the modern story of the accursed share. It is not a question of explaining it; it is necessary to be its mirror in real time. It is necessary to exceed the speed of events, which have themselves for a long time exceeded the speed of liberation. And it is necessary to speak of incoherence, anomaly and catastrophe, it is necessary to speak of the vitality of all these extreme phenomena which play with extermination and simultaneously with certain mysterious rules.<sup>66</sup>

Would *Jurassic Park* not be that film? (And in being that film would it not be all film?) And in all that I have said of *Jurassic Park*, have I never not been prescribing/describing Baudrillard's work as all this, and more? Would it not be that 'mirror' of the film 'in real time', an uncanny, fatal mirror in which 'Objects . . . may be closer than they appear!'

But at the same time does Baudrillard's work not tell us that (that) film is, as '*Jurassic Park*' 'itself' declares, such a mirror and that mirror work of his already 'such' a film? As his epigraph to 'Vanishing Point' might be thought to declare, the ironical logic of the world, the metamorphic, anamorphic reversibility of everything and anything under the sign of Seduction, is not only at work in *Jurassic Park*. The evil demon (of images) is at work within Baudrillard's own work, begging the question of the nature and relation of that work to cinema, as it must be at work within this essay, likewise begging the question of the nature and relation of this work to cinema, including to *Jurassic Park*, as it does of the nature and relation of this work to Baudrillard's work.

Certainly, Baudrillard has explicitly addressed cinema in his writings from his earliest texts on (Godard's *Le Mépris* in *Le Système des objets*, *The Student of Prague* and *Playtime* in *La Société de consommation*); but with *The Evil Demon of Images*, presented in 1984 as the Inaugural Mari Kuttna Lecture on Film, and its final paragraph quoted earlier, and then with *America*, published in 1986, film becomes a favoured figure of hyperreality.<sup>67</sup> Already in the 1982 interview 'I Like the Cinema', in response to the question, 'In everyday life, do you sometimes have the impression of being in a film?', Baudrillard declares:

Yes, particularly in America, to a quite painful degree. If you drive round Los Angeles in a car, or go out into the desert, you are left with an impression that is totally cinematographic, hallucinatory. You are in a film: you are steeped in a substance which is that of the real, of the hyper-real, of the cinema.<sup>68</sup>

Four years later these ideas would be given explicit instantiation in his book *America*. Taking *America* as the exemplification of the hyperreal, Baudrillard took *America* to be cinematized, to be a film, as his experience in travelling within and across it he characterized as a travelling shot.

But, once past *The Evil Demon of Images* and *America*, we can just as well suppose that Baudrillard has not only never not been writing about the cinema, about film, but that his own work has never not itself been cinematized, never not itself been a film. *America*, for example, would be a book-film, a book travelling shot. For if, as Baudrillard claims in *The Evil Demon of Images*, there is an increasingly de-finitive indetermining of the relation of film and world, an increasing commingling of film and world such that one cannot be disentangled from the other, not only are Baudrillard's writings on the world at the same time on film, and vice versa, necessitating quotation marks around the words 'world' and 'film', but moreover, Baudrillard's own writings commingle with their subjects such that it is impossible to know where the author and the authored, the animator and the animated, the subject and the object, etc., 'begin' and 'end'.<sup>69</sup>

Like the dinosaur and egg aporia of *Jurassic Park*, like the mass and the media, like the mirror in which 'Objects . . . may be closer than they appear!', and like the ironical, fatal Object, the Object as Strange Attractor, and more, itself the mirror – all of which reverse upon and hyperconform to each other and to 'themselves' as they at the same time form the turn, the pivot, the Dead Point of what they strangely attract, image and 'reflect', themselves never given nor givable 'as such', always excluded to enable one pole of an opposition to be equivalent to another while at the same time in their inclusion disenabling such an equivalence, begging the question of whether it is because the poles oppose

and are equivalent to each other that the third would be excluded or whether it is because the third is excluded that these poles could oppose and be equivalent to each other – here too, in the relation of film and world, Baudrillard's own writings and what he writes of, including the cinema, and this essay and what it addresses, the questions are begged: which is which? which came before which? which is cause and which is effect? And the answer in each case is tendered: the only answer is that there is no answer. The question and answer of the viral, vital virtuality of theory-fiction, of special effect, of Seduction, of Illusion, of the mirror as Strange Attractor, and more, the mirror as Object, the mirror as Crystal.<sup>70</sup>

Like all these strange mirrors, Baudrillard's uncanny work is at once compliant with and fatal to the metastatic processes and systems his work provokes, describes and ironizes – in a word, ecstacizes – as it is itself ecstasized in the process.<sup>71</sup> In 'Game with Vestiges' Baudrillard declares, 'I don't have any doctrines to defend. I have one strategy, that's all'.<sup>72</sup> That one strategy is ecstasizing, hypertelia, the logic of 'pushing a system or a concept or an argument to the extreme points where one pushes them over, where they tumble over their own logic. Yes, it's all a type of artifice using irony and humour'.<sup>73</sup>

This means that Baudrillard's recent texts, *The Transparency of Evil* and *L'Illusion de la fin*, are not only themselves viral, vital, virtual metastatic forms, they would be more. In the essay 'Instabilité et stabilité exponentielles' Baudrillard makes a crucial distinction: 'Destiny is an ecstatic figure of necessity, Chaos is only a metastatic figure of Chance'.<sup>74</sup> For Baudrillard Chaos is but a parody, a simulation, of all metaphysics of destiny. Baudrillard's work remains a defence of the principle of Seduction, a defence of Illusion, a defence of the ecstatic necessity of destiny, as sovereign principles, against the Chaos of the increasingly cold, statistical, aleatory world of simulacra. Ten years ago, this might have been formulated as: the sole thing that is at stake is Seduction (warm, enchanted simulation) against simulation (cold, disenchanting Seduction), with Seduction the superior – while simulation simulates Seduction, Seduction seduces simulation.

More recently, it might be articulated as: Illusion (unconditional simulacra) against simulation (conditional, disillusioned simulacra). For Baudrillard the catastrophic, hypermediatized, uncertain, post-orgy state of today is characterized by the fatally flawed, panic-stricken effort to 'realize' the world – be it through art, the humanities, science and/or technology – in simulacra *against* the total radical illusion of the world, its great game of putting into play, its artifice, its irony, its humour.<sup>75</sup> Illusion, as sovereign, renders any such project of 'realization' – at once a simulation of utopia and a utopian simulation – lost in advance. Such as the attempt of Jurassic Park and *Jurassic Park* at total realism, that is,

total simulation, an attempt whose 'magic' resides only in the technological wizardry it displays, as it takes the display of such virtuosity to be cinema's sole rationale: the demonstration and performance of what cinema can do, such a rationale itself testifying to the post-cinema state of 'cinema' today.<sup>76</sup>

Baudrillard may write in *L'Illusion de la fin*, 'Our Apocalypse is not real, it is *virtual*. And it is not in the future, it is taking place *here and now*',<sup>77</sup> but I believe that he would see the necessary reversibility of his statement in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 'Today reality is itself hyper-realist',<sup>78</sup> into 'hyperreality is today's reality', which for me suggests that hyperreality is not merely virtual but also a reality, a reality of a particular sort, that would be, if I may reverse his definition in 'The Precession of Simulacra', without origin or a real,<sup>79</sup> that would be a 'real unreal', an actual virtual and virtual actual at the same time, like, in a word, cinema.<sup>80</sup>

Like Jurassic Park and *Jurassic Park*, the necromancer Baudrillard's America and *America* and his corpus in general are mirrors in which 'Objects . . . may be closer than they appear!', at once conjuring a world into 'virtual existence' and out again, with the qualification that what is brought close in such 'realizing' is a doubled virtual reality: of simulation and of Seduction, of Illusion. Baudrillard himself 'realizes' a world as virtual and at the same time shows it to be a conditional simulacrum doubled by a superior virtuality, that of radical Illusion and its play in virtualizing reality as simulacrum, a reality of Illusion in which Illusion is always at once included and excluded. Actuality would thus come to be that virtuality (Illusion) at once included and excluded in any virtual reality.

In such a scenario, any 'reflection', including Baudrillard's, including mine, must repeat in fractal abyssal form the fatal paradox of losing Illusion in any effort to speak of it, for it is never given as such. Illusion must be fatal to itself, or it is not. Illusion is not reconciled, nor reconcilable, not even to 'itself'. Any 'reflection' faces the inevitable turn of the mirror, which turns (on) everything, even itself – the 'mirror' that mirrors nothing. If it is only Baudrillard's work that makes its object possible, after such invention it is only the object that makes such a work possible, even as the object and the work become reversible and their relationship indeterminate in and through this doubling process. In such a process, the 'work', to quote Baudrillard from 'The Year 2000', 'loses all objective validity, but perhaps gains in coherence, that is to say in real affinity with the system that surrounds us'.<sup>81</sup>

That 'real affinity' would be the virulent vitality of the virtual, that 'fly in the ointment', that animatic 'mirror' in 'real' time, not only what is immanent in its opposite, doubling and (un)doing it, but what doubles and (un)does 'itself' – vertiginously. And if this is (un)done 'with

artifice, using irony and humour', with wit and poetry, then it would be (un)done with a Seductive surcharge.

Crucially, although today we speak of hyperreality, of virtual reality, instead of reality, once past Canetti's Dead Point, all reality is and has never not been virtual. In provocatively declaring, 'I live in the virtual'<sup>82</sup> – a declaration as impossible of proof as it is irrefutable, which is likewise true of theory-fiction, special effect, simulation, Seduction, Illusion, the uncanny, the animatic *et al.* – all of which are in a certain sense 'nothing' at all – Baudrillard for me implicitly suggests that he has never not lived there, that virtual reality has never not been the case. In accord with this, I would declare: virtual reality is the only reality I've ever 'known'.

'Welcome to Jurassic Park'. Or rather – to paraphrase another Terminator in the case of the future anterior – 'welcome back', for it will have always already been back . . . in the beginning as in the end.

## NOTES

1 Translated by Paul Patton and Paul Foss, Sydney: Power Institute Publications, 1987, p. 33.

2 'Superconductive Events', in *The Transparency of Evil*, translated by James Benedict, London: Verso, 1993, p. 43.

3 The book, intriguingly, cultivates no such aporia insofar as the egg is declared to be synthetic. See Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*, London: Arrow, 1991.

4 'The Theorem of the Accursed Share', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 108.

5 'Le Théorème de la Part Maudite', in *La Transparence du mal*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1990, p. 112, my translation.

6 'The Theorem of the Accursed Share', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 107.

7 After conceptualizing this essay around the figure of this uncanny mirror, I encountered Tom Shone's essay, 'Raider of His Lost Art', *The Modern Review*, vol. 1, no. 10, August–September 1993, in which Shone proposes that the sticker at the bottom of this mirror, reading "'Objects may be closer than they appear" (sic) . . . could be his [Spielberg's] motto', that Spielberg has 'devoted most of his career to perfecting a state-of-the-art way of yelling "He's behind you!" – his 'monster-in-the-rear-view-mirror joke' (p. 3). I would suggest that what appears in that mirror and its death sentence is what Slavoj Žižek, after Lacan's treatment of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* in terms of the emergence of and in the anamorphic image of the death's head as the making visible of the subject as annihilated, takes up as the phallic anamorphic uncanny eruption of the real. Or what, after Samuel Weber, I would describe as the parallax coming-to-pass and passing-to-come of film. See Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, pp. 88–91; and Samuel Weber, 'The Parallax View', *assemblage*, no. 20, April 1993, where Weber argues that it is television that installs the parallax view. Parenthetically, it is surprising that Žižek takes up this eruption – of the

'signifier without signified' – in terms of the films of Alfred Hitchcock without citing the film that for me (but not myself alone) more than any other makes of this figure the greatest conundrum in the history of cinema: *Citizen Kane*, and its irresolvable *Rosebud*. Here, Bernstein's *Woman In White* weds to Baudelaire's *passante* as a figure of such an eruption. On Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin and Baudelaire's *passante* in relation to the mass media, see Weber, 'Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin', in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko, Sydney/Stanford: Power Publications/Stanford University Press, 1996.

8 See *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation*, ed. Alan Cholodenko, Sydney: Power Publications, 1991. 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton', subsequently presented in long form to the graduate students of Sydney College of the Arts, the Sydney Society for Literature and Aesthetics, the Power Institute Public Education Program and the Critical Studies Program at UCLA, is as yet unpublished.

9 On Baudrillard's notion of the retrospective whitewashing of history, see, for example, 'Operational Whitewash' and 'Necrospective', in *The Transparency of Evil* and 'La décongélation de l'Est', in *L'Illusion de la fin*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1992.

10 Canetti defines the Dead Point as follows: 'A tormenting thought: as of a certain point, history was no longer *real*. Without noticing it, all mankind suddenly left reality; everything happening since then was supposedly not true; but we supposedly didn't notice. Our task would now be to find that point, and as long as we didn't have it, we would be forced to abide in our present destruction'. *The Human Province*, translated by Joachim Neugroschel, London: André Deutsch, 1985, p. 69.

11 On the Tasaday, see Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', translated by Paul Foss and Paul Patton, in Baudrillard, *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983, pp. 13–23.

12 Quoted in Don Shay and Jody Duncan, *The Making of Jurassic Park*, London: Bantam, 1993, p. 139.

13 On Baudrillard's principle of hypertelia – the pushing of things to their limits – see *Fatal Strategies*, ed. Jim Fleming and translated by Philip Beitchman and W.G.J. Niesluchowski, New York: Semiotext(e), 1990.

14 In terms of this notion of 'pushing the envelope', see Crichton, *Jurassic Park*, p. 51.

15 In terms of delirium, see Baudrillard's English language epigraph to *La Transparence du mal*: 'Since the world drives to a delirious state of things, we must drive to a delirious point of view'. James Benedict, translator of *The Transparency of Evil*, for me inexplicably alters this epigraph to 'Since the world is on a delusional course, we must adopt a delusional standpoint towards the world'.

16 Quoted in *The Making of Jurassic Park*, p. 139.

17 On the process of the increasing indetermination of film and world, see Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*.

18 On the *deinos*, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Typography', in *Typography*, ed. Christopher Fynsk, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 93, note 79, where he remarks that Socrates is fond of speaking of the artifice of the

'living statue', the animated statue, and that, as for Plato, 'what unsettles him, in the plastic realm or in "fiction" (whatever form it might take), is, as P.M. Schuhl has suggested, *simultaneously* that the inanimate being should give itself as something alive and that this (falsely or illusorily) living thing should never be sufficiently alive, that is, should always let death show through too much (in other words, "brute" death, the bad death that the sensible world holds – and not that death that marks the "separation of the soul and the body" as the beginning of the true "life of the spirit"). The *deimon*, the *Unheimliche* (as the expatriation or exile of the soul, as well) is this unassignable, this "neither dead nor alive", that disturbs, or always risks disturbing, the fundamental ontological opposition (between the present and the non-present). This is mimesis, the "disquieting strangeness" of fiction: undecidability "itself". On this uncanny figure of the living statue – the automaton – as it relates to animation and film, see my 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton'.

19 In this regard Tom Gunning's essay 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator', *Art & Text*, no. 34, Spring 1989, links the advent of the cinema to the aesthetic of attraction, which, though narrative will come to overlay it, never ceases to run its course through the history of cinema. Of course, for me a film like *Jurassic Park* ecstasizes the attraction and, as well, all the more suggests that Gunning's strong piece would benefit from the qualifications that an acknowledgement of his own use of the terms 'canny' and 'uncanny' would call for. That is, for me the advent of the cinema is an uncanny advent, one which necessitates a complex analysis that would avoid simply inverting and replacing the classic passive slave, 'dupe' model of the early film spectator with an active master, 'all-knowing', urban sophisticate model (a reduction Gunning does not always avoid, though it appears he would wish to), one that would acknowledge that all that Gunning says of the character of this advent is already in Freud's 'logics' of the uncanny; that the attraction, film and *a fortiori* animation are of the order of the uncanny (what I characterize as the *animatic*); that when Gunning says that the shock – the simultaneous attraction and repulsion, fascination and dread – at seeing what was still 'come to life' founds the cinema and persists as an undercurrent in narrative cinema, he is saying that the uncanny, the animatic, 'founds' cinema – the inanimate become animate, and vice versa; and that any thinking of cinema cannot delimit itself to the thinking of the subject and its desires and the cinema as only a mode of production and appearance but must at the same time consider what American film theorists have typically ignored, that is, the object and its games, games superior to the subject – the non-organic, artificial life of objects of the cinematic, or rather animatic, apparatus and its modes of seduction, play, dissemination and disappearance. The non-organic life of objects – for me what we mean by 'magic' – is a 'life' coimplicated with the notion of the death drive, for which all uncanny returns are stand-ins, that is, it is death which returns, and more, as it is a life coimplicated with not only a system of explosion but simultaneously one of implosion. And, of course, such a complex analysis would acknowledge the implications of such a model for the very analysis under way, acknowledge the limitations set up thereby to the theorist's ability to account for what he/she seeks to render an account of, so that the theorist would not, like Gunning, on the one hand attempt to forge a sophisticated 'both/and, neither/nor' model for

describing the cinema and its spectator while on the other hand buying into an either/or binary, assuming the position of master demystifying showman-theorist who could simply stand outside the logics of the system being described (in this case the cinematization of the world), who, like his spectator, could find, upon leaving the movie theatre, the world outside the cinema untainted by the world within. For me the radical coimplication of film and world offered by Baudrillard's *The Evil Demon of Images* would call any assumption of such a simple 'leaving', including Barthes', into question (as Barthes' own appeal in his essay, 'Upon Leaving the Movie Theater', to a 'cinematic condition' of 'crepuscular reverie' outside the cinema arguably disturbs his maintenance otherwise in that piece of an opposition of inside versus outside the movie theatre), as it would call for a more complex thinking of the 'suspension of disbelief', one that acknowledges that the cinematization of the world would of necessity incorporate the spectator and theorist, even the theorist as master demystifier, within it and that the cinematic apparatus is, despite all the '70s discourse and project of the revelation of its mode of production, never givable, producible, as such. Indeed, that the cinema issues a challenge to the either/orism of the master/slave, active/passive model, as it does to all productivist efforts to unveil its/the mode of production. Such banal efforts of demystification are no match for the fatal strategies of the cinema and their seduction of film theory, turning it into a special effect.

20 See 'L'immortalité', in *L'illusion de la fin*. On Freud's protozoa as the destiny of the 'human', see 'The Hell of the Same', in *The Transparency of Evil* and 'L'immortalité', in *L'illusion de la fin*.

21 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', in *FUTUR&FALL: Excursions into Post-Modernity*, ed. E.A. Grosz et al., Sydney: Power Institute Publications, 1986.

22 On vactors, see Peter Britton, "'Vactors" Grab Starring Roles in Dawn of Film-Making's Digital Age', *The Australian*, Tuesday 19 October 1993, pp. 42–43.

23 On such a cryptic incorporation, one might also consult Jacques Derrida, 'Fors', in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, translated by Nicholas Rand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

24 See 'The Hell of the Same', in *The Transparency of Evil* and 'L'immortalité', in *L'illusion de la fin*.

25 Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *What is Cinema?*, translated by Hugh Gray, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. And see Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*, p. 31, and 'After the Orgy', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 4.

26 Quoted in Rufus Sears, 'It's Big!', *Empire*, August 1993, p. 78.

27 'Hystérie du Millenium', in *L'illusion de la fin*, p.166, my translation.

28 To Baudrillard's three orders of simulacra (see 'The Orders of Simulacra', translated by Philip Beitchman, in *Simulations*) *The Transparency of Evil* adds this fourth.

29 See *Fatal Strategies* and *The Transparency of Evil*.

30 *Citizen Kane*, a watershed moment for the history, or rather destiny, of cinema, in terms of the hypertelic processes it dramatizes and partakes of, is another film about a potentate who has set up a zoo in his exotic and fenced-in preserve, in this regard (and others) articulating, like *Jurassic Park*, with *King Kong*. See note 7. It is worthy of note that *Citizen Kane* also represents a

watershed moment in cinema for Gilles Deleuze, who characterizes it as 'the first great film of a cinema of time'. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 99.

31 Peter Wollen, 'Theme Park and Variations', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 3, no. 7, July 1993, pp. 7-9. Ostensibly self-declaredly operating as 'cine-palaeontologist tracing the evolutionary history of film', Wollen sees *Jurassic Park* not only as 'a rather obvious hybrid of *Jaws* and writer Michael Crichton's earlier theme-park fantasy *Westworld*' (and through *Jaws* to 'the successful line of monster movies that runs from *The Lost World*, on through *King Kong*, and down to *Jaws*') but also as having as its closest ancestor Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, which film represents for Wollen a merger of the fantastic monster film with the slasher genre.

32 Spielberg is quoted as saying 'Jurassic Park had a lot of forefathers, and I'm sure *Dr Strangelove* was among them', in Eric Lefcovitz, 'How *Dr Strangelove* inspired Spielberg', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 5 February 1994, Spectrum, p. 12A. For Baudrillard's discussion of Stanley Kubrick and his *Barry Lyndon* in terms of the filmmaker as purely operational chess player, see *The Evil Demon of Images*, pp. 30-32.

33 Like the 'appropriateness' of the casting of Jeff Goldblum from David Cronenberg's *The Fly* as Ian Malcolm, the 'appropriateness' of Sir Richard Attenborough as Hammond is 'secured' by his earlier role as Blossom in *Dr Dolittle*.

34 On *Apocalypse Now* and *The China Syndrome*, see Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*.

35 On the artificial paradise of Biosphere 2, see Baudrillard, 'L'écologie maléfique', in *L'Illusion de la fin*. In this regard, the malefic curvature of events – the arrival immanent in the departure at the same time as the departure is immanent in the arrival, indetermining which is which – might be thought to be 'in play' in Peter Wollen's piece on the theme park, 'Theme Park and Variations', wherein he claims, after Michael Sorkin, as 'Ur-form' of the theme park – of which *Jurassic Park* would be an example, like Disneyland and Disney World before it – the Great Exhibition of the World's Fair of 1851 held at the Crystal Palace in London, 'bringing together the wealth of nations into an enclosed palace for tourists, which [Wollen here quotes Sorkin from his book *Variations on a Theme Park*] "depicted paradise. Not only was it laid out like a great cathedral, with nave and transept, but it was also the largest greenhouse ever built, its interior filled with greenery as well as goods, a climate-controlled reconciliation of Arcadia and industry, a garden for machines"' (pp. 8-9). Wollen notes that Richard Owen, the great palaeontologist who coined the term 'dinosaur', designed an exhibition of dinosaurs – the first such exhibition – on an artificial island in the Exhibition Park when the Crystal Palace moved to Sydenham. Here I would make several points. First, the Crystal Palace is fascinating as a proto-architectural form of the movie theatre in general and the motion picture palace in particular insofar as, like the arcade, it is a form of double invagination, at once the introversion of the exterior and extroversion of the interior, and it is an artificial paradise in which denatured nature is complemented by naturalized machines. And in terms of both it and Owen's prototype of *Jurassic Park*, I

would claim, against the 'Ur-form' of Wollen and Sorkin, that a prior ancestry for the theme park can be argued: those gardens and grottos of machines – hydraulically driven automata theatres – adjacent to the palaces of the nobility of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which take up a place in a history of automata spectacles whose lineage is well over 2000 years old. See my 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton'.

36 See 'After the Orgy', in *The Transparency of Evil*. Of Stephen Jay Gould's essay on *Jurassic Park*, 'Dinomania', *New York Review of Books*, 12 August 1993, it could be said that Gould still (and nostalgically) takes as a given what the work of Baudrillard, films like *Jurassic Park* and this essay would suggest are lost referentials: palaeontology, origin, presence, essence, purity, authenticity, the zone of the real and the museum as the sacred site for the real dinosaurs – in the form of fossils. Gould writes: 'theme parks are, in many ways, the antithesis of museums. If each institution respects the other's essence and place, the opposition poses no problem. But theme parks belong to the realm of commerce, museums to the world of education' (pp. 55-56). But I would argue that the theme park has no essence and no place; its 'essence' would be no essence, its 'place' no place. Which suggests that Gould's either/or modelling is naive, displaying insufficient understanding of the logics of the good and bad copy and an unsupportable belief in the candour of the simulacrum and the possibility of it – here in the form of the virtual reality of the theme park – being put outside and kept outside the original, nor does he link the 'reality' of *Jurassic Park* with the virtual reality he attributes to the theme park. The virality of *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park* wars against Gould's modelling, even as it wars against Hammond's design.

37 See Baudrillard's articulation of the simultaneous processes of acceleration and inertia in the posthistorical in 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place'.

38 *Fatal Strategies*, pp. 51, 173. One is reminded of the joke that did the rounds, that the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* are better actors than the humans.

39 Baudrillard, 'La danse des fossiles', in *L'Illusion de la fin*, p. 109.

40 On Baudrillard on Disney and/or Disneyland, see, for example, 'The Precession of Simulacra'; *America*, translated by Chris Turner, London: Verso, 1988; and 'L'écologie maléfique' and 'Hystérie du Millenium' in *L'Illusion de la fin*. See also my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life*.

41 On Telematic Man (what Benedict translates as Telecomputer Man), otherwise called by Baudrillard Virtual Man, see Baudrillard, 'Xerox and Infinity', in *The Transparency of Evil*. The words *virtual* and *virus* contain the Latin *vir*, meaning man, as well as harkening toward the word *virtue*. The computer bug Nedry represents the fall of both man and virtue, though the articulation called for would be a complex one.

42 On the uncanny, see Freud's 'The "Uncanny"', in *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955. The uncanny coupling by Nathanael of the lawyer Coppelius and the optician Coppola in the E.T.A. Hoffmann story, 'The Sand Man', is a copulation already marked in their names, a copulation that cannot but perpetuate itself – uncannily – in their coupling with the name already there of the film director Coppola (Francis Ford), whose *Apocalypse Now* Baudrillard characterizes as an example of 'cinema become a vast machine of special effects', the perpetuation of

the Vietnam war by other means, a film become war, as Vietnam is a war become film. *The Evil Demon of Images*, p. 17. In terms of my understanding of film as uncanny, see my Introduction to *The Illusion of Life* and 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton'. As well, see Thierry Kuntzel's point in 'A Note upon the Filmic Apparatus', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, August 1976, that in nominating The Mystic Writing Pad as metaphor of the psyche, Freud missed a better model: the cinema. Here Derrida's essays 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', in *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, and 'To Speculate - on "Freud"', in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, translated by Alan Bass, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, prove most instructive. On the archaeopterics of the uncanny, see Derrida, 'Fors', in Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p. xxvii.

43 *The Evil Demon of Images*, p. 31.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

45 See Baudrillard, 'The Orders of Simulacra', in *Simulations*, p. 109.

46 On Eisenstein's notion of plasmaticness, see Sergei Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, ed. Jay Leyda and translated by Alan Upchurch, London: Methuen, 1988. As well, consult Keith Clancy, 'TIPHETHP: The T(r)opology of Pyromania', and Keith Broadfoot and Rex Butler, 'The Illusion of Illusion', in *The Illusion of Life*. My 'Speculations on the Animatic Automaton' also takes up this notion.

47 Such viral indeterminacy takes as one of its pre-eminent forms the facticity of fact generated by the mass media, otherwise known as simulation. See Baudrillard's *America*, p. 85, and *La Guerre du golfe n'a pas eu lieu*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1991.

48 'Transaesthetics', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 15.

49 In terms of Chaos Theory, the Lorenz attractor is here recalled.

50 See 'Superconductive Events', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 43.

51 On the multiplicitous meanings - all relevant - of *chez*, see Weber, 'Reading and Writing - chez Derrida', in *Institution and Interpretation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. The uncanny nature of the cinema, marked in the event of its advent as described by Gunning, turns the sense of being at home that the spectator felt before the image started to turn from still photograph to mobile cinematograph - the experience of being in a legitimate theatre or at an all too familiar spectacle - into a sense of being homeless - *unheimlich* - with its movement, its turning, its 'coming to life', its coming-to-pass - its animation. (Here, the expression 'coming to life' needs qualification, a curious locution insofar as I would suggest that life can never be come to (nor death); in any case, it is the illusion of life to which for me this expression alludes.) So, too, the relation between film and world becomes homeless, uncanny, as each - film and world - invades, 'inhabits' and indeterminates the other. To be in the house (*casa*) of cinema is not to be in the *domus* - the home. Its refuge could never be pure refuge, any more than it could be pure non-refuge. The movie theatre is of the order of the between. To be in it is to be in the haunted house of cinema, *chez* cinema. See notes 19 and 42.

52 On the tele-, see Baudrillard, 'Xerox and Infinity', in *The Transparency of Evil*. See also Weber, 'Television: Set and Screen' and 'Deus ex Media', in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*.

53 Such a process in/and such a medium is, of course, uncanny. Freud's term *unheimlich* can slide all the way into its opposite - *heimlich*, meaning familiar, cosy, friendly - and vice versa.

54 'Superconductive Events', in *The Transparency of Evil*, pp. 36-37.

55 Intriguingly, a tour through the meanings of the French *tour* discloses that it has not one but two forms: the masculine noun, whose meanings include turn, round, twining, winding, revolution, circuit, tour, trip, twist, and notably, trick, dodge, wile; and the feminine noun, meaning tower, rook, castle (chess), taking us to the Devil's Tower of *Close Encounters*. Moreover, *tour* turns up in *tourisme*; *tournée* (the name of the compilation of best animated films that does the rounds, the journey, through movie theatres each year); *tourner*, as in *tourner un film* (to shoot a film), recalling the winding, spooling, of the reel of film in the process not only of shooting but of projection; and as well in *tourbillon*, meaning whirlwind, whirlpool, eddy, vortex. On Heraclitus' fiery whirlwind, see Keith Clancy's essay in *The Illusion of Life*.

56 As Baudrillard points out in 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', pp. 21-23, it is, contrary to Canetti's aspiration, a crossing itself impossible to locate, only ever assumable.

57 Here lies a point of coincidence between Baudrillard's and Derrida's work, implicit in one of Baudrillard's hypotheses in 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place': 'But we can just as well suppose that history itself is, or was, nothing but an enormous simulation model' (p. 23).

58 See Bazin's 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in *What is Cinema?*. Yet such an uncanny return to cinema's advent is consistent with Bazin's idea that the myth of total cinema, the goal of integral realism, existed fully formed at cinema's conceptual inception, hence the passage to the fulfilment by cinema of its myth must be a movement forwards backwards, or is it backwards forwards? - who could tell? This is to suggest that there are intriguing parallels between Bazin and Baudrillard to be teased out, for example Bazin's model of a cinema bound (albeit ontogenetically) not to man but to the universe and his definition of the job of the film director as not creating a new reality but 'framing the fleeting crystallization of a reality of whose environing presence one is ceaselessly aware'. 'Theater and Cinema - Part One', in *What is Cinema?*, p. 91, quoted in Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 123. And for Bazin such a reality is inescapably ambiguous and never given as such. Here, again, it is Welles and *Citizen Kane* that come to the fore. As Andrew writes: 'It is Welles's name and the film *Citizen Kane* that continually resurface in Bazin's ruminations about the environing presence of our spatial universe and the filmmaker's task of crystallizing its fleeting meanings. Probably more than any other film, *Citizen Kane* forced Bazin to locate a metaphysics within a style of photography and narrative' (*ibid.*). Such would be Bazin's metaphysics of ambiguity.

*Jurassic Park* redoubles/recapitulates/returns (to) cinema's advent/arrival to complete and annihilate it. The shock attendant upon the arrival of the train of cinema and its doubling of the world is here redoubled by the shock attendant upon the departure of cinema in the pure and empty form of attraction: its fulfillment, death and artificial resurrection in the void. Paralleling acceleration and inertia, exponential instability and stability, the attraction becomes at once



more and less attraction than attraction, more and less distraction than distraction, more and less shock than shock, more and less dread than dread, more and less fascination than fascination.

59 'Superconductive Events', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 43.

60 Crichton, *Jurassic Park*, p. 133. Note that the word 'turn' hyperproliferates in and hypersaturates the novel.

61 'Superconductive Events', in *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 40.

62 After Lacan one might say of film: film is what it is not and is not what it is.

63 This would indeed be true of any account, including this one, this account of the account.

64 Media virulent in their capability of and complicity in not only challenging, outbidding and seducing reality and the subject but each other.

65 Keeping the tele- in mind.

66 'Le Théorème de la part maudite', in *La Transparence du Mal*, p. 113, my translation. In 'The Theorem of the Accursed Share', *The Transparency of Evil*, p. 108, James Benedict translates *Le film* as 'development', which for me is an infelicitous development. And he translates *jouent* with 'toy', which, while not wrong, for me does not sufficiently capture the play of play (*jouent*).

67 It should be noted that a substantial amount of material in the Kuttna Lecture was drawn from a number of pieces in Baudrillard's *Simulacres et simulation*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1981.

68 'I Like the Cinema', interview with C. Charbonnier, reproduced in *Baudrillard Live*, ed. Mike Gane, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 31. Indeed, the Hollywood cinema of the last twenty to thirty years seems the pre-eminent filmic exemplar of the logics of certain French 'poststructuralist' and 'postmodernist' thinkers.

69 *Jurassic Park* would suggest that Baudrillard, too, is a great animator who raises the dead to put them into eternal orbit, not merely the whitewashed Hammond but the chaotician Malcolm, and more, for both of them are implicated in the actions of others that demonstrate the limits of the principles Hammond and Malcolm embrace and the actions they undertake: the T-Rex and the Velociraptors. Are the latter not animators, too? Here one is reminded of Chuck Jones' comment in 'What's Up, Down Under?', in *The Illusion of Life*, p. 39, that 'We never made films for adults, and we never made films for children . . . We made pictures for ourselves', suggesting that the Warner Bros. animators could be thought of as both children and adults, neither children nor adults, at the same time and/or, more radically, as not human! It is this latter sense – of something nonhuman at work – that I would suggest is likewise in operation in the animation of Baudrillard.

70 For the Strange Attractor, see *The Transparency of Evil*, especially 'The Object as Strange Attractor', as well as *L'Illusion de la fin*, especially 'Instabilité et stabilité exponentielles'. In terms of the Crystal, see Baudrillard, 'Revenge of the Crystal', in *Fatal Strategies*, itself subtitled: *Crystal Revenge*. The figure of the crystal – be it Bazin's 'fleeting crystallization of a reality', Baudrillard's Crystal, Deleuze's crystal-image or the Crystal Palace – appears to 'reside' at the 'heart' of cinema, in cinema's coming-to-pass, like Baudelaire's *passante*. In the case of Deleuze, the crystal-image of cinema is formed of two sides – actual and virtual – existing in a state of reversibility, that is, where actual and virtual exchange,

thereby producing indiscernibility. The crystal-image for Deleuze finds exemplification in the mirror-image; and when mirror-images proliferate, they absorb the actuality of the character reflected in the mirror, making the virtual images more and more actual in relation to the increasing virtualization of the actual character. Here again Welles surfaces. Deleuze says that 'this situation was prefigured in Welles's *Citizen Kane*, when Kane passes between two facing mirrors, but it comes to the fore in its pure state in the famous palace of mirrors in *The Lady From Shanghai*, where the principle of indiscernibility reaches its peak: a perfect crystal-image'. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 70. And a few pages later Deleuze returns to *Citizen Kane* to address the virtual image as seed 'which will crystallize an environment which is at present [actuellement] amorphous; but on the other hand the latter must have a structure which is virtually crystallizable, in relation to which the seed now plays the role of actual image' (p. 74), citing the moment Kane utters the word 'Rosebud' and lets slip the snow globe that shatters, that constellation of word and image posing the question of whether the virtual seed 'Rosebud' will be actualized in an environment, and vice versa. Obviously, I would suggest (and have in particular ways suggested) that such issues are intensely and complexly in play in *Jurassic Park*, as exemplified in its constellation of mirror-image and words 'OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR', and that the seed implanted by Welles and *Citizen Kane* (and *The Lady From Shanghai*) in Spielberg and *Jurassic Park*, and by the latter in turn, would be a bad seed, having a demonic viral character.

71 Seduction is what is at stake in all of this as fundamental principle for Baudrillard. He writes: 'Seduction does not only turn around the fundamental rule – it IS the fundamental rule'. *L'Autre par lui-même*, Paris: Editions Galilée, 1987, p. 59, my translation. Seduction is the turn. And necessarily, Baudrillard's own work, even in its very movement, would have to be obedient to this principle: for example, one could postulate that it is (and ironically so) with his book *De la Séduction* (1979) that his work uncannily turns from a trajectory that he took to be moving away from the subject of the object – its apparent destination – to one moving toward the subject of the Object! – its destiny. Such an ironical, spiralling movement is what Baudrillard characterizes as not the subjective irony of Adorno but Objective Irony, a movement in and of the destiny of the world. On his strategy of Objective Irony, see the interview between Baudrillard and Edward Colless, David Kelly and Alan Cholodenko in *The Evil Demon of Images*, pp. 39–42, reproduced in *Baudrillard Live*, pp. 137–39.

72 'Game with Vestiges', interview with Salvatore Mele and Mark Titmarsh, *On the Beach*, no. 5, Winter 1984, p. 19, reproduced in *Baudrillard Live*, p. 82.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 19; *Baudrillard Live*, pp. 81–82.

74 'Instabilité et stabilité exponentielles', in *L'Illusion de la fin*, p. 159. Note the shift from 'The Object as Strange Attractor' in *The Transparency of Evil* to 'Instabilité et stabilité exponentielles', where Evil exceeds Chaos Theory.

75 See 'This Beer Isn't a Beer', in *Baudrillard Live*, p. 184. In the same way that Baudrillard describes the work of Andy Warhol in 'Le Snobisme machinal', so would his own work be in accord with the artifice not of art and aesthetics but of Illusion. Hence, in my opinion it is wrong to entitle this conference 'The Art of Theory', insofar as if art is everywhere except in art, it is not art any more, nor is theory simply sustainable outside quotation marks, marking a fatality to theory.