

sociology under Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre. In 1966, he began teaching at the University of Paris at Nanterre. During this time, he was associated with Roland Barthes, whose ideas deeply influenced Baudrillard's first book, *The System of Objects* (1968). After reading the work of Marshall McLuhan, Baudrillard began to see the symbolic representations of culture in mass media to be the basis for performing sociological analysis. After the student revolt at Nanterre in 1968, he wrote for a typical journal of the time, *Utopie*, using Marxist analysis to critique the symbols of capitalism. He eventually came to regard Marxism itself a symbolist ideology produced by the mass culture of capitalism, and to lose his oppositional stance against mass media and technology. His later works discuss the extreme reproducibility of images and sounds through electronic media forms, creating, in Baudrillard's terminology, a culture of the "hyperreal." He became maître-assistant (assistant professor) at Nanterre from 1970 to 1987. He is currently professor of philosophy of culture and media criticism at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. His books include *Consumer Society* (1970), *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972), *The Mirror of Production* (1973), *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (1983), *Simulations* (1983), *Forget Foucault* (1987), *Simulacra and Simulations* (1988), *Seduction* (1990), *The Illusion of the End* (1992), *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995), *The Perfect Crime* (1996), *America* (1998), *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2001), *Screened Out* (2002), and *Passwords* (2003). The following essay is taken from *Simulations*.

From *The Precession*¹ of Simulacra

The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the truth which conceals that there is none.

The simulacrum is true. —ECCLESIASTES²

If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale³ where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where the decline of the Empire sees this map

become frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts — the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an Imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing) — then this fable has come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra.⁴

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory — PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA — it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory

Translated by Paul Foss and Paul Patton.

¹Baudrillard's title hinges on a scientific term that refers to the "wobble" of anything spinning that is also acted on by an outside force (including gravity). For example the axis of the earth's rotation wobbles very slowly (the period is 18,600 years), so that different stars have been (and in due course will be) in the position now held by Polaris. One of the proofs of Einstein's theory of relativity was its correct predictions about the precession in the orbit of Mercury. Possibly Baudrillard's point is that the ability to map our world depends on such imperceptible phenomena.

²Ecclesiastes is a biblical book containing worldly, sometimes cynical wisdom, but nothing remotely resembling this particular text is to be found there.

³"On Exactitude in Science" (1960), by Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986).

⁴Cf. J. Baudrillard, *L'Echange symbolique et la mort*, ("L'Ordre des simulacres"), Paris, Gallimard, 1975. [Baudrillard]

whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. *The desert of the real itself.*

In fact, even inverted, the fable is useless. Perhaps only the allegory of the Empire remains. For it is with the same Imperialism that present-day simulators try to make the real, all the real, coincide with their simulation models. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm. For it is the difference which forms the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real. This representational imaginary, which both culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer's mad project of an ideal coextensivity between the map and the territory, disappears with simulation — whose operation is nuclear and genetic, and no longer specular and discursive. With it goes all of metaphysics. No more mirror of being and appearances; of the real and its concept. No more imaginary coextensivity: rather, genetic miniaturization is the dimension of simulation. The real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models — and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times. It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.

In this passage to a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor of truth, the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials — worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, a more ductile material than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalence, all binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra. It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double,

a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced — this is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather of anticipated resurrection which no longer leaves any chance even in the event of death. A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference.

THE DIVINE IRREFERENCE OF IMAGES

To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: "Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some[one] who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms." (Littré)⁵ Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between "true" and "false," between "real" and "imaginary." Since the simulator produces "true" symptoms, is he ill or not? He cannot be treated objectively either as ill, or as not-ill. Psychology and medicine stop at this point, before a thereafter undiscoverable truth of the illness. For if any symptom can be "produced," and can no longer be accepted as a fact of nature, then every illness may be considered as simulatable and simulated, and medicine loses its meaning since it only knows how to treat "true" illnesses by their objective causes. Psychosomatics evolves in a dubious way on the edge of the illness principle. As for psychoanalysis, it transfers the symptom from the organic to the unconscious order: once again, the latter is held to be true, more true than the former — but why should simulation stop at the portals of the unconscious? Why couldn't the "work" of the unconscious be

⁵Paul-Maximilien-Emile Littré (1801–1888) translated the works of science of the classical period, and compiled (1854) a dictionary of medicine and surgery, from which the quotation is taken.

"produced" in the same way as any other symptom in classical medicine? Dreams already are.⁶

The alienist,⁷ of course, claims that "for each form of the mental alienation there is a particular order in the succession of symptoms, of which the simulator is unaware and in the absence of which the alienist is unlikely to be deceived." This (which dates from 1865) in order to save at all cost the truth principle, and to escape the spectre raised by simulation — namely that truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist. What can medicine do with something which floats on either side of illness, on either side of health, or with the reduplication of illness in a discourse that is no longer true or false? What can psychoanalysis do with the reduplication of the discourse of the unconscious in a discourse of simulation that can never be unmasked, since it isn't false either?⁸

What can the army do with simulators? Traditionally, following a direct principle of identification, it unmasks and punishes them. Today, it can reform an excellent simulator as though he were equivalent to a "real" homosexual, heart-case or lunatic. Even military psychology retreats from the Cartesian clarities and hesitates to draw the distinction between true and false, between the "produced" symptom and the authentic symptom. "If he acts crazy so well, then he must be mad." Nor is it mistaken: in the sense that all lunatics are simulators, and this lack of distinction is the worst from of subversion. Against it classical reason armed itself with all its categories. But it is this today which again outflanks them, submerging the truth principle.

Outside of medicine and the army, favored terrains of simulation, the affair goes back to religion and the simulacrum of divinity: "I forbid

any simulacrum in the temples because the divinity that breathes life into nature cannot be represented."⁹ Indeed it can. But what becomes of the divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme authority, simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or is it volatilized into simulacra which alone deploy their pomp and power of fascination — the visible machinery of icons being substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God? This is precisely what was feared by the Iconoclasts, whose millennial quarrel is still with us today.¹⁰ Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of effacing God from the consciousness of men, and the overwhelming, destructive truth which they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God, that only the simulacrum exists, indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum. Had they been able to believe that images only occulted or masked the Platonic Idea of God, there would have been no reason to destroy them. One can live with the idea of a distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and that in fact they were not images, such as the original model would have made them, but actually perfect simulacra forever radiant with their own fascination. But this death of the divine referential has to be exorcised at all cost.

It can be seen that the iconoclasts, who are often accused of despising and denying images, were in fact the ones who accorded them their actual worth, unlike the iconolaters, who saw in them only reflections and were content to venerate God at one remove. But the converse can also be said, namely that the iconolaters were the most

⁶Baudrillard's point is that the "truth principle," the explanatory power of medicine as positive science, is weakened by the existence of psychosomatic symptoms in a simulating sufferer, because each disease becomes two diseases, one produced by physical, the other by psychological causes. Since dreams are psychological symptoms for the psychoanalyst, Baudrillard speculates that they too can be produced by the simulating psyche.

⁷Early term for a psychoanalyst.

⁸And which is not susceptible to resolution in transference. It is the entanglement of these two discourses which makes psychoanalysis interminable. [Baudrillard]

⁹The quotation is not from the Bible, but reflects Baudrillard's rationale for the second commandment, at Exodus 20:4, against idolatry: that a simulacrum eventually supplants the original.

¹⁰Cf. M. Perniola, "Icones, Visions, Simulacres," *Traverses*/10, p. 39. [Baudrillard] In the Byzantine empire of the eighth and ninth centuries, certain emperors ordered the destruction of all pictorial representations of God. Protestant leaders of the sixteenth century, like Calvin and Zwingli, also favored the destruction of religious art seen as idolatrous. Iconoclasm continues in the Islamic world.

modern and adventurous minds, since underneath the idea of the apparition of God in the mirror of images, they already enacted his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations (which they perhaps knew no longer represented anything, and that they were purely a game, but that this was precisely the greatest game — knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them).

This was the approach of the Jesuits, who based their politics on the virtual disappearance of God and on the worldly and spectacular manipulation of consciences — the evanescence of God in the epiphany of power — the end of transcendence, which no longer serves as alibi for a strategy completely free of influences and signs. Behind the baroque of images hides the grey eminence¹¹ of politics.

Thus perhaps at stake has always been the murderous capacity of images, murderers of the real, murderers of their own model as the Byzantine icons could murder the divine identity. To this murderous capacity is opposed the dialectical capacity of representations as visible and intelligible mediation of the Real. All of Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could *exchange* for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange — God, of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum — not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.

So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. The latter starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the *utopia* of this principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as*

value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum.

This would be the successive phases of the image:

- it is the reflection of a basic reality
- it masks and perverts a basic reality
- it masks the *absence* of a basic reality
- it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

In the first case, the image is a *good* appearance — the representation is of the order of sacrament. In the second, it is an *evil* appearance — of the order of malefice. In the third, it *plays at being* an appearance — it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation.

The transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing, marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs). The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgment to separate true from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.

When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production: this is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us — a strategy of the real, neo-real and hyperreal whose universal double is a strategy of deterrence. . . .¹²

¹¹The term "grey eminence" (*eminence grise*) originates in Father Joseph, the Capuchin monk who was confessor to Cardinal Richelieu, and who was thought to be the true center of power during the reign of Louis XIII.

¹²Baudrillard here hints at something he will discuss at length later, the way in which proxy conflicts of various kinds (including the Vietnam War) serve as simulations standing for but deterring the nuclear war between the United States and the USSR.

HYPERREAL AND IMAGINARY

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusions and phantasms: Pirates, the Frontier, Future World, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturized and *religious* revelling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and affection of the crowd, and in that sufficiently excessive number of gadgets used there to specifically maintain the multitudinous affect. The contrast with the absolute solitude of the parking lot — a veritable concentration camp — is total. Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetize the crowd into direct flows — outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile. By an extraordinary coincidence (one that undoubtedly belongs to the peculiar enchantment of this universe), this deep-frozen infantile world happens to have been conceived and realized by a man who is himself now cryogenized: Walt Disney, who awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centigrade.¹³

The objective profile of America, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here, in miniature and comic strip form. Embalmed and pacified. Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (L. Marin does it well in *Utopies, jeux d'espaces*): digest of the American way of life, panegyric to American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. To be sure. But this conceals something else, and that "ideological" blanket exactly serves to cover over a *third-order simulation*: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of

"real" America, which *is* Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle.

The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false; it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly amongst those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions as to their real childishness.

Moreover, Disneyland is not the only one. Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain, Marine World: Los Angeles is encircled by these "imaginary stations" which feed reality, reality-energy, to a town whose mystery is precisely that it is nothing more than a network of endless, unreal circulation — a town of fabulous proportions, but without space or dimensions. As much as electrical and nuclear power stations, as much as film studios, this town, which is nothing more than an immense script and a perpetual motion picture, needs this old imaginary made up of childhood signals and faked phantasms for its sympathetic nervous system.

POLITICAL INCANTATION

Watergate. Same scenario as Disneyland (an imaginary effect concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter): though here it is a scandal effect concealing that there is no difference between the facts and their denunciation (identical methods are employed by the CIA and the *Washington Post* journalists). Same operation, though this time tending towards scandal as a means to regenerate a moral and political principle, towards the

¹³It is merely an urban legend that Walt Disney (1901–1965) had his body cryogenically preserved in the hope of being resuscitated some day. In fact his body was cremated and his ashes rest at Forest Lawn cemetery. It is unclear whether Baudrillard actually believes the urban legend or whether it merely served as a useful image connected with Disneyland's intended resurrection-effect, to turn the adult visitor into a child again.

imaginary as a means to regenerate a reality principle in distress.

The denunciation of scandal always pays homage to the law. And Watergate above all succeeded in imposing the idea that Watergate *was* a scandal — in this sense it was an extraordinary operation of intoxication. The reinjection of a large dose of political morality on a global scale. It could be said along with Bourdieu that: "The specific character of every relation of force is to dissimulate itself as such, and to acquire all its force only because it is so dissimulated," understood as follows: capital, which is immoral and unscrupulous, can only function behind a moral superstructure, and whoever regenerates this public morality (by indignation, denunciation, etc.) spontaneously furthers the order of capital, as did the *Washington Post* journalists.

But this is still only the formula of ideology, and when Bourdieu enunciates it, he takes "relation of force" to mean the *truth* of capitalist domination, and he *denounces* this relation of force as itself a *scandal* — he therefore occupies the same deterministic and moralistic position as the *Washington Post* journalists. He does the same job of purging and reviving moral order, an order of truth wherein the genuine symbolic violence of the social order is engendered, well beyond all relations of force, which are only its indifferent and shifting configuration in the moral and political consciousness of men.

All that capital asks of us is to receive it as rational or to combat it in the name of rationality, to receive it as moral or to combat it in the name of morality. For they are *identical*, meaning *they can be read another way*: before, the task was to dissimulate scandal; today, the task is to conceal the fact that there is none.

Watergate is not a scandal: this is what must be said at all cost, for this is what every one is concerned to conceal, this dissimulation masking a strengthening of morality, a moral panic as we approach the primal (*mise en*) scene of capital: its instantaneous cruelty, its incomprehensible ferocity, its fundamental immorality — this is what is scandalous, unaccountable for in that system of moral and economic equivalence which remains the axiom of leftist thought, from Enlightenment theory to communism. Capital doesn't give a damn

about the idea of the contract which is imputed to it — it is a monstrous unprincipled undertaking, nothing more. Rather, it is "enlightened" thought which seeks to control capital by imposing rules on it. And all that recrimination which replaced revolutionary thought today comes down to reproaching capital for not following the rules of the game. "Power is unjust, its justice is a class justice, capital exploits us, etc." — as if capital were linked by a contract to the society it rules. It is the left which holds out the mirror of equivalence, hoping that capital will fall for this phantasmagoria of the social contract and fulfill its obligation towards the whole of society (at the same time, no need for revolution: it is enough that capital accept the rational formula of exchange).

Capital in fact has never been linked by a contract to the society it dominates. It is a sorcery of the social relation, it is a *challenge to society* and should be responded to as such. It is not a scandal to be denounced according to moral and economic rationality, but a challenge to take up according to symbolic law.

THE END OF THE PANOPTICON¹⁴

It is again to this ideology of the lived experience, of exhumation, of the real in its fundamental banality, in its radical authenticity, that the American TV-verité¹⁵ experiment on the Loud family in 1971 refers:¹⁶ 7 months of uninterrupted shooting, 300 hours of direct non-stop broadcasting, without script or scenario, the odyssey of a family, its dramas, its joys, ups and downs — in brief, a "raw" historical document, and the "best thing ever on television, comparable, at the level of our daily

¹⁴Prison building designed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832); its key feature was that every inmate could be seen at all times by the guard. Michel Foucault discusses the Panopticon in his book, *Discipline and Punish*, mentioned by Baudrillard later.

¹⁵Baudrillard plays on the French word for "documentary film," *cinéma-vérité*, literally "film-truth."

¹⁶Baudrillard's topic is *An America Family*, a twelve-part documentary covering the daily life of an affluent Santa Barbara family, William and Pat Loud and their five children, which was shot by Allan and Susan Raymond beginning in 1971. During filming the marriage of the Louds broke up, and the film also "outed" the family's gay son, Lance. The program was first aired by the public television network in 1973.

existence, to the film of the lunar landing." Things are complicated by the fact that this family came apart during the shooting: a crisis flared up, the Louds went their separate ways, etc. Whence that insoluble controversy: was TV responsible? What would have happened *if TV hadn't been there*.

More interesting is the phantasm of filming the Louds *as if TV wasn't there*. The producer's trump card was to say: "They lived as if we weren't there." An absurd, paradoxical formula — neither true, nor false: but utopian. The "as if we weren't there" is equivalent to "as if *you* were there." It is this utopia, this paradox that fascinated 20 million viewers, much more than the "perverse" pleasure of prying. In this "truth" experiment, it is neither a question of secrecy nor of perversion, but of a kind of thrill of the real, or of an aesthetics of the hyperreal, a thrill of vertiginous and phony exactitude, a thrill of alienation and of magnification, of distortion in scale, of excessive transparency all at the same time. The joy in an excess of meaning, when the bar of the sign slips below the regular water line of meaning: the non-signifier is elevated by the camera angle. Here the real can be seen to have never existed (but "as if you were there"), without the distance which produces perspective space and our depth vision (but "more true than nature"). Joy in the microscopic simulation which transforms the real into the hyperreal. (This is also a little like what happens in porno, where fascination is more metaphysical than sexual.)

This family was in any case already somewhat hyperreal by its very selection: a typical, California-housed, 3-garage, 5-children, well-to-do professional upper middle class ideal American family with an ornamental housewife. In a way, it is this statistical perfection which dooms it to death. This ideal heroine of the American way of life is chosen, as in sacrificial rites, to be glorified and to die under the fiery glare of the studio lights, a modern fatum. For the heavenly fire no longer strikes depraved cities, it is rather the lens which cuts through ordinary reality like a laser, putting it to death. "The Louds: simply a family who agreed to deliver themselves into the hands of television, and to die from it," said the producer. So it is really a question of a sacrificial process, of a sacrificial spectacle offered to 20 million Americans. The liturgical drama of a mass society.

TV-verité. Admirable ambivalent terms: does it refer to the truth of this family, or to the truth of TV? In fact, it is TV which is the Loud's truth, it is it which is true, it is it which renders true. A truth which is no longer the reflexive truth of the mirror, nor the perspective truth of the panoptic system and of the gaze, but the manipulative truth of the test which probes and interrogates, of the laser which touches and then pierces, of computer cards which retain your punched-out sequences, of the genetic code which regulates your combinations, of cells which inform your sensory universe. It is to this kind of truth that the Loud family is subjected by the TV medium, and in this sense it really amounts to a death sentence (but is it still a question of truth?).

The end of the panoptic system. The eye of TV is no longer the source of an absolute gaze, and the ideal of control is no longer that of transparency. The latter still presupposes an objective space (that of the Renaissance) and the omnipotence of a despotic gaze. This is still, if not a system of confinement, at least a system of scrutiny. No longer subtle, but always in a position of exteriority, playing on the opposition between seeing and being seen, even if the focal point of the panopticon may be blind.

It is entirely different when with the Louds "You no longer watch TV, TV watches you (live)," or again: "You no longer listen to *Pas de Panique*, *Pas de Panique* listens to you" — switching over from the panoptic apparatus of surveillance (of *Discipline and Punish*) to a system of deterrence, where the distinction between active and passive is abolished. No longer is there any imperative to submit to the model, or to the gaze. "YOU are the model!" "YOU are the majority!" Such is the slope of a hyperrealist sociality, where the real is confused with the model, as in the statistic operation, or with the medium, as in the Loud's operation. Such is the later stage of development of the social relation, our own, which is no longer one of persuasion (the classical age of propaganda, ideology, publicity, etc.) but one of dissuasion or deterrence: "YOU are news, you are the social, the event is you, you are involved, you can use your voice, etc." A turnabout of affairs by which it becomes impossible to locate an instance of the model, of power, of the gaze, of the medium

itself, since *you* are always already on the other side. No more subject, focal point, center or periphery: but pure flexion or circular inflection. No more violence or surveillance: only "information," secret virulence, chain reaction, slow implosion and simulacra of spaces where the real-effect again comes into play.

We are witnessing the end of perspective and panoptic space (which remains a moral hypothesis bound up with every classical analysis of the "objective" essence of power), and hence the *very abolition of the spectacular*. Television, in the case of the Louds for example, is no longer a spectacular medium. We are no longer in the society of spectacle which the situationists talked about, nor in the specific types of alienation and repression which this implied. The medium itself is no longer identifiable as such, and the merging of the medium and the message (McLuhan¹⁷) is the first great formula of this new age. There is no

longer any medium in the literal sense: it is now intangible, diffuse and diffracted in the real, and it can no longer even be said that the latter is distorted by it.

Such inmixture, such a viral, endemic, chronic, alarming presence of the medium, without our being able to isolate its effects — spectralized, like those publicity holograms sculptured in empty space with laser beams, the event filtered by the medium — the dissolution of TV into life, the dissolution of life into TV — an indiscernible chemical solution: we are all Louds, doomed not to invasion, to pressure, to violence and to blackmail by the media and the models, but to their induction, to their infiltration, to their illegible violence.

But we must be careful of the negative twist discourse gives this: it is a question neither of an illness nor of a viral complaint. Rather, we must think of the media as if they were, in outer orbit,

¹⁷The medium/message confusion, of course, is a correlative of the confusion between sender and receiver, thus sealing the disappearance of all the dual, polar structures which formed the discursive organization of language, referring to the celebrated grid of functions in Jacobson, the organization of all determinate articulation of meaning. "Circular" discourse must be taken literally: that is, it no longer goes from one point to the other but describes a circle that *indistinctly* incorporates the positions of transmitter and receiver, henceforth unlocatable as such. Thus there is no longer any instance of power, any transmitting authority — power is something that circulates and whose source can no longer be located, a cycle in which the positions of dominator and the dominated interchange in an endless reversion which is also the end of power in its classical definition. The circularization of power, knowledge and discourse brings every localization of instances and poles to an end. Even in psychoanalytic interpretation, the "power" of the interpreter does not come from any external authority, but from the interpreted themselves. This changes everything, for we can always ask the traditional holders of power where they get their power from. Who made you Duke? The King. And who made the King? God. God alone does not reply. But to the question: who made the psychoanalyst? the analyst quite easily replies: You. Thus is expressed, by an inverse simulation, the passage from the "analyzed" to the "analyzand," from active to passive, which only goes to describe the swirling, mobile effect of the poles, its effect of circularity in which power is lost, is dissolved, is resolved into complete manipulation (this is no longer of the order of the directive authority and the gaze, but of the order of personal contact and commutation). See, also, the State/family circularity secured by the floating and metastatic regulation of images of the social and the private. (J. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*)

From now on, it is impossible to ask the famous question: "From what position do you speak?" —

"How do you know?" —

"From where do you get the power?," without immediately getting the reply: "But it is *of* (from) you that I speak" — meaning, it is you who speaks, it is you who knows, power is you. A gigantic circonvolution, circumlocation of the spoken word, which amounts to irredeemable blackmail and irremovable deterrence of the subject supposed to speak, but left without a word to say, responseless, since to questions asked can come the inevitable reply: but *you are* the reply, or: your question is already an answer, etc. — the whole sophistical stranglehold of word-tapping, forced confession disguised as free expression, trapping the subject in his own questioning, the precession of the reply about the question (the whole violence of interpretation in there, and the violence of the conscious or unconscious self-management of "speech").

This simulacrum of inversion or involution of poles, this clever subterfuge which is the secret of the whole discourse of manipulation and hence, today, in every domain, the secret of all those new powers sweeping clean the stage of power, forging the assumption of all speech from which comes that fantastic silent majority characteristic of our times — all this undoubtedly began in the political sphere with the democratic simulacrum, that is to say with the substitution of the instance of the people for the instance of God as source of power, and the substitution of power as *representation* for power as *emanation*. An anti-Copernican revolution: no longer any transcendent instance nor any sun nor any luminous source of power and knowledge — everything comes from and returns to the people. It is [through] this magnificent *recycling* that the universal simulacrum of manipulation, from the scenario of mass suffrage to present-day and illusory opinion polls, begins to be installed. [Baudrillard]

a sort of genetic code which controls the mutation of the real into the hyperreal, just as the other, micromolecular code controls the passage of the signal from a representative sphere of meaning to the genetic sphere of the programmed signal.¹⁸

The whole traditional mode of causality is brought into question: the perspective, deterministic mode, the "active," critical mode, the analytical mode — the distinction between cause and effect, between active and passive, between subject and object, between ends and means. It is in this mode that it can be said: TV watches us, TV alienates us, TV manipulates us, TV informs us. . . . Throughout all this one is dependent on the analytical conception whose vanishing point is the horizon between reality and meaning.

On the contrary, we must imagine TV on the DNA model, as an effect in which the opposing poles of determination vanish according to a nuclear contraction or retraction of the old polar schema which has always maintained a minimal distance between a cause and an effect, between the subject and an object: precisely, the meaning gap, the discrepancy, the difference, the smallest possible margin of error, irreducible under penalty of reabsorption in an aleatory¹⁹ and indeterminable process which discourse can no longer even account for, since it is itself a determinable order.

It is this gap which vanishes in the genetic coding process, where indeterminacy is less a product of molecular randomness than a product of the abolition, pure and simple, of the *relation*. In the process of molecular control, which "goes" from the DNA nucleus to the "substance" it "informs," there is no more traversing of an effect, of an energy, of a determination, of any message. "Order, signal, impulse, message": all these attempt to render the matter intelligible to us, but by analogy, retranscribing in terms of inscription,

¹⁸Baudrillard is analogizing the television/life relationship to the DNA/organism relationship. DNA carries information that codes the organism, and in that sense is a simulacrum for the organism; mutations in the DNA cause changes in the organism. Similarly, Baudrillard argues, television gives the viewer a picture of life, a simulacrum that is translated into a vision of human meaning that controls how people live.

¹⁹Aleatory means "random" (*aleator* is Latin for dice-player).

vector, decoding, a dimension of which we know nothing — it is no longer even a "dimension," or perhaps it is the fourth (that which is defined, however, in Einsteinian relativity, by the absorption of the distinct poles of space and time). In fact, this whole process only makes sense to us in the negative form. But nothing separates one pole from the other, the initial from the terminal: there is just a sort of contraction into each other, a fantastic telescoping, a collapsing of the two traditional poles into one another: an *IMPLOSION* — an absorption of the radiating model of causality, of the differential mode of determination, with its positive and negative electricity — an implosion of meaning. *This is where simulation begins.*

Everywhere, in whatever political, biological, psychological, media domain, where the distinction between poles can no longer be maintained, one enters into simulation, and hence into absolute manipulation — not passivity, but the *non-distinction of active and passive*. DNA realizes this aleatory reduction at the level of the living substance. Television itself, in the example of the Louds, also attains this *indefinite* limit where the family *vis-à-vis* TV is no more or less active or passive than is a living substance *vis-à-vis* its molecular code. In both there is only a nebula indecipherable into its simple elements, indecipherable as to its truth.

ORBITAL AND NUCLEAR²⁰

. . . Yet, despite this deterrence by the orbital authority — the nuclear code or molecular — events continue at ground level, mishaps are increasingly more numerous, despite the global process of contiguity and simultaneity of data. But, subtly, these events no longer make any sense; they are nothing more than a duplex effect of simulation at the summit. The best example must be the Vietnam war, since it was at the crossroads of a maximal historical or "revolutionary" stake and

²⁰Here Baudrillard explores the idea of war as *theater*, where the simulacra are proxy conflicts within the 1946–1989 Cold War between the United States and the USSR, with China as a third major player. In an omitted section, Baudrillard considers the "orbital" space race in which the United States and USSR competed in a proxy war to put a man into Earth orbit and then onto the moon.

the installation of this deterrent authority. What sense did that war make, if not that its unfolding sealed the end of history in the culminating and decisive event of our age?

Why did such a difficult, long and arduous war vanish overnight as if by magic?

Why didn't the American defeat (the greatest reversal in its history) have any internal repercussions? If it had truly signified a setback in the planetary strategy of the USA, it should have necessarily disturbed the internal balance of the American political system. But no such thing happened.

Hence something else took place. Ultimately this war was only a crucial episode in a peaceful coexistence. It marked the advent of China to peaceful coexistence. The long sought-after securing and concretizing of China's non-intervention, China's apprenticeship in a global *modus vivendi*, the passing from a strategy of world revolution to one of a sharing of forces and empires, the transition from a radical alternative to political alternation in a now almost settled system (normalization of Peking-Washington relations): all this was the stake of the Vietnam war, and in that sense, the USA pulled out of Vietnam but they won the war.

And the war "spontaneously" came to an end when the objective had been attained. This is why it was de-escalated, demobilized so easily.²¹

The effects of this same remodeling are legible in the field. The war lasted as long as there remained unliquidated elements irreducible to healthy politics and a discipline of power, even a communist one. When finally the war passed from the resistance to the hands of regular Northern

troops, it could stop: it had attained its objective. Thus the stake was a political relay. When the Vietnamese proved they were no longer bearers of an unpredictable subversion, it could be handed over to them. That this was a communist order wasn't fundamentally serious: it had proved itself, it could be trusted. They are even more effective than capitalists in liquidating "primitive" pre-capitalist and antiquated structures.

Same scenario as in the Algerian war.²²

The other aspect of this war and of all wars since: behind the armed violence, the murderous antagonism between adversaries — which seems a matter of life and death, and which is played as such (otherwise you could never send out people to get smashed up in this kind of trouble), behind this simulacrum of a struggle to death and of ruthless global stakes, the two adversaries are fundamentally as one against that other, unnamed, never mentioned thing, whose objective outcome in war, with equal complicity between the two adversaries, is total liquidation. It is tribal, communal, pre-capitalist structures, every form of exchange, language and symbolic organization which must be abolished. Their murder is the object of war — and in its immense spectacular contrivance of death, war is only the medium of this process of terrorist rationalization by the social — the murder through which sociality can be founded, no matter what allegiance, communist or capitalist. The total complicity or division of labor between two adversaries (who can even make huge sacrifices to reach that) for the very purpose of remodeling and domesticating social relations.

"The North Vietnamese were advised to countenance a scenario of the liquidation of the American presence through which, of course, honor must be preserved."

The scenario: the extremely heavy bombardment of Hanoi. The intolerable nature of this

²¹Baudrillard's theory is that the 1963–1975 Vietnam War had to continue as long as the United States was convinced that its Vietcong opponents were proxies for China, and that defeat in Vietnam would mean defeat by China throughout Asia. As soon as President Nixon reached a separate settlement with China, and control of the war passed to North Vietnam, ideology became irrelevant, the proxy aspect of the Vietnam War vanished, the war itself became a merely local conflict that could be quickly settled. The heavy bombing of Hanoi just before the withdrawal of U.S. forces was a different simulacrum intended for home consumption: the images of the bombing (which would cost many lives but would not change the political situation) would mitigate the appearance that the United States had been defeated.

²²Like the U.S./Vietnam War, the Algerian war of independence (1954–1962) posed a Western colonial government against a populist independence movement. Baudrillard's interpretation of the 1962 endgame of the war would emphasize the mutation of the popular Algerian movement (the FLN) into an official political party under Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumedienne, and the willingness of France to relinquish its colony to a government that would take power and repress the remnants of its populist base.

bombing should not conceal the fact that it was only a simulacrum to allow the Vietnamese to seem to countenance a compromise and Nixon to make the Americans swallow the retreat of their forces. The game was already won, nothing was objectively at stake but the credibility of the final montage.

Moralists about war, champions of war's exalted values should not be greatly upset: a war is not any the less heinous for being a mere

simulacrum — the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead ex-combatants count as much there as in other wars. That objective is always amply accomplished, like that of the partitioning of territories and of disciplinary sociality. What no longer exists is the adversity of adversaries, the reality of antagonistic causes, the ideological seriousness of war — also the reality of defeat or victory, war being a process whose triumph lies quite beyond these appearances.

Jürgen Habermas

b. 1929

Jürgen Habermas, the most significant social philosopher in Germany and the Marxist most quoted by liberal humanists, was born in Düsseldorf and educated at the Universities of Göttingen and Zurich before taking his Ph.D. at Bonn in 1954. He taught at the University of Marburg and at Heidelberg before moving in 1964 to the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt, where, as professor of philosophy, he was Theodor Adorno's assistant at the end of Adorno's career. Since 1981, Habermas has been director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Science at Starnberg; he also teaches at Northwestern University. Habermas has published nearly thirty books, including Knowledge and Human Interests (1968), Toward a Rational Society (1971), Legitimation Crisis (1971), Communication and the Evolution of Society (1979), The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1985), Autonomy and Solidarity (1986), On the Logic of the Social Sciences (1988), The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate (1989), Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (1990), The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1991), Remarks on Discourse Ethics (1993), Between Facts and Norms (1996), and The Pragmatics of Communication (1998). Habermas's most recent work has taken up international politics: The Postnational Constellation (2001), Religion and Rationality: Essays of Reason, God, and Modernity (2002), and Philosophy in a Time of Terror (with Jacques Derrida, 2003). In 2004, Habermas won philosophy's equivalent of the Nobel, the Kyoto Prize; his acceptance speech was on "The Public Role of Religion in a Secular Context." The following essay, "Modernity versus Postmodernity" originated as a talk on the occasion of Habermas's acceptance of the Adorno prize awarded by the city of Frankfurt in 1980.