







A woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow sweater and a gold bracelet, is smiling and holding a large bouquet of pink and white flowers. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a doorway. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font, with each word on a new line and underlined.

KITSCH  
TRANSFORMS  
DISGUST INTO  
UNIVERSAL  
APPROVAL

INTRODUCTION TO KITSCH

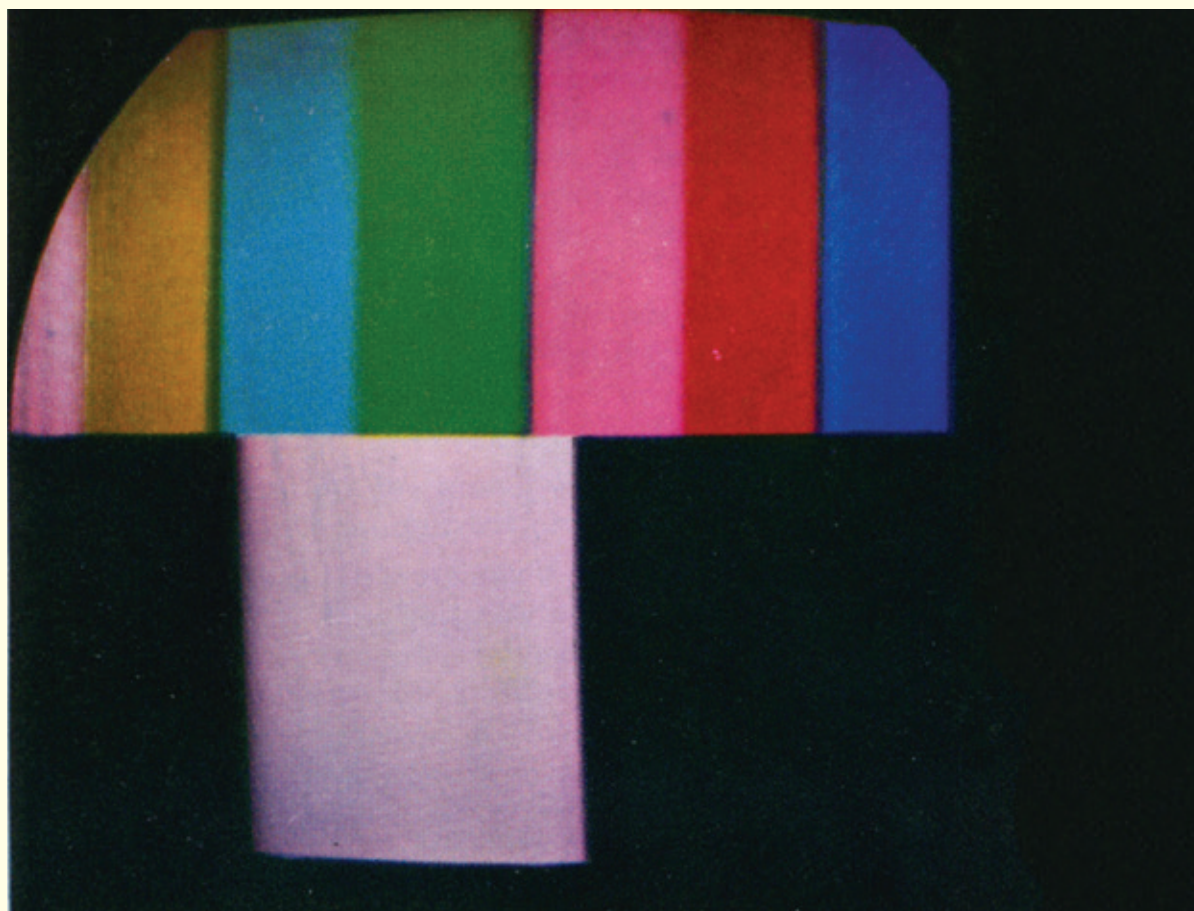


THE TABLE IS SET FOR A FORMAL DINNER





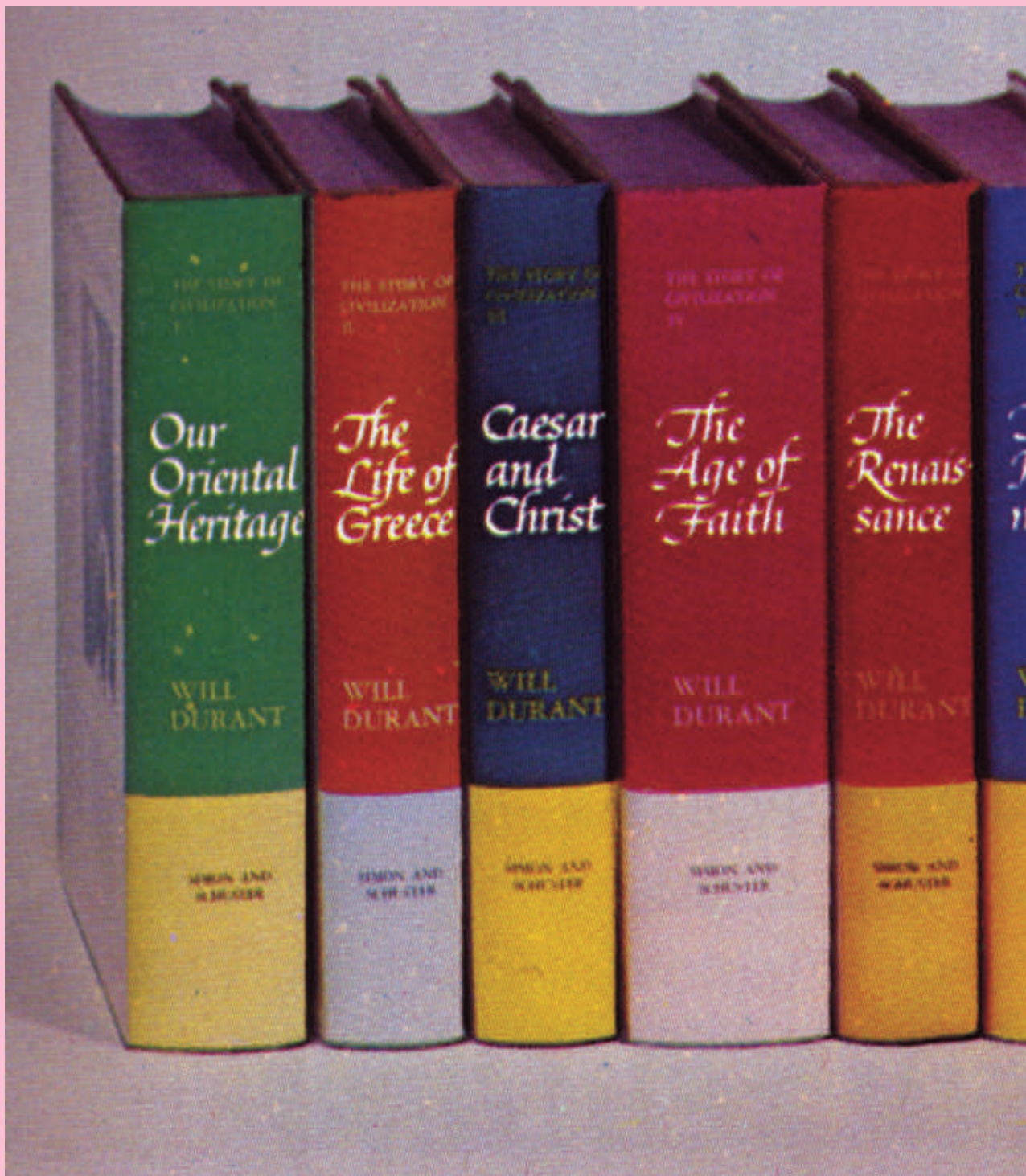












THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
I

*Our  
Oriental  
Heritage*

WILL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
II

*The  
Life of  
Greece*

WILL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
III

*Caesar  
and  
Christ*

WILL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
IV

*The  
Age of  
Faith*

WILL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
V

*The  
Renaissance*

WILL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER



THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
I

The  
Reformation

WILL  
and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
II

The  
Age of  
Reason  
Begins

WILL and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
III

The  
Age of  
Louis  
XIV

WILL and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
IV

The  
Age  
of  
Voltaire

WILL and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
V

Rousseau  
and  
Revolution

WILL and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER

THE STORY OF  
CIVILIZATION  
VI

The  
Age  
of  
Napoleon

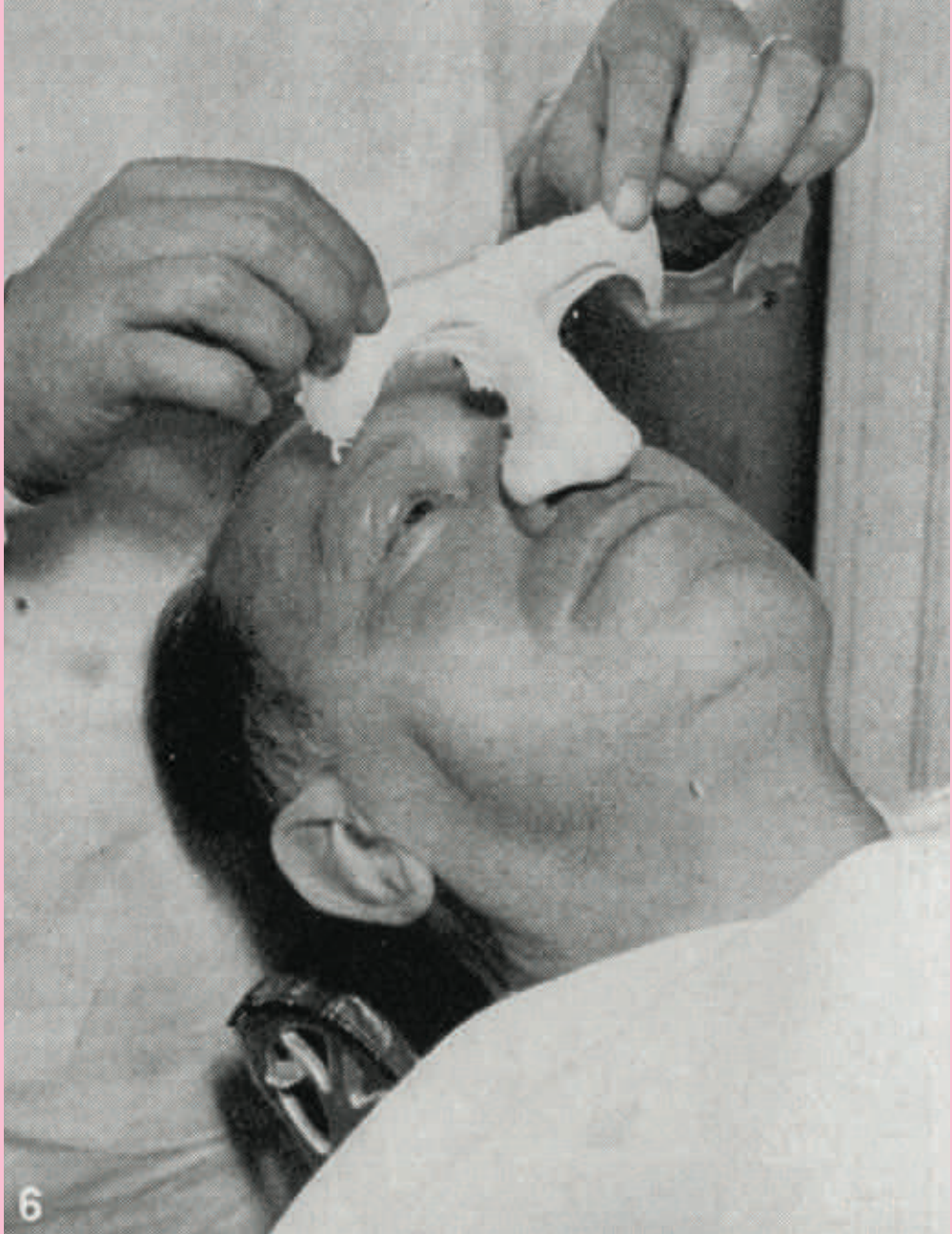
WILL and  
ARIEL  
DURANT

SIMON AND  
SCHUSTER













# KITSCH

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# ENCYCLOPEDIA

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A SURVEY OF UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE

SARA CWYNAR

KITSCH ARCHIVE

ABBÉ PIERRE,  
ABSURDITY,  
AGA SAGA,  
AMERICA/UTOPIA,  
ANTI-, ART,  
ARCHAEOLOGY OF  
KNOWLEDGE,  
ARCHIVE





ABBÉ PIERRE

**BUT HERE AS EVERYWHERE ELSE,  
NEUTRALITY ENDS UP FUNCTIONING AS THE  
SIGN OF NEUTRALITY**

The myth of the Abbé Pierre has at its disposal a precious asset: the physiognomy of the Abbé. It is a fine physiognomy, which clearly displays all the signs of apostleship: a benign expression, a Franciscan haircut, a missionary's beard, all this made complete by the sheepskin coat of a worker-priest and the staff of the pilgrim. Thus are united the marks of legend and those of modernity. The haircut, devoid of definite shape, is without doubt trying to achieve a style completely outside the bounds of art and even of technique, a sort of zero degree of haircut. The Abbé Pierre's haircut thus becomes the capillary archetype of saintliness: the saint is first and foremost a being without formal context; the idea of fashion is antipathetic to the idea of sainthood.



But here as everywhere else, neutrality ends up functioning as the sign of neutrality. The "zero" haircut, then, is quite simply the label of Franciscanism; first conceived negatively so as not to contradict the appearance of sainthood, it quickly becomes a superlative mode of signification, it dresses up the Abbé as Saint Francis. Hence the tremendous iconographic popularity of this haircut in illustrated magazines and in films.

The beard goes through the same mythological routine. Naturally, the problem is not to know how this forest of signs has been able to grow on the Abbé Pierre (although it is indeed surprising that the attributes of goodness should be like transferable coins allowing an easy exchange between reality (The Abbé Pierre of Match) and fiction (The Abbé Pierre of film) and that, in short, apostleship should appear from the start ready-made and fully equipped for the big journey of reconstitutions and legends). I am only wondering about the enormous consumption of such signs by the public. I see it reassured

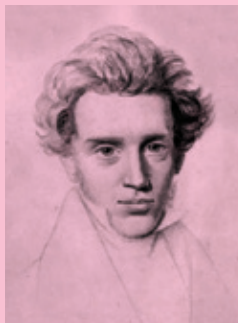
by the spectacular identity of a morphology and a vocation, in no doubt about the latter because it knows the former, no longer having access to the real experience of apostleship except through the bric-à-brac associated with it, and getting used to acquiring a clear conscience by merely looking at the shop window of saintliness; and I get worried about a society which consumes with such avidity the display of charity that it forgets to ask itself questions about its consequences, its uses and its limits. And I start to wonder whether the fine and touching iconography of the Abbé Pierre is not the alibi which a sizeable part of the nation uses in order, once more, to substitute with impunity the signs of charity for the reality of justice."<sup>1</sup>

ABSURDITY

**KITSCH FUNCTIONS AS A MEANS  
OF FINDING MEANING IN THE ABSURD**

The realization that existence is absurd arises from a sense of futility and meaninglessness provoked by the perception that there is a divorce between human aspiration towards infinity and the finite nature of actual human experience, or between the intellectual desire for rationality and the irrationality of the physical world. The world is experienced as something unintelligible, and as the product of random combinations of events and circumstances. Although the experience of the absurd can induce a suicidal despair, the realization that there is no God and that human beings are not immortal can also produce an exhilarating sense of freedom and in-spire a revolt against the human condition.<sup>2</sup>

Twisting and turning beside the slumbering Tereza, he recalled something she has told him not long before in the course of an insignificant conversation. They had been talking about his friend Z. when she announced, 'If I hadn't met you, I'd certainly have fallen in love with him.' Even then, her words had left Tomas in a strange state of melancholy, and now he realized it was only a matter of chance that Tereza loved him and not his friend Z. Apart from her consummated love for Tomas, there were, in the realm of possibility, and infinite number of unconsummated loves for other men. (Cont'd pg.3)



<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Dru, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press, 1938.

We all reject out of hand the idea that the love of our life may be something light or weightless; we presume our love is what must be, that without it our life would no longer be the same; we feel that Beethoven himself, gloomy and awe-inspiring, is playing the “Es muss sein!” (the “it must be”) to our own great love. Tomas often thought of Tereza’s remark about his friend Z. He came to the conclusion that the love story of his life exemplified not “Es muss sein!” (It must be so), but rather “Es konnte auch anders sein” (It could just as well have been otherwise). It had taken six chance happenings to push Tomas towards Tereza, as if he had little inclination to go to her on his own.<sup>3</sup>

*Milan Kundera argues that we use kitsch and myth as a means of finding meaning in the absurd.*

What is the Absurd? It is, as may quite easily be seen, that I, a rational being, must act in a case where my reason, my powers of reflection, tell me: you can just as well do the one thing as the other; that is to say where my reason and reflection say: you cannot act and yet here is where I have to act...The Absurd, or to act by virtue of the absurd, is to act upon faith ... I must act, but reflection has closed the road so I take one of the possibilities and say: This is what I do, I cannot do otherwise because I am brought to a standstill by my powers of reflection.<sup>4</sup>

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#### AGA SAGA

### A WEALTHY COZINESS

Aga Saga is a pejorative term used for a subgenre of popular novel set in a semi-rural area and centred on the domestic and emotional entanglements of affluent middle-class characters. It derives from the proprietary name of a type of stove which has come to symbolize a wealthy coziness.<sup>5</sup>

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#### AMERICA/UTOPIA

### HOME OF THE PERPETUAL MOTION PICTURE

*The american desert* is “an ecstatic critique of culture, an ecstatic form of disappearance.” *Speed is key because* “Speed creates pure objects.” Everything is to be discovered, everything obliterated, the US is utopia achieved. Los Angeles is a perpetual motion picture.<sup>6</sup>




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### PROVING THEATER BY ANTI-THEATER; ART BY ANTI-ART; PEDAGOGY BY ANTI-PEDAGOGY; PSYCHIATRY BY ANTI-PSYCHIATRY, ETC., ETC.

It is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary; proving truth by scandal; proving the law by transgression; proving work by the strike; proving the system by crisis and capital by revolution; and for that matter proving ethnology by the dispossession of its object (the Tasaday). Without counting: proving theater by anti-theater; proving art by anti-art; proving pedagogy by anti-pedagogy; proving psychiatry by anti-psychiatry, etc...<sup>7</sup>




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#### ARCHAEOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

### IT SHAPES OUR RELATION TO THE PAST AND THE CREATION OF HISTORICAL MEANING

*For Foucault, the “archaeologist of knowledge” aims to recover and reconstruct the archive, to reveal how it shapes our relation to the past and the creation of historical meaning.* “Archaeology of knowledge is a mode of historical and epistemological inquiry developed by Foucault. Foucault explains that he derives the term from the phrase used by Kant to designate “the history of that which makes a certain form of thought necessary.”

Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge is concerned, not with the evolution of ideas, but with the emergence and transformation of discursive formations and with the underlying episteme that governs relations between them. Archaeology deals with what Foucault terms the “positive unconscious of knowledge,” that is, with a level of knowledge that eludes the consciousness of individual scientists and thinkers but that provides their theories with underlying rules and structures.

For example, for Foucault, Renaissance thinking was governed by an episteme for which the world was a syntactic system in which all beings communicated with their environment through a series of similarities and correspondences. In contrast, the thought of the Classical age (17th and 18th Centuries) is characterized or governed by a combination of mathesis (a general mathematical science of order), taxonomia (a more empirical form of classification) and genetic analysis.<sup>8</sup>





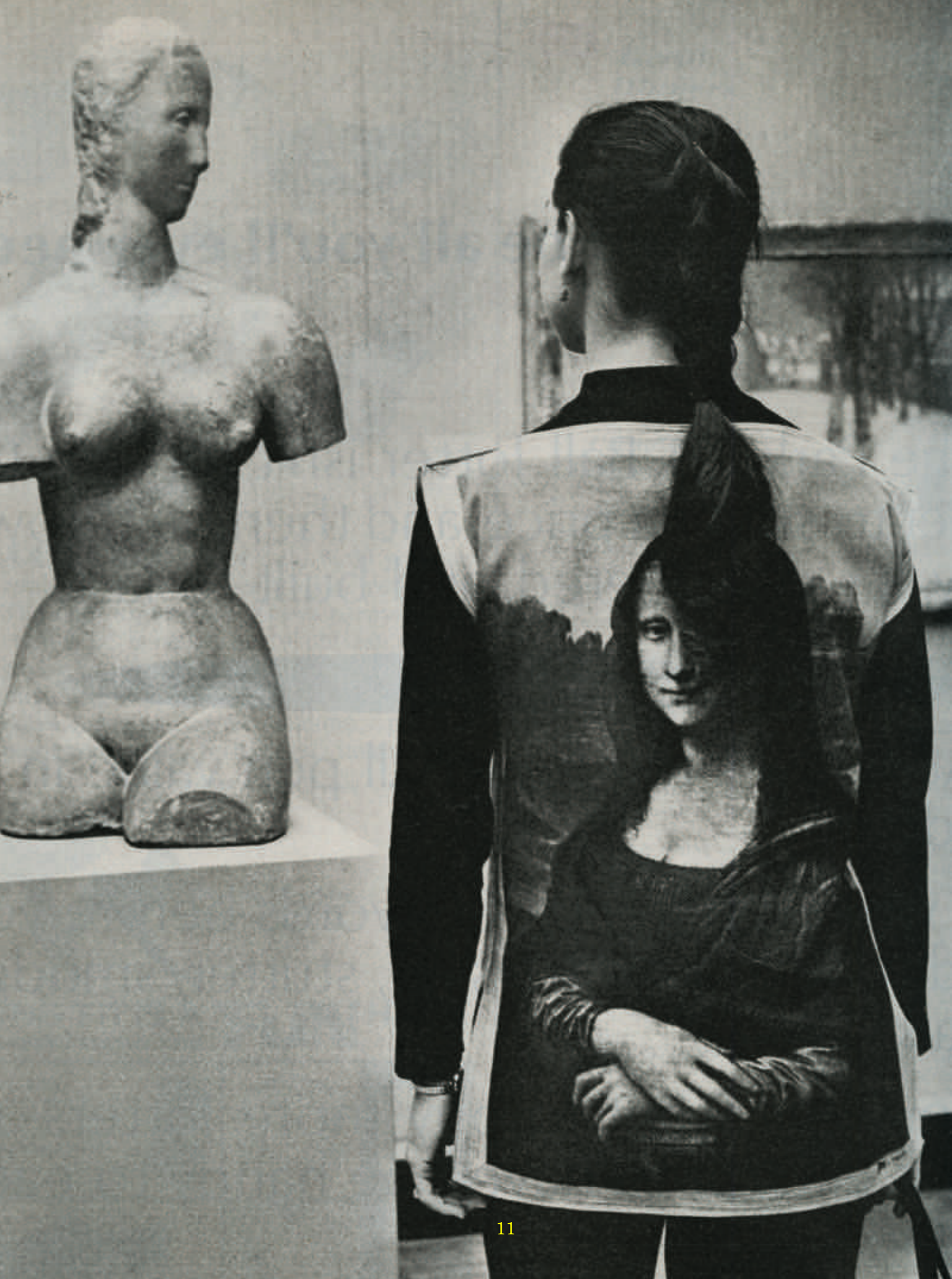












## THE ARCHIVE IS THE FIRST LAW OF WHAT CAN BE SAID

An important concept in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, the “archive” is essentially the law governing what can and cannot be said in a given period or situation, or the general system that governs the formation and transformation of statements and sentences. In this model of discourse analysis, the archive is the second of three levels. The most general level is that of “language” (langue; the term is adapted from Saussure’s langue/parole distinction), or the system that defines the sum total of all the sentences that have actually been spoken. The intermediary level of the archive determines which sentences can be spoken, manipulated and analysed.<sup>9</sup>



The archive is first the law of what can be said. What is considered history is determined by the ideological forces of the time. The archive governs what is said or unsaid, recorded or unrecorded, what becomes history, and this is shaped by ideological control. There is an underlying structure governing the thought systems and values of any given society, in relation to its own people and others.

Thus, who determines, and what conditions enable, a history to be written, depend on the definition of the

archive, and on the “systems and values” (power relations) which define the archive. *These power relations also govern the myths of a society. The institutions of society determine what becomes considered history. This is another manifestation of kitsch, that history can be distilled down to certain moments or motifs determined by these institutions.* In relation, Derrida argues that there is no political control without control of the archive, if not of memory. Derrida examines the “archival impulse” in relation to what Freud saw as the “indissociable presence of the death drive in the necessarily repetitive act of recollection.” Derrida argues for an archival desire that seeks to assure a future always threatened by finitude (death).<sup>10</sup>

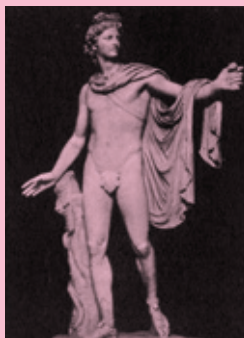
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 ART
 

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## ART HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE IDEOLOGICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR THE RETROACTIVE REWRITING OF THE HISTORY OF HUMAN SOCIETIES

Art disappears as society thrashes in reproducible culture: The logic of the disappearance of art is, precisely, inversely proportional to that of the production of culture. The “xerox-degree” of culture in a state of absolute proliferation corresponds to the zero-degree of art: one is the other’s vanishing point, and absolute simulation ... from this a direct line links Baudelaire to Andy Warhol, under the sign of “absolute merchandise.”<sup>11</sup> What is beauty? said Franz, and he saw himself attending a recent gallery preview at his wife’s side, and at her insistence. The endless vanity of speeches and words, the vanity of culture, the vanity of art.<sup>12</sup>




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<sup>3</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Dru, *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>8</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Merewether, *The Archive*, Documents of Contemporary Art, 2008.

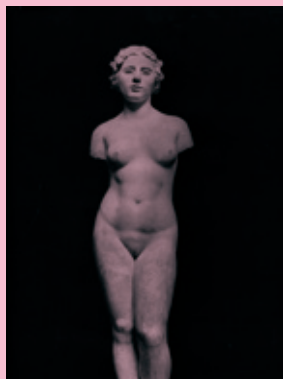
<sup>11</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

BEAUTY,  
BINARY  
OPPOSITION,  
BLUE BLOOD  
CRUISE,  
BLUE GUIDE,  
BOURGEOISIE,  
BRAIN OF EINSTEIN

The most powerful agency or “frame of reference” by which the discipline of museology has been successful in its virually universal colonization of the world’s cultures is the totalizing notion of art. As one of the most remarkable of modern European inventions, “art” has been one of the most effective ideological instruments for the retroactive rewriting of the history of human societies.<sup>13</sup>



Amid all this snow at once fragile and compact, the eyes alone, black like strange soft flesh, but not in the least expressive, are two faintly tremulous wounds. In spite of its extreme beauty, this face, not drawn but sculpted in something smooth and fragile, that is, at once perfect and ephemeral, comes to resemble the flour-white complexion of Charlie Chaplin, the dark vegetation of his eyes, his totem-like countenance Garbo offered to one’s gaze a sort of Platonic Idea of the human creature, which explains why her face is almost sexually undefined, without however leaving one in doubt.



# B

## BEAUTY

### THE FINAL PHASE IN THE HISTORY OF BEAUTY

Sabina said, “Unintentional beauty. Yes. Another way of putting it might be beauty by mistake. Before beauty disappears entirely from earth, it will go on existing for a while by mistake. ‘Beauty by mistake’—the final phase in the history of beauty.”<sup>14</sup>

Garbo belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philtre, when the face represented a kind of absolute state...it is indeed an admirable object-face.

The makeup has the snowy thickness of a mask. it is not a painted face, but one set in plaster, protected by the surface of the colour, not by its lineaments.

The name given to her, the Divine, probably aimed to convey less a superlative state of beauty than the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light. She herself knew this: how many actresses have consented to let the crowd see the ominous maturing of their beauty. Not she, however; the essence was not to be degraded, her face was not to have any reality except that of its perfection, which was intellectual even more than formal. (Cont'd pg.15)

<sup>13</sup> D. Preziosi, “Collecting/ Museums”, from *Critical Terms for Visual Culture*, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

And yet, in this deified face, something sharper than a mask is looming: a kind of voluntary and therefore human relation between the curve of the nostrils and the arch of the eyebrows; a rare, individual function relating two regions of the face. A mask is but a sum of lines; a face, on the contrary, is above all their thematic harmony. Garbo's face represents this fragile moment when the cinema is about to draw an existential from an essential beauty, when the archetype leans towards the fascination of mortal faces, when clarity of the flesh as essence yields its place to a lyricism of Woman.

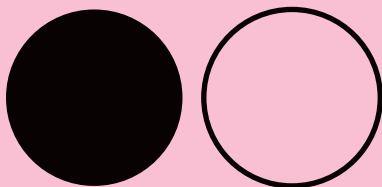
Viewed as a transition the face of Garbo reconciles two iconographic ages, it assures the passage from awe to charm. As is well known, we are today at the other pole of this evolution: the face of Audrey Hepburn, for instance, is individualized, not only because of its peculiar thematics (woman as child, woman as kitten) but also because of her person, of an almost unique specification of the face, which has nothing of the essence left in it, but is constituted by an infinite complexity of morphological functions.<sup>15</sup>

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#### BINARY OPPOSITION

### THE LIVES OF SOCIAL SUBJECTS ARE GOVERNED BY LAWS OF WHICH THEY ARE NOT FULLY CONSCIOUS

The great simulacra constructed by man pass from a universe of natural laws to a universe of force and tensions of force, today to a universe of structures and binary oppositions.<sup>16</sup>

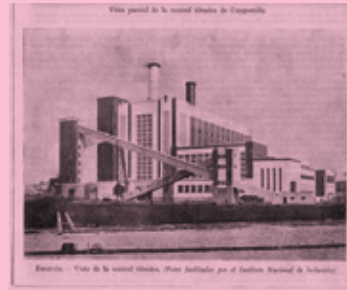


Levi-Strauss was applying the lessons of what he called the Copernican revolution brought about by structural linguistics to the analysis of mythology. His analysis is based upon the classically structuralist thesis that the relations between observable phenomena are more important than the phenomena themselves. By concentrating on the knots in the webs of the social fabric rather than the lines, he demonstrates that the lives of social subjects are governed by laws of which they are not fully conscious. All human societies give away daughters and receive wives in return, even though their members are not aware of the laws that structure their exchange.

Myths are demonstrated to consist of elementary units or mythemes which permit a conceptual understanding of the world by ordering it in terms of opposition between day and night, inside and outside, male and female, and so on.

Structuralism uses "binary opposition" to explain human knowledge and to explain how many phenomena are constructed. Systems are "binary" when they are composed of only two parts. For an opposition to be truly "binary",

however, the opposing classes of thing/idea must be mutually exclusive. That is, membership in one class must make impossible membership in the other.<sup>17</sup>



True binary oppositions that organize a class of thing are not supposed to allow confusion, that is allowing a thing to claim membership in both simultaneously, or exclusion, non-membership while still belonging to the class of things organized by the binary. The most obvious place in which binary oppositions work to structure knowledge is in computer's "machine code", the most basic level of programming which tells each tiny microprocessor switch whether it is to be opened (0 or "off") or closed (1 or "on"). Everything you see on this screen, together with instructions for how it is to be displayed and where it is to be stored, is expressed to the computers in enormous strings of zeros and ones, a binary code that cannot fail if properly constructed.

The world of natural objects contains other "natural binaries", like magnetic poles (north and south) and gravitational force (to or away from the object in question).<sup>18</sup>

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#### BLUE BLOOD CRUISE

### THE GOD-KING AND THE KING-OBJECT

Ever since the Coronation, the French had been pining for fresh news about royal activities, of which they are extremely fond; the setting out to sea of a hundred or so royals on a Greek yacht entertained them greatly. The coronation of Elizabeth was a theme which appealed to the emotions and sentimentalities; the "Blue Blood" Cruise is a humorous episode. Kings played at being men...Such a feeling of amusement carries a heavy pathological burden: if one is amused by a contradiction, it is because one supposes its terms to be very far apart. In other words, kings have a superhuman essence, and when they temporarily borrow certain forms of democratic life, it can only be through an

incarnation which goes against nature, made possible through condescension alone. To flaunt the fact that kings are capable of prosaic actions is to recognize that this status is no more natural to them than angelism to common mortals, it is to acknowledge that the king is still king by divine right.



Thus the neutral gestures of daily life have taken an exorbitantly bold character, like those creative fantasies in which Nature violates its own kingdoms: Kings shave themselves! This touch was reported by our national press as an incredible act of singularity, as if in doing so kings consented to risk the whole of their royal status, making thereby, incidentally, a profession of faith in its indestructible nature.



All this gives us, antiphrastically, information on a certain ideal of daily life: to wear cuffs, to be shaved by a flunkey, to get up late. By renouncing these privileges, kings make them recede into the heaven of dream: their (very temporary) sacrifice determines and eternalizes the signs of daily bliss.

What is more curious is that this mythical character of our king is nowadays secularized, though not in the least exorcized, by resorting to scientism of a sort. Kings are defined by the purity of their race (Blue Blood). The two century-old themes are merged, that of the God-King and that of the King-Object.<sup>19</sup>

TO SELECT ONLY MONUMENTS SUPPRESSES AT ONE STROKE THE REALITY OF THE LAND AND THAT OF ITS PEOPLE

The Blue Guide hardly knows the existence of scenery except under the guise of the picturesque. The picturesque is found any time the ground is uneven. We find again here this bourgeois promoting of the mountains, this old Alpine myth (since it dates back to the nineteenth century) which Gide rightly associated with Helvetic-Protestant morality and which has always functioned as a hybrid compound of the cult of nature and of puritanism (regeneration through clean air, moral ideas at the sight of mountain-tops, summit-climbing as civic virtue, etc.) (Cont'd pg.17)



Sales. — Pastora y gran en los Alpes



<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>18</sup> [http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng105sanders/binary\\_oppositions.htm](http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng105sanders/binary_oppositions.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

Among the views elevated by the Blue Guide to aesthetic existence, we rarely find plains (redeemed only when they can be described as fertile), never plateaux. Only mountains, gorges, defiles and torrents can have access to the pantheon of travel, inasmuch, probably, as they seem to encourage a morality of effort and solitude.



The mythology of the Blue Guide dates back to the last century, to that phase in history when the bourgeoisie was enjoying a kind of new-born euphoria in buying effort, in keeping its image and essence without feeling any of its ill-effects. Just as hilliness is overstressed to such an extent as to eliminate all other types of scenery, the human life of a country disappears to the exclusive benefit of its monuments. For the Blue Guide, men exist only as “types.” For the Blue Guide, men exist as social entities only in trains, where they fill a “very mixed” Third Class. Apart from that, they are a mere introduction, they constitute a charming and fanciful decor, meant to surround the essential part of the country: its collection of monuments. If one excepts its wild defiles, fit for moral ejaculations, Spain according to the Blue Guide knows only one type of space, that which weaves, across a few nondescript lacunae, a close web of churches, vestries, reredoses, crosses, altar-curtains, spires (always octagonal), sculpted groups (Family and Labour), Romanesque porches, naves and life-size crucifixes.

To select only monuments suppresses at one stroke the reality of the land and that of its people, it accounts for nothing of the present, that is, nothing historical, and as a consequence, the monuments themselves become undecipherable, therefore senseless. By reducing geography to the description of an uninhabited world of monuments, the Blue Guide expresses a mythology which is obsolete for a part of the bourgeoisie itself.

But as for the Blue Guide, it still abides by a partly superseded bourgeois mythology, that which postulated (religious) Art as the fundamental value of culture, but saw its “riches” and “treasures” only as a reassuring accumulation of goods (cf. the creation of museums). This behaviour expressed a double urge: to have at one’s disposal a cultural alibi as ethereal as possible, and to maintain this alibi in the toils of a computable and acquisitive system, so that one could at any moment do the accounts of the ineffable. Beside the historical accounts proper (which are rare and meagre, incidentally, for it is well known that History is not a good bourgeois), those accounts in which the Republicans are always “extremists” looting churches but nothing

on Guernica—while the good “Nationalists”, on the contrary, spend their time “liberating”, solely by “skilful strategic manoeuvres” and “heroic feats of resistance,” let me mention the flowering of a splendid myth-alibi: that of the prosperity of the country. Hachette World Guides, dubbed “Guide Bleu” in French.<sup>20</sup>

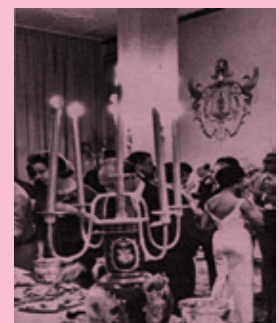



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#### THE BOURGEOISIE

### MYTH MYSTIFIES AND TRANSFORMS PETIT-BOURGEOIS CULTURE INTO A UNIVERSAL NATURE

The essential enemy is the bourgeois norm. The starting point of these reflections (on the myths of French daily life as presented by the media) was a feeling of impatience at the sight of the “naturalness with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. Myth is a sign-system, the language of mass culture, which mystifies and transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature.”<sup>21</sup>




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#### BRAIN OF EINSTEIN

### EINSTEIN EMBODIES THE MOST CONTRADICTIONARY DREAMS, AND MYTHICALLY RECONCILES THE INFINITE POWER OF MAN OVER NATURE WITH THE FATALITY OF THE SACROSANCT, WHICH MAN CANNOT YET DO WITHOUT

Einstein’s brain is a mythical object: paradoxically, the greatest intelligence of all provides an image of the most up-to-date machine, the man who is too powerful is removed from psychology, and introduced into a world of robots; as is well known, the supermen of









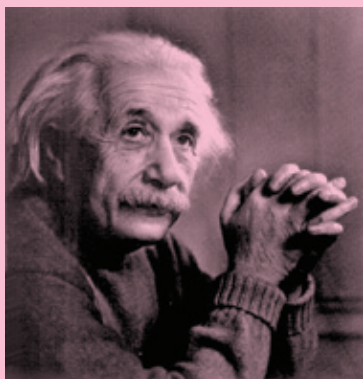








science-fiction always have something reified about them. So has Einstein: he is commonly signified by his brain, which is like an object for anthologies, a true museum exhibit. Perhaps because of his mathematical specialization, superman is here divested of every magical character; no diffuse power in him, no mystery other than mechanical: he is a superior, a prodigious organ, but a real, even a physiological one. Mythologically, Einstein is matter, his power does not spontaneously draw one towards the spiritual, it needs the help of an independent morality, a reminder about the scientist's "conscience" (Science without conscience, they said...). Einstein himself has to some extent been a party to the legend by bequeathing his brain, for the possession of which two hospitals are still fighting as if it were an unusual piece of machinery which it will at last be possible to dismantle. A photograph shows him lying down, his head bristling with electric wires: the waves of his brain are being recorded, while he is requested to "think of relativity". (But for that matter, what does "to think of" mean, exactly?) What this is meant to convey is probably that the seismograms will be all the more violent since "relativity" is an arduous subject. Thought itself is thus represented as an energetic material, the measurable product of a complex (quasi-electrical) apparatus which transforms cerebral substance into power.



The mythology of Einstein shows him as a genius so lacking in magic that one speaks about his thought as of a functional labour analogous to the mechanical making of sausages, the grinding of corn or the crushing of ore: he used to produce thought, continuously, as a mill makes flour, and death was above all, for him, the cessation of a localized function: "the most powerful brain of all has stopped thinking." What this machine of genius was supposed to produce was equations. Through the mythology of Einstein, the world blissfully regained the image of knowledge reduced to a formula. Paradoxically, the more the genius of the man was materialized under the guise of his brain, the more the product of his inventiveness came to acquire a magical dimension, and gave a new incarnation to the old esoteric image of a science entirely contained in a few letters. There is a single secret to the world, and this secret is held in one word; the universe is a safe of which humanity seeks the combination: Einstein almost found it, this is the myth of Einstein. In it, we find all the Gnostic themes: the unity of nature, the ideal possibility of a fundamental reduction of the world, the unfastening power of the word, the age-old struggle between a

secret and an utterance, the idea that total knowledge can only be discovered all at once, like a lock which suddenly opens after a thousand unsuccessful attempts. The historic equation  $E=mc^2$ , by its unexpected simplicity, almost embodies the pure idea of the key, bare, linear, made of one metal, opening with a wholly magical ease a door which had resisted the desperate efforts of centuries. Popular imagery faithfully expresses this: photographs of Einstein show him standing next to a blackboard covered with mathematical signs of obvious complexity... But since the world is still going on, since research is proliferating, and on the other hand since God's share must be preserved, some failure on the part of Einstein is necessary: Einstein died, it is said, without having been able to verify "the equation in which the secret of the world was enclosed." So in the end the world resisted; hardly opened, the secret closed again, the code was incomplete. In this way Einstein fulfils all the conditions of myth, which could not care less about contradictions so long as it establishes a euphoric security: at once magician and machine, eternal researcher and unfulfilled discoverer, unleashing the best and the worst, brain and conscience, Einstein embodies the most contradictory dreams, and mythically reconciles the infinite power of man over nature with the "fatality" of the sacrosanct, which man cannot yet do without. "Science without conscience is but the ruin of the Soul."<sup>22</sup>



\_\_\_\_\_ CATEGORICAL AGREEMENT WITH BEING

**THE AESTHETIC IDEAL OF THE CATEGORICAL AGREEMENT WITH BEING IS A WORLD IN WHICH SHIT IS DENIED AND EVERYONE ACTS AS THOUGH IT DID NOT EXIST. THIS AESTHETIC IDEAL IS CALLED KITSCH**

Kitsch has its source in the categorical agreement with being. But what is the basis of being? God? Mankind? Struggle? Love? Man? Woman? Since opinions vary, there are various kitsches: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Communist, Fascist, democratic, feminist, European, American, national, international. Since the days of the French Revolution, one half of Europe has been referred to as the left, the other half as the right. Yet to define one or the other by means of the theoretical principles it professes is all but impossible. (Cont'd pg.28)

<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>21</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>22</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

CATEGORICAL  
AGREEMENT  
WITH BEING,  
CAUSE, CEMETERY,  
CEREMONY, CODE,  
COLLECTIVE  
REPRESENTATIONS,  
CONFLICT,  
CONTROL

A black and white photograph of a palm tree with a person climbing it, overlaid with a pink-to-purple gradient and a yellow border. The text is centered over the image.

**THE WORK OF THE RIGHT IS DONE VERY WELL, AND SPONTANEOUSLY, BY THE LEFT ON ITS OWN**

And no wonder: political movements rest not so much on rational attitudes as on the fantasies, images, words, and archetypes that come together to make up this or that political kitsch. Behind all the European faiths, religious and political, we find the first chapter of Genesis, which tells us that the world was created properly, that human existence is good, and that we are therefore entitled to multiply. Let us call this basic faith a categorical agreement with being. The fact that until recently the word shit appeared in print as s— has nothing to do with moral considerations. You can't claim that shit is immoral, after all! The objection to shit is a metaphysical one. The daily defecation session is daily proof of the unacceptability of Creation. Either/or: either shit is acceptable (in which case don't lock yourself in the bathroom!) or we are created in an unacceptable manner.

It follows, then, that the aesthetic ideal of the categorical agreement with being is a world in which shit is denied and everyone acts as though it did not exist. This aesthetic ideal is called kitsch.<sup>23</sup>



Nor were they merely expressing political agreement with Communism; no, theirs was an agreement with being as such. The May Day ceremony drew its inspiration from the deep well of the categorical agreement with being. The unwritten, unsung motto of the parade was not Long Live Communism! But Long Live Life! The power and cunning of Communist politics lay in the fact that it appropriated this slogan. For it was this idiotic tautology (Long Live Life!) which attracted people indifferent to the theses of Communism to the Communist parade.

All hypotheses are possible, although this one is superfluous: the work of the Right is done very well, and spontaneously, by the Left on its own. Besides, it would be naive to see an embittered good conscience at work here. For the Right itself also spontaneously does the work of the Left. All the hypotheses of manipulation are reversible in an endless whirligig. For manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another; where there is no longer any active or passive.<sup>24</sup>



Above: London elementary and secondary school pupils march on March 2, 1968, in School Action. Below: demonstrators for support of women in cosmetics and medicine, in a demand for equal pay, and more pay for teachers. Below: Students for a Democratic Society march on Columbia University's Lee Library, Feb. 27, 1968.



It is by putting an arbitrary stop to this revolving causality that a principle of political reality can be saved. It is by the simulation of a conventional, restricted perspective field, where the premises and consequences of any act or event are calculable, that a political credibility can be maintained (including, of course, "objective" analysis, struggle, etc.)

But if the entire cycle of any act or event is envisaged in a system where linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist, in a field unhinged by simulation, then all determination evaporates, every act terminates at the end of the cycle having benefited everyone and been scattered in all directions. We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable-Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>24</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>25</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

The fantasy of the Grand March that Franz was so intoxicated by is the political kitsch joining leftists of all times and tendencies. The Grand March is the splendid march on the road to brotherhood, equality, justice, happiness; it goes on and on, obstacles notwithstanding, for obstacles there must be if the march is to be the Grand March.

The dictatorship of the proletariat or democracy? Rejection of the consumer society or demands for increased productivity? The guillotine or an end to the death penalty? It is all beside the point. What makes a leftist a leftist is not this or that theory but his ability to integrate any theory into the kitsch called the Grand March. The meeting reached its peak when a famous American actress rose to speak. Because of her, even more photographers and cameramen streamed into the auditorium, and every syllable she pronounced was accompanied by the click of another camera. The actress spoke about suffering children, about the barbarity of Communist dictatorship, the human right to security, the current threat to the traditional values of civilized society, the inalienable freedom of the human individual, and President Carter, who was deeply sorrowed by the events in Cambodia. By the time she had pronounced her closing words, she was in tears.<sup>26</sup>

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CEMETERY

**THE CEMETERY WAS VANITY**  
**TRANSMOGRIFIED INTO STONE**

The Montparnasse Cemetery was the closest. It was all tiny houses, miniature chapels over each grave. Sabina could not understand why the dead would want to have imitation palaces built over them. The cemetery was vanity transmogrified into stone. Instead of growing more sensible in death, the inhabitants of the cemetery were sillier than they had been in life. Their monuments were meant to display how important they were. There were no fathers, brothers, sons, or grandmothers buried there, only public figures, the bearers of titles, degrees, and honours; even the postal clerk celebrated his chosen profession, his social significance—his dignity.<sup>27</sup>




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CEREMONY

**ART, THEATRE, AND**  
**LANGUAGE PRESERVE ILLUSION IN**  
**WAYS CEREMONY USED TO**

Art, theatre, and language preserve illusion in ways ceremony used to, but no longer does: they "maintain the tiny distance that makes the real play with its own reality." We may certainly include film and other moving image technologies in these categories.<sup>28</sup>




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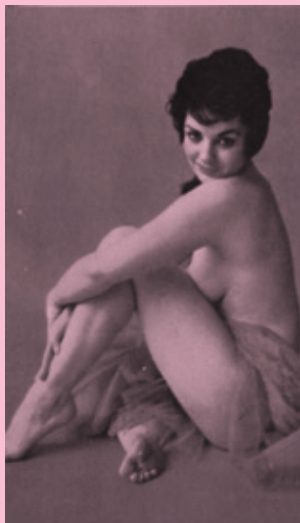
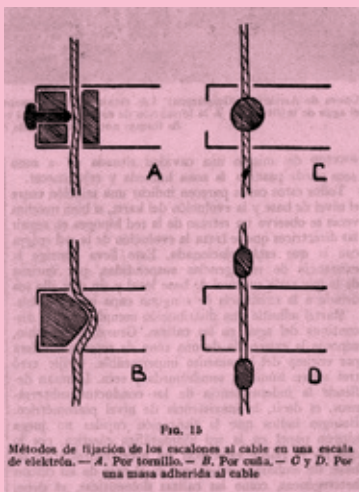
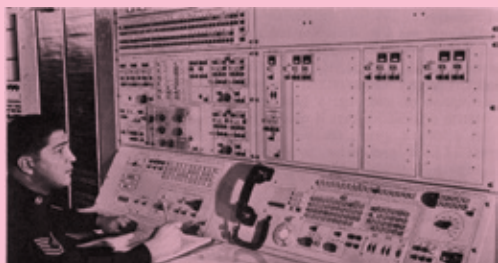
CODE

**IT IS IN EFFECT IN THE GENETIC CODE**  
**THAT THE "GENESIS OF SIMULACRA" TODAY**  
**FINDS ITS MOST ACCOMPLISHED FORM**

After the metaphysics of being and appearance, after that of energy and determination, we have the metaphysics of indeterminacy and the code. Cybernetic control, generation by models, differential modulation, feed-back,

questionnaires (question/response?): such is the new operational configuration... Digitality is its metaphysical principal... and DNA its prophet. It is in effect in the genetic code that the "genesis of simulacra" today finds its most accomplished form. code; e.g. the binary code of computer technology; the DNA code in biology, or the digital code in television and sound recording—the code in information technology.

Central is the connection between code and reproduction—reproduction which is itself "original". The code entails that the object produced—tissue in biology, for example—is not a copy in the accepted sense of the term, where the copy is the copy of an original, natural object.<sup>29</sup>



— CONFLICT

AND THAT PERHAPS IT NEVER  
EVER BEGAN. MANY OTHER SUCH EVENTS  
NEVER BEGAN

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 would never send 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. (Cont'd pg. 32)

— COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS

COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS  
AS SIGN SYSTEMS

By treating "collective representations" as sign systems one might account for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature.<sup>30</sup>

26 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

27 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext, 1984.

28 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext, 1984.

29 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

30 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

DEATH OF  
THE REAL,  
DETERRENCE,  
DISNEYLAND,  
DREAM



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. “War is peace” said Orwell. Thus it is possible to miss the truth of a war: namely, that it is well over before reaching a conclusion, that at its very core, war was brought to an end, and that perhaps it never ever began. Many other such events never began.<sup>31</sup>



# D

## DEATH OF THE REAL

### FROM MEDIUM TO MEDIUM THE REAL IS VOLATIZED; IT BECOMES AN ALLEGORY OF DEATH

This also means the collapse of reality into hyperrealism, in the minute duplication of the real, preferably on the basis of another reproductive medium—advertising, photo, etc. From medium to medium the real is volatilized; it becomes an allegory of death, but it is reinforced by its very destruction; it becomes the real for the real, fetish of the lost object—no longer object of representation, but ecstasy of degeneration and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal.<sup>33</sup>



## CONTROL

### EVERYTHING TESTIFIES ALREADY – NOT IN PRODUCTION, BUT IN COUNTERFEIT TO THE SAME PROJECT OF CONTROL AND UNIVERSAL HEGEMONY

Reunify the scattered world (after the Reformation) under the aegis of a homogenous doctrine, universalize the world under a single word, constitute a political elite of the state, with an identically centralized strategy: these are the objectives of the Jesuits. In order to accomplish this, you need to create effective simulacra: the apparatus of the organization is one, but also is clerly magnificence and the theatre (the great theatre of the cardinals and grey eminences). And training and education are other simulacra that aimed, for the first time every in a systematic manner, at remodeling an ideal nature from a child. That architectural sauce of stucco and baroque is a great apparatus of the same kind. All of the above precedes the productivist rationality of capital, but everything testifies already – not in production, but in counterfeit to the same project of control and universal hegemony – to a social scheme where the internal coherence of a system is already at work.<sup>32</sup>



## DETERRENCE

### THE BALANCE OF TERROR IS THE TERROR OF BALANCE

Deterrence precludes war—the archaic violence of expanding systems. Deterrence itself is the neutral, implosive violence of metastable systems or systems in involution. There is no longer a subject of deterrence, nor an adversary nor a strategy—it is a planetary structure of the annihilation of stakes. Atomic war, like the Trojan War, will not take place. (ConFd pg.33)



<sup>31</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

The risk of nuclear annihilation only serves as a pretext, that surpasses any possible objective to such an extent that it is itself a symptom of nullity), for installing a universal security system, a universal lockup and control system whose deterrent effect is not at all aimed at an atomic clash (which was never in question, except without a doubt in the very initial stages of the cold war, when one still confused the nuclear apparatus with conventional war) but, rather, at the much greater probability of any real event, of anything that would be an event in the general system and upset its balance. The balance of terror is the terror of balance. Deterrence is not a strategy, it circulates and is exchanged between nuclear protagonists exactly as is international capital in the orbital zone of monetary speculation whose fluctuations suffice to control all global exchanges. Thus the money of destruction (without any reference to real destruction, any more than floating capital has a real referent of production) that circulates in nuclear orbit suffices to control all the violence and potential conflicts around the world.

What is hatched in the shadow of this mechanism with the pretext of a maximal, "objective," threat, and thanks to Damocles' nuclear sword, is the perfection of the best system of control that has ever existed. And the progressive satellization of the whole planet through this hypermodel of security.

Thus the very possibility of paralyzing a whole country with the flick of a switch makes it impossible that electric engineers will ever utilize this weapon: the entire myth of the revolutionary and total strike collapses at the very moment when the means to do so are available. This is deterrence in a nutshell.<sup>34</sup>

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#### DISNEYLAND

### DISNEYLAND IS PRESENTED AS IMAGINARY IN ORDER TO MAKE US BELIEVE THAT THE REST IS REAL

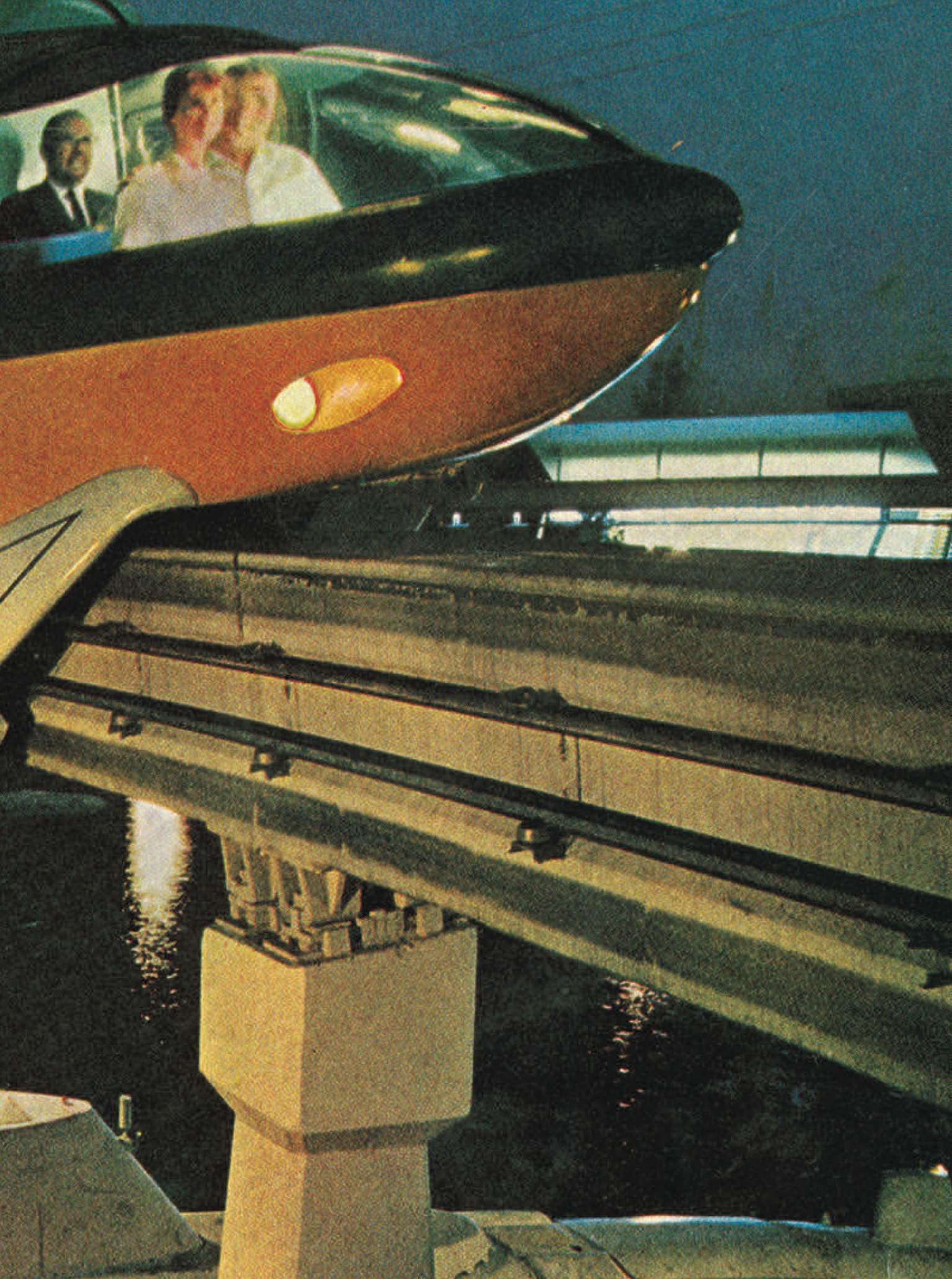
Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusions and phantasms: pirates, the frontier, future world, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But, what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the 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 efficiently 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.

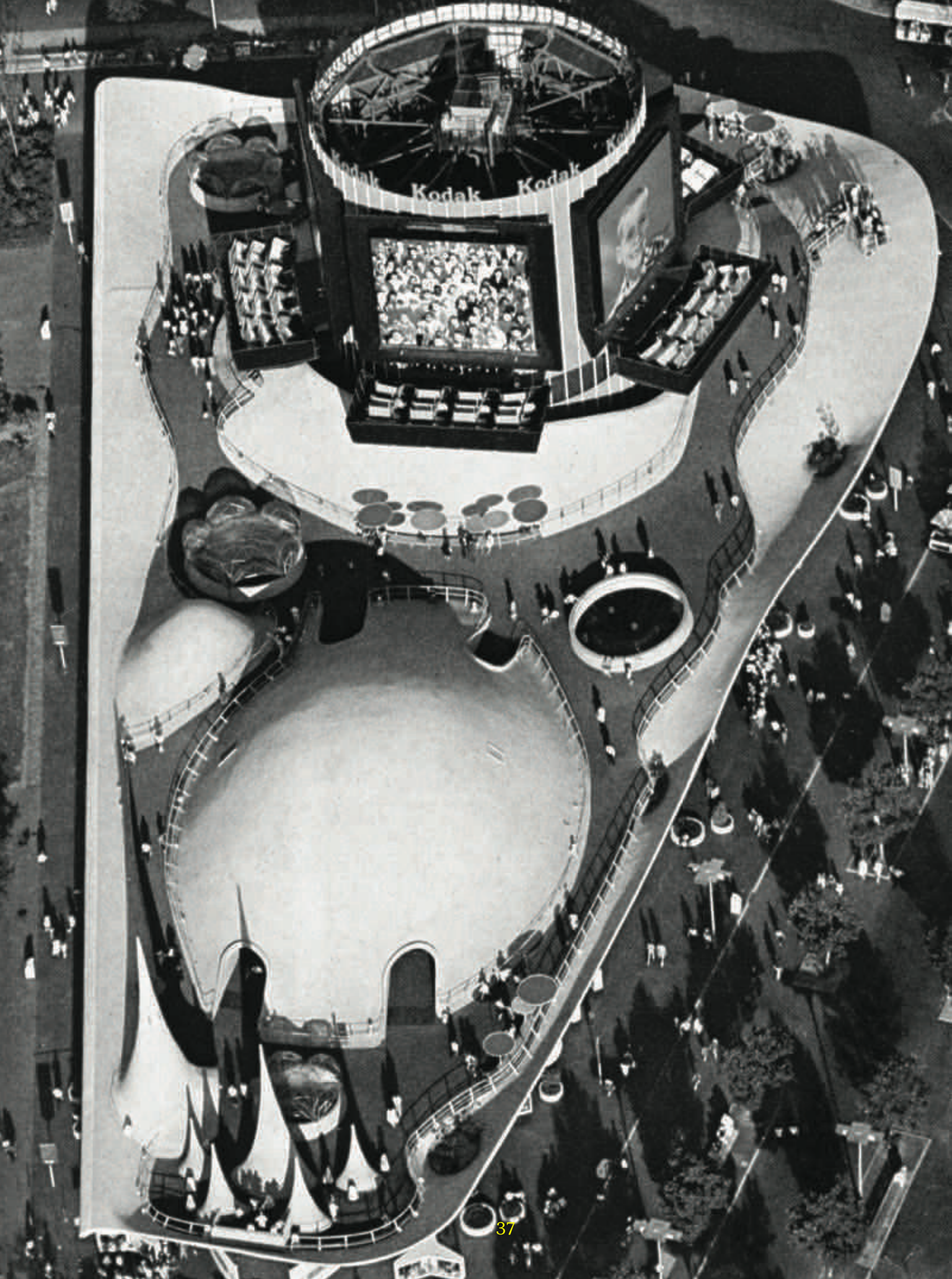
The objective profile of the United States, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here, in miniature and comic-strip form. Embalmed and pacified. Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (L. Marin does it well in *Utopiques: 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. (Cont'd pg. 40)



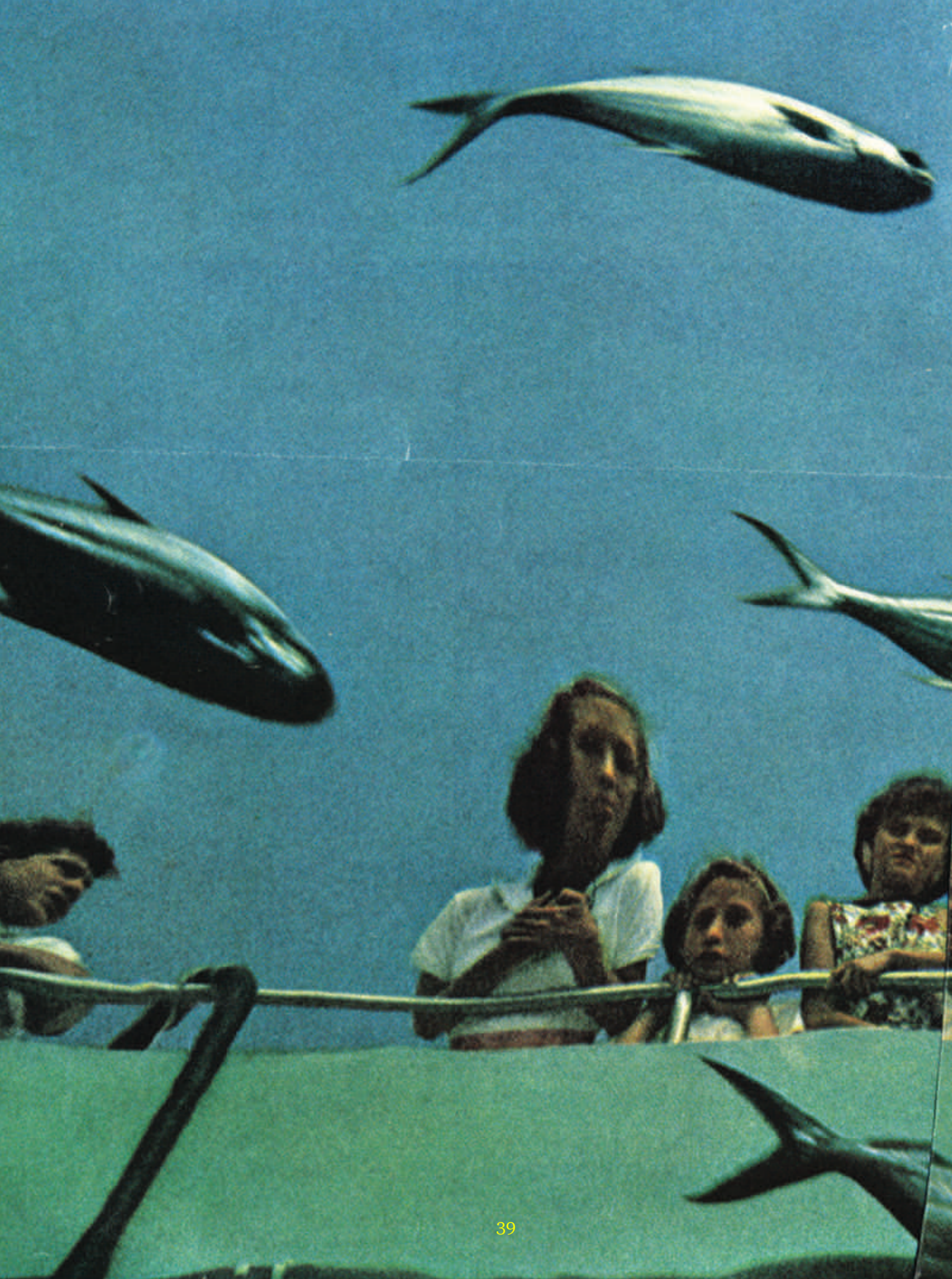












The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the “real” world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of 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.<sup>35</sup>

DREAM

THE PARADES HE IMAGINED TO BE REALITY WERE NOTHING BUT THEATER, DANCE, CARNIVAL—IN OTHER WORDS, A DREAM

I might put it another way: Franz felt his book life to be unreal. He yearned for real life, for the touch of people walking side by side with him, for their shouts. It never occurred to him that what he considered unreal (the work he did in the solitude of the office or library) was in fact his real life, whereas the parades he imagined to be reality were nothing but theater, dance, carnival—in other words, a dream.

The feeling Soviet kitsch evoked in Sabina strikes me as very much like the horror Tereza experienced in her dream of being marched around a swimming pool with a group of naked women and forced to sing cheerful songs with them while corpses floated just below the surface of the pool. Tereza could not address a single question, a single word, to any of the women; the only response she would have got was the next stanza of the current song. She could not even give any of them a secret wink; they would immediately have pointed her out to the man standing in the basket above the pool, and he would have shot her dead.<sup>36</sup>



34 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

35 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

36 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# EMPIRE, END, EXISTENTIAL CRISIS



DRUGS

WHEN THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUBLIME AND SQUALID, ANGEL AND FLY

E

EMPIRE

FINALLY, THERE IS A PRESENCE OF THE SIGNIFIED THROUGH THE SIGNIFIER

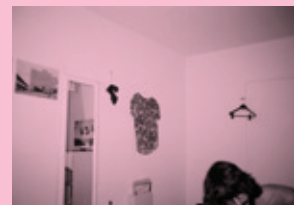
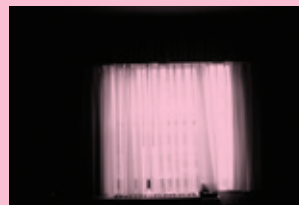
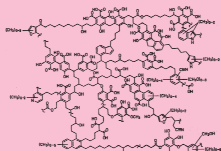
A copy of Paris-Match is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.<sup>37</sup>



END

SUCH IS THE STATUS OF THE SIGN THAT IS ALSO THE END OF SIGNIFICATION

End of the theatre of representation, the space of signs, their conflict, their silence, only the black box of code, the molecular emitter of signals from which we have been irradiated, crossed by answers/questions like signifying radiations, tested continuously by our own program inscribed in the cells. Such is the third order of simulacrum, our own. Such is the “mystic elegance of the binary system, of the zero and the one,” from which all being proceeds. Such is the status of the sign that is also the end of signification: DNA or operational simulation.<sup>38</sup>



37 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

38 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

39 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# FIDELITY & BETRAYAL, FIRST ORDER SIMULACRA, FORM & CONCEPT



**WHERE THE IMAGE IS CLEARLY AN  
ARTIFICIAL PLACEMARKER**

**F**

FIDELITY AND BETRAYAL

**BETRAYAL MEANS BREAKING RANKS AND  
GOING OFF INTO THE UNKNOWN**

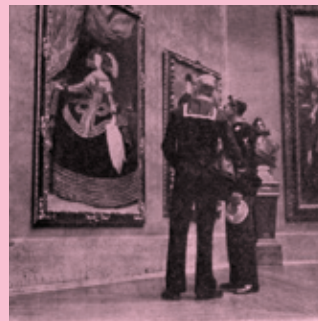
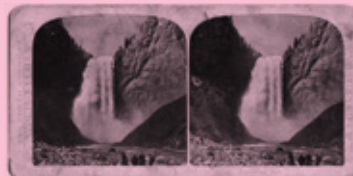
What he did not know was that Sabina was charmed more by betrayal than by fidelity. The word fidelity reminded her of her father, a small-town puritan, who spent his Sundays painting away at canvases of woodland sunsets and roses in vases. Thanks to him, she started drawing as a child. When she was fourteen, she fell in love with a boy her age. Her father was so frightened that he would not let her out of the house by herself for a year. One day, he showed her some Picasso reproductions and made fun of them. If she couldn't love her fourteen year-old schoolboy, she could at least love cubism. After completing school, she went off to Prague with the euphoric feeling that now at last she could betray her home.

Betrayal. From tender youth we are told by father and teacher that betrayal is the most heinous offense imaginable. But what is betrayal? Betrayal means breaking ranks. Betrayal means breaking ranks and going off into the unknown. Sabina knew of nothing more magnificent than going off into the unknown.

Though a student at the Academy of Fine Arts, she was not allowed to paint like Picasso. It was the period when so-called socialist realism was prescribed and the school manufactured Portraits of Communist statesmen. Her longing to betray her father remained unsatisfied: Communism was merely another father equally strict and limited, a father who forbade her love (the times were puritanical) and Picasso, too. And if she married a second-rate actor, it was only because he had a reputation for being eccentric and was unacceptable to both fathers.<sup>40</sup>



Associated with the pre-modern period, where the image is clearly an artificial placemaker for the real item. Substituting the signs of the real for the real. Baudrillard is not merely suggesting that postmodern culture is artificial, because the concept of artificiality still requires some sense of reality against which to recognize the artifice. His point, rather, is that we have lost all ability to make sense of the distinction between nature and artifice. To clarify his point, he argues that there are three “orders of simulacra.” In the first order of simulacra, which he associates with the pre-modern period, the image is a clear counterfeit of the real; the image is recognized as just an illusion. The first order of simulacra focuses on counterfeits and false images. In this instance the sign no longer refers to that which it is obligated to refer to, but rather to produced signifieds. In this level, signs cease to have obligatory meanings. Instead the sign becomes more important than the physical. That is to say that the focus is placed on the sign rather than on what it is intended to represent. Thus what becomes crucial for the furthering of simulation is the reproduction of the sign itself not the physical or the signified. This is the realm of the automaton, the obvious fake that plays with reality.<sup>41</sup>

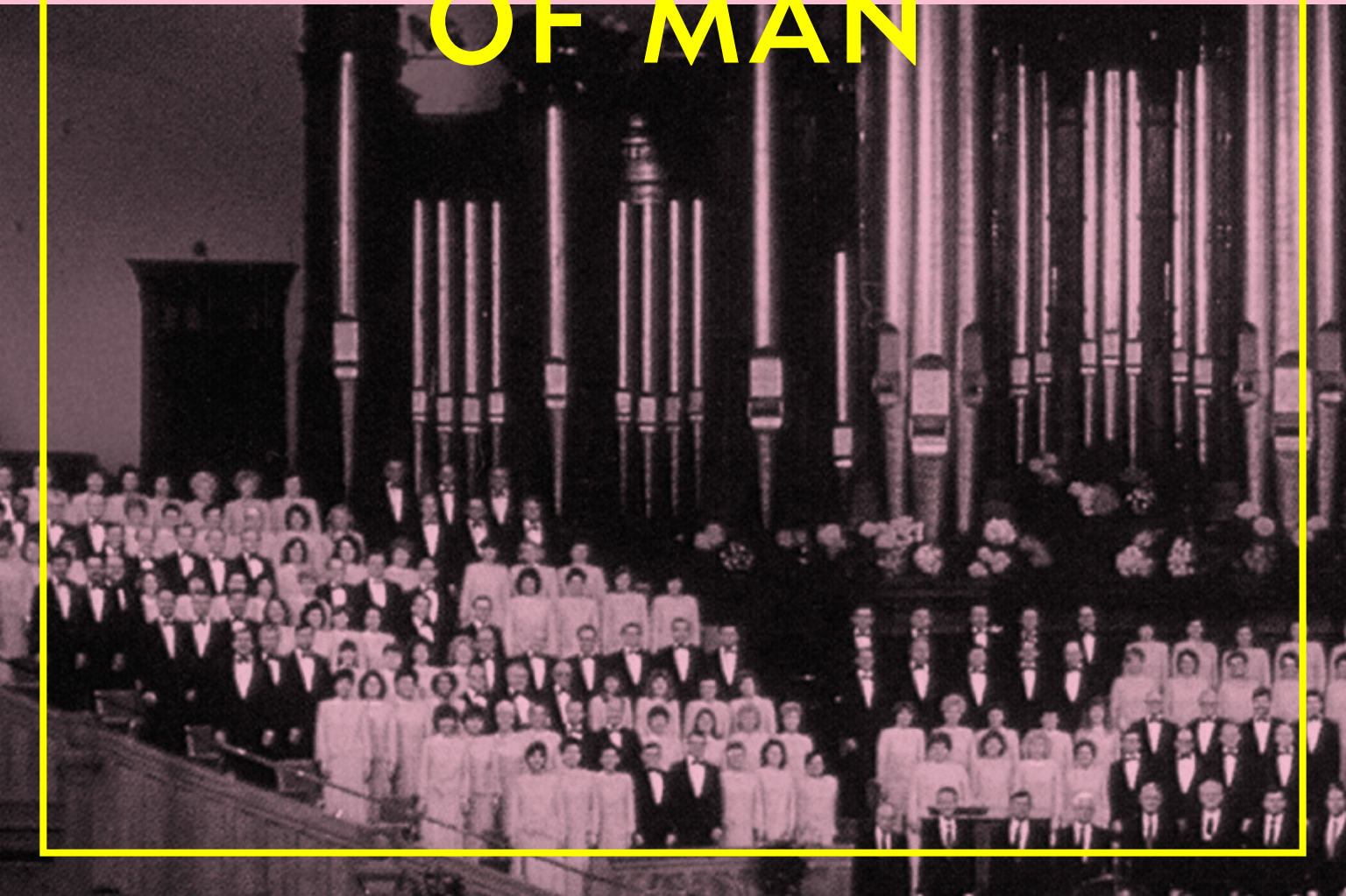


<sup>40</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>41</sup> Dino Felluga, (n.d.). Modules on Baudrillard: On Simulation. In *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. Retrieved 2011, from <http://mscv.purdue.edu/guidetatheory/postmodernism/modules/baudrillardsimulation.html>

KITSCH ARCHIVE

GOD,  
GOOD VS. EVIL,  
GRAND MARCH,  
GREAT FAMILY  
OF MAN



**MYTH HAS IN FACT A DOUBLE FUNCTION:  
IT POINTS OUT AND IT NOTIFIES, IT  
MAKES US UNDERSTAND SOMETHING  
AND IT IMPOSES IT ON US**

Before tackling the analysis of each term of the mythical system, one must agree on terminology. We now know that the signifier can be looked at, in myth, from two points of view: as the final term of the linguistic system, or as the first term of the mythical system. We therefore need two names. On the plane of language, that is, as the final term of the first system, I shall call the signifier: meaning (my name is lion, a Negro is giving the French salute); on the plane of myth, I shall call it: form. In the case of the signified, no ambiguity is possible: we shall retain the name concept. The third term is the correlation of the first two: in the linguistic system, it is the sign; but it is not possible to use this word again without ambiguity, since in myth (and this is the chief peculiarity of the latter), the signifier is already formed by the signs of the language. I shall call the third term of myth the signification. This word is here all the better justified since myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us.<sup>42</sup>



**G**

GOD

**THEN THE WHOLE SYSTEM BECOMES  
WEIGHTLESS; IT IS NO LONGER ANYTHING  
BUT A GIANT SIMULACRUM**

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. Representation 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.<sup>43</sup>

When I was small and would leaf through the Old Testament retold for children and illustrated in engravings by Gustave Doré, I saw the Lord God standing on a cloud. He was an old man with eyes, nose, and a long beard, and I would say to myself that if He had a mouth, He had to eat. And if He ate, He had intestines. But that thought always gave me a fright, because even though I come from a family that was not particularly religious, I felt the idea of a divine intestine to be sacrilegious.

Spontaneously, without any theological training, I, a child, grasped the incompatibility of God and shit and thus came to question the basic thesis of Christian anthropology, namely, that man was created in God's image. Either/or: either man was created in God's image—and God has intestines!—or God lacks intestines and man is not like Him.<sup>44</sup>



GOOD VS. EVIL

**THE PROCESS OF CREATING HEROES**

It has already been noted that in America wrestling represents a sort of mythological fight between Good and Evil (of a quasi-political nature, the "bad" wrestler always being supposed to be a Red [Communist]). The process of creating heroes in French wrestling is very different, being based on ethics and not on politics. (Cont'd pg.47)

<sup>42</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>44</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

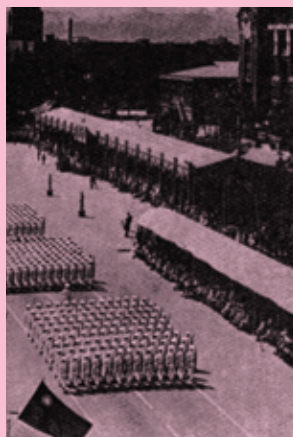
What the public is looking for here is the gradual construction of a highly moral image: that of the perfect "bastard." One comes to wrestling in order to attend the continuing adventures of a single major leading character... The "bastard" is here revealed as a classical entity, an essence, whose acts are only significant epiphenomena (secondary phenomena) arranged in time. The "bastard" is someone unstable, who accepts the rules only when they are useful to him and transgresses the formal continuity of attitudes. He is unpredictable, therefore asocial.<sup>45</sup>

THE GRAND MARCH

THE GRAND MARCH IS THE SPLENDID MARCH ON THE ROAD TO BROTHERHOOD, EQUALITY, JUSTICE, HAPPINESS

The fantasy of the Grand March that Franz was so intoxicated by is the political kitsch joining leftists of all times and tendencies. The Grand March is the splendid march on the road to brotherhood, equality, justice, happiness; it goes on and on, obstacles notwithstanding, for obstacles there must be if the march is to be the Grand March.

The dictatorship of the proletariat or democracy? Rejection of the consumer society or demands for increased productivity? The guillotine or an end to the death penalty? It is all beside the point. What makes a leftist a leftist is not this or that theory but his ability to integrate any theory into the kitsch called the Grand March.<sup>46</sup>



our Exhibition: the diversity of men proclaims his power, his richness: the unity of their gestures demonstrates his will. "This look over the human condition must somewhat resemble the benevolent gaze of God on our absurd and sublime ant-hill."

Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History; we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behaviour where historical alienation introduces some "differences" which we shall here quite simply call "injustices."<sup>47</sup>



THE GREAT FAMILY OF MAN

THIS AMBIGUOUS MYTH OF THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

A big exhibition of photographs has been held in Paris, the aim of which was to show the universality of human actions in the daily life of all the countries of the world: birth, death, work, knowledge, play, always impose the same types of behaviour; there is a family of Man.

We are at the outset directed to this ambiguous myth of the human "community," which serves as an alibi to a large part of our humanism. Of course this means postulating a human essence, and here we have God reintroduced into

# H

HISTORICAL/HYSTERICAL

## HISTORICAL (HYSTERICAL) RETROSPECTION OF EVERY SYMBOLIC FORM

It is extremely naïve to look for ethnology amongst the Savages or in some Third World—it is here, everywhere, in the metropolis, among the whites, in a world completely catalogued and analysed and then artificially revived as though real, in a world of simulation: of the hallucination of truth, of blackmail by the real, of the murder and historical (hysterical) retrospection of every symbolic form.

Whence the characteristic hysteria of our time: the hysteria of production and reproduction of the real. The other production, that of goods and commodities, that of la belle époque of political economy, no longer makes any sense of its own, and has not for some time. What society seeks through production, and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it. That is why contemporary “material” production is itself hyperreal. It retains all the features, the whole discourse of traditional production, but it is nothing more than its scaled-down refraction (thus the hyperrealists fasten in a striking resemblance a real from which has fled all meaning and charm, all the profundity and energy of representation). Thus the hyperrealism of simulation is expressed everywhere by the real’s striking resemblance to itself.

Power, too, for some time now produces nothing but signs of its resemblance. And at the same time, another figure of power comes into play: that of a collective demand for signs of power—a holy union which forms around the disappearance of power. Everybody belongs to it more or less in fear of the collapse of the political. And in the end the game of power comes down to nothing more than the critical obsession with power: an obsession with its death; an obsession with its survival which becomes greater the more it disappears. When it has totally disappeared, logically we will be under the total spell of power—a haunting memory already foreshadowed everywhere, manifesting at one and the same time the satisfaction of having got rid of it (nobody wants it any more, everybody unloads it on others) and grieving its loss. Melancholy for societies without power: this has already given rise to fascism, that overdose of a powerful referential in a society which cannot terminate its mourning.<sup>45</sup>



STUPIDEST CREATURE: The Stegosaurus weighed 6½ tons, its brain 2½ ounces

## THEY ALL DEFINE AN ETERNAL WISDOM, A CLASS OF ASSERTIONS WHICH ESCAPE HISTORY

The pietistic intention is underlined by the quotations which accompany each chapter of the exhibition: these quotations often are “primitive” proverbs or verses from the Old Testament. They all define an eternal wisdom, a class of assertions which escape History: “The Earth is a Mother who never dies, Eat bread and salt and speak the truth, etc.” This is the reign of gnomic truths, the meeting of all the ages of humanity at the most neutral point of their nature, the point where the obviousness of the truism has no longer any value except in the realm of a purely “poetic” language.<sup>49</sup>



El temple de la Sagrada Família, Barcelona



<sup>45</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

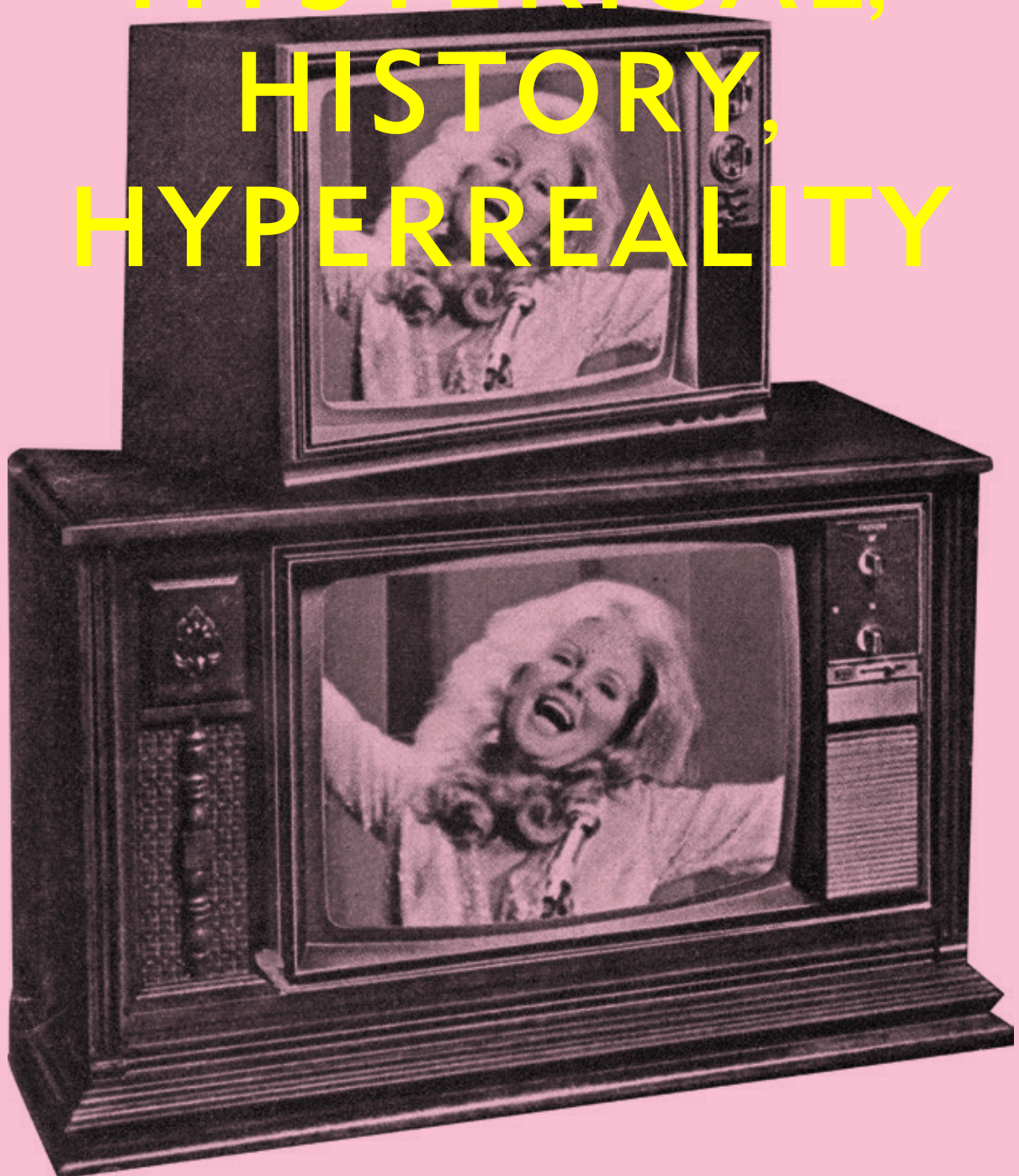
<sup>46</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>49</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>47</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# HISTORICAL/ HYSTERICAL, HISTORY, HYPERREALITY



**THE WORLD WE LIVE IN HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A COPY WORLD**

The world we live in has been replaced by a copy world...an illusion of absolute reality is created by holographs, dioramas and detailed reproductions of original works of art.

Most aspects of hyperreality can be thought of as “reality by proxy.” For example, a viewer watching pornography begins to live in the non-existent world of the pornography, and even though pornography is not an accurate depiction of sex, for the viewer, the reality of “sex” becomes something non-existent. Some examples are simpler: the McDonald’s “M” arches create a world with the promise of endless amounts of identical food, when in “reality” the “M” represents nothing, and the food produced is neither identical nor infinite.<sup>50</sup>



Baudrillard suggests that the world we live in has been replaced by a copy world, where we seek simulated stimuli and nothing more. Baudrillard borrows, from Jorge Luis Borges (who already borrowed from Lewis Carroll), the example of a society whose cartographers create a map so detailed that it covers the very things

it was designed to represent. When the empire declines, the map fades into the landscape and there is neither the representation nor the real remaining—just the hyperreal. Baudrillard’s idea of hyperreality was heavily influenced by phenomenology, semiotics, and Marshall McLuhan.

Hyperreality is a term used by Umberto Eco to describe the culture of those American museums and theme parks where an illusion of absolute reality is created by holographs, dioramas and detailed reproductions of original works of art. They represent a hypereal dimension in which the American imagination demands the real thing and, in order to attain it, fabricates the absolute fake. With cynical amusement, Eco describes the facsimile of the bill of sale of Manhattan to be found in museum shops. It looks old, feels old and even smells old. It is almost real. But, Eco points out, its pseudo-antique characters are written in English whereas the original was in Dutch. Hyperreality is the defining characteristic of amusement cities such as Las Vegas and Disneyland; they are real fakes. They are also more real than the real. The real crocodile in the zoo may be asleep or hiding, but Disneyland’s real-fake crocodile never fails to appear on cue. Baudrillard also describes Disneyland in these terms, and is fascinated by the way in which it causes to disappear into kitsch and hyperreality.<sup>51</sup>

A condition in which “reality” has been replaced by simulacra. Today we only experience prepared realities—edited war footage, meaningless acts of terrorism, the Jerry Springer Show. The very definition of the real has become: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction... The real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced: that is the hyperreal...which is entirely in simulation. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible. Division between “real” and simulation has collapsed.<sup>52</sup>



ICON

**BUT WHAT BECOMES OF THE DIVINITY WHEN IT REVEALS ITSELF IN ICONS**

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? (Cont’d pg. 56)

<sup>50</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>51</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* Penguin, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# ICON, ICONOCLAST





GOD  
LOVES  
YOU



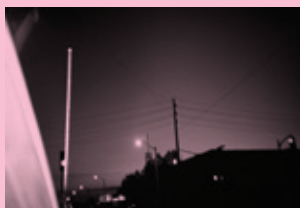
HOUSE



Wrestling is the only sport which gives such an externalized image of torture. But here again, only the image is involved in the game, and the spectator does not wish for the actual suffering of the contestant; he only enjoys the perfection of an iconography.

A painting of Jesus Christ or another holy figure, typically in a traditional style on wood, venerated and used as an aid to devotion in the Byzantine and other Eastern Churches.

A person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of something: this iron-jawed icon of American manhood, or in linguistics a sign whose form directly reflects the thing it signifies, for example, the word snarl pronounced in a snarling way.<sup>53</sup>



verebrate God at one remove. But the converse can also be said, namely that the iconolasts possessed the most 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 eminence 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 a 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.<sup>54</sup>

ICONOCLAST

**THE ICONOCLASTS, WHO ARE OFTEN ACCUSED OF DESPISING AND DENYING IMAGES, WERE IN FACT THE ONES WHO ACCORDED THEM THEIR ACTUAL WORTH**

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

<sup>53</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# JOURNALIST, JUSTIFICATION



**THIS TYPE OF FOCUSING IS, FOR INSTANCE, THAT OF THE PRODUCER OF MYTHS, OF THE JOURNALIST WHO STARTS WITH A CONCEPT AND SEEKS A FORM FOR IT**

If I focus on an empty signifier, I let the concept fill the form of the myth without ambiguity, and I find myself before a simple system, where the signification becomes literal again: the Negro who salutes is an example of French imperialism, he is a symbol for it. This type of focusing is, for instance, that of the producer of myths, of the journalist who starts with a concept and seeks a form for it.<sup>55</sup>

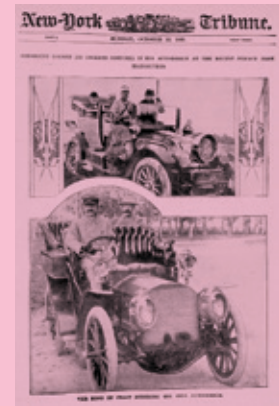


JUSTIFICATION

**THE MYTH EXISTS FROM THE PRECISE MOMENT WHEN FRENCH IMPERIALITY ACHIEVES THE NATURAL STATE: MYTH IS SPEECH JUSTIFIED IN EXCESS**

We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature. We now understand why, in the eyes of the myth consumer, the intention, the adhomination of the concept can remain manifest without however appearing to have an interest in the matter: what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason. If I read the Negro-saluting (see pg. 42) as symbol pure and simple of imperialism, I must renounce the reality of the picture, it discredits itself in my eyes when it becomes an instrument. Conversely, if I decipher the Negro's salute as an alibi of coloniality, I shatter the myth even more surely by the obviousness of its motivation. But for the myth-reader, the outcome is quite different: everything happens as if the picture naturally conjured up the concept, as if the signifier gave a foundation to the signified: the myth exists from the precise moment when French imperialism achieves the natural state: myth

is speech justified in excess. Here is a new example which will help understand clearly how the myth-reader is led to rationalize the signified by means of the signifier. We are in the month of July, I read a big headline in France-Soir: THE FALL IN PRICES: FIRST INDICATIONS. VEGETABLES: PRICE DROP BEGINS. Let us quickly sketch the semiological schema: the example being a sentence, the first system is purely linguistic. The signifier of the second system is composed here of a certain number of accidents, some lexical (the words: first, begins, the [fall]), some typographical (enormous headlines where the reader usually sees news of world importance). The signified or concept is what must be called by a barbarous but unavoidable neologism: governmentality, the Government presented by the national press as the Essence of efficacy. The signification of the myth follows clearly from this: fruit and vegetable prices are falling because the government has so decided. Now it so happens in this case (and this is on the whole fairly rare) that the newspaper itself has, two lines below, allowed one to see through the myth which it had just elaborated—whether this is due to self-assurance or honesty. It adds (in small type, it is true): “The fall in prices is helped by the return of seasonal abundance.”<sup>56</sup>



<sup>55</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>56</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# KITSCH



# K

## KITSCH

### KITSCH EXCLUDES EVERYTHING FROM ITS PURVIEW WHICH IS ESSENTIALLY UNACCEPTABLE IN HUMAN EXISTENCE

The identity of kitsch comes not from a political strategy but from images, metaphors, and vocabulary.

Kitsch is a German word born in the middle of the sentimental nineteenth century, and from German it entered all Western languages. Repeated use, however, has obliterated its original metaphysical meaning; kitsch is the absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and the figurative senses of the word; kitsch excludes everything from its purview which is essentially unacceptable in human existence.

What repelled her was not nearly so much the ugliness of the Communist world (ruined castles transformed into cow sheds) as the mask of beauty it tried to wear—in other words, Communist kitsch. The model of Communist kitsch is the ceremony called May Day. When the heart speaks, the mind finds it indecent to object. In the realm of kitsch, the dictatorship of the heart reigns supreme. The feeling induced by kitsch must be a kind the multitudes can share. Kitsch may not, therefore, depend on an unusual situation; it must derive from the basic images people have engraved in their memories: the ungrateful daughter, the neglected father, children running on the grass, the motherland betrayed, first love.



Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. The brotherhood of man on earth will be possible only on a base of kitsch. Kitsch is the aesthetic ideal of all politicians and all political parties and movements. Everything that infringes on kitsch must be banished for life: every display of individualism (because a deviation from the collective is a spit in the eye of the smiling brotherhood); every doubt (because anyone who starts doubting details will end by doubting life itself); all irony (because in the realm of kitsch everything must be taken quite seriously); and the mother who abandons her family or the man who prefers men to women, thereby calling into question the holy decree be fruitful and multiply.

Tereza's dream reveals the true function of kitsch: kitsch is a folding screen set up to curtain off death. All her life she had proclaimed kitsch her enemy. But hadn't she in fact been carrying it with her? Her kitsch was her image of home, all peace, quiet, and harmony, and ruled by a loving mother and wise father. It was an image that took shape within her after the death of her parents. The less her life resembled that sweetest of dreams, the more sensitive she was to its magic, and more than once she shed tears when the ungrateful daughter in a sentimental film embraced the neglected father as the windows of the happy family's house shone out into the dying day.<sup>57</sup>

# L

## LAWS OF BEAUTY

### WITHOUT REALIZING IT, THE INDIVIDUAL COMPOSES HIS LIFE ACCORDING TO THE LAWS OF BEAUTY



<sup>57</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

LAWS OF BEAUTY,  
LIES,  
LIGHT & DARKNESS,  
LIGHTNESS,  
LIGHTNESS/WEIGHT  
DICHOTOMY,  
LIVING IN TRUTH,  
LOST CONTINENT



Lives are composed like music. Guided by his sense of beauty, an individual transforms a fortuitous occurrence (Beethoven's music, death under a train) into a motif, which then assumes a permanent place in the composition of the individual's life.

Anna (of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*) could have chosen another way to take her life. But the motif of death and the railway station, unforgettably bound to the birth of love, enticed her in her hour of despair with its dark beauty. Without realizing it, the individual composes his life according to the laws of beauty even in times of greatest distress.<sup>58</sup>

LIES

ON THE SURFACE, AN INTELLIGIBLE LIE;  
UNDERNEATH, THE UNINTELLIGIBLE TRUTH

Here is a painting I happened to drip red paint on. At first I was terribly upset, but then I started enjoying it. The trickle looked like a crack; it turned the building site into a battered old backdrop, a backdrop with a building site painted on it. I began playing with the crack, filling it out, wondering what might be visible behind it. And that's how I began my first cycle of paintings. I called it *Behind The Scenes*. Of course, I couldn't show them to anybody. I'd have been kicked out of the Academy. On the surface, there was always an impeccably realistic world, but underneath, behind the backdrop's cracked canvas, lurked something different, something mysterious or abstract. After pausing for a moment, she added, On the surface, an intelligible lie; underneath, the unintelligible truth. Tereza listened to her with the remarkable concentration that few professors ever see on the face of a student and began to perceive that all Sabina's paintings, past and present, did indeed treat the same idea, that they all featured the confluence of two themes, two worlds, that they were all double exposures, so to speak. A landscape showing an old-fashioned table lamp shining through it. An idyllic still life of apples, nuts, and a tiny, candle-lit Christmas tree showing a hand ripping through the canvas.<sup>59</sup>



LIGHT AND DARKNESS

BUT FOR HER, DARKNESS DID NOT MEAN  
INFINITY; FOR HER, IT MEANT A DISAGREEMENT  
WITH WHAT SHE SAW, THE NEGATION  
OF WHAT WAS SEEN, THE REFUSAL TO SEE

Living for Sabina meant seeing. Seeing is limited by two borders: strong light, which blinds, and total darkness. Perhaps that was what motivated Sabina's distaste for all extremism. Extremes mean borders beyond which life ends, and a passion for extremism, in art and in politics, is a veiled longing for death.

But the larger a man grows in his own inner darkness, the more his outer form diminishes. A man with closed eyes is a wreck of a man. Then, Sabina found the sight of Franz distasteful, and to avoid looking at him she too closed her eyes. But for her, darkness did not mean infinity; for her, it meant a disagreement with what she saw, the negation of what was seen, the refusal to see.<sup>60</sup>



LIGHTNESS

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING – WAS  
THAT THE GOAL?

Until that time, her betrayals had filled her with excitement and joy, because they opened up new paths to new adventures of betrayal. But what if the paths came to an end? One could betray one's parents, husband, country, love, but when parents husband, country, and love were gone—what was left to betray? The unbearable lightness of being—was that the goal?<sup>61</sup>

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,

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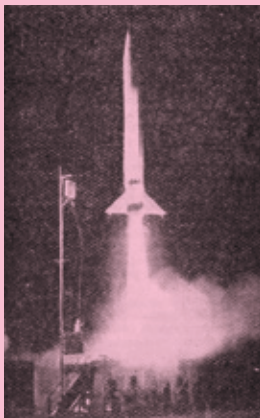
that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless; it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum: not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.

So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation 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.<sup>62</sup>

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#### LIGHTNESS/WEIGHT DICHOTOMY

### A WORLD THAT RESTS ESSENTIALLY ON THE NONEXISTENCE OF RETURN, FOR IN THIS WORLD EVERYTHING IS PARDONED IN ADVANCE AND THEREFORE EVERYTHING IS CYNICALLY PERMITTED



The idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself recurs ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify?

Putting it negatively, the myth of eternal return states that a life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime, its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing. We need take no more note of it than of a war between two African kingdoms in the fourteenth century, a war that altered nothing in the destiny of the world, even if a hundred thousand blacks perished in excruciating torment. Will the war between two African kingdoms in the fourteenth century itself be altered if it recurs again and again, in eternal return? It will: it will become a solid mass, permanently protuberant, its inanity irreparable. If the French Revolution were to recur eternally, French

historians would be less proud of Robespierre. But because they deal with something that will not return, the bloody years of the Revolution have turned into mere words, theories, and discussions, have become lighter than feathers, frightening no one. There is an infinite difference between a Robespierre who occurs only once in history and a Robespierre who eternally returns, chopping off French heads.

Let us therefore agree that the idea of eternal return implies a perspective from which things appear other than as we know them: they appear without the mitigating circumstance of their transitory nature. This mitigating circumstance prevents us from coming to a verdict. For how can we condemn something that is ephemeral, in transit? In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine.

A world that rests essentially on the nonexistence of return, for in this world everything is pardoned in advance and therefore everything cynically permitted.

If every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. It is a terrifying prospect. In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make. That is why Nietzsche called the idea of eternal return the heaviest of burdens (das schwerste Gewicht). If eternal return is the heaviest of burdens, then our lives can stand out against it in all their splendid lightness. But is heaviness truly deplorable and lightness splendid? The heaviest of burdens crushes us, we sink beneath it, it pins us to the ground. But in the love poetry of every age, the woman longs to be weighed down by the man's body. The heaviest of burdens is therefore simultaneously an image of life's most intense fulfillment. The heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become. Conversely, the absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, to soar into the heights, take leave of the earth and his earthly being, and become only half real, his movements as free as they are insignificant. What then shall we choose? Weight or lightness? Parmenides posed this very question in the sixth century before Christ. He saw the world divided into pairs of opposites: light/darkness, fineness/coarseness, warmth/cold, being/non-being. One half of the opposition he called positive (light, fineness, warmth, being), the other negative. We might find this division into positive and negative poles childishly simple except for one difficulty: which one is positive, weight or lightness? Parmenides responded: lightness is positive, weight negative. Was he correct or not? That is the question. The only certainty is: the lightness/weight opposition is the most mysterious, most ambiguous of all.<sup>63</sup>

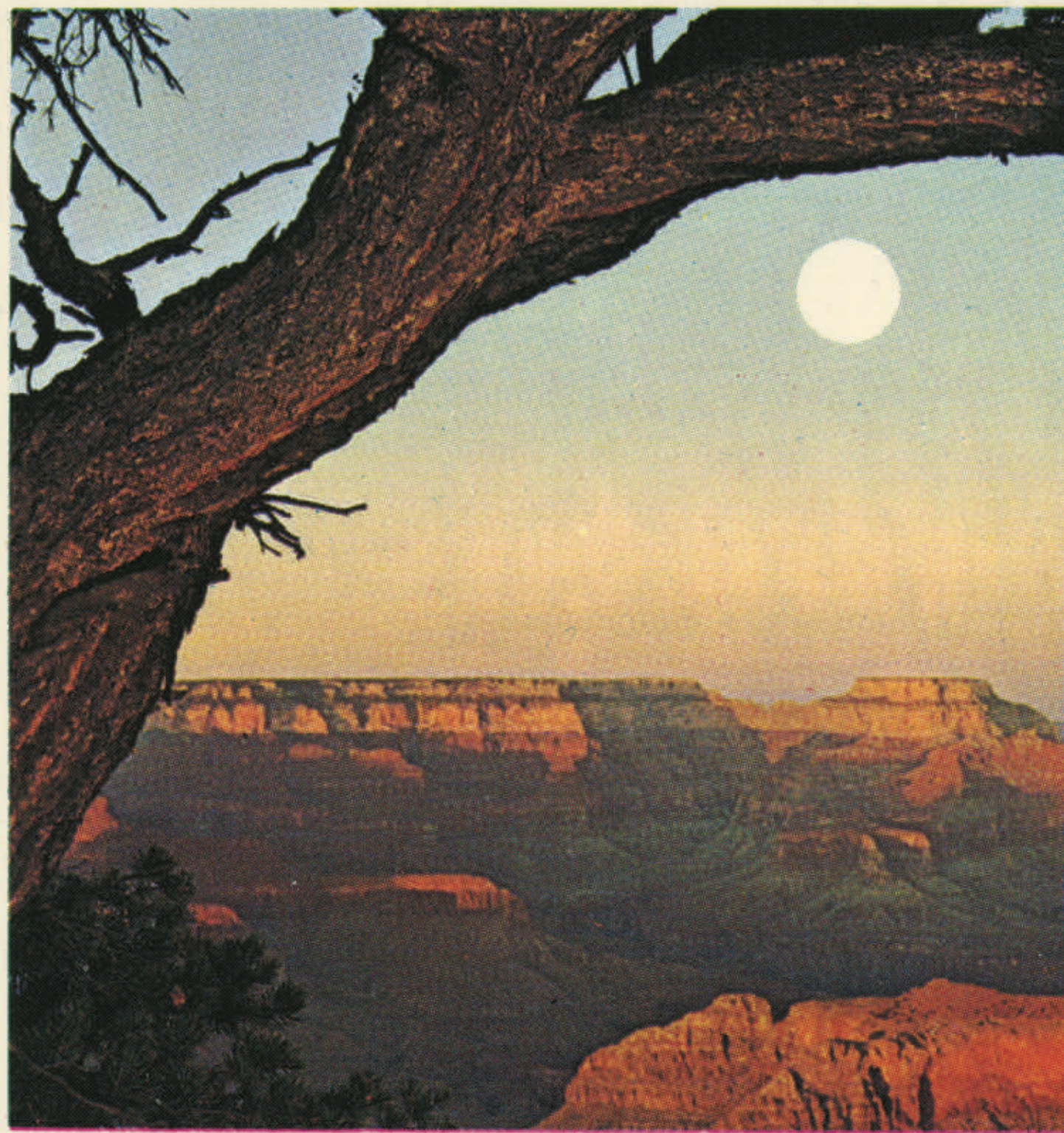
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#### LIVING IN TRUTH

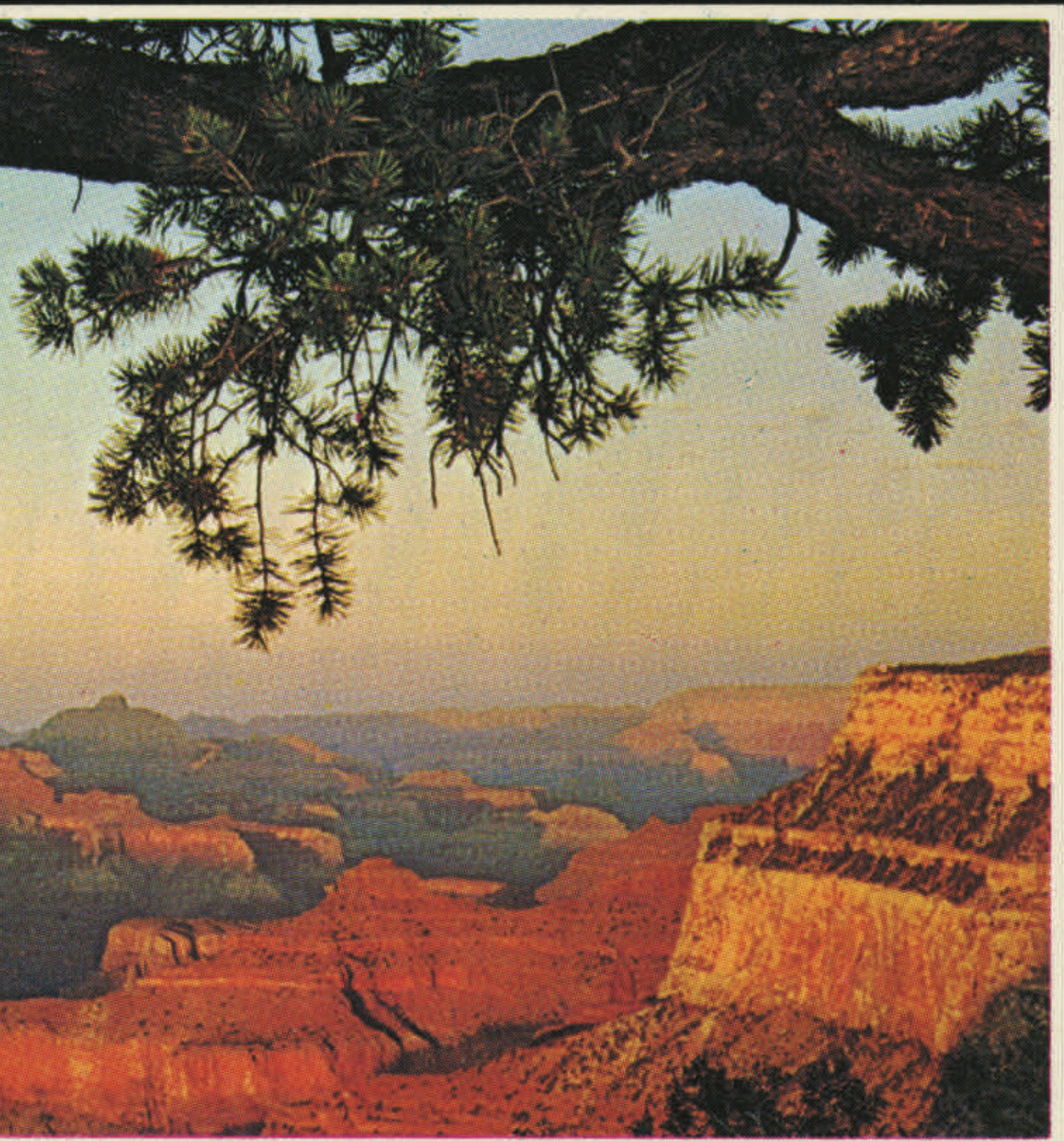
### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE IN TRUTH?

Having a public, keeping a public in mind, means living in lies. What does it mean to live in truth? Putting it negatively is easy enough: it means not lying, not hiding, and not dissimulating. From the time he met Sabina, however, Franz had been living in lies. He told his wife about nonexistent congresses in Amsterdam and lectures





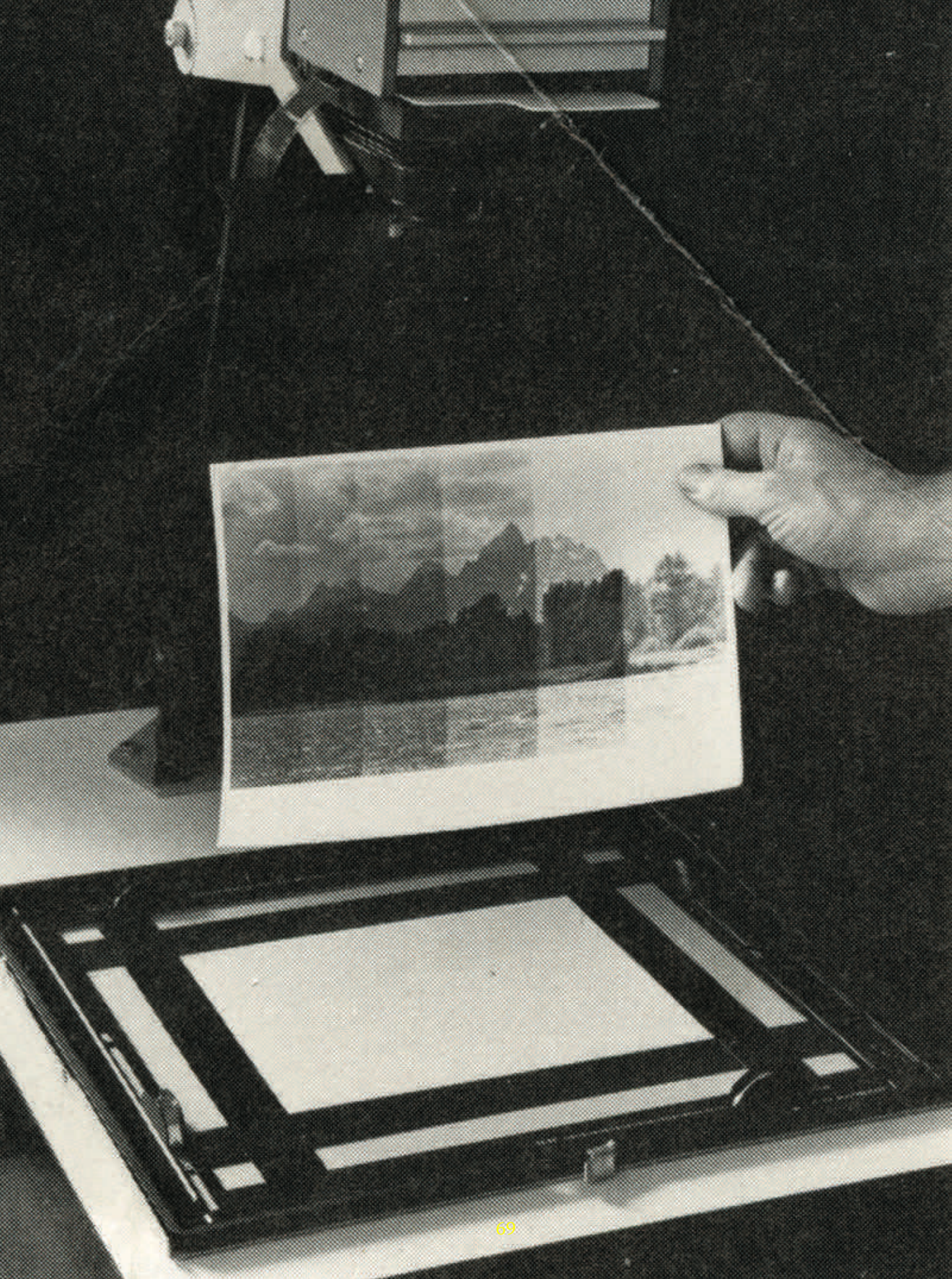
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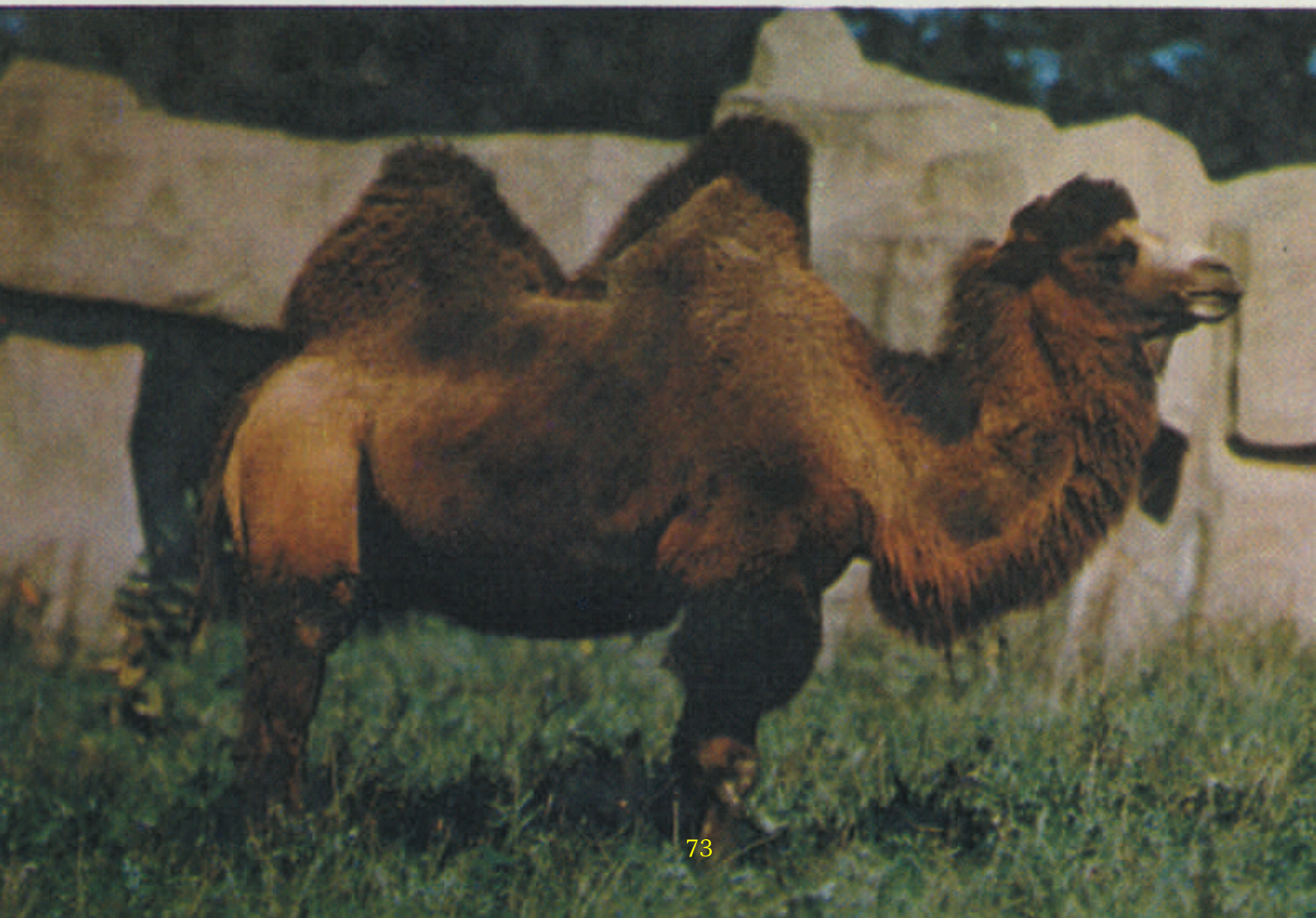
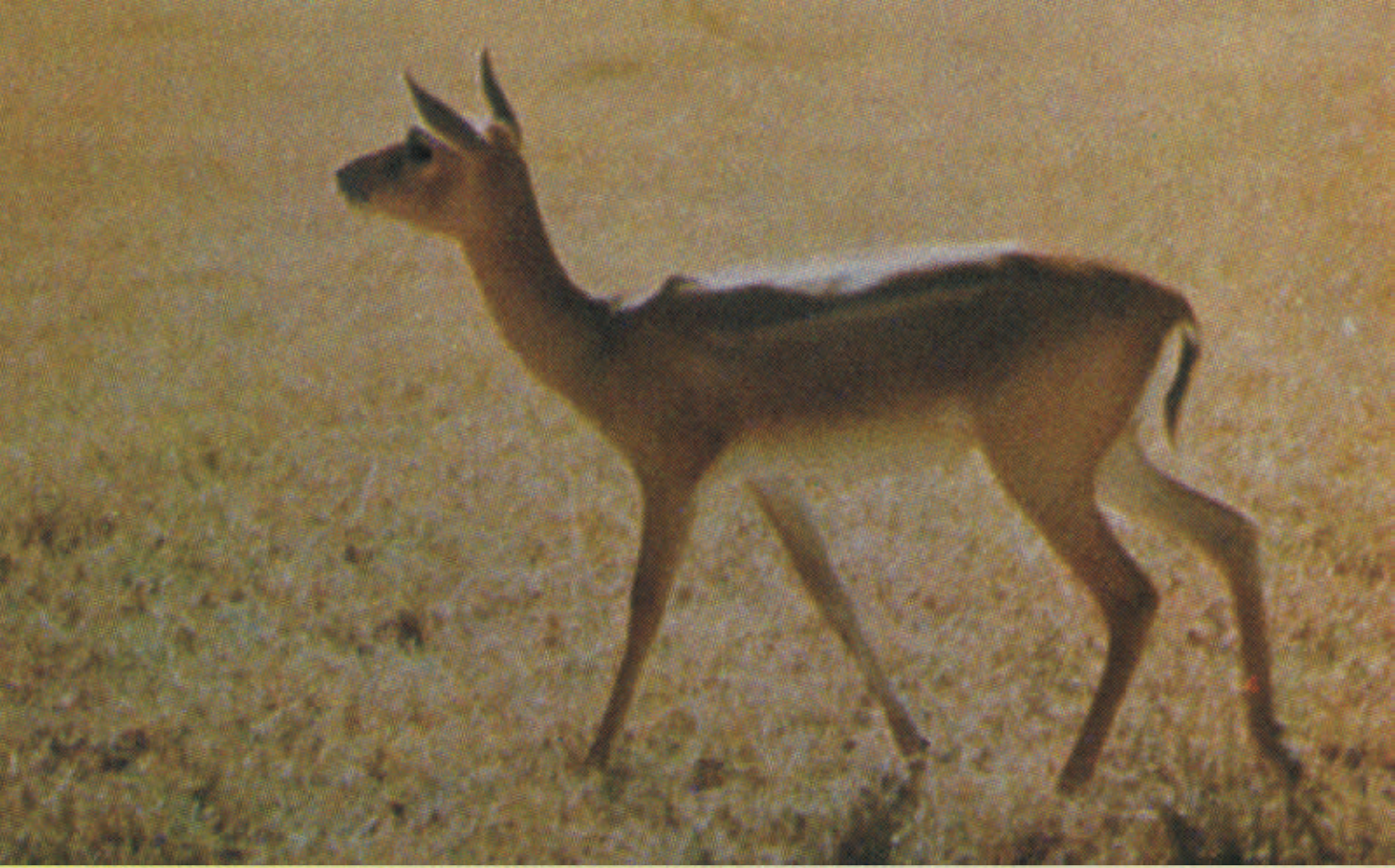












in Madrid; he was afraid to walk with Sabina through the streets of Geneva. And he enjoyed the lying and hiding: it was all so new to him. He was as excited as a teacher's pet who has plucked up the courage to play truant.

For Sabina, living in truth, lying neither to ourselves nor to others, was possible only away from the public: the moment someone keeps an eye on what we do, allowances for that eye, and nothing we do is truthful. Having a public, keeping a public in mind, means living in lies. Sabina despised literature in which people give away all kinds of intimate secrets about themselves and their friends. A man who loses his privacy loses everything, Sabina thought. And a man who gives it up of his own free will is a monster. That was why Sabina did not suffer in the least from having to keep her love secret. On the contrary, only by doing so could she live in truth.

Franz, on the other hand, was certain that the division of life into private and public spheres is the source of all lies: a person is one thing in private and something quite different in public. For Franz, living in truth meant breaking down the barriers between the private and the public. He was fond of quoting André Breton on the desirability of living in a glass house into which everyone can look and there are no secrets.<sup>64</sup>



A film, *The Lost Continent*, throws a clear light on the current myth of exoticism. It is a big documentary on 'the East', the pretext of which is some undefined ethnographic expedition, evidently false, incidentally, led by three or four bearded Italians into the Malay Archipelago. The film is euphoric, everything in it is easy, innocent. Our explorers are good fellows, who fill up their leisure time with child-like amusements: they play with their mascot, a little bear (a mascot is indispensable in all expeditions: no film about the polar region is without its tame seal, no documentary on the tropics is without its monkey), or they comically upset a dish of spaghetti on the deck. Which means that these good people, anthropologists though they are, don't bother much with historical or sociological problems. Penetrating the Orient never means more for them than a little trip in a boat, on an azure sea, in an essentially sunny country. And this same Orient which has today become the political centre of the world we see here all flattened, made smooth and gaudily coloured like an old-fashioned postcard.



The device which produces irresponsibility is clear: colouring the world is always a means of denying it (and perhaps one should at this point begin an inquiry into the use of colour in the cinema). Orientals have religions of their own? Never mind, these variations matter very little compared to the basic unity of idealism. Every rite is thus made at once specific and eternal, promoted at one stroke into a piquant spectacle and a quasi-Christian symbol. (Cont'd pg.76)

THE LOST CONTINENT

**ALL TOLD, EXOTICISM HERE SHOWS WELL ITS FUNDAMENTAL JUSTIFICATION, WHICH IS TO DENY ANY IDENTIFICATION BY HISTORY**

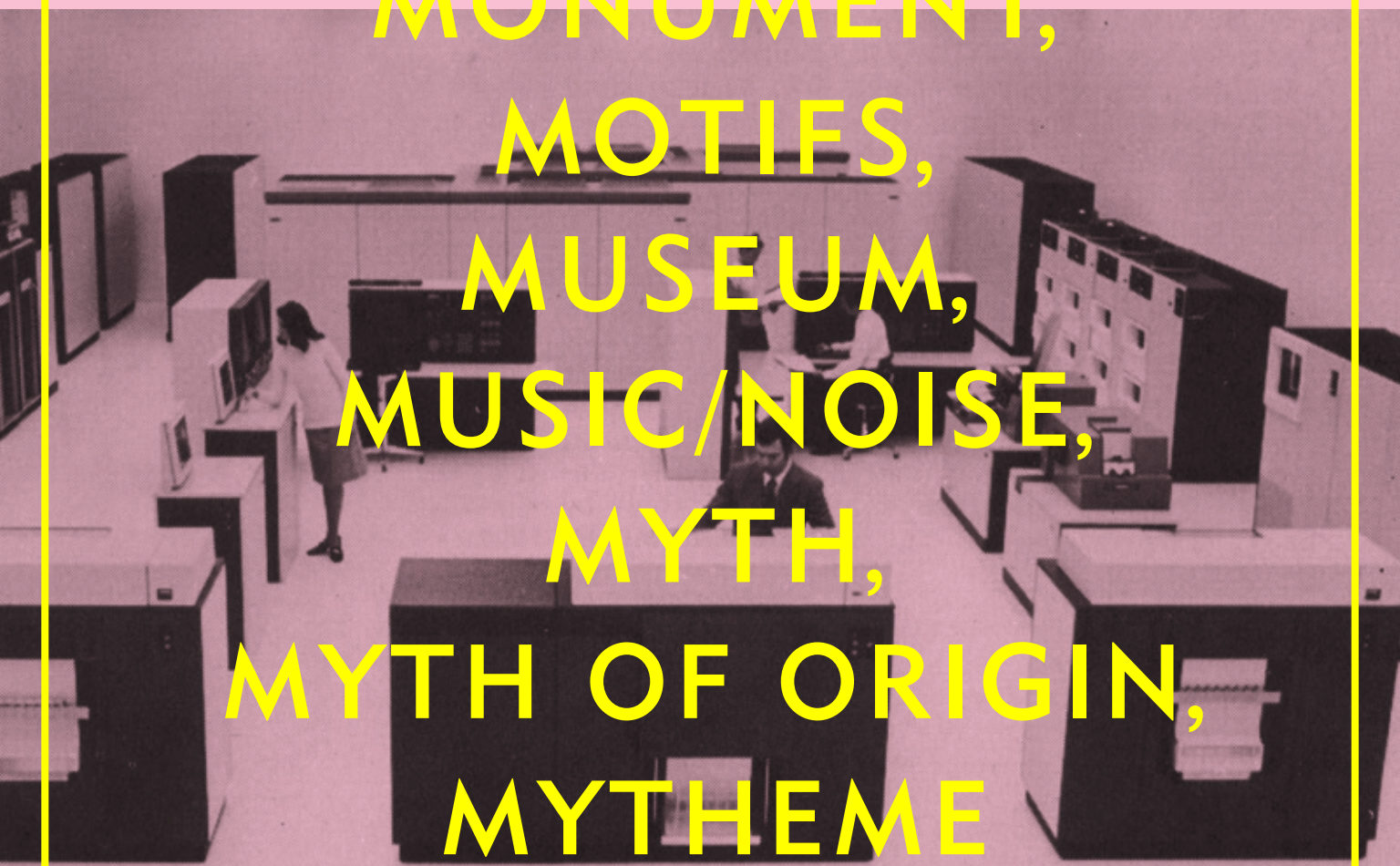
62 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1982.

63 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

64 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

MAN,  
THE MAP,  
MARCH OF HISTORY,  
MEDIA RITUAL,  
MEMORY BANKS,  
MONUMENT,  
MOTIFS,  
MUSEUM,  
MUSIC/NOISE,  
MYTH,  
MYTH OF ORIGIN,  
MYTHEME

A black and white photograph of a vintage computer room. The room is filled with rows of desks, each equipped with an early computer terminal consisting of a monitor and a keyboard. Several people are seated at the desks, appearing to be working or operating the machines. The room has a clean, organized appearance with a light-colored floor and walls. The overall atmosphere is one of a busy, early digital workspace.

It is this same “all things are alike” which is hinted at by our ethnographers: East and West, it is all the same, they are only different in hue, their essential core is identical, and that is the eternal postulation of man towards God, the paltry and contingent character of geographical considerations compared to this human nature of which Christianity alone holds the key. Even the legends, all this “primitive” folklore whose strangeness seems ostensibly pointed out to us, have as their sole mission the illustration of “Nature”: the rites, the cultural facts, are never related to a particular historical order, an explicit economic or social status, but only to the great neutral forms of cosmic commonplaces (the seasons, storms, death, etc.). If we are concerned with fishermen, it is not at all the type of fishing which is shown; but rather, drowned in a garish sunset and eternalized, a romantic essence of the fisherman, presented not as a workman dependent by his technique and his gains on a definite society, but rather as the theme of an eternal condition, in which man is far away and exposed to the perils of the sea, and woman weeping and praying at home. The same applies to refugees, a long procession of which is shown at the beginning, coming down a mountain: to identify them is of course unnecessary: they are eternal essences of refugees, which it is in the nature of the East to produce.

All told, exoticism here shows well its fundamental justification, which is to deny any identification by History. By appending to Eastern realities a few positive signs which mean “native,” one reliably immunizes them against any responsible content. A little “situating,” as superficial as possible, supplies the necessary alibi and exempts one from accounting for the situation in depth. Faced with anything foreign, the Established Order knows only two types of behaviour, which are both mutilating: either to acknowledge it as a Punch and Judy show, or to defuse it as a pure reflection of the West. In any case, the main thing is to deprive it of its history. We see therefore that the “beautiful pictures” of *The Lost Continent* cannot be innocent: it cannot be innocent to lose the continent which found itself again at Bandung.<sup>65</sup>



MAN

**SABINA WATCHED FRANZ WALK ACROSS THE ROOM WITH THE CHAIR ABOVE HIS HEAD; THE SCENE STRUCK HER AS GROTESQUE AND FILLED HER WITH AN ODD SADNESS**

Stroking Franz's arms in bed in one of the many hotels where they made love, Sabina said, “The muscles you have! They're unbelievable!” Franz took pleasure in her praise. He climbed out of bed, got down on his haunches,

grabbed a heavy oak chair by one leg, and lifted it slowly into the air. You never have to be afraid, he said. I can protect you no matter what. I used to be a judo champion.

When he raised the hand with the heavy chair above his head, Sabina said, It's good to know you're so strong. But deep down she said to herself, Franz may be strong, but his strength is directed outward; when it comes to the people he lives with, the people he loves, he's weak. Franz's weakness is called goodness. Franz would never give Sabina orders.



He would never command her, as Tomas had, to lay the mirror on the floor and walk back and forth on it naked. Not that he lacks sensuality; he simply lacks the strength to give orders. There are things that can be accomplished only by violence. Physical love is unthinkable without violence. (Cont'd pg.77)

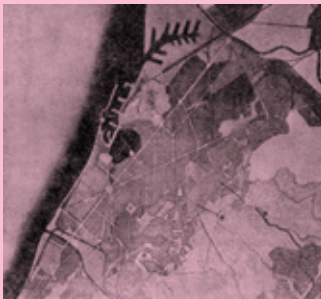
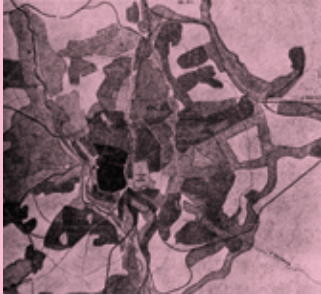
<sup>65</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

Sabina watched Franz walk across the room with the chair above his head; the scene struck her as grotesque and filled her with an odd sadness.<sup>66</sup>

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#### THE MAP

### 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



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.

If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where, with the decline of the Empire this map becomes 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), this fable would then have come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra.

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 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.<sup>67</sup>

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#### MARCH OF HISTORY

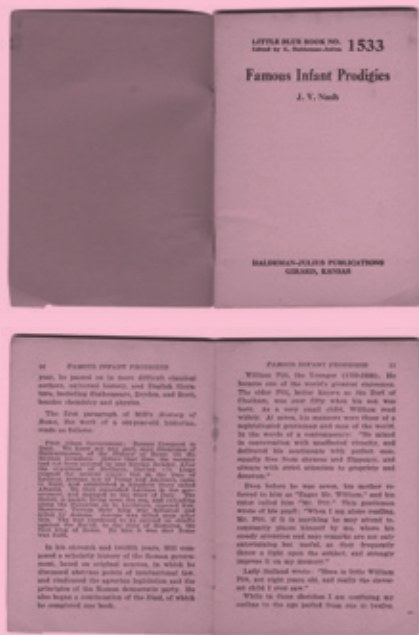
### IT IS ALWAYS NICE TO DREAM THAT WE ARE PART OF A JUBILANT THROG MARCHING THROUGH THE CENTURIES, AND FRANZ NEVER QUITE FORGOT THE DREAM

Franz had the sudden feeling that the Grand March was coming to an end. Europe was surrounded by borders of silence, and the space where the Grand March was occurring was now no more than a small platform in the middle of the planet. The crowds that had once pressed eagerly up to the platform had long since departed, and the Grand March went on in solitude, without spectators. Yes, said Franz to himself, the Grand March goes on, the world's indifference notwithstanding, but it is growing nervous and hectic: yesterday against the American occupation of Vietnam, today against the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia; yesterday for Israel, today for the Palestinians; yesterday for Cuba, tomorrow against Cuba—and always against America; Franz could not accept the fact that the glory of the Grand March was equal to the comic vanity of its marchers, that the exquisite noise of European history was lost in an infinite silence and that there was no longer any difference between history and silence. He felt like placing his own life on the scales; he wanted to prove that the Grand March weighed more than shit.

It is always nice to dream that we are part of a jubilant throng marching through the centuries, and Franz never quite forgot the dream.<sup>68</sup>

**IT IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE TO ISOLATE THE PROCESS OF THE REAL, OR TO PROVE THE REAL**

Go and organize a fake hold up. Be sure to check that your weapons are harmless, and take the most trustworthy hostage, so that no life is in danger (otherwise you risk committing an offence). Demand ransom, and arrange it so that the operation creates the greatest commotion possible. In brief, stay close to the "truth," so as to test the reaction of the apparatus to a perfect simulation. But you won't succeed: the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with real elements (a police officer will really shoot on sight; a bank customer will faint and die of a heart attack; they will really turn the phoney ransom over to you). In brief, you will unwittingly find yourself immediately in the real, one of whose functions is precisely to devour every attempt at simulation, to reduce everything to some reality: that's exactly how the established order is, well before institutions and justice come into play.



This is why order always opts for the real. In a state of uncertainty, It always prefers this assumption (thus in the army they would rather take the simulator as a true madman). But this becomes more and more difficult, for it is practically impossible to isolate the process of simulation; through the force of inertia of the real which surrounds us, the inverse is also true (and this very reversibility forms part of the apparatus of simulation and of power's impotency): namely, it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real.

But the difficulty is in proportion to the peril. How to feign a violation and put it to the test? Go and simulate a theft in a large department store: how do you convince the security guards that it is a simulated theft? There is no "objective" difference: the same gestures and the same signs exist as for a real theft. As far as the established order is concerned, they are always of the order of the real.<sup>69</sup>

**THE REAL IS PRODUCED FROM MINIATURIZED UNITS, FROM MATRICES, MEMORY BANKS AND COMMAND MODELS**

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, which are a more ductile material than meaning, in that they lend themselves 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.<sup>70</sup>



<sup>69</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>69</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>68</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

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MONUMENT

**BEFORE WE ARE FORGOTTEN, WE WILL  
BE TURNED INTO KITSCH**

What remains of the dying population of Cambodia? One large photograph of an American actress holding an Asian child in her arms. What remains of Tomas?

An inscription reading HE WANTED THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH. What remains of Beethoven? A frown, an improbable mane, and a somber voice intoning Es muss sein! What remains of Franz? An inscription reading A RETURN AFTER LONG WANDERINGS. And so on and so forth. Before we are forgotten, we will be turned into kitsch.<sup>71</sup>



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MOTIFS

**A SENTIMENTAL SUMMARY OF  
AN UNSENTIMENTAL STORY THAT WAS  
DISAPPEARING IN THE DISTANCE**

It was a recapitulation of time, a hymn to their common past, a sentimental summary of an unsentimental story that was disappearing in the distance.

The bowler hat was a motif in the musical composition that was Sabina's life. It returned again and again, each time with a different meaning, and all the meanings flowed through the bowler hat like water through a riverbed. I might call it Heraclitus' (You can't step twice into the same river) riverbed: the bowler hat was a bed through which each time Sabina saw another river flow, another semantic river: each time the same object would give rise to a new meaning, though all former meanings would resonate (like an echo, like a parade of echoes) together with the new one. Each new experience would resound, each time enriching the harmony. The reason why Tomas and Sabina were touched by the sight of the bowler hat in a Zurich hotel and made love almost in tears was that its black presence was not merely a reminder of their love games but also a memento of Sabina's.<sup>72</sup>



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MUSEUM

**THE MUSEUM IS NOW EVERYWHERE**

Same thing as in Creusot where, in the form of an "open" museum exhibition, they have "museumised" on the spot, as historical witnesses to their period, entire working class quarters, living metallurgical zones, a complete culture including men, women and children and their gestures, languages and habits—living beings fossilized as in a snap

shot. The museum, instead of being circumscribed in a geometrical location, is now everywhere, like a dimension of life itself.<sup>73</sup>



MUSIC/NOISE

NOISE MASKED AS MUSIC HAD PURSUED HER SINCE EARLY CHILDHOOD

For Franz music was the art that comes closest to Dionysian beauty in the sense of intoxication. No one can get really drunk on a novel or a painting, but who can help getting drunk on Beethoven's Ninth, Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, or the Beatles' White Album? Franz made no distinction between classical music and pop. He found the distinction old-fashioned and hypocritical. He loved rock as much as Mozart.

Noise masked as music had pursued her since early childhood. During her years at the Academy of Fine Arts, students had been required to spend whole summer vacations at a youth camp. They lived in common quarters and worked together on a steelworks construction site. Music roared out of loudspeakers on the site from five in the morning to nine at night. She felt like crying, but the music was cheerful, and there was nowhere to hide, not in the latrine or under the bedclothes: everything was in range of the speakers. The music was like a pack of hounds that had been sicked on her.

At the time, she had thought that only in the Communist world could such musical barbarism reign supreme. Abroad, she discovered that the transformation of music into noise was a planetary process by which mankind was entering the historical phase of total ugliness. The total ugliness to come had made itself felt first as omnipresent acoustical ugliness: cars, motorcycles, electric guitars, drills, loudspeakers, sirens. The omnipresence of visual ugliness would soon follow.<sup>74</sup>

MYTH

ANCIENT OR NOT, MYTHOLOGY CAN ONLY HAVE AN HISTORICAL FOUNDATION, FOR MYTH IS A TYPE OF SPEECH CHOSEN BY HISTORY: IT CANNOT POSSIBLY EVOLVE FROM THE 'NATURE' OF THINGS

Myth is a type of speech. Of course, it is not any type: language needs special conditions in order to become myth: we shall see them in a minute. But what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form. To discriminate among mythical objects according to their substance would be entirely illusory: since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth.

Since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. Myth is not defined by the objects of its message, but by the way in which it utters its message. Everything, then, can be a myth? Yes, I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions. Every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society. A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with: a type of social usage which is added, to pure matter. Naturally, everything is not expressed at the same time: some objects become the prey of mythical speech for a while, then they disappear, others take their place and attain the status of myth. One can conceive of very ancient myths, but there are no eternal ones; for it is human history which converts reality into speech, and it alone rules the life and the death of mythical language. Ancient or not, mythology can only have an historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the "nature" of things.

Myth is a language that does not want to die: it wrests from the meanings which give it its sustenance an insidious, degraded survival, it provokes in them an artificial reprieve in which it settles comfortably, it turns them into speaking corpses. (Cont'd pg.81)

71. Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

72. Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

73. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations, Semiotext(e), 1984.

74. Milan Kundera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

Modern poetry always asserts itself as a murder of language, a kind of spatial, tangible analogue of silence. Poetry occupies a position which is the reverse of that of myth: myth is a semiological system which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system.

Statistically, myth is on the right... The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal: he has an exclusive right to meta-language.<sup>75</sup>

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#### MYTH OF ORIGIN

### OUR ENTIRE AND LINEAR AND ACCUMULATIVE CULTURE COLLAPSES IF WE CANNOT STOCKPILE THE PAST IN PLAIN VIEW

*We require a visible myth of origin—we need to know where we stand in the great march of history, we need to know that history will progress in a linear fashion and that we will have some place within it (this is also an existential question). But we have destroyed much of our own origins (e.g. The Native Americans). So we take things that were never part of our history (e.g. mummies) and subplant them into our own history where they lose all meaning. Baudrillard describes a mummy placed in a North American museum: “mummies do not decay because of worms, they die from being transplanted from a prolonged symbolic order, which is master over death and putrescence, on to an order of history, science and museums, our own, which is no longer master over anything since it only knows how to condemn its predecessors to death...the violence of a civilization without secrets. The hatred of an entire civilization for its own foundations.” We have destroyed our real history, so we make up a simulated one.*



Our entire linear and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view. To this end the pharaohs must be brought out of their tomb and the mummies out of their silence. To this end they must be exhumed and given military honors. They are prey to both science and worms. Only absolute secrecy assured them this millennial power—the mastery over putrefaction that signified the mastery of the complete cycle of exchanges with death. We only know how to place our science in service of repairing the mummy, that is to say restoring a visible order, whereas embalming was a mythical effort that strove to immortalize a hidden dimension. We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end. Because finally we have never believed in them.

Whence this historic scene of the reception of the mummy at the Orly airport. Why? Because Ramses was a great despotic and military figure? Certainly. But mostly because our culture dreams, behind this defunct power that it tries to annex, of an order that would have had nothing to do with it, and it dreams of it because it exterminated it by exhuming it as its own past. We are fascinated by Ramses as Renaissance Christians were by the American Indians, those (human?) beings who had never known the word of Christ. Thus, at the beginning of colonization, there was a moment of stupor and bewilderment before the very possibility of escaping the universal law of the Gospel. There were two possible responses: either admit that this Law was not universal, or exterminate the Indians to efface the evidence. In general, one contented oneself with converting them, or even simply discovering them, which would suffice to slowly exterminate them. Thus it would have been enough to exhume Ramses to ensure his extermination by museumification.<sup>76</sup>







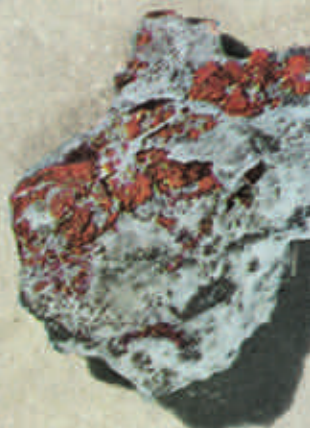




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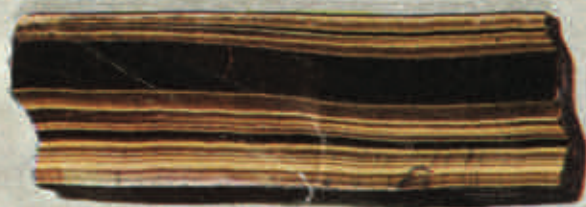
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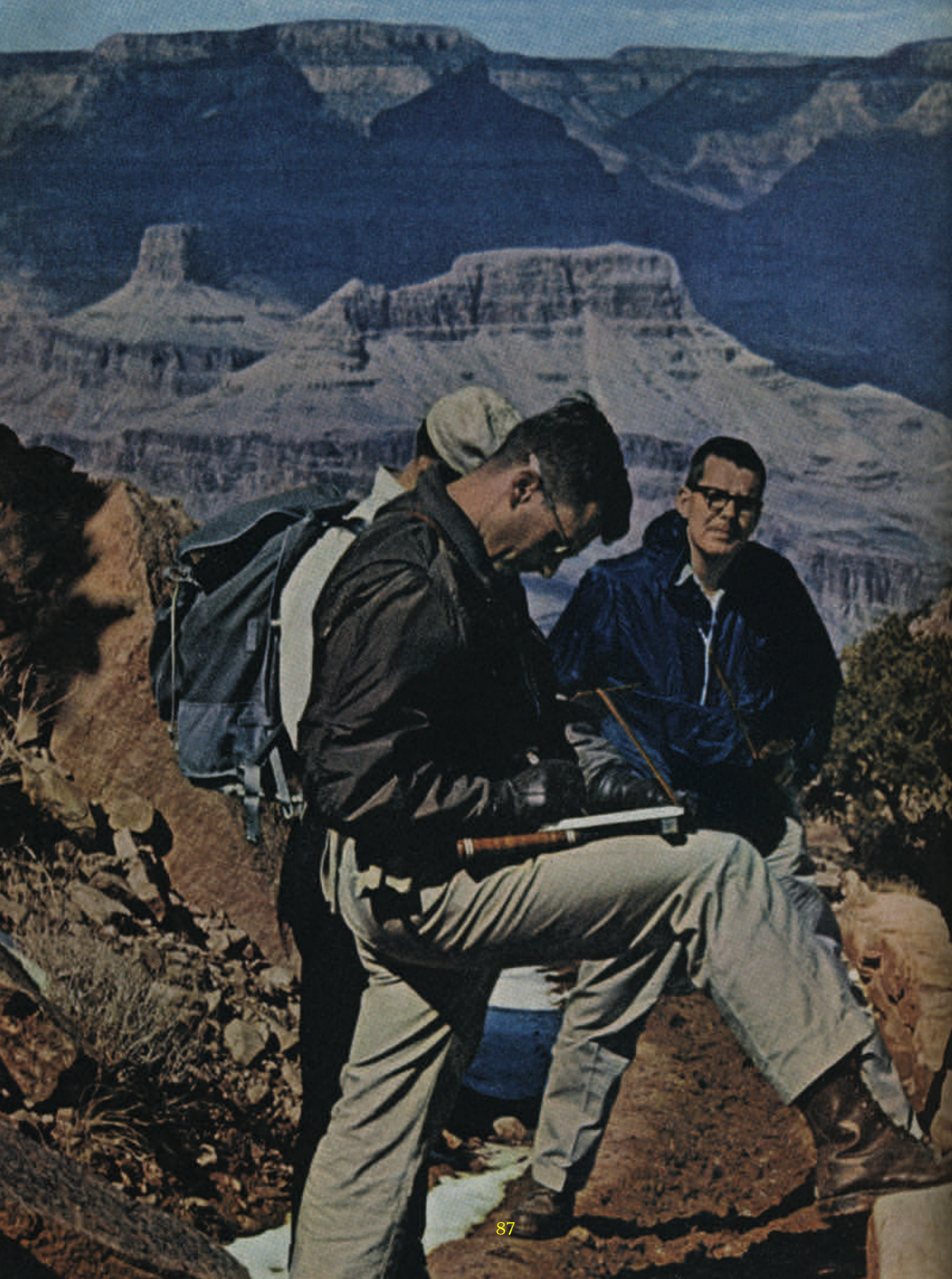


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SYNTHETIC FIBERS

FUEL CELLS

ANTIBIOTIC DRUG

RECHARGEABLE FLASHLIGHT

SYNTHETIC FIBERS

IRRADIATED

ELECTRONIC WATCH

CARBON 14

BALL POINT PEN

FREEZE-DRIED FOOD

FIBER-REINFORCED METAL

CERAMIC MA

PLASTIC HEART VALVE

DESALTED PACIFIC OCEAN WATER

FREEZE-DRIED FOOD

CONTACT LENSES

RUBY LASER

HOLY BIBLE

POCKET RADIATION MONITOR

FILM BADGE

MOLECULAR BLOCK

TEKTITE POSSIBLE LUNAR









MYTHEME

**IN NATIVE AMERICAN TALES AND MYTHS, THE ROLE OF THE TRICKSTER CAN BE TAKEN BY THE RAVEN, THE COYOTE, OR THE MINK BUT THE UNDERLYING MYTHEME OR FUNCTION REMAINS CONSTANT**

In Native American tales and myths, the role of the trickster can be taken by the raven, the coyote, or the mink but the underlying mytheme or function remains constant. A mytheme is a neologism coined by Lévi-Strauss by analogy with phoneme and used to describe the by binary or ternary oppositions and are analogous with functions identified by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. Mythemes are to be identified with functions, and not with the characters of mythical tales. Thus, in Native American tales and myths, the role of the trickster can be taken by the raven, the coyote, or the mink but the underlying mytheme or function remains constant, despite the different characteristics of the individual creatures.<sup>77</sup>



N

NATIONALISM

**WHAT BOUND HER TO THEM? THE LANDSCAPE? IF EACH OF THEM WERE ASKED TO SAY WHAT THE NAME OF HIS NATIVE COUNTRY EVOKED IN HIM, THE IMAGES THAT CAME TO MIND WOULD BE SO DIFFERENT AS TO RULE OUT ALL POSSIBILITY OF UNITY**

It made her unhappy, and down in the street she asked herself why she should bother to maintain contact with

Czechs. What bound her to them? The landscape? If each of them were asked to say what the name of his native country evoked in him, the images that came to mind would be so different as to rule out all possibility of unity. Or the culture? But what was that? Music? Dvorak and Janacek? Yes. But what if a Czech had no feeling for music? Then the essence of being Czech vanished into thin air. Or great men? Jan Hus? None of the people in that room had ever read a line of his works. The only thing they were all able to understand was the flames, the glory of the flames when he was burned at the stake, the glory of the ashes, so for them the essence of being Czech came down to ashes and nothing more. The only things that held them together were their defeats and the reproaches they addressed to one another.<sup>78</sup>



NATURE/HISTORY

**NATURE AND HISTORY CONFUSED AT EVERY TURN**

The naturalness with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. (Cont'd pg.96)

<sup>75</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>76</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>77</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

NATIONALISM,  
NATURE/HISTORY,  
NEWS,  
NOSTALGIA,  
NOVELS,  
& CHILDREN,  
NUCLEAR,  
NUCLEAR FAMILY



This myth of the human “condition” rests on a very old mystification, which always consists in placing Nature at the bottom of History. Any classic humanism postulates that in scratching the history of men a little, the relativity of their institutions or the superficial diversity of their skins, one very quickly reaches the solid rock of a universal human nature. Progressive humanism, on the contrary, must always remember to reverse the terms of this very old imposture, constantly to scour nature, its “laws” and its “limits” in order to discover History there, and at last to establish Nature itself as historical. Nature and history confused at every turn. Examples? Here they are: those of our Exhibition. Birth, death? Yes, these are facts of nature, universal facts. But if one removes History from them, there is nothing more to be said about them; any comment about them becomes purely tautological. The failure of photography seems to me to be flagrant in this connection: to reproduce death or birth tells us, literally, nothing. For these natural facts to gain access to a true language, they must be inserted into a category of knowledge which means postulating that one can transform them, and precisely subject their naturalness to our human criticism.

An eternal lyricism of birth. The same goes for death: must we really celebrate its essence once more, and thus risk forgetting that there is still so much we can do to fight it?<sup>79</sup>

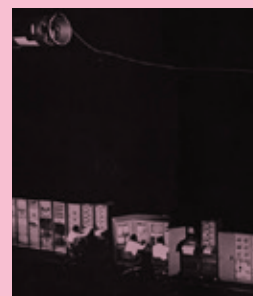


NEWS

**THUS THE WHOLE NEWSREEL OF THE PRESENT GIVES THE SINISTER IMPRESSION OF KITSCH, RETRO AND PORNO ALL AT THE SAME TIME**

Many other such events never began never existed, except that artificial mishaps—abstracts, ersatzes of troubles, catastrophes and crises intended to maintain a historical and psychological investment under hypnosis.

All media and the official news service only exist to maintain the illusion of actuality—of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of the facts. All events are to be read in reverse, where one perceives that all these things arrive too late, with an overdue history, a lagging spiral, that they have exhausted their meaning long in advance and only survive on an artificial effervescence of signs thus the whole newsreel of “the present” gives the sinister impression of kitsch, retro and porno all at the same time—doubtless everyone knows this, and nobody really accepts it.<sup>80</sup>



NOSTALGIA

**SIMULATION IS MASTER, AND NOSTALGIA, THE PHANTASMAL PARODIC REHABILITATION OF ALL LOST REFERENTIALS, ALONE REMAINS**

Simulation is master, and nostalgia, the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials, alone remains. 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. (Cont'd pg.97)

<sup>79</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>80</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

For how can we condemn something that is ephemeral, in transit? In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine.<sup>81</sup>

NOVELS AND CHILDREN

**LET NO WOMEN BELIEVE THAT THEY  
CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS PACT WITHOUT  
HAVING FIRST SUBMITTED TO  
THE ETERNAL STATUTE OF WOMANHOOD**

If we are to believe the weekly *Elle*, which some time ago mustered seventy women novelists on one photograph, the woman of letters is a remarkable zoological species: she brings forth, pell mell, novels and children. We are introduced, for example, to Jacqueline Lenoir (two daughters, one novel); Marina Grey (one son, one novel); Nicole Dutreil (two sons, four novels), etc. What does it mean? This: to write is a glorious but bold activity; the writer is an "artist," one recognizes that he is entitled to a little bohemianism. As he is in general entrusted—at least in the France of *Elle*—with giving society reasons for its clear conscience, he must, after all, be paid for his services: one tacitly grants him the right to some individuality. But make no mistake: let no women believe that they can take advantage of this pact without having first submitted to the eternal statute of womanhood. Women are on the earth to give children to men; let them write as much as they like, let them decorate their condition, but above all, let them not depart from it: let their Biblical fate not be disturbed by the promotion which is conceded to them, and let them pay immediately, by the tribute of their motherhood, for this bohemianism which has a natural link with a writer's life. Women, be therefore courageous, free; play at being men, write like them; but never get far from them; live under their gaze, compensate for your books by your children; enjoy a free rein for a while, but quickly come back to your condition. One novel, one child, a little feminism, a little connubiality. Let us tie the adventure of art to the strong pillars of the home: both will profit a great deal from this combination: where myths are concerned, mutual help is always fruitful.<sup>82</sup>

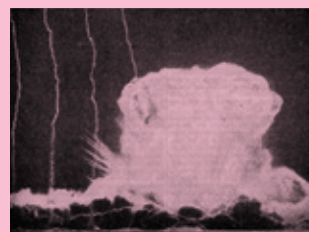
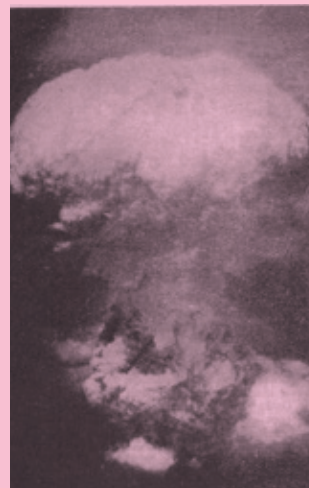


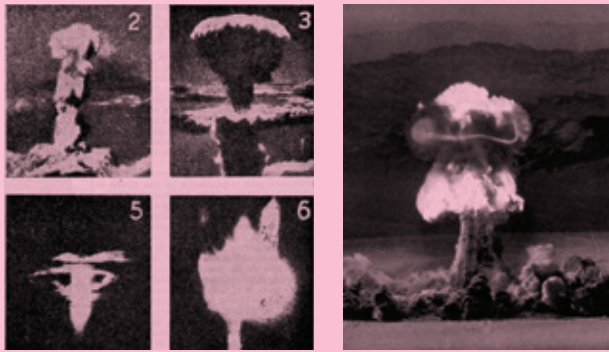
NUCLEAR

**THE WHOLE ORIGINALITY OF THE  
SITUATION LIES IN THE IMPROBABILITY  
OF DESTRUCTION**

The nuclear is the apotheosis of simulation. However, the balance of terror is never anything but the spectacular slope of a system of deterrence that has insinuated itself from the inside into all the cracks of daily life.

Nuclear suspension only serves to seal the trivialized system of deterrence that is at the heart of the media, of the violence without consequences that reigns throughout the world, of the aleatory apparatus of all the choices that are made for us. The most insignificant of our behaviors is regulated by neutralized, indifferent, equivalent signs, by zero-sum signs like those that regulate the "strategy of games" (but the true equation is elsewhere, and the unknown is precisely that variable of simulation which makes of the atomic arsenal itself a hyperreal form, a simulacrum that dominates everything and reduces all "ground-level" events to being nothing but ephemeral scenarios, transforming the life left us into survival, into a stake without stakes—not even into a life insurance policy: into a policy that already has no value). It is not the direct threat of atomic destruction that paralyzes our lives, it is deterrence that gives them leukemia. And this deterrence comes from that fact that even the real atomic clash is precluded—precluded like the eventuality of the real in a system of signs. The whole world pretends to believe in the reality of this threat (this is understandable on the part of the military, the gravity of their exercise and the discourse of their "strategy" are at stake), but it is precisely at this level that there are no strategic stakes. The whole originality of the situation lies in the improbability of destruction.<sup>84</sup>

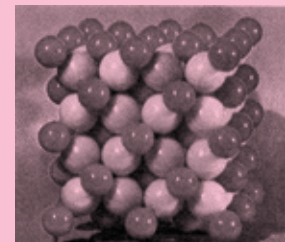




OBJECT

**SCIENCE CAN ONLY DIE  
CONTAMINATED BY THE DEATH OF THE OBJECT  
WHICH IS ITS INVERSE MIRROR**

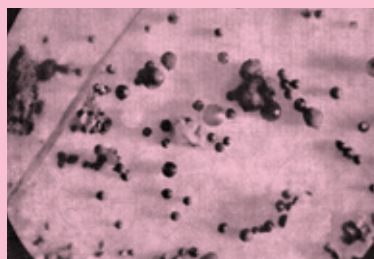
The confinement of the scientific object is the same as that of the insane and the dead. And just as the whole of society is hopelessly contaminated by that mirror of madness it has held out for itself, so science can only die contaminated by the death of the object which is its inverse mirror. It is science which ostensibly masters the object, but it is the latter which deeply invests the former, following an unconscious reversion, giving only dead and circular replies to a dead and circular interrogation.<sup>85</sup>



NUCLEAR FAMILY

**THE IDEAL HEROINE OF  
THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE**

The 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. The 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.<sup>83</sup>



<sup>81</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>82</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>83</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>85</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

# OBJECT, ORNAMENTAL COOKERY, OTHER

FRUITS



abricot

pêche

brugnon

prune

prune



poire comice

poire passe-cressane

pomme starking delicious

pomme calville

pomme reinette du Canada











# 香燒雞

**D65** *Grilled chicken*



# 香茅辣椒雞

**D60** *Chicken with chili and lemon grass in special sauce*

香燒豬排

**D47** *Barbecued pork chop*



薑蔥雞片

**D67** *Chicken with ginger and green onions in oyster sauce*



**GOLDEN PARTRIDGES STUDDED  
WITH CHERRIES, A FAINTLY PINK CHICKEN  
CHAUDFROID, A MOULD OF CRAYFISH  
SURROUNDED BY THEIR RED SHELLS,  
A FROTHY CHARLOTTE PRETTIFIED WITH  
GLACÉ FRUIT DESIGNS**

The weekly *Elle* (a real mythological treasure) gives us almost every week a fine colour photograph of a prepared dish: golden partridges studded with cherries, a faintly pink chicken chaudfroid, a mould of crayfish surrounded by their red shells, a frothy charlotte prettified with glacé fruit designs, multicoloured trifle, etc.



8 A.M. : LOW-CALORIE EYE-OPENER--



The “substantial” category which prevails in this type of cooking is that of the smooth coating: there is an obvious endeavour to glaze surfaces, to round them off, to bury the food under the even sediment of sauces, creams, icing and jellies. This of course comes from the very finality of the coating, which belongs to a visual category, and cooking according to *Elle* is meant for the eye alone, since sight is a genteel sense. For there is, in this persistence of glazing, a need for gentility. *Elle* is a highly valuable journal, from the point of view of legend



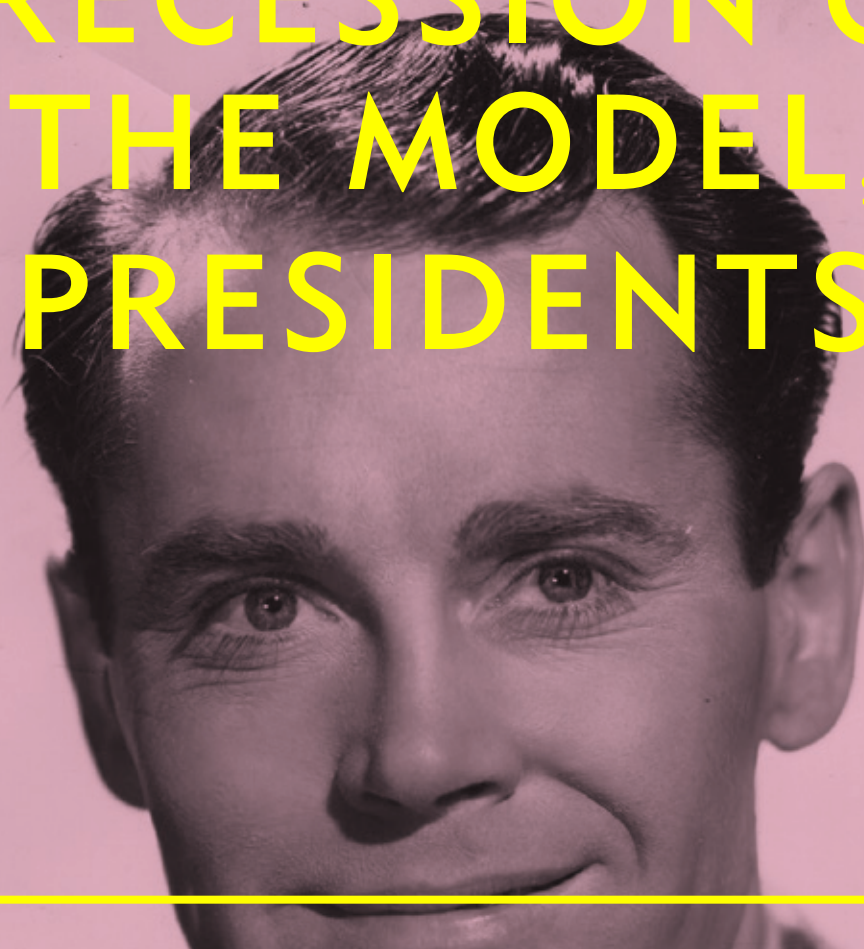
at least, since its role is to present to its vast public which (market-research tells us) is working-class, the very dream of smartness. Hence a cookery which is based on coatings and alibis, and is for ever trying to extenuate and even to disguise the primary nature of foodstuffs, the brutality of meat or the abruptness of sea-food. A country dish is admitted only as an exception (the good family boiled beef), as the rustic whim of jaded city-dwellers. But above all, coatings prepare and support one of the major developments of genteel cookery: ornamentation. Glazing, in *Elle*, serves as background for unbridled beautification: chiselled mushrooms, punctuation of cherries, motifs of carved lemon, shavings of truffle, silver pastilles, arabesques of glacé fruit: the underlying coat (and this is why I called it a sediment, since the food itself becomes no more than an indeterminate bed-rock) is intended to be the page on which can be read a whole rococo cookery (there is a partiality for a pinkish colour). Ornamentation proceeds in two contradictory ways, which we shall in a moment see dialectically reconciled: on the one hand, fleeing from nature thanks to a kind of frenzied baroque (sticking shrimps in a lemon, making a chicken look pink, serving grapefruit hot), and on the other, trying to reconstitute it through an incongruous artifice (strewing meringue mushrooms and holly leaves on a traditional log-shaped Christmas cake, replacing the heads of crayfish around the sophisticated Béchamel which hides their bodies).

It is in fact the same pattern which one finds in the elaboration of petit-bourgeois trinkets (ashtrays in the shape of a saddle, lighters in the shape of a cigarette, terrines in the shape of a hare). This is because here, as in all petit-bourgeois art, the irrepressible tendency towards extreme realism is countered—or balanced—by one of the eternal imperatives of journalism for women's magazines: what is pompously called, at *L'Express*, having ideas. Cookery in *Elle* is, in the same way, an “idea”—cookery. But here inventiveness, confined to a fairy-land reality, must be applied only to garnishings, for the genteel tendency of the magazine precludes it from touching on the real problems concerning food (the real problem is not to have the idea of sticking cherries into a partridge, it is to have the partridge, that is to say, to pay for it). This ornamental cookery is indeed supported by wholly mythical economics. This is an openly dream-like cookery. *Elle* is addressed to a genuinely working-class public that it is very careful not to take for granted that cooking must be economical. Compare with *L'Express*, whose exclusively middle-class public enjoys a comfortable purchasing power: its cookery is real, not magical. *Elle* gives the recipe of fancy partridges, *L'Express* gives that of salade niçoise. The readers of *Elle* are entitled only to fiction; one can suggest real dishes to those of *L'Express*, in the certainty that they will be able to prepare them.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

PARADES,  
PHONEME,  
PHOTOGRAPHY &  
ELECTORAL APPEAL,  
POWER,  
PRECESSION OF  
THE MODEL,  
PRESIDENTS



**ONE POLE OF THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN A SUBJECT AND A PERSON OR  
THING DEFINED OR CONSTITUTED AS  
A NON-SELF THAT IS DIFFERENT OR OTHER**

The notion of the other is widely used in a variety of disciplines...Although meaning of the term varies considerably, it refers, at its most general level, to one pole of the relationship between a subject and a person or thing defined or constituted as a non-self that is different or other. The other is also a major theme in postcolonial theory. In this context the term refers to the discursive production of an other—a process typified in the way in which Europe produces an Orient-as-other through the discourse of [Orientalism](#).



Perhaps the most influential account of the other is that advanced by Lacan and it originates in a phenomenological tradition. Self-consciousness exists only to the extent that it exists for another self-consciousness, and only to the extent that it is recognized by the other as existing. The paradigm for this relationship is the dialectic between master and slave, in which both parties strive for recognition in the eyes of their other. This relationship inaugurates a dialectic of desire, in which the subject strives after an object that is always in possession of the other. Lacan will therefore say that man's desire is the desire for the other...<sup>87</sup>

**P**

**THE IMAGE OF THAT EVIL WAS  
A PARADE OF PEOPLE MARCHING BY WITH  
RAISED FISTS AND SHOUTING IDENTICAL  
SYLLABLES IN UNISON**

During her studies, Sabina lived in a dormitory. On May Day all the students had to report early in the morning for the parade. Student officials would comb the building to ensure that no one was missing. Sabina hid in the lavatory. Not until long after the building was empty would she go back to her room. It was quieter than anywhere she could remember. The only sound was the parade music echoing in the distance. It was as though she had found refuge inside a shell and the only sound she could hear was the sea of an inimical world. A year or two after emigrating, she happened to be in Paris on the anniversary of the Russian invasion of her country. A protest march had been scheduled, and she felt driven to take part. Fists raised high, the young Frenchmen shouted out slogans condemning Soviet imperialism. She liked the slogans, but to her surprise she found herself unable to shout along with them. She lasted no more than a few minutes in the parade. When she told her French friends about it, they were amazed. You mean you don't want to fight the occupation of your country? She would have liked to tell them that behind Communism, Fascism, behind all occupations and invasions lurks a more basic, pervasive evil and that the image of that evil was a parade of people marching by with raised fists and shouting identical syllables in unison.

But she knew she would never be able to make them understand. Embarrassed, she changed the subject.<sup>88</sup>



<sup>87</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>88</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

**DID YOU SAY PIG OR FIG?**

A phoneme is analogous with mytheme in Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth. In the linguistic functionalism of the Prague School, and the work of Jakobson and André Martinet, a phoneme is defined as a phonological unit with a distinctive function that cannot be broken down into smaller units with similar functions. A phoneme is defined by its distinctive features, such as its being voiced (/v/) or non-voiced (/f/). The list of phonemes making up any given language is a closed list. As Jakobson remarks, the Cheshire Cat in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* shows an intuitive grasp of phonematic analysis when it asks Alice: "Did you say fig or pig? In English there is a functional difference between /f/ and /p/ and it conveys the difference of meaning between fig and pig. Not all phonetic differences are functional: Standard English employs both a 'clear' and a 'dark' /l/ - to use Lyons' terminology - employed respectively before consonants ('leaf') and at the end of words ('feel') The substitution of one for the other would not constitute a significant error of pronunciation for any speaker or listener with a native competence in English."<sup>89</sup>

PHOTOGRAPHY & ELECTORAL APPEAL

**A HANDSOME HERO (IN UNIFORM)  
ON ONE SIDE OF THE HANDOUT, AND AS  
A MATURE AND VIRILE CITIZEN ON  
THE OTHER, DISPLAYING HIS LITTLE FAMILY**

The very definition of the photogenic: the voter is at once expressed and heroized, he is invited to elect himself, to weigh the mandate which he is about to give with a veritable physical transference: he is delegating his "race." The types which are thus delegated are not very varied. First there is that which stands for social status, respectability, whether sanguine and well-fed (lists of "National" parties), or genteel and insipid (lists of the M.R.P.—the Christian Democrats). Then, the type of the intellectual (let it be repeated that we are dealing here with "signified" types, not actual ones) whether sanctimonious like the candidate of centre right parties like the Rassemblement national, or "searching" like that of the Communists. In the last two cases, the iconography is meant to signify the exceptional conjunction of thought and will, reflection and action: the slightly narrowed eyes allow a sharp look to filter through, which seems to find its strength in a beautiful inner dream without however ceasing to alight on real obstacles, as if the ideal candidate had in this case magnificently to unite social idealism with bourgeois empiricism. The last type is quite simply that of the "good-looking chap," whose obvious credentials are his health and virility. Some candidates, incidentally, beautifully manage to win on both counts, appearing for instance as a handsome hero (in uniform) on one side of the handout, and as a mature and virile citizen on the other, displaying his little family. For in most cases, the morphological type is assisted by very obvious attributes: one candidate is surrounded by his

kids (curled and dolled up like all children photographed in France), another is a young parachutist with rolled-up sleeves, or an officer with his chest covered with decorations. Photography constitutes here a veritable blackmail by means of moral values: country, army, family, honour, reckless heroism.



The conventions of photography, moreover, are themselves replete with signs. A full-face photograph underlines the realistic outlook of the candidate, especially if he is provided with scrutinizing glasses. Everything there expresses penetration, gravity, frankness: the future deputy is looking squarely at the enemy, the obstacle. Some candidates for Parliament adorn their electoral prospectus with a portrait. This presupposes that photography has a power to convert which must be analysed. To start with, the effigy of a candidate establishes a personal link between him and the voters; the candidate does not only offer a programme for judgment, he suggests a physical climate, a set of daily choices expressed in a morphology, a way of dressing, a posture. Electoral photography is above all the acknowledgment of something deep and irrational co-extensive with politics. What is transmitted through the photograph of the candidate are not his plans, but his deep motives, all his family, mental, even erotic circumstances, all this style of life of which he is at once the product, the example and the bait. It is obvious that what most of our candidates offer us through their likeness is a type of social setting, the spectacular comfort of family, legal and religious norms, the suggestion of innately owning such items of bourgeois property as Sunday Mass, xenophobia, steak and chips, cuckold jokes, in short, what we call an ideology. Needless to say the use of electoral photography presupposes a kind of complicity: a photograph is a mirror, what we are asked to read is the familiar, the known; it offers to the voter his own likeness, but clarified, exalted, superbly elevated into a type. This glorification is in fact the "problem." A three-quarter face photograph, which is more common, suggests the tyranny of an ideal: the gaze is lost nobly in the future, it does not confront, it soars, and fertilizes some other domain, which is chastely left undefined. Almost all three-quarter face photos arc ascensional, the face is lifted towards a supernatural light which draws it up and elevates it to the realm of a higher humanity; the candidate reaches the Olympus of elevated feelings, where all political contradictions are solved....<sup>90</sup>

**THE ONLY WEAPON OF POWER, ITS ONLY STRATEGY AGAINST THIS DEFECTION, IS TO REINJECT REALNESS AND REFERENTIALITY EVERYWHERE, IN ORDER TO CONVINCE US OF THE REALITY OF THE SOCIAL**

As is the fact that power is no longer present except to conceal that there is none. A simulation which can go on indefinitely, since—unlike “true” power which is, or was, a structure, a strategy, a relation of force, a stake—this is nothing but the object of a social demand, and hence subject to the law of supply and demand, rather than to violence and death. Completely expunged from the political dimension, it is dependent, like any other commodity, on production and mass consumption. Its spark has disappeared; only the fiction of a political universe is saved. The only weapon of power, its only strategy against this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis, but also—why not?—the discourse of desire.

“Take your desires for reality!” can be understood as the ultimate slogan of power, for in a nonreferential world even the confusion of the reality principle with the desire principle is less dangerous than contagious hyperreality. One remains among principles, and there power is always right.



Hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and of every objective; they turn against power this deterrence which is so well utilized for a long time itself. For, finally, it was capital which was the first to feed throughout its history on the destruction of every referential, of every human goal, which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power. It was the first to practice deterrence, abstraction, disconnection, deterritorialization, etc.; and if it was capital which fostered reality, the reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it in the extermination of every use value, of every real equivalence, of production and wealth, in the very sensation we have of the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation. Now, it is this very logic which is today hardened even more against it. And when it wants to fight this catastrophic spiral by secreting one last glimmer of reality, on which to found one last glimmer of power, it only multiplies the signs and accelerates the

play of simulation. As long as it was historically threatened by the real, power risked deterrence and simulation, disintegrating every contradiction by means of the production of equivalent signs. When it is threatened today by simulation (the threat of vanishing in the play of signs), power risks the real, risks crisis, it gambles on remanufacturing artificial, social, economic, political stakes. This is a question of life or death for it. But it is too late.<sup>91</sup>




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 PRECESSION OF THE MODEL

**SIMULATION IS CHARACTERIZED BY A PRECESSION OF THE MODEL, OF ALL MODELS AROUND THE MEREST FACT – THE MODELS COME FIRST**

Simulation is characterized by a precession of the model, of all models around the merest fact—the models come first, and their orbital (like the bomb) circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events. Facts no longer have any trajectory of their own, they arise at the intersection of the models: a single fact may even be engendered by all the models at once. This anticipation, this precession, this short-circuit, this confusion of the fact with its model (no more divergence of meaning, no more dialectical polarity, no more negative electricity or implosion of poles) is what each time allows for all the possible interpretations, even the most contradictory—all are true, in the sense that their truth is exchangeable, in the image of the models from which they proceed, in a generalized cycle.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

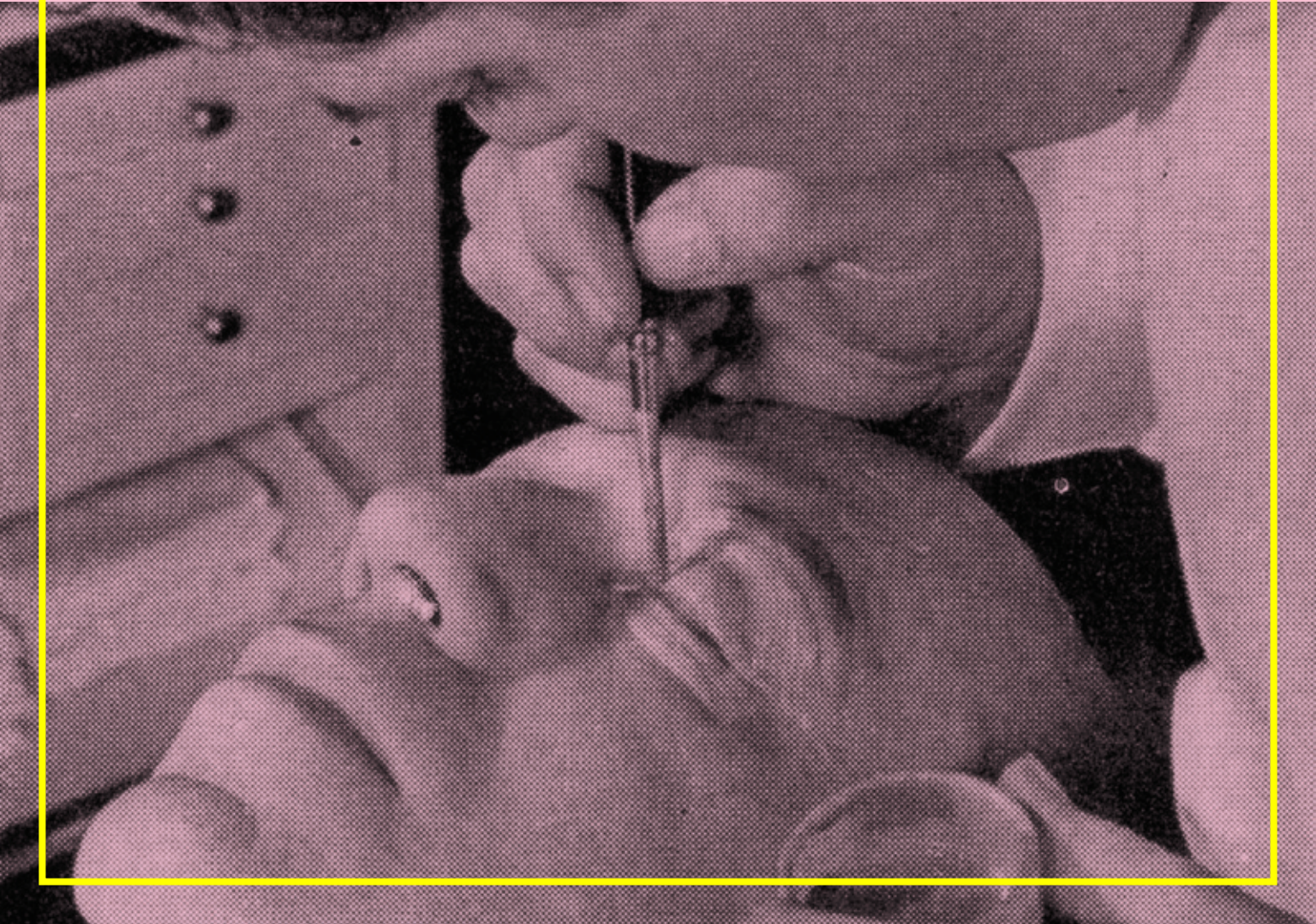
<sup>90</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>91</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>92</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# QUANTITATIVE, QUESTION, QUIPU



QUANTITATIVE

**BOURGEOIS DRAMATIC ART RESTS ON A PURE QUANTIFICATION OF EFFECTS: A WHOLE CIRCUIT OF COMPUTABLE APPEARANCES ESTABLISHES A QUANTITATIVE EQUALITY BETWEEN THE COST OF A TICKET AND THE TEARS OF AN ACTOR OR THE LUXURIOUSNESS OF A SET**

Bourgeois theatre is a good example of this contradiction: on the one hand, theatre is presented as an essence which cannot be reduced to any language and reveals itself only to the heart, to intuition. From this quality, it receives an irritable dignity (it is forbidden as a crime of 'lese-essence' to speak about the theatre scientifically: or rather, any intellectual way of viewing the theatre is discredited as scientism or pedantic language). On the other hand, bourgeois dramatic art rests on a pure quantification of effects: a whole circuit of computable appearances establishes a quantitative equality between the cost of a ticket and the tears of an actor or the luxuriousness of a set: what is currently meant by the 'naturalness' of an actor, for instance, is above all a conspicuous quantity of effects. The statement of fact. Myths tend towards proverbs. Bourgeois ideology invests in this figure interests which are bound to its very essence: universalism, the refusal of any explanation, an unalterable hierarchy of the world. But we must again distinguish the language-object from the metalanguage.<sup>93</sup>



QUESTION

**A QUESTION IS LIKE A KNIFE THAT SLICES THROUGH THE BACKDROP AND GIVES US A LOOK AT WHAT LIES BEHIND IT**

In the realm of totalitarian kitsch, all answers are given in advance and preclude any questions. It follows, then, that the true opponent of totalitarian kitsch is the person who asks questions. A question is like a knife that slices through the backdrop and gives us a look at what lies behind it. In fact, that was exactly how Sabina had explained her paintings to Tereza: on the surface, an intelligible lie; underneath, the unintelligible truth showing through.<sup>94</sup>

QUIPU

**THIS GENERIC WAY OF CONCEIVING LANGUAGE IS IN FACT JUSTIFIED BY THE VERY HISTORY OF WRITING: LONG BEFORE THE INVENTION OF OUR ALPHABET, OBJECTS LIKE THE INCA QUIPU, OR DRAWINGS, AS IN PICTOGRAPHS, HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED AS SPEECH**

Myth can be defined neither by its object nor by its material, for any material can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning: the arrow which is brought in order to signify a challenge is also a kind of speech. True, as far as perception is concerned, writing and pictures, for instance, do not call upon the same type of consciousness; and even with pictures, one can use many kinds of reading: a diagram lends itself to signification more than a drawing, a copy more than an original, and a caricature more than a portrait. But this is the point: we are no longer dealing here with a theoretical mode of representation: we are dealing with this particular image, which is given for this particular signification. Mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance. This substance is not unimportant: pictures, to be sure, are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analyzing or diluting it. But this is no longer a constitutive difference. Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful: like writing, they call for a lexis. We shall therefore take language, discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something. This generic way of conceiving language is in fact justified by the very history of writing: long before the invention of our alphabet, objects like the Inca quipu, or drawings, as in pictographs, have been accepted as speech. This does not mean that one must treat mythical speech like language; myth in fact belongs to the province of a general science, coextensive with linguistics, which is semiology.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>94</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>95</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

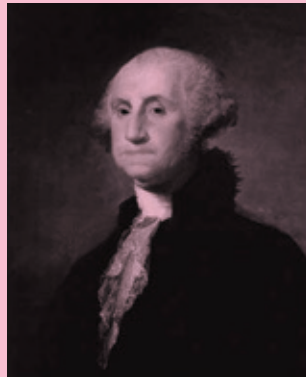
RANDOMNESS,  
REAL,  
RELIGION,  
REVOLUTION,  
ROMANS IN  
FILM



PRESIDENTS

EVERY FORM OF POWER, EVERY SITUATION SPEAKS OF ITSELF BY DENIAL

Everything is metamorphosed into its inverse in order to be perpetuated in its purged form. Every form of power, every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to attempt to escape, by simulation of death, its real agony. Power can stage its own murder to rediscover a glimmer of existence and legitimacy. Thus with the American presidents: the Kennedys are murdered because they still have a political dimension. Others—Johnson, Nixon, Ford—only had a right to puppet attempts, to simulated murders. But they nevertheless needed that aura of an artificial menace to conceal that they were nothing other than mannequins of power. In olden days the king (also the god) had to die—that was his strength. Today he does his miserable utmost to pretend to die, so as to preserve the blessing of power. But even this is gone.<sup>96</sup>



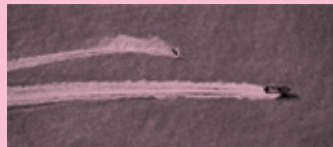
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RANDOMNESS

OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE IS BOMBARDED WITH FORTUITIES OR, TO BE MORE PRECISE, WITH THE ACCIDENTAL MEETINGS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS WE CALL COINCIDENCES

Only chance can speak to us. We read its message much as gypsies read the images made by coffee grounds at the bottom of the cup. Tomas appeared to Tereza in the hotel restaurant as chance in the absolute. There he sat, poring over an open book, when suddenly he raised his eyes to her, smiled, and said “a cognac please.” On her way to the counter to pour the cognac, Tereza turned the volume up. She recognized Beethoven. How was it possible that at the very moment she was taking an attractive stranger’s order, at that very moment she heard Beethoven? Necessity knows no magic formulae—they are all left to chance. But her nascent love inflamed her sense of beauty and she never forget that music. Whenever she heard it, she would be touched. Everything going on around her at that moment would be haloed by the music and take on its beauty.

Our day-to-day life is bombarded with fortuities or, to be more precise, with the accidental meetings of people and events we call coincidences. “Co-incident” means that two events unexpectedly happen at the same time, they meet: Tomas appears in the hotel restaurant at the same time the radio is playing Beethoven.<sup>97</sup>



<sup>96</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>97</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

**THE REAL HAS BEEN PRECEDED  
BY ITS SIMULATION**

Actually, he had always preferred the unreal to the real. Just as he felt better at demonstrations (which, as I have pointed out, are all playacting and dreams) than in a lecture hall full of students, so he was happier with Sabina the invisible goddess than the Sabina who had accompanied him throughout the world and whose love he constantly feared losing.<sup>98</sup>

*For Kundera, when we ignore what is shameful or unpleasant in our lives, in our “sense of beauty,” we lose reality, we exist in a falsified, unreal atmosphere. The only way to discover what is real again is to look to what is being ignored in this view of the world, to look at that which is shameful, to admit that we are living in the realm of kitsch.*



*The real has been replaced by simulacrum. For Baudrillard, we are no longer in a world of false representations of reality (ie. Ideology), we are in a world that tries to hide the fact that reality no longer exists.*

*We are living in a world created in cyberspace, by the media, in an atmosphere without referent to reality. Is this the highest form of kitsch? In Kitsch we ignore reality, in simulacra we have completely lost it.<sup>99</sup>*

**BUT WHAT BECOMES OF THE DIVINITY  
WHEN IT REVEALS ITSELF IN ICONS, WHEN IT IS  
MULTIPLIED IN SIMULACRA?**

Outside of medicine and the army, favored terrains of simulation, the affair goes back to religion and the simulacrum of divinity: “I forbade any simulacrum in the temples because the divinity that breathes life into nature cannot be represented.” 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.

Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of erasing God from the consciousnesses of people, and the overwhelming, destructive truth which they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God; that only simulacra exist; 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.<sup>100</sup>

REVOLUTION

**SHE CAME FROM A LAND WHERE  
REVOLUTIONARY ILLUSION HAD LONG SINCE  
FADED BUT WHERE THE THING HE  
ADMIRE MOST IN REVOLUTION REMAINED:  
LIFE ON A LARGE SCALE; A LIFE OF RISK,  
DARING, AND THE DANGER OF DEATH**

Franz greatly admired Sabina's country. Whenever she told him about herself and her friends from home, Franz heard the words prison, persecution, enemy tanks, emigration, pamphlets, banned books, banned exhibitions, and he felt a curious mixture of envy and nostalgia.

It is in this spirit that we may understand Franz's weakness for revolution. First he sympathized with Cuba, then with China, and when the cruelty of their regimes began to appall him, he resigned himself with a sigh to a sea of words with no weight and no resemblance to life. He became a professor in Geneva (where there are no demonstrations), and in a burst of abnegation (in womanless, paradeless solitude) he published several scholarly books, all of which received considerable acclaim. Then one day along came Sabina. She was a revelation. She came from a land where revolutionary illusion had long since faded but where the thing he admired most in revolution remained: life on a large scale; a life of risk, daring, and the danger of death. Sabina had renewed his faith in the grandeur of human endeavor. Superimposing the painful drama of her country on her person, he found her even more beautiful.



The trouble was that Sabina had no love for that drama. The words prison, persecution, banned books, occupation, tanks were ugly, without the slightest trace of romance. The only word that evoked in her a sweet, nostalgic memory of her homeland was the word cemetery.<sup>101</sup>

THE ROMANS IN FILM

**QUITE SIMPLY THE LABEL OF ROMAN-NESS.  
WE THEREFORE SEE HERE THE  
MANSRING OF THE SPECTACLE — THE  
SIGN — OPERATING IN THE OPEN**

In Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar*, all the characters are wearing fringes. Some have them curly, some straggly,

some tufted, some oily, all have them well combed, and the bald are not admitted, although there are plenty to be found in Roman history... What then is associated with these insistent fringes? Quite simply the label of Roman-ness. We therefore see here the mainspring of the Spectacle—the sign—operating in the open. The frontal lock overwhelms one with evidence, no one can doubt that he is in Ancient Rome. And this certainty is permanent: the actors speak, act, torment themselves, debate “questions of universal import,” without losing, thanks to this little flag displayed on their foreheads, any of their historical plausibility. These signs are at the same time excessive and ineffectual: they postulate a “nature” which they have not even the courage to acknowledge fully; they are not “fair and square.” Yet another sign in this *Julius Caesar*: all the faces sweat constantly. Labourers, soldiers, conspirators, all have their austere and tense features streaming (with Vaseline). And closeups are so frequent that evidently sweat here is an attribute with a purpose. Like the Roman fringe or the nocturnal plait, sweat is a sign. Of what? Of moral feeling. In the whole film, there is but one man who does not sweat and who remains smooth-faced, unperturbed and watertight: Caesar.



Here again, the sign is ambiguous: it remains on the surface, yet does not for all that give up the attempt to pass itself off as depth. It aims at making people understand (which is laudable) but at the same time suggests that it is spontaneous (which is cheating); it presents itself at once as intentional and irrepressible, artificial and natural, manufactured and discovered. (Cont'd pg.120)

<sup>98</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

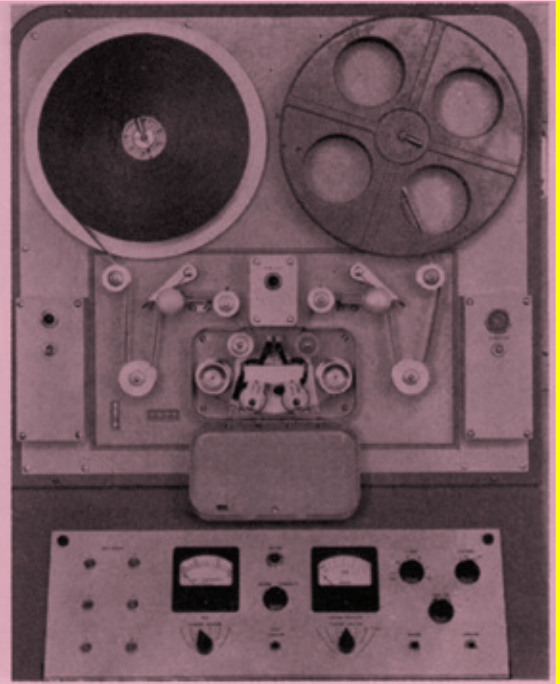
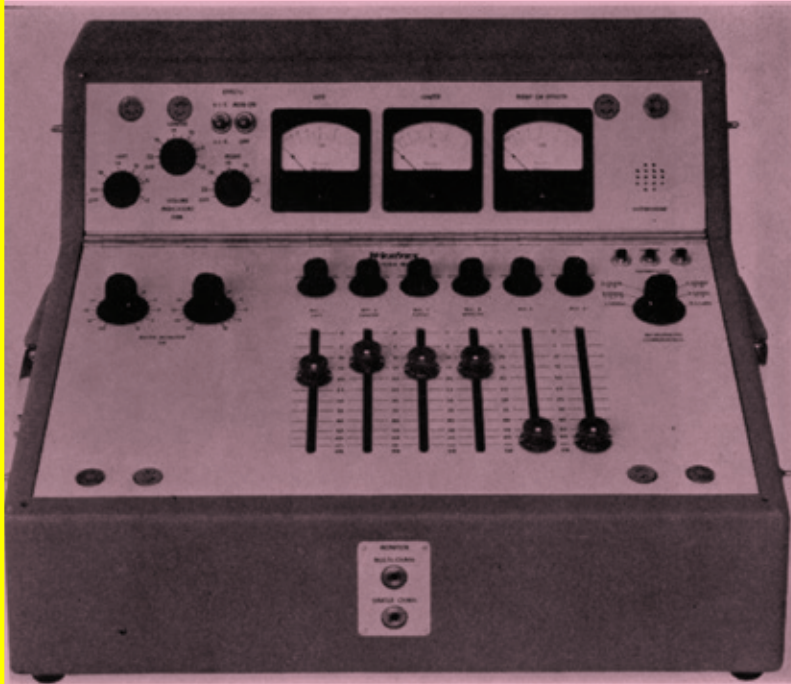
<sup>99</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

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KITSCH ARCHIVE

# SCIENCE, SECOND ORDER SIMULACRA, SIGNIFIER/SIGNIFIED



**DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN IMAGE AND REALITY  
BREAKS DOWN DUE TO THE PROLIFERATION OF  
MASS-PRODUCED COPIES**

Associated with the Industrial Revolution, where distinctions between image and reality breaks down due to the proliferation of mass-produced copies. The items' ability to imitate reality threatens to replace the original version.<sup>104</sup>



SIGNIFIER/SIGNIFIED

**EVERYTHING HAPPENS AS IF MYTH  
SHIFTED THE FORMAL SYSTEM OF THE FIRST  
SIGNIFICATIONS SIDWAYS**

Semiology postulates a relation between two terms, a signifier and a signified. This relation concerns objects which belong to different categories, and this is why it is not one of equality but one of equivalence. We must here be on our guard for despite common parlance which simply says that the signifier expresses the signified, we are dealing, in any semiological system, not with two, but with three different terms. For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms. Take a bunch of roses: I use it to signify my passion. Do we have here, then, only a signifier and a signified, the roses and my passion? (Cont'd pg.121)



This can lead us to an ethic of signs. Signs ought to present themselves only in two extreme forms: either openly intellectual and so remote that they are reduced to an algebra, as in the Chinese theatre, where a flag on its own signifies a regiment; or deeply rooted, invented, so to speak, on each occasion, revealing an internal, a hidden facet, and indicative of a moment in time, no longer of a concept (as in the art of Stanislavsky, for instance). But the intermediate sign, the fringe of Roman-ness or the sweating of thought, reveals a degraded spectacle, which is equally afraid of simple reality and of total artifice. For although it is a good thing if a spectacle is created to make the world more explicit, it is both reprehensible and deceitful to confuse the sign with what is signified. And it is a duplicity which is peculiar to bourgeois art: between the intellectual and the visceral sign is hypocritically inserted a hybrid, at once elliptical and pretentious, which is pompously christened 'nature'.<sup>102</sup>

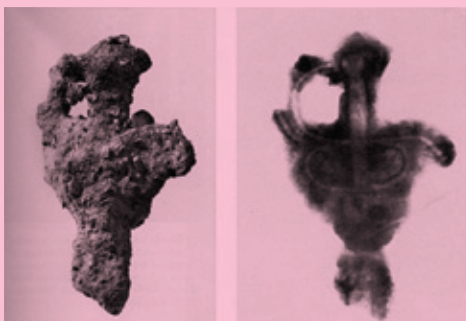
S

SCIENCE

**SIMULATED SACRIFICE OF ITS OBJECT IN ORDER  
TO SAVE ITS REALITY PRINCIPLE**

It is against this hell of the paradox that the ethnologists wished to protect themselves by cordoning off the Tasaday with virgin forest. No one can touch them anymore: as in a mine the vein is closed down. Science loses precious capital there, but the object will be safe, lost to science, but intact in its "virginity." It is not a question of sacrifice (science never sacrifices itself, it is always murderous), but of the simulated sacrifice of its object in order to save its reality principle. The Tasaday, frozen in their natural element, will provide a perfect alibi, an eternal guarantee.

Here begins an antiethnology that will never end and to which Jaulin, Castañeda, Clastres are various witnesses. In any case the logical evolution of a science is to distance itself every further from its object until it dispenses with it entirely: its autonomy evermore fantastical in reaching its pure forms.<sup>103</sup>

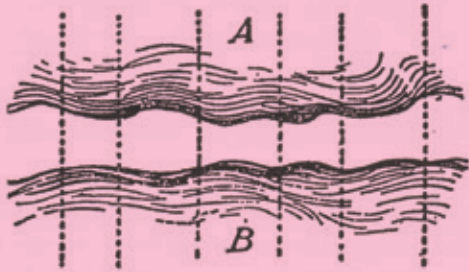


<sup>102</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>103</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>104</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

Not even that: to put it accurately, there are only “passionified” roses. But on the plane of analysis, we do have three terms; for these roses weighted with passion perfectly and correctly allow themselves to be decomposed into roses and passion: the former and the latter existed before uniting and forming the third object, which is the sign. It is true to say that on the plane of experience I cannot dissociate the roses from the message they carry, as to day that on the plane of analysis I cannot confuse the roses as signifier and the roses as sign: the signifier is empty, the sign is full, it is a meaning.



In myth, we find again the tri-dimensional pattern which I have just described: the signifier, the signified and the sign. But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second. We must here recall that the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. Myth sees in them only the same raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language. Whether it deals with alphabetical or pictorial writing, myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain. And it is precisely this final term which will become the first term of the greater system which it builds and of which it is only a part. Everything happens as if myth shifted the formal system of the first significations sideways. As this lateral shift is essential for the analysis of myth, I shall represent it in the following way, it being understood, of course, that the spatialization of the pattern is here only a metaphor.

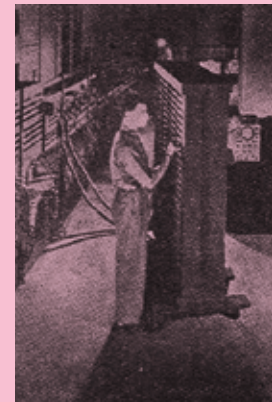
It can be seen that in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or the modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call the language-object, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build its own system; and myth itself, which I shall call metalanguage, because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first. When he reflects on a metalanguage, the semiologist no longer needs to ask himself questions about the composition of the language object, he no longer has to take into account the details of the linguistic schema; he will only need to know its total term, or global sign, and only inasmuch as this term lends itself to myth. This is why the semiologist is entitled to treat in the same way writing and pictures: what he retains from them is the fact that they are both signs, that they both reach the threshold

of myth endowed with the same signifying function, that they constitute, one just as much as the other, a language-object.<sup>105</sup>

#### SIMULACRUM

### FOR BAUDRILLARD, A SIMULACRUM IS A REPRODUCTION OF AN OBJECT OR EVENT CHARACTERISTIC OF A SPECIFIC STAGE IN THE HISTORY OF THE IMAGE OR THE SIGN

In latin this word denoted a material representation or image, usually of a deity. For Baudrillard, a simulacrum is a reproduction of an object or event characteristic of a specific stage in the history of the image or the sign. Whereas the image was once a reflection of basic reality, as in the feudal order in which signs were clear indications of hierarchical status, it came to mask or pervert a basic reality when, in the baroque period that privileged artifice and counterfeit over natural signs, arbitrary or artificial signs began to proliferate.

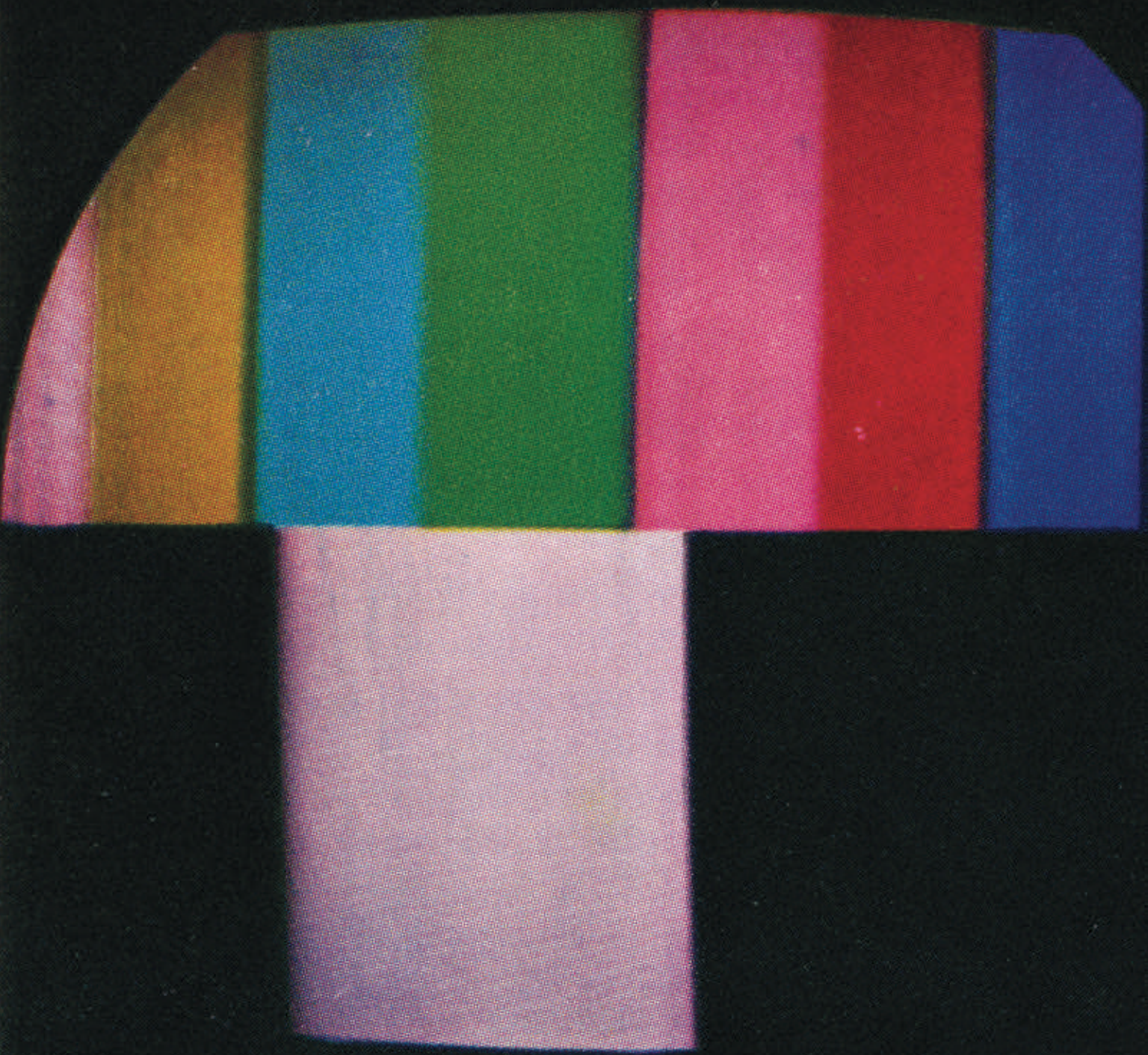


Such signs are described as first order simulacra. With the mass production of industrial objects in Benjamin’s “era of mechanical reproduction” second order simulacrum proliferated as “originals” lost their mystic aura; such simulacra signal the absence of a basic reality. The third order simulacra of postmodernity have no relation to reality whatsoever, and are their own pure simulacra or imitations of imitations. The ultimate simulation is Disneyland. Cindy Sherman’s film stills are examples as reproductions of originals that never existed.<sup>106</sup>

#### SIMULATION

### MODERN SOCIETY HAS REPLACED ALL REALITY AND MEANING WITH SYMBOLS AND SIGNS

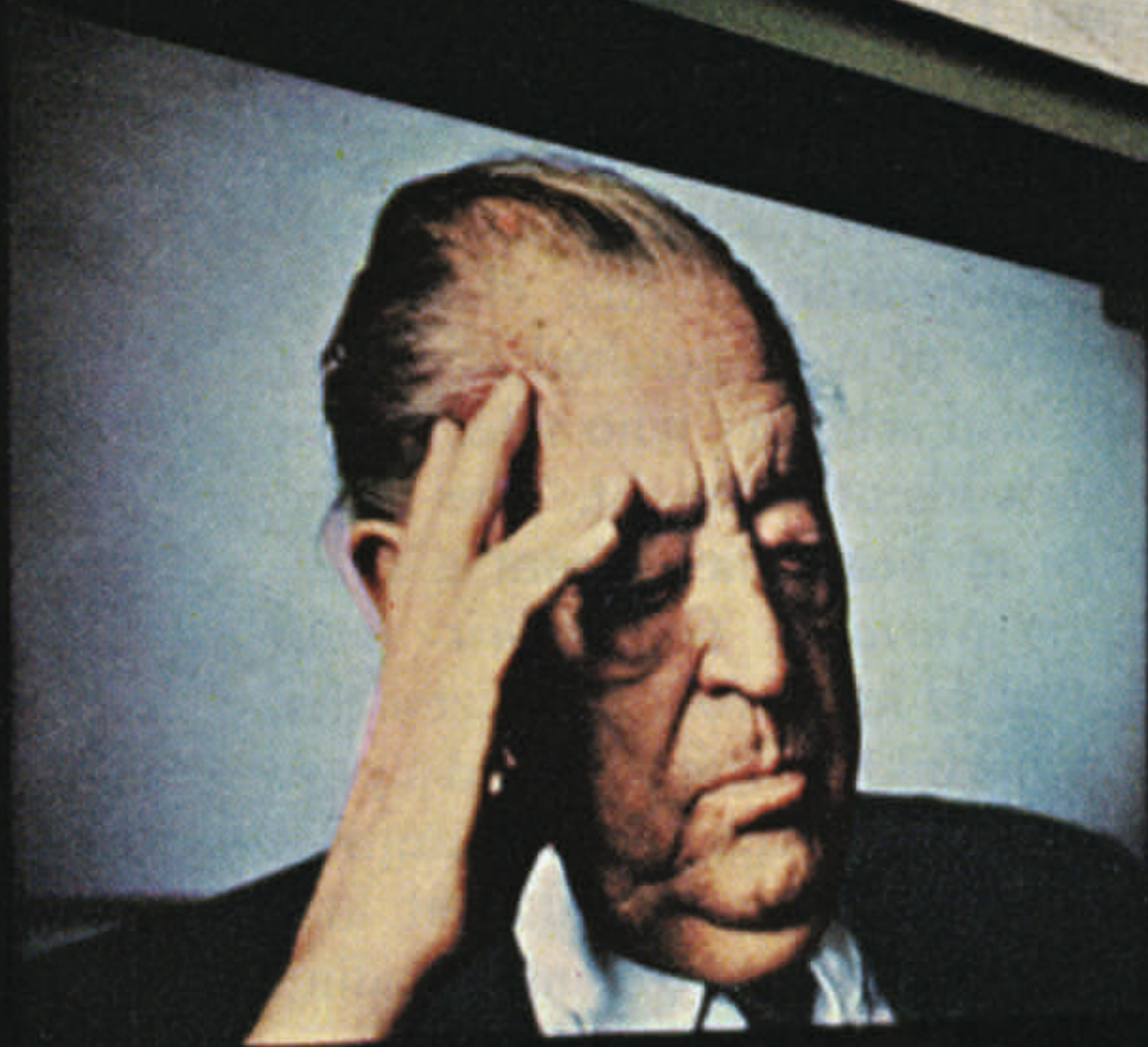
Simulacra and Simulation is most known for its discussion of images, signs, and how they relate to the present day. Baudrillard claims that modern society has replaced all













reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that the human experience is of a simulation of reality rather than reality itself. The simulacra that Baudrillard refers to are signs of culture and media that create the perceived reality; Baudrillard believed that society has become so reliant on simulacra that it has lost contact with the real world on which the simulacra are based. Baudrillard theorizes that the lack of distinctions between reality and simulacra originates in several phenomena: contemporary media including television, film, print and the Internet, which are responsible for blurring the line between goods that are needed and goods for which a need is created by commercial images.

Exchange value, in which the value of goods is based on money rather than usefulness. Multinational capitalism, which separates produced goods from the plants, minerals and other original materials and the processes used to create them. Urbanization, which separates humans from the natural world. Language and ideology, in which language is used to obscure rather than reveal reality when used by dominant, politically powerful groups.<sup>107</sup>



Fig. 12. Photograph of color-bar pattern on color receiver viewed through oscillating screen and zoom

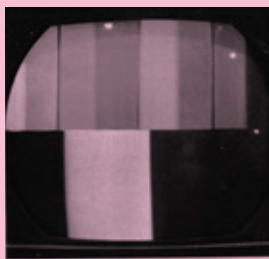
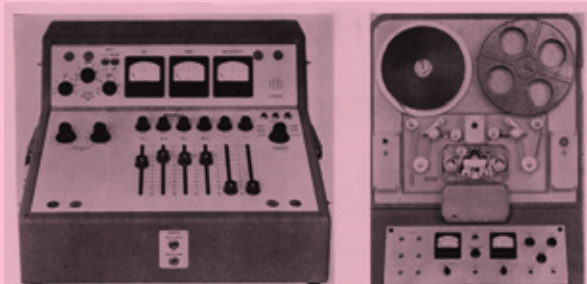


Fig. 13. Photograph taken under conditions of Fig. 12 but oscillating screen removed from receiver.



City simulators/urban simulation, classroom of the future, digital lifecycle simulation, disaster preparedness and simulation training, engineering, technology or process simulation, satellite navigation simulators, finance, flight simulators, home-built flight simulators, marine simulators, military simulations, robotics simulators, sales process simulators, truck simulator.

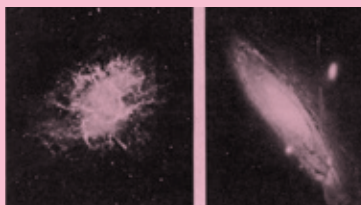
Reinforced concrete: concrete furniture, chairs, drawers, concrete sewing machines, and outside in the court yard, an entire orchestra, including violins, all concrete! Concrete trees with real leaves printed on them, a hog made out of reinforced concrete, a concrete sheep covered with real wool.<sup>108</sup>

#### SPACE RACE

**IN FACT, THE SPATIAL AND NUCLEAR MODELS DO NOT HAVE THEIR OWN ENDS: NEITHER THE DISCOVERY OF THE MOON, NOR MILITARY**

**AND STRATEGIC SUPERIORITY. THEIR TRUTH IS TO BE THE MODELS OF SIMULATION, THE MODEL VECTORS OF A SYSTEM OF PLANETARY CONTROL**

The "space race" played exactly the same role as nuclear escalation. This is why the space program was so easily able to replace it in the 1960s (Kennedy/Khrushchev), or to develop concurrently as a form of "peaceful coexistence." Because what, ultimately, is the function of the space program, of the conquest of the moon, of the launching of satellites if not the institution of a model of universal gravitation, of satellization of which the lunar module is the perfect embryo? Programmed microcosm, where nothing can be left to chance. (Cont'd pg.129)



<sup>105</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>106</sup> David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin, 2000.

<sup>107</sup> *Simulacra and Simulation*, (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*, Retrieved 2011, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra\\_and\\_Simulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra_and_Simulation)

<sup>108</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

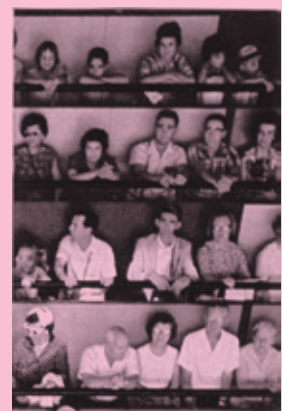
Trajectory, energy, calculation, physiology, psychology, environment—nothing can be left to contingencies, this is the total universe of the norm—the Law no longer exists, it is the operational immanence of every detail that is law. A universe purged of all threat of meaning, in a state of asepsis and weightlessness—it is this very perfection that is fascinating. The exaltation of the crowds was not a response to the event of landing on the moon or of sending a man into space (this would be, rather, the fulfillment of an earlier dream), rather, we are dumbfounded by the perfection of the programming and the technical manipulation, by the immanent wonder of the programmed unfolding of events. Fascination with the maximal norm and the mastery of probability. Vertigo of the model, which unites with the model of death, but without fear or drive. Because if the law, with its aura of transgression, if order, with its aura of violence, still taps a perverse imaginary, the norm fixes, fascinates, stupefies, and makes every imaginary involute. One no longer fantasizes about the minutiae of a program. Just watching it produces vertigo. The vertigo of a world without flaws. Now, it is the same model of programmatic infallibility, of maximum security and deterrence that today controls the spread of the social. There lies the true nuclear fallout: the meticulous operation of technology serves as a model for the meticulous operation of the social. Here as well, nothing will be left to chance, moreover this is the essence of socialization, which began centuries ago, but which has now entered its accelerated phase, toward a limit that one believed would be explosive (revolution), but which for the moment is translated by an inverse, implosive, irreversible process: the generalized deterrence of chance, of accident, of transversality, of finality, of contradiction, rupture, or complexity in a sociality illuminated by the norm, doomed to the descriptive transparency of mechanisms of information. In fact, the spatial and nuclear models do not have their own ends: neither the discovery of the moon, nor military and strategic superiority. Their truth is to be the models of simulation, the model vectors of a system of planetary control (where even the superpowers of this scenario are not free—the whole world is satellized).<sup>109</sup>

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SPECTACLE

**LIFE IS NO LONGER SOMETHING  
TO BE LIVED, BUT A SPECTACLE TO BE  
WATCHED FROM A DISTANCE**

The profound alienation in which the circulation of images has become more important than the accumulation of material commodities. Life is no longer something to be lived, but a spectacle to be watched from a distance. The spectacle is not merely as set of images, but a social relationship between people mediated by images; it does not realize philosophy but philosophizes reality. In the society of the spectacle, the concrete life of all is debased to being a speculative universe. Even violent revolt is liable to be incorporated into the constant and ever changing spectacle. Wrestling is not a sport, it is a spectacle, and it is no more ignoble to attend a wrestled performance of Suffering than a performance of the sorrows of Arnolphe of Andromaque.<sup>110</sup>




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STRIPTEAUSE

**ALL AIM AT ESTABLISHING THE WOMAN RIGHT  
FROM THE START AS AN OBJECT IN DISGUISE**

Striptease—at least Parisian striptease—is based on a contradiction: Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked. We may therefore say that we are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear, or rather on the pretence of fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration. It is only the time taken in shedding clothes which makes voyeurs of the public; but here, as in any mystifying spectacle, the decor, the props and the stereotypes intervene to contradict the initially provocative intention and eventually bury it in insignificance: evil is advertised the better to impede and exorcise it. French striptease seems to stem from what I have earlier called “Operation Margarine,” a mystifying device which consists in inoculating the public with a touch of evil, the better to plunge it afterwards into a permanently immune Moral Good: a few particles of eroticism, highlighted by the very situation on which the show is based, are in fact absorbed in a reassuring ritual which negates the flesh as surely as the vaccine or the taboo circumscribe and control the illness or the crime. There will therefore be in striptease a whole series of coverings placed upon the body of the woman in proportion as she pretends to strip it bare. Exoticism is the first of these barriers, for it is always of a petrified kind which

transports the body into the world of legend or romance: a Chinese woman equipped with an opium pipe (the indispensable symbol of “Sininess”), an undulating vamp with a gigantic cigarette-holder, a Venetian decor complete with gondola, a dress with panniers and a singer of serenades: all aim at establishing the woman right from the start as an object in disguise.<sup>111</sup>



SUCCESSIVE PHASES

EVERYTHING IS ALREADY DEAD AND RISEN IN ADVANCE

These would be the successive phases of the image:

- 1 It is the reflection of a basic reality.
- 2 It masks and perverts a basic reality.
- 3 It masks the absence of a basic reality.
- 4 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 judgement to separate truth from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.<sup>112</sup>

SUCCESSIVE SEQUENCES

THE IMAGES FRAGMENT PERCEPTION INTO SUCCESSIVE SEQUENCES, INTO STIMULI TOWARD WHICH THERE CAN ONLY BE INSTANTANEOUS RESPONSE, YES OR NO

No contemplation is possible. The images fragment perception into successive sequences, into stimuli toward which there can only be instantaneous response, yes or no—the limit of an abbreviated reaction. Film no longer allows you to question. It questions you, and directly. It is in this sense that the modern media call for, according to McLuhan, a greater degree of immediate participation, an incessant response, a total plasticity (Benjamin compares the work of the cameraman to that of a surgeon: tactility and manipulation). The role of the message is no longer information, but testing and polling, and finally control. (“Contra-role,” in the sense that all your answers are already inscribed in the “role”, on the anticipated registers of code). Montage and codification demand, in effect, that the receiver construe and decode by observing the same procedure whereby the work was assembled. The reading of the message is then only a perpetual examination of the code.<sup>113</sup>



<sup>109</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>110</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>111</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>112</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>113</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

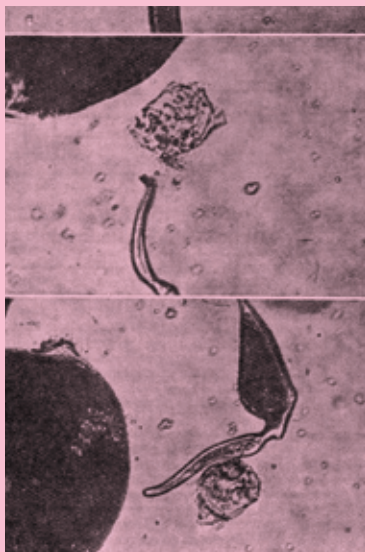
KITSCH ARCHIVE

# TELEVISION, THIRD ORDER SIMULACRA, TOYS

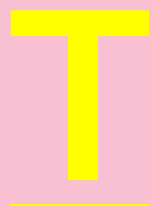


**IF ANY SYMPTOM CAN BE PRODUCED,  
AND CAN NO LONGER BE ACCEPTED AS A FACT  
OF NATURE, THEN EVERY ILLNESS MAY BE  
CONSIDERED AS SIMULATABLE AND SIMULATED**

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 pretend he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms." 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 or she ill or not? The simulator 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 real, more real than the former; but why should simulation stop at the portals of the unconscious? Why couldn't the "work" of the unconscious be "produced" in the same way as any other symptom in classical medicine? Dreams already are.



The alienist, 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 specter 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?<sup>114</sup>



TELEVISION

**THE SIMPLE PRESENCE OF TELEVISION  
TRANSFORMS OUR HABITAT INTO A KIND OF  
ARCHAIC, CLOSED-OFF CELL**

The simple presence of television transforms our habitat into a kind of archaic, closed-off cell, into a vestige of human relations whose survival is highly questionable. It is obscene goo: in the heyday described by the situationists the consumer society was lived under the sign of alienation; it was a society of the spectacle, and the spectacle, even if alienated, is never obscene. Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theater, no more illusion, when everything becomes immediately transparent, visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication. We no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication.<sup>115</sup>



<sup>114</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>115</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS, UTOPIA



THIRD ORDER SIMULACRA

THERE IS ONLY THE SIMULACRUM

Third order, associated with the postmodern age, where the simulacrum precedes the original and the distinction between reality and representation break down. There is only the simulacrum. Baudrillard theorizes the lack of distinctions between reality and simulacra originates in several phenomena:

1. Contemporary media including television, film, print and the Internet, which are responsible for blurring the line between goods that are needed and goods for which a need is created by commercial images.
2. Exchange value, in which the value of goods is based on money rather than usefulness.
3. Multinational capitalism, which separates produced goods from the plants, minerals and other original materials and the process used to create them.
4. Urbanization, which separates humans from the natural world.
5. Language and ideology, in which language is used to obscure rather than reveal reality when used by dominant, politically powerful groups.<sup>116</sup>



TOYS

THE FACT THAT FRENCH TOYS  
LITERALLY PREFIGURE THE WORLD OF ADULT  
FUNCTIONS OBVIOUSLY CANNOT BUT  
PREPARE THE CHILD TO ACCEPT THEM ALL

French toys: one could not find a better illustration of the fact that the adult Frenchman sees the child as another self. All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public the child was, all told, nothing but a smaller man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size. Invented forms are very rare: a few sets of blocks, which appeal to the spirit of do-it-yourself, are the only ones which offer dynamic forms. As for the others, French toys always mean something, and this something is always entirely socialized, constituted by the myths or the techniques of modern adult life: the Army, Broadcasting, the Post Office, Medicine (miniature instrument cases, operating theatres for dolls), School, Hair-Styling (driers for permanent-waving), the Air Force (Parachutists), Trans-

port (trains, Citroens, Vedettes, Vespas, petrol-stations), Science (Martian toys). The fact that French toys literally prefigure the world of adult functions obviously cannot but prepare the child to accept them all, by constituting for him, even before he can think about it, the alibi of a Nature which has at all times created soldiers, postmen and Vespas. Toys here reveal the list of all the things the adult does not find unusual: war, bureaucracy, ugliness, Martians, etc. It is not so much, in fact, the imitation which is the sign of an abdication, as its literalness: French toys are like a Jivaro head, in which one recognizes, shrunken to the size of an apple, the wrinkles and hair of an adult. There exist, for instance, dolls which urinate; they have an oesophagus, one gives them a bottle, they wet their nappies; soon, no doubt, milk will turn to water in their stomachs. This is meant to prepare the little girl for the causality of house-keeping, to "condition" her to her future role as mother.<sup>117</sup>



U

UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS

A MEANS OF DEALING WITH THE UNBEARABLE  
LIGHTNESS OF BEING

*Kitsch is first a means of dealing with existentialist questions about the point of living, about the existence of God, about randomness and death—a means of dealing with the unbearable lightness of being. Kitsch is essentially about the categorical agreement with being—about whether or not we can accept life as we see it around us.*<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Simulacra and Simulation. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved 2011, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra\\_and\\_Simulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra_and_Simulation).

<sup>117</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>118</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# VANITY



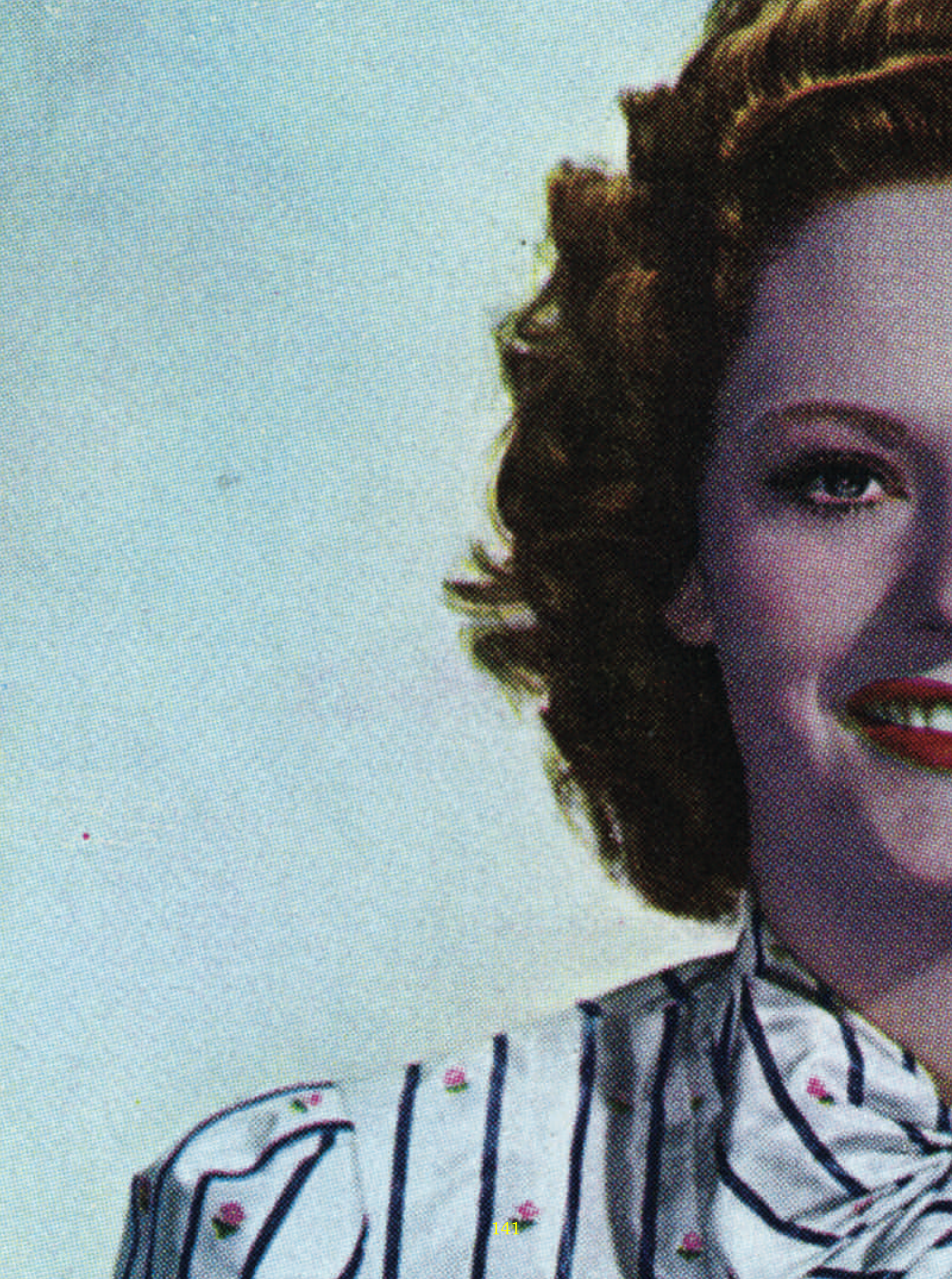












*Kitsch transforms disgust into universal approval and thus ignores all that is difficult about life (most fundamentally the fact that life eventually ends in death). Kundera says, "kitsch is a folding screen set up to curtain off death." Kitsch is an aesthetic of denial rather than acceptance, a means of representing a digestible reality. Kitsch is a world where "all questions are answered in advance. . . It could manifest itself as a parade, a cross, an image of mankind united, a political cause to the left or right, kitsch embraces cliché as a defense against the weight (or unbearable lightness) of human reality." Kitsch is the means through which complex human experience is distilled down to simple, sentimental motifs and ideas.*<sup>119</sup>




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UTOPIA

**SIMULATION STARTS FROM THE UTOPIA OF THIS PRINCIPLE OF EQUIVALENCE, FROM THE RADICAL NEGATION OF THE SIGN AS VALUE**

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.<sup>120</sup>

Anyone who thinks that the Communist regimes of Central Europe are exclusively the work of criminals is overlooking a basic truth: the criminal regimes were made not by criminals but by enthusiasts convinced they had discovered the only road to paradise. They defended that road so valiantly that they were forced to execute many people. Later it became clear that there was no paradise...<sup>121</sup>




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VANITY

**SHE WONDERS AT THE VANITY OF THE TOMBSTONES**

We find her in Paris now, free but depressed with the burden of the unbearable lightness of her existence. Sabina wonders what purpose her life serves. Is the unbearable lightness of being her one true role? While thinking those things (after four years in Geneva, three in Paris, Kundera notes), she receives a letter from Tomas' son, Simon, telling of the deaths of Tomas and Tereza. Simon thinks of Sabina as his father's closest friend, she learns. Moved, she walks to a cemetery, where she wonders at the vanity of the tombstones, some in the forms of chapels and houses.<sup>122</sup>



<sup>119</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>120</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>121</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>122</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

**WATERGATE,  
WINE & MILK,  
WOMAN,  
A WORLD BETRAYED,  
WORLD OF  
WRESTLING,  
WORK**



# W

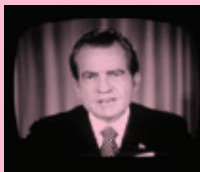
WATERGATE

THERE IS ONLY THE SIMULACRUM

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 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 mocality (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 elements of its indifferent and shifting configuration in the moral and political consciousnesses of people.



moral panic as we approach the primal (mise-en-) scene of capital: its instantaneous cruelty; its incomprehensible ferocity; its fundamental immorality—these are what are 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).

Hence Watergate was only a trap set by the system to catch its adversaries—a simulation of scandal to regenerative ends. This is embodied by the character called “Deep Throat,” who was said to be a Republican grey eminence manipulating the leftist journalists in order to get rid of Nixon - and why not?

It would take too long to run through the whole range of operational negativity, of all those scenarios of deterrence which, like Watergate, try to revive a moribund principle by simulated scandal, phantasm, murder - a sort of hormonal treatment by negativity and crisis.<sup>123</sup>

WINE AND MILK

THE MYTHOLOGY OF WINE CAN IN FACT HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE USUAL AMBIGUITY OF OUR DAILY LIFE. FOR IT IS TRUE THAT WINE IS A GOOD AND FINE SUBSTANCE, BUT IT IS NO LESS TRUE THAT ITS PRODUCTION IS DEEPLY INVOLVED IN FRENCH CAPITALISM



Watergate is not a scandal: this is what must be said at all cost, for this is what everyone is concerned to conceal, this dissimulation masking a strengthening of morality, a

<sup>123</sup> Jean Baudrillard, Simulations, Semiotext(e), 1984.

Wine is felt by the French nation to be a possession which is its very own, just like its three hundred and sixty types of cheese and its culture. It is a totem-drink, corresponding to the milk of the Dutch cow or the tea ceremonially taken by the British Royal Family.

Being essentially a function whose terms can change, wine has at its disposal apparently plastic powers: it can serve as an alibi to dream as well as reality, it depends on the users of the myth. For the worker, wine means enabling him to do his task with demiurgic ease ("heart for the work"). For the intellectual, wine has the reverse function: the local white wine or the beaujolais of the writer is meant to cut him off from the all too expected environment of cocktails and expensive drinks (the only ones which snobbishness leads one to offer him). Wine will deliver him from myths... American films, in which the hero, strong and uncompromising, did not shrink from having a glass of milk before drawing his avenging Colt, have paved the way for this new Parsifalian myth. A strange mixture of milk and pomegranate, originating in America, is to this day sometimes drunk in Paris, among gangsters and hoodlums. But milk remains an exotic substance; it is wine which is part of the nation. The mythology of wine can in fact help us to understand the usual ambiguity of our daily life. For it is true that wine is a good and fine substance, but it is no less true that its production is deeply involved in French capitalism, whether it is that of the private distillers or that of the big settlers in Algeria who impose on the Muslims, on the very land of which they have been dispossessed, a crop of which they have no need, while they lack even bread. There are thus very engaging myths which are however not innocent. And the characteristic of our current alienation is precisely that wine cannot be an unalloyedly blissful substance, except if we wrongfully forget that it is also the product of an expropriation.<sup>124</sup>

WOMAN

NOT EVERY WOMAN WAS WORTHY OF BEING CALLED A WOMAN

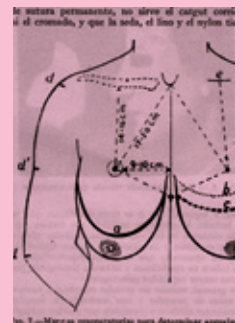
During one of their first times together, Franz announced to her, in an oddly emphatic way, Sabina, you are a woman. She could not understand why he accentuated the obvious with the solemnity of a Columbus who has just sighted land. Not until later did she understand that the word woman, on which he had placed such uncommon emphasis, did not, in his eyes, signify one of the two human sexes; it represented a value. Not every woman was worthy of being called a woman.

But if Sabina was, in Franz's eyes, a woman, then what was his wife, Marie-Claude? More than twenty years earlier, several months after Franz met Marie-Claude, she had threatened to take her life if he abandoned her. Franz was bewitched by the threat. He was not particularly fond of Marie-Claude, but he was very much taken with her love. He felt himself unworthy of so great a love, and felt he owed her a low bow. He bowed so low that he married her. And even though Marie-Claude never recaptured the emotional intensity that accompanied her suicide threat, in his heart he kept its memory alive with the thought that he must never hurt her and always respect the woman in her.

It is an interesting formulation. Not respect Marie-Claude, but respect the woman in Marie-Claude. But if Marie-Claude is herself a woman, then who is that other woman hiding in her, the one he must always respect? The Platonic ideal of a woman, perhaps? No. His mother. It never would have occurred to him to say he respected the woman in his mother. He worshipped his mother and not some woman inside her. His mother and the Platonic ideal of womanhood were one and the same.<sup>125</sup>



MAKE-UP TECHNIQUE BY THE HOUSE OF WESTINGHOE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENRY WAINMAN. POSED BY MILDRED WORTH. COURTESY OF WARDEN BROS. VARIOUS TYPES OF MAKE-UP



En estos parámetros, no sirve el cuello corto ni el cuadrado, y que la boca, el fino y el nylon tra



A WORLD BETRAYED

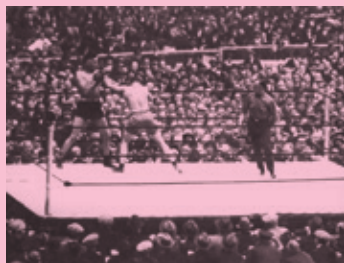
BEAUTY HIDES BEHIND THE SCENES OF A MAY DAY PARADE. IF WE WANT TO FIND IT, WE MUST DEMOLISH THE SCENERY

From that time on she knew that beauty is a world betrayed. The only way we can encounter it is if its persecutors have overlooked it somewhere. Beauty hides behind the scenes of a May Day parade. If we want to find it, we must demolish the scenery.<sup>126</sup>

**WHAT IS THUS DISPLAYED FOR THE  
PUBLIC IS THE GREAT SPECTACLE OF SUFFERING,  
DEFEAT, AND JUSTICE**

The public is completely uninterested in knowing whether the contest is rigged or not, and rightly so; it abandons itself to the primary virtue of the spectacle, which is to abolish all motives and all consequences: what matters is not what it thinks but what it sees.

In other words, wrestling is a sum of spectacles, of which no single one is a function: each moment imposes the total knowledge of a passion which rises erect and alone, without ever extending to the crowning moment of a result. Thus the function of the wrestler is not to win: it is to go exactly through the motions which are expected of him. Each sign in wrestling is therefore endowed with an absolute clarity, since one must always understand everything on the spot. As soon as the adversaries are in the ring, the public is overwhelmed with the obviousness of the roles. What is thus displayed for the public is the great spectacle of Suffering, Defeat, and Justice. Wrestling presents man's suffering with all the amplification of tragic masks.



The wrestler who suffers in a hold which is reputedly cruel (an arm-lock, a twisted leg) offers an excessive portrayal of Suffering; like a primitive Pietà, he exhibits for all to see his face, exaggeratedly contorted by an intolerable affliction. It is obvious, of course, that in wrestling reserve would be out of place, since it is opposed to the voluntary ostentation of the spectacle, to this Exhibition of Suffering which is the very aim of the fight. There is another figure, more spectacular still than

a hold, it is a forearm smash, which is accompanied by a dull noise and the exaggerated sagging of a vanquished body. In the forearm smash, catastrophe is brought to maximum obviousness, so much so that ultimately, the gesture appears as no more than a symbol. When the hero or the villain of the drama, the man who was seen a few minutes earlier possessed by moral rage, magnified into a sort of metaphysical sign, leaves the wrestling hall, impassive, anonymous, carrying a small suitcase and arm-in-arm with his wife, no one can doubt that wrestling holds the power of transmutation which is common to the Spectacle and to Religious Worship. In the ring, and even in the depths of their voluntary ignominy, wrestlers remain gods because they are, for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils the form of a Justice which is at last intelligible.

Wrestlers, who are very experienced, know perfectly well how to direct the spontaneous episodes of the fight so as to conform them to the image which the public has of the great themes of its mythology. A wrestler can irritate or disgust, he never disappoints, for he always accomplishes completely, by a progressive solidification of signs, what the public expects of him. In wrestling, nothing exists except in the absolute, there is no symbol, no allusion, everything is presented exhaustively. Each action discards all parasitic meanings and ceremonially offers to the public a pure and full signification, rounded like Nature. What is portrayed by wrestling is therefore an ideal understanding of things, it is the euphoria of men raised for a while above the constitutive ambiguity of everyday situations and placed before the panoramic view of univocal Nature, in which signs at last correspond to causes, without obstacle, without evasion, without contradiction.<sup>127</sup>

**EVERYBODY STILL PRODUCES,  
AND MORE AND MORE, BUT WORK HAS  
SUBTLY BECOME SOMETHING ELSE**

The spark of production, the violence of its stake no longer exists. Everybody still produces, and more and more, but work has subtly become something else: a need (as Marx ideally envisaged it, but not at all in the same sense), the object of a social "demand," like leisure, to which it is equivalent in the general run of life's options. A demand exactly proportional to the loss of stake in the work process.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>125</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>126</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984.

<sup>127</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>128</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

X=,  
EX-NOMINATION,  
EXOTICISM



x=

**JUST AS IF LATIN/LATINITY = BASQUE/X,**  
**X = BASQUITY**

There is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely. And it is precisely because they are historical that history can very easily suppress them. This instability forces the mythologist to use a terminology adapted to it, and about which I should now like to say a word, because it often is a cause for irony: I mean neologism. The concept is a constituting element of myth: if I want to decipher myths, I must somehow be able to name concepts. The dictionary supplies me with a few: Goodness, Kindness, Wholesomeness, Humaneness, etc. But by definition, since it is the dictionary which gives them to me, these particular concepts are not historical. Now what I need most often is ephemeral concepts, in connection with limited contingencies: neologism is then inevitable. China is one thing, the idea which a French petit-bourgeois could have of it not so long ago is another: for this peculiar mixture of bells, rickshaws, and opium-dens, no other word possible but Sininess. (Or perhaps Sinity? Just as if Latin/Latinity = Basque/x, x= Basquity. Unlovely? One should at least get some consolation from the fact that conceptual neologisms are never arbitrary: they are built according to a highly sensible proportional rule... a Basque chalet: or even better, the very essence of Basquity.<sup>129</sup>

EX-NOMINATION

**EX-NOMINATION REFERS TO THE WAY**  
**THE BOURGEOISIE REMAINS 'ANONYMOUS'**  
**BY SUCCEEDING IN PRESENTING**  
**ITS IDEOLOGY AS COMMON SENSE**

Ex-nomination refers to the way the bourgeoisie remains "anonymous" by succeeding in presenting its ideology as "common sense." This is a political language: it represents nature for me only inasmuch as I am going to transform it, it is a language thanks to which I act the object; the tree is not an image for me, it is simply the meaning of my action. But if I am not a woodcutter, I can no longer "speak the tree", I can only speak about it, on it. My language is no longer the instrument of an "acted-upon tree," it is the "tree-celebrated" which becomes the instrument of my language. I no longer have anything more than an intransitive relationship with the tree; this tree is no longer the meaning of reality as a human action, it is an image-at-one's-disposal. Compared to the real language of the woodcutter, the language I create is a second order language, a metalanguage in which I shall henceforth not "act the things" but "act their names," and which is to the primary language what the gesture is to the act. This second-order language is not entirely mythical, but it is the very locus where myth settles; for myth can work only on objects which have already received the mediation of a first language. There is therefore one language which is not mythical, it is the language of man as a producer: wherever man speaks in

order to transform reality and no longer to preserve it as an image, wherever he links his language to the making of things, metalanguage is referred to a language-object, and myth is impossible.<sup>130</sup>



EXOTICISM

**THERE IS HERE A FIGURE FOR**  
**EMERGENCIES: EXOTICISM**

The petit-bourgeois is a man unable to imagine the Other. If he comes face to face with him, he blinds himself, ignores and denies him, or else transforms him into himself. In the petit-bourgeois universe, all the experiences of confrontation are reverberating, any otherness is reduced to sameness. The spectacle or the tribunal, which are both places where the Other threatens to appear in full view, become mirrors. This is because the Other is a scandal which threatens his essence. Dominici cannot have access to social existence unless he is previously reduced to the state of a small simulacrum of the President of the Assizes or the Public Prosecutor: this is the price one must pay in order to condemn him justly, since justice is a weighing operation and since scales can only weigh like against like.



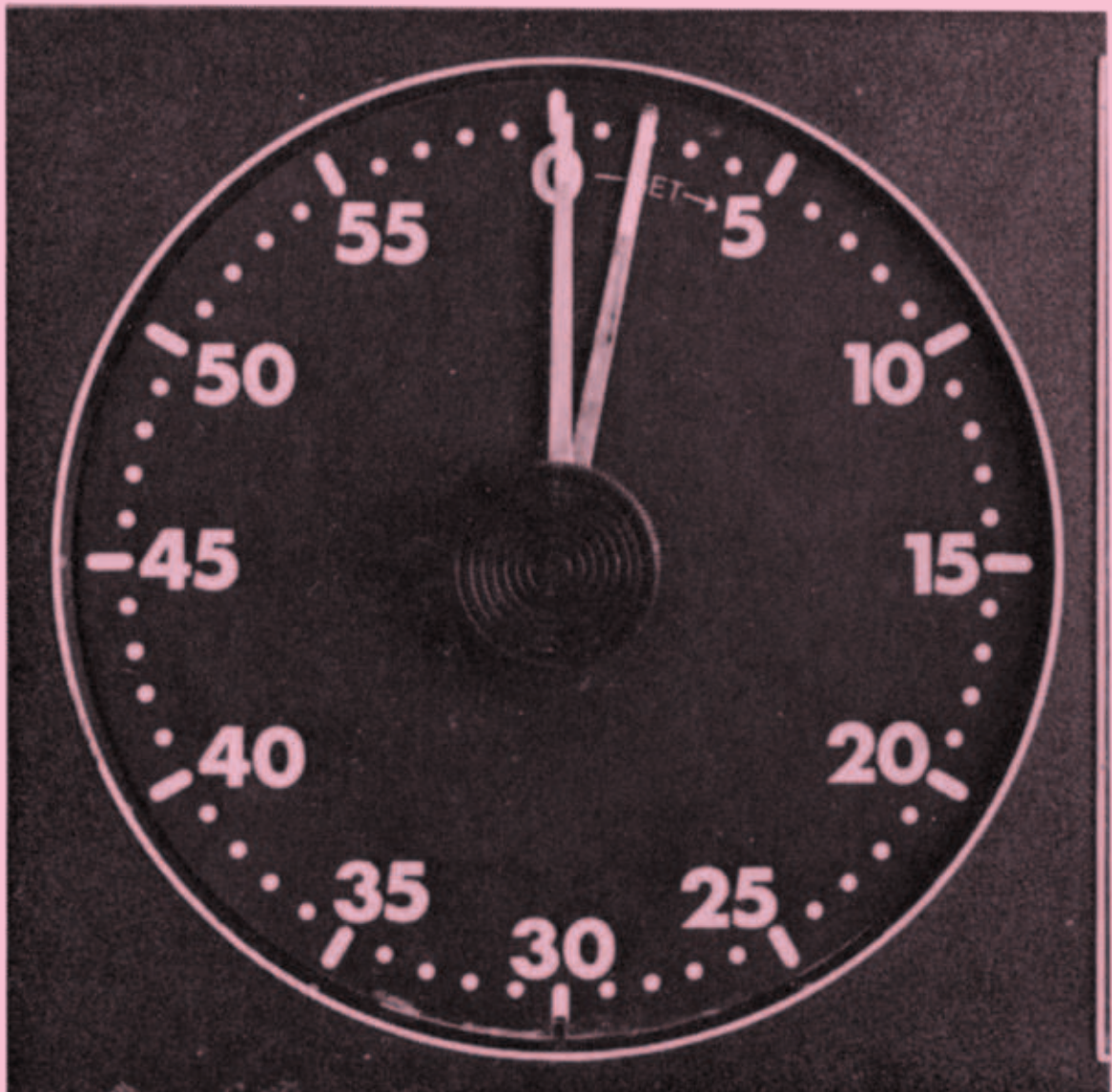
There are, in any petit-bourgeois consciousness, small simulacra of the hooligan, the parricide, the homosexual, etc., which periodically the judiciary extracts from its brain, puts in the dock, admonishes and condemns: one never tries anybody but analogues who have gone astray: it is a question of direction, not of nature, for that's how men are. Sometimes—rarely—the Other is revealed as irreducible: not because of a sudden scruple, but because common sense rebels: a man does not have a white skin, but a black one, another drinks pear juice, not Pernod. How can one assimilate the Negro, the Russian? There is here a figure for emergencies: exoticism. (Conrd pg.150)

<sup>129</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>130</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# YESTERYEAR (OBJECT OF)



The same change in fortune as for power: the scenario of work is there to conceal the fact that the work-real, the production-real, has disappeared. And for that matter so has the strike-real too, which is no longer a stoppage of work, but its alternative pole in the ritual scansion of the social calendar. It is as if everyone has “occupied” their work place or work post, after declaring the strike, and resumed production, as is the custom in a “self-managed” job, in exactly the same terms as before, by declaring themselves (and virtually being) in a state of permanent strike.<sup>131</sup>



This isn't a science-fiction dream: everywhere it is a question of a doubling of the work process. And of a double or locum for the strike process—strikes which are incorporated like obsolescence in objects, like crises in production. Then there are no longer any strikes or work, but both simultaneously, that is to say something else entirely: a wizardry of work, a trompe l'oeil, a scenodrama (not to say melodrama) of production, collective dramaturgy upon the empty stage of the social. It is no longer a question of the ideology of work—of the traditional ethic that obscures the “real” labour process and the “objective” process of exploitation—but of the scenario of work. Likewise, it is no longer a question of the ideology of power, but of the scenario of power. Ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs; simulation corresponds to a short-circuit of reality and to its reduplication by signs. It is always the aim of ideological analysis to restore the objective process; it is always a false problem to want to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum. And what can be said about work, which the Exhibition places among great universal facts, putting it on the same plane as birth and death, as if it was quite evident that it belongs to the same order of fate? That work is an age-old fact does not in the least prevent it from remaining a perfectly historical fact. Firstly, and evidently, because of its modes, its motivations, its ends and its benefits, which matter to such an extent that it will never be fair to confuse in a purely gestural identity the colonial and the Western worker (let us also ask the North African workers of the Goutte d'Or district in Paris what they think of The Great Family of Man). Secondly, because of the very differences in its inevitability: we know very well that work is “natural” just as long as it is “profitable,” and that in modifying the inevitability of the profit, we shall perhaps one day modify the inevitability of labour. It is this entirely historified work which we should be told about, instead of an eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures. All this Adamism is to give to the immobility of the world the alibi of a “wisdom” and a “lyricism” which only make the gestures of man look eternal the better to defuse them.<sup>132</sup>

# Y

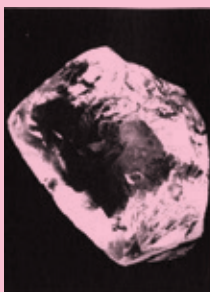
YESTERYEAR (OBJECT OF)

## IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE OBJECT OF YESTERYEAR

Today, the object is no longer “functional” in the traditional meaning of the word; it no longer serves serves you, it tests you. It has nothing to do with the object of yesteryear, no more than does media news with the “reality” of facts. Both objects and information result already from a selection, a montage, from a point-of-view.<sup>133</sup>



en centrala enheten i en kardenskt uppbyggd kodareströmg, upprätt stillningsde,



<sup>131</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>132</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.

<sup>133</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

KITSCH ARCHIVE

# ZHADNOV, ZODIALOGICAL SIGNS OF THE BOURGEOIS UNIVERSE



**THE MECHANIC, THE ENGINEER,  
EVEN THE USER, 'SPEAK THE OBJECT'; BUT  
THE MYTHOLOGIST IS CONDEMNED  
TO METALANGUAGE**

One last exclusion threatens the mythologist: he constantly runs the risk of causing the reality which he purports to protect, to disappear. Quite apart from all speech, the D.S. 19 is a technologically defined object: it is capable of a certain speed, it meets the wind in a certain way, etc. And this type of reality cannot be spoken of by the mythologist. The mechanic, the engineer, even the user, "speak the object"; but the mythologist is condemned to metalanguage. This exclusion already has a name: it is what is called ideologism. Zhdanovism has roundly condemned it (without proving, incidentally, that it was, for the time being, avoidable) in the early Lukacs, in Marr's linguistics, in works like those of Benichou or Goldmann, opposing to it the reticence of a reality inaccessible to ideology, such as that of language according to Stalin. It is true that ideologism resolves the contradiction of alienated reality by an amputation, not a synthesis (but as for Zhdanovism, it does not even resolve it): wine is objectively good, and at the same time, the goodness of wine is a myth here is the aporia. The mythologist gets out of this as best he can: he deals with the goodness of wine, not with the wine itself, just as the historian deals with Pascal's ideology, not with the Pensees in themselves. It seems that this is a difficulty pertaining to our times: there is as yet only one possible choice, and this choice can bear only on two equally extreme methods: either to posit a reality which is entirely permeable to history, and ideologize; or, conversely, to posit a reality which is ultimately impenetrable, irreducible, and, in this case, poetize. In a word, I do not yet see a synthesis between ideology and poetry (by poetry I understand, in a very general way, the search for the inalienable meaning of things). The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. It would seem that we are condemned for some time yet always to speak excessively about reality.<sup>134</sup>

ZODIACAL SIGNS OF THE  
BOURGEOIS UNIVERSE

**BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY CONTINUOUSLY  
TRANSFORMS THE PRODUCTS OF HISTORY INTO  
ESSENTIAL TYPES**

But it is obvious that those given here, such as they are, fall into two great categories, which are like the Zodiacal Signs of the bourgeois universe: the Essences and the Scales. Bourgeois ideology continuously transforms the products of history into essential types. Just as the

cuttlefish squirts its ink in order to protect itself, it cannot rest until it has obscured the ceaseless making of the world, fixated this world into an object which can be forever possessed, catalogued its riches, embalmed it, and injected into reality some purifying essence which will stop its transformation, its flight towards other forms of existence. And these riches, thus fixated and frozen, will at last become computable: bourgeois morality will essentially be a weighing operation, the essences will be placed in scales of which bourgeois man will remain the motionless beam. For the very end of myths is to immobilize the world: they must suggest and mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of possessions. Thus, every day and everywhere, man is stopped by myths, referred by them to this motionless prototype which lives in his place, stifles him in the manner of a huge internal parasite and assigns to his activity the narrow limits within which he is allowed to suffer without upsetting the world: bourgeois pseudo-physis is in the fullest sense a prohibition for man against inventing himself. Myths are nothing but this ceaseless, untiring solicitation, this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them one day as if for all time. For the Nature, in which they are locked up under the pretext of being eternalized, is nothing but an Usage. And it is this Usage, however lofty, that they must take in hand and transform.<sup>135</sup>



<sup>134</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, Semiotext(e), 1984.

<sup>135</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1972.







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**The Chinese Frontiers**

Ting Tsu Kuo











No. 64 CONS.

H. 8 1/4"

W. 24"

D. 16 1/2"



