

# Historimulacram

Submitted by Astarte Naimoli on May 12<sup>th</sup>

Final Research Paper for  
Advanced Research Seminar: Visual Culture  
Ivana Radavic, Instructor  
Parsons The New School for Design  
School of Art and Design History and Theory

Spring 2024

## Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	3
Artist Statement.....	14
Introduction.....	15
Chapter 1 .....	17
Chapter 2 .....	18
Chapter 3 .....	21
Interview .....	24
Bibliography.....	26

# List of Figures

Fig. 1: Jean Baudrillard at home, date unknown, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 2: A simulator of space, 1962, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 3: Salvador Dali The Transparent Simulacrum, date unknown, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 4: A painting of a simulated Dome, 1703, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 5: Two Egyptian ladies study a painting depicting a large battle in the Military Museum, 2009, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 6: Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight, 2008, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 7: A simulated rainstorm installation from inside a home, October 1986 - December 1986, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 8: Simulation of elaborately carved wood frame, oval, brought to the rectangle by simulated surface of graining. Enclosed in the frame is a painted representation of foliage and a mockingbird, 1850–60, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 9: A doll dancing with Disney characters with an assortment of a few objects, 1991, courtesy of Jstor.

Fig. 10: A replica of a diamond, circa 1907, courtesy of Jstor.



Fig .1 Gueorgui Pinkhassov. (1996). FRANCE. Paris. Jean BAUDRILLARD, French philosopher. 1996. Jean BAUDRILLARD at home, summer 1996.  
<https://jstor.org/stable/community.9866624>

Within the framework of Simulacra, the piece represents a mediated reality, blurring the boundaries between the public persona of Baudrillard and his private life. This prompts reflection on the authenticity of representations and the construction of identity in the media age.

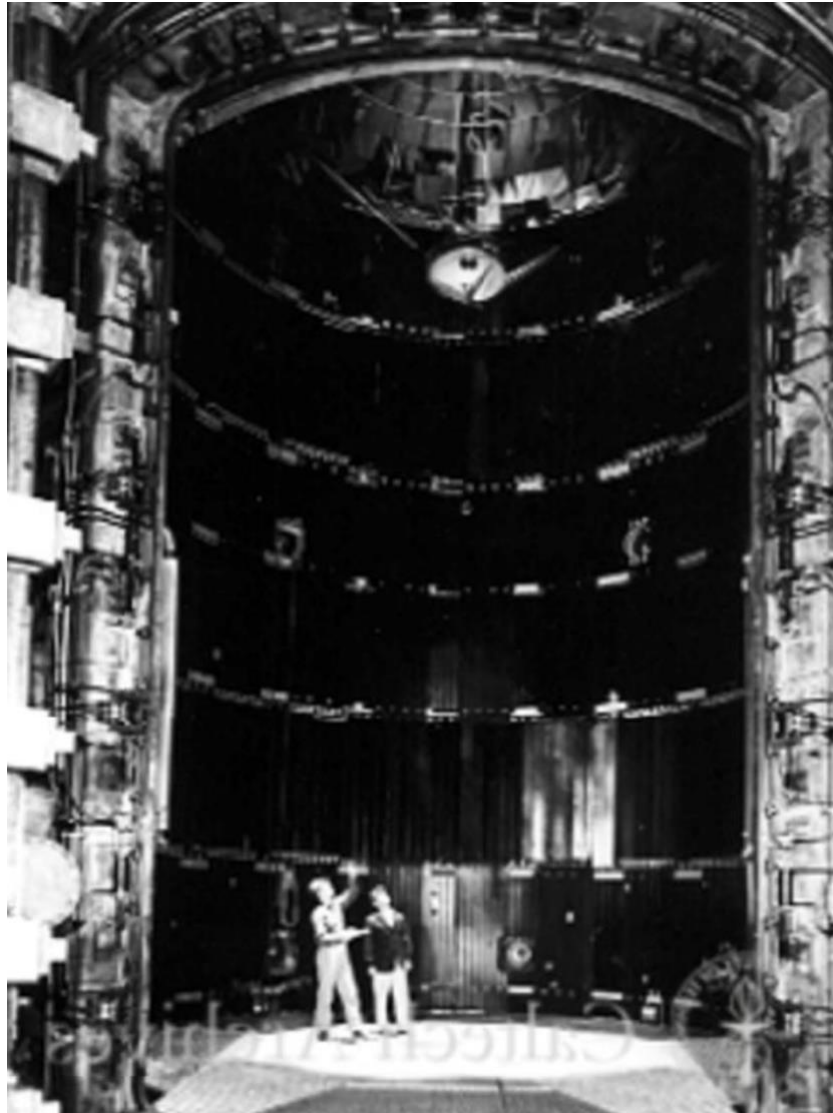


Fig. 2 Space simulator. (1962). <https://jstor.org/stable/community.30993885>

It provides insights into the capabilities of the space simulator at the JPL, highlighting its role in testing spacecraft and equipment under simulated space conditions. The piece offers a glimpse into the space simulator at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, showcasing its importance in testing spacecraft and equipment for space missions.



**Fig. 3** Salvador Dalí. (1938). *The Transparent Simulacrum of the Feigned Image* [Oil on canvas]. Buffalo AKG Art Museum; Bequest of A. Conger Goodyear, 1966.  
<https://jstor.org/stable/community.21790449>

Within the framework of simulacra, the piece represents a simulated reality where transparency serves as a metaphor for the complexity of representation and the inherent artificiality of images, prompting reflection on the nature of truth and illusion in contemporary culture.



Fig. 4 Andrea Pozzo. (1703). *Simulated Dome*. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.14497753>

Within the framework of simulacra, the image represents a simulated architectural environment, challenging viewers' perceptions of space and reality. This prompts reflection on the authenticity of simulated experiences and the role of illusion in shaping artistic expression.





Fig. 5 Jason Larkin. (2009). Two Egyptian ladies study a painting depicting a large battle in the Military Museum. Housed in the Citadel it features weapons and costumes from Egyptian warfare as well as life-size simulations depicting several of Egypt's key battles. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.12134191>

The image represents a simulated representation of historical events, prompting reflection on the authenticity of simulated experiences and the influence of museums on perceptions of history.





Fig. 6 Katie Paterson. (2008). *Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight* [Light bulb with halogen filament, frosted colored shell, 28W, 4500K, log book].  
<https://jstor.org/stable/community.10704208>

Within the framework of simulacra, the image represents a simulated reality, challenging viewers' perceptions of authenticity and inviting reflection on the role of simulation in shaping artistic representation of natural phenomena.



Fig. 7 *In a Strange House*. (October 1986 – December 1986).  
<https://jstor.org/stable/community.34681587>

Within the framework of Simulacra, the image represents a simulated reality, blurring the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. This prompts reflection on the authenticity of simulated experiences and the role of simulation in shaping perceptions of reality.



Fig. 8 [Block-printed and hand painted on a combed background]. (1850–60). Cooper Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution; Wallcoverings Department; Gift of Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.10639866>

Within the framework of simulacra, the image represents a simulated reality, challenging viewers' perceptions of authenticity and inviting reflection on the role of simulation in shaping artistic representation.



**Fig. 9** Porter, Liliana, Argentine, b.1941. (1991). *Simulacrum* [Acrylic, silkscreen and collage on paper]. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.14399931>

The piece titled "Simulacrum" explores the representation of humanoid figures resembling dolls. It presents humanoid figures within the artwork that resemble dolls, suggesting an exploration of the uncanny and artificial nature of human-like simulacra. Discussions may arise regarding the concept of artificiality, the boundary between the real and the artificial, and the psychological implications of encountering lifelike representations. By examining the artistic intent and cultural context of the piece, one can analyze the significance of representation and implications pertaining to perceptions of reality and artificiality. The piece depicts humanoid figures resembling dolls, inviting viewers to contemplate the uncanny nature of artificial representations and their relationship to reality.



Fig. 10 Unknown. *Diamond (Replica)*. circa 1907. <a href="https://www.tepapa.govt.nz">Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa</a>; Collection: History; Gift of Mrs K A MacLaughlin, 1966. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.27032467>.

In the realm of simulacra, the replica in "Diamond Replica" acts as a simulacrum—a copy lacking qualities of its original referent, existing within a realm where representations often precede and potentially supersede reality itself. By engaging viewers with its aesthetic composition, the image prompts a critical examination of the constructed nature of reality and the profound impact of replication on our perceptions.



# Artist Statement

Astarte (2002, Brooklyn, New York) is a versatile artist exploring the realms of writing, design, and film. Her work consists of vibrant diversity, pieces designed to deeply resonate with individuals through relatable, uplifting, and thought-provoking narratives. Primarily a writer and filmmaker, Astarte crafts pieces that invite readers on a journey of self-reflection and exploration. Whether weaving intricate worlds in fiction or constructing "choose your own adventure" websites, she infuses a playful, colorful, and spontaneous spirit into her projects.

Astarte's design approach is characterized by a commitment to breaking conventional norms. From HTML websites to short films experimenting with various colors to convey emotions, she explores the boundaries of artistic expression. In her written work, such as "The Boom Bus," she challenges traditional storytelling structures like The Hero's Journey, embracing a mindset of what she likes to call "writing outside of the box." Her inspiration emanates from a profound desire to enlighten audiences and provide a cheerful experience through her art. As she articulates, being an artist allows her to connect with people on a level that exceeds the ordinary, resonating with those who share her visionary perspective.

Beyond her creative writing and design pursuits, Astarte engages in exploratory studies that push the boundaries of visual representation. For instance, she conducted a study analyzing her personal Instagram data, transforming it into an interactive game. Users play as the social media app, wandering through a neighborhood to hunt for her



data. Astarte manipulated the size of each asset Instagram claimed she had an interest in and altered its size in terms of accuracy. Challenging the precision of data representation and experimenting with innovative methods that one can utilize to visually display data. Currently, Astarte is researching the theory of Simulacra by Jean Baudrillard, to understand its relevance more deeply in the modern day and what his ideologies may look like in a contemporary eye. Her commitment to exploring new avenues of expression continues to drive her artistic journey, pushing the boundaries of creativity and challenging the status quo.

## Introduction

With extensive research into the theory of Simulacrum, it was inevitable to discover its correlation with how we perceive history. As I've delved deeper into Jean Baudrillard's philosophy, it became more apparent that our view of history is Simulacra in itself. Come with me to unveil the hidden truths of how history is taught and how it influences our perception of the past. I intend to shed light on how the compartmentalization of history has significantly impacted our understanding of it.

Through examining historical compartmentalization, my research aims to explain how the distortion of historical narratives influences our perception of reality, questioning the way we are taught to understand it. The conversation surrounding historical compartmentalization has been prominent within the field of historiography, with notable scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Hayden White engaging in debates about its implications involving how the past is documented. Nonetheless, these scholarly

discussions have yet to fully explore the profound impact of historical compartmentalization on shaping our perception of reality and how it relates to simulacrum.

The text below will reference many reputable sources, but most importantly, "Simulacra and Simulation" by Jean Baudrillard. His book delves into the extensive influence of Simulacra in society. Baudrillard argues that simulations (imitation of a situation or process) have become more real than reality itself, leading to a state of hyperreality where the distinction between reality and simulation is blurred. His book explores the consequences of this phenomenon across various domains, including culture, media, technology, and politics. Baudrillard suggests that the abundance of Simulacra has resulted in a loss of meaning and authenticity, shifting conventional ideas of truth.

In my project, I delve into this issue with a particular focus on understanding how compartmentalization creates distorted historical narratives. Specifically, I will analyze how compartmentalization has fragmented our understanding of reality over time. By examining different historiographical approaches and contrasting them with the concept of a unified historical narrative, I aim to unveil previously overlooked connections between compartmentalization and the perception of reality through interviews, objects/visual analysis, books, articles and more. My argument suggests that historical compartmentalization significantly contributes to the perception of reality as a simulacrum. Ultimately offering insight that'll deepen our understanding of historical representation and narratives.

# Chapter 1

## The definition of Simulacra and who Jean Baudrillard was

To begin, let us define what Simulacra is in the eyes of Jean Baudrillard, how it relates to history, and who he was. Jean Baudrillard was a famous French sociologist, philosopher, and poet who is best known for his studies into the “hyperreal” and “simulacrum.” Hyperreality is an intriguing concept that describes a state of being in which the boundary between reality and its representations becomes indistinguishable. In other words, it is when what is real and what is not becomes blurred. On the other hand, Simulacrum is a term that refers to an imitation or representation of a person, place, or thing. It can be seen as a copy of something that may or may not exist in reality. There’s a difference between the hyperreal and simulacra though. According to an article written by John Nosta on The Medium “Hyperreality, by Baudrillard’s definition, represents a condition where the distinction between the ‘real’ and the simulated blurs, as the simulacrum (the copy or image) no longer refers to any original reality, but functions as ‘reality’ in its own right.”<sup>1</sup>

## How this relates to history and how it is studied

What does this have to do with history you ask? When history is being studied, we often divide historical narratives into distinct isolated categories. My philosophy is that the compartmentalization of history has warped our understanding of the past. Thus, our history is not based on objective facts but rather on subjective imagination. The world as

<sup>1</sup> Nosta, John. "The Digitization Of Reality: Simulacra, hyperreality and the metamorphosis of perception." Medium. June 24, 2023. Accessed May 10th 2024.

we know it and perceive it to have been, is not really what it is or was. Humans strive to define everything, but the real definition of what things are is truly unknown, making our interpretations of reality ultimately false. When we are taught about the past, we are presented with history in pieces. While being linear and in chronological order, we lack the in-between. In turn, this can cause fragmented understanding, lack of context, a limited perspective, and more.

## Chapter 2

### Historimulacram

Nothing is truly defined; therefore, how can one ever accurately define it? Hence, we are living in a simulacrum. A representation of reality based on a history that has no basis in reality. Compartmentalization of history causes incomplete and even sometimes entirely false historical narrative views, with many events in history often undocumented as we attempt to fill in the blanks. I will be referring to my philosophy as ***Historimulacram***.

Jean Baudrillard states in his book:

*"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."*<sup>2</sup>

Symbols and signs generate a new reality that exists independently of its origins, leading to a complex interplay between representation and reality. They have the tendency to change over time. If this is the case, and no definition is static, can we give deeper meaning to anything if everything is subject to change? In history, a common symbol in Christianity is

<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and simulation. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

the cross. The cross was used to represent a form of torture or execution. However, through Christianity, the cross became a symbol of hope, redemption, and divine sacrifice changing its definition. This is just one example of this however more and more over time we can see an alteration in things that once had static meanings. We can narrow his ideology down to language itself. With words and phrases losing their original meaning or being modified for commercial or political purposes. This manipulation can lead to a falsification of language and a shifting of meanings. What does a world with no definition become and who or why are they allowing them to change?

### Examples of Simulacra

Baudrillard provides extensive examples of Simulacra in his writings however one that I've found to be the most useful and enticing in my research was his book published in 1981 titled "Simulacra and Simulation." He often refers to Disneyland as a clear exemplar of Simulacra. He mentions how Disneyland encapsulates the dynamic of how our world operates and is replicated seamlessly. Baudrillard speculates that Disneyland is characterized by simulated environments and states that these synthetic surroundings cause us to in turn experience synthetic emotions as well. These emotions are not based on genuine experiences, but rather on artificial simulations that lack the depth and authenticity of the real. In other words, he suggests that our emotions have become entirely insincere. This is particularly intriguing as it theorizes that true phantasmagoria exists within human interactions and emotion, even more so than within the constructed

illusions and fantasies (Mickey Mouse and Pirates, etc.). The observation is noteworthy as it suggests that there may be an inexplicable and unfathomable quality of human emotion that is directly affected by simulated realities, which are only getting stronger and more abundant. Further exploration of this idea could yield significant insights into the nature of human emotion and the effects of hyper-reality on our minds.

Lastly, he writes the most interesting statement of all:

*“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...”<sup>2</sup>*

In his work, Baudrillard offers a critical analysis of media, arguing that it is a powerful tool for promoting biased interests and agendas. It has the ability to manipulate our perception of reality and as a result, the world we live in can be seen as a simulation, a direct outcome of the messages publicized through various forms of media. Now with that being said we must ask, when are our emotions truly valid?

As an example, I have included an image of Jean Baudrillard himself in Figure #1. Ironically, this image of him can be seen as a version of Simulacra, which is a representation of Baudrillard lacking his direct presence or reality. Many of the images that I have provided are strong examples of hyperreality. For instance, Figure #6 shows the use of a light bulb to simulate the moon, Figure #10 replicates a clear structure that looks like a diamond, Figure #4 replicates a dome, and Figure #2 simulates space. These images only scratch the surface of how art can visually represent the ideologies of Baudrillard and further shape visual culture.

<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and simulation. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.



## Chapter 3

In the course of studies, a breakthrough was made when an article titled "The Fragmentation and 'Compartmentalization' of Knowledge According to Alasdair Macintyre" was stumbled upon. A correlation between Simulacrum and the compartmentalization of history was suspected, but it was only after reading the article that it was confirmed. Macintyre's philosophy states that contemporary society is characterized by a lack of unity and coherence, resulting in a fragmented existence where individuals inhabit separate spheres devoid of a shared vision. This lack of a common goal or purpose can lead to a sense of disconnection and isolation among individuals, which can destabilize the overall cohesion of society. Concerning how knowledge is taught, this generic form of compartmentalization within knowledge results in a lack of coherence in both individual lives and academic disciplines, leading to a disjointed and unproductive approach to knowledge.

One can narrow down Macintyre's philosophy to history specifically and how compartmentalizing can in turn lead to simulated versions of the past or Historimulacram. Macintyre's perception of compartmentalization and how the knowledge being provided to us when fragmented and isolated, bears resemblance to simulacra—it presents a distorted or incomplete remembrance of reality.

On top of compartmentalization, the technique in which history is taught can also be seen as fraud for its use of narrative storytelling. Hayden white, a popular historian released a few reputable works discussing how narratives can be seen as methodically

unsound when teaching history. White, in his book titled "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," compares the subject to science. He believes that science has more analytical and objective methods of description, which can be considered a superior way of learning rather than through narration:

*"A discipline that produces narrative accounts of its subject matter as an end in itself seems methodologically unsound; one that investigates its data in the interest of telling a story about them appears theoretically deficient."*<sup>3</sup>

Disciplines that prioritize storytelling over objective investigation of data can be seen as academically deficient. Now tie that into compartmentalization, the promotion of biased agendas, and relentlessly changing definitions. What are we being taught?

To conclude, after conducting thorough research and analysis, it has been discovered that the compartmentalization of history is intricately linked with the concept of Simulacrum. The fragmentation of historical events and information has significantly impacted our understanding and interpretation of the past, shaping our perception of it in ways that are often inaccurate or incomplete. It is undeniable that Jean Baudrillard's thought-provoking ideas continue to hold immense relevance and significance in the realm of contemporary art and our society today. In summary, there are four phases of Simulacrum stated in Jean Baudrillard's book that one must be aware of to clock its presence:

*"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.*

<sup>3</sup>White, Hayden. "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." History and Theory 23, no. 1 (1984): 1–33.

*4 It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.”<sup>2</sup>*

Going off of how Jean defines stage 2, “*In the second, it is an evil appearance: of the order of malefice...*”<sup>2</sup> It seems as though we have reached it. We’ve reached the phase in which history has morphed itself into what wants to be told rather than what needs to be said.

Can we call it a representation of history? Or have we lost its original essence entirely and stumbled into the second phase of Simulacrum? Lastly, when will we reach phase five and what will that look like for society? John Carrick once said:

*“Knowledge is the greatest power, and it is something no one can see. It cannot be stolen or broken, No one can take it from you.”<sup>4</sup>*

-

<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and simulation. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Carrick, John. Legacy of a Mad Scientist. Originally published June 29, 2011.

# Interview

Tyler Naimoli

Writer, historiographer, artist  
(A Parsons graduate in journalism)

**Q: How do you perceive the impact of compartmentalization on the study and understanding of history?**

A: When we learn about history, we like to study specific times and places. As a result, we tend to neglect the relationships between places during those specific times.

**Q: Can you discuss any specific examples of historical events or periods that have been subject to compartmentalization, and how this has shaped public perception or memory?**

A: For example, when we talk about the founding of the United States in 1776, how often do we stop and consider the fact that the Qing Dynasty co-existed alongside it?

**Q: How does the process of categorizing historical knowledge reflect broader social, cultural, or political dynamics?**

A: Well, this way of thinking has led to us having a narrow view of history because we don't stop to consider how states may have interacted with each other even before globalization was widespread.

**Q: In your opinion, what are the underlying reasons or motivations behind the compartmentalization of history?**

A: I think nationalism is a big motivator. We are all biased for our own countries' history no matter where we are from. So, when we teach about a certain place, we're more likely to talk about what happened within that place rather than its interaction with other places.

**Q: How can historians work to bridge gaps between fragmented narratives and foster a more holistic understanding of the past?**

A: I think a major step would be to discuss more expected examples of states interacting with each other. A good example is the U.S.'s involvement in the Barbary Wars, one the earliest examples of U.S. foreign policy. Or how the Louisiana Purchase was partly motivated by Napoleon's losses in the Haitian Revolution.

**Q: How has the digital age and advancements in technology affected the compartmentalization of historical knowledge?**

A: I think that the proliferation of history websites and videos has taken the ways history has always been taught and amplified it, rather than reinvent it. There are exceptions, though they're few and far between.

**Q: Can you discuss any efforts or initiatives aimed at combating compartmentalization and promoting interdisciplinary approaches to historical scholarship? How can collaboration between historians from different subfields contribute to a more integrated understanding of history?**

A: There's a good website called GeaCron that has an interactive map of every state that has ever existed. By typing in a certain year, you can see what the world's states looked like at any moment in history. It probably isn't perfect, but it does help to give you a greater appreciation of just how interrelated history can be.

**Q: How does the compartmentalization of history intersect with broader issues of representation, identity, and power? In what ways does it impact marginalized or underrepresented voices within historical discourse?**

A: This goes back to my argument about nationalism. Teachers may discuss the history of certain states in ways that serve as a source of pride for certain groups of people.

**Q: Are there any ethical considerations that historians need to consider when addressing the compartmentalization of history, particularly in relation to the interpretation and presentation of sensitive or contested historical narratives?**

A: Well, teachers may also discuss the history of certain states in ways that serve as a source of grievance for certain groups of people. They may ignore or underdiscuss the history of states that they feel had little impact on the rest of the world, like the Pre-Columbian Americas or Africa and Oceania pre-colonization. I think that taking a more globalist approach to history can help solve that specific issue.

**Q: Finally, looking towards the future, what do you envision as potential strategies or approaches for overcoming compartmentalization and fostering a more interconnected and inclusive approach to the study of history?**

A: I think that using resources such as GeaCron would be a big help. But I think that enacting initiatives led by historians from different subfields would be the ultimate solution. The more attention that is brought to this subconscious approach to teaching history, the more likely we are to make changes to it.

## Bibliography

1. Nosta, John. "The Digitization Of Reality: Simulacra, hyperreality and the metamorphosis of perception." Medium. June 24, 2023. Accessed May 10<sup>th</sup> 2024.  
<https://johnnosta.medium.com/the-digitization-of-reality-8db42ebab34b#:~:text=Hyperreality%2C%20by%20Baudrillard's%20definition%2C%20represents,realty'%20in%20its%20own%20right.>
2. Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
3. White, Hayden. "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (1984): 1–33.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2504969>.
4. Carrick, John. *Legacy of a Mad Scientist*. Originally published June 29, 2011.
5. Giménez Amaya, José Manuel. "The fragmentation and 'compartmentalisation' of knowledge according to Alasdair MacIntyre." In *Sapienza e libertà: Studi in onore del Prof. Lluís Clavell*, edited by M. Pérez de Laborda, 193-202. Roma: EDUSC, 2012.