While Don DeLillo and Jean Baudrillard hold similar views about postmodern terrorism, they differ regarding the relationship between terrorism and art. For Baudrillard, the sacrificial violence of terrorism is an "artwork" that subverts hyperreal culture. For DeLillo, art remains the best hope for resisting a regime of media and spectacle.

Terrorism and Art: Don DeLillo's *Mao II* and Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*

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Don DeLillo is America's foremost bard of conspiracy, paranoia, and terrorism. DeLillo began to hone in on terrorism as early as 1977 in *Players,* a novel in which terrorists explain their rationale for attacking the New York Stock Exchange in chillingly familiar terms: "They have money. We have destruction" (107). *The Names* probes the antipathies between fundamentalist terrorists and America's expanding global empire. *Mao II,* however, represents DeLillo's most fully developed exploration of terrorism and the global society of spectacle. The novel breaks new ground in its exploration of the dilemmas of the artist in postmodern culture, and the relationships between terrorism and art, terrorists and novelists. *Mao II's* protagonist, novelist Bill Gray, posits an integral, if obverse, relation between the two: "There's a curious knot that binds novelists and terrorists. […] Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gunman have taken that territory. They make raids on human consciousness. What writers used to

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do before we were all incorporated" (41). Bill Gray's words take on, retrospectively, a prophetic tone, and give special meaning to the events of September 11, 2001, events that threw into question the degree to which the artistic imagination can make "raids on human consciousness" in the face of awesome, overwhelming, spectacular terrorism.

Another writer who grapples with similar questions is Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard and DeLillo hold strikingly similar views of postmodern terrorism. Both see postmodern culture as an arena of a media-driven consumption of signs, of autonomous and free floating signifiers, artificial codes, and simulational models. Both writers see terrorism as a canny adaptive response to the Western regime of image proliferation, sign exchange, and spectacle. Both see terrorism (as Baudrillard puts it) "already inscribed in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their presentation and their possible consequences" (*Simulacra* 21). Moreover both writers address the question: how can a challenge be mounted against a hyperreal regime in which the multiplication of signs, images, and information serves to deflect, contain, or neutralize that challenge? In both cases, this question revolves around the fate of the symbolic—the symbolic representations of art, the symbolic as a cultural form—in a regime of semiosis. How can art be subversive in a hyperreal, simulational world where the symbolic—and all the functions pertaining to it: representation, critical interrogation, resistance—has dissolved into commutable, floating, and multiplying signifiers? While both writers address these questions, their speculations point to divergent answers. While *Mao II's* Bill Gray laments the demise of the novel in the face of the society of spectacle, with its media-driven, postmodern terrorism, DeLillo's novel argues for art's continuing capacity to change social consciousness. DeLillo wishes to retain the notion (so dear to at least one strain of modernist theory) of the artistic imagination as inherently subversive, yet for him the only way to do this is to move beyond modernist forms of representation and forge a postmodern aesthetics of resistance.

Baudrillard, usually seen as an exemplary postmodernist theorist, on the other hand, has embraced something remarkably akin to a modernist aesthetic of estrangement, a stripping away of the banal evil of familiarity, a sparking of a shock of recognition. Baudrillard's thought is characterized by complex movements: in the early 80s, when he began writing extensively on terrorism, the focus of his thinking shifted from the symbol to the sign, in response to his awareness of the accelerated development of the economy of the sign and media saturation in the West. Yet the notion of symbolic exchange, introduced in his *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* was always implicit in his writings, and the momentous nature of the attacks on the World Trade Center compelled him to develop his views on the relationship between simulation and symbolic exchange—the process of giving and returning, or passing on of, the "gift." The logic

of symbolic exchange is ambivalence and transformation, and as such, it forms a counter-logic to that of economic and sign exchange (Grace 11). Symbolic exchange holds the potential to generate irreducible, singular events. For Baudrillard, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 constituted a "singularity," a kind of avant-garde artwork that made a stunning raid on human consciousness.

If Don DeLillo finds resistance in the symbolic processes of art, Baudrillard attributes symbolic power to the terrorist rather than the artist. For Baudrillard, the terrorist is the transgressive artist par excellence. DeLillo's "American" perspective, characterized at a fundamental level by democratic and cosmopolitan ideals, and Baudrillard's "European" post-Marxist perspective, inspired by an intellectual tradition of avant-garde insurgency, provide a counterpoint to one another that is mutually illuminating. Moreover, DeLillo's exploration of the relationship between artists and terrorists ultimately provides an opportunity to interrogate Baudrillard's notions of symbolic exchange and sacrificial violence as the most effective weapons against Western ideology and its calculus of exchange.

DeLillo's characters in *Mao II* inhabit a strikingly Baudrillardian universe, where terrorism steals the show, where the terrorist narrative mobilizes the flow of images and information in a media-saturated world. Writer Bill Gray complains that "we're giving way to terror, to news of terror, to tape recorders and cameras, to radios, to bombs stashed in radios. News of disaster is the only narrative people need. The darker the news, the grander the narrative. News is the last addiction" (42). For Gray, terrorism is related precisely to a media-saturated culture in which informational events stand in for the real, in which the grand narratives by which people live are mythic, hyperreal, and in which those observing the terroristic act are swept up in the *mise en abyme* of its staging, fascinated by the will to spectacle it represents. We are reminded of Baudrillard's contention that terrorism's "only 'ripples' are precisely not an historical flow but its story, its shock wave in the media. This story no more belongs to an objective and informative order than terrorism does to the political order. Both are elsewhere, in an order which is neither of meaning nor of representation—mythical perhaps, simulacrum undoubtedly" (*Shadow* 54). Terrorists have adapted to a simulation order; their acts are staged for the media and become part of the world of self-referential signs, part of the hyperreal condition ("simulacrum undoubtedly"). In *Mao II,* this issue is precisely relevant to the artistic crisis Bill Gray undergoes in the novel—in a larger sense, a clash between Bill Gray's modernist aesthetic assumptions and a new world of postmodern simulacra and spectacle he finds himself inhabiting.

Early in the narrative, we find Gray living a bunkered existence in upstate New York. He has withdrawn from his publisher and the publishing industry. Gray lives in a state of mourning for the passing of modernism, which he equates with the death of the novel and the passing of an aesthetic order in which it thrived: "Beckett is the last writer to shape the way we think and see," he says. "After him, the major work involves midair explosions and crumbled buildings. This is the new tragic narrative" (157). Like a Frankfurt School modernist, Gray broods about the uniqueness and subversive potential of art being threatened by commercial values and saleable items of print: "The more books they publish, the weaker we become" (47). Gray's reclusive state figures his own refusal to capitulate to postmodernity's rampant flow of images and signs: "The image world is corrupt," he claims; "here is a man who hides his face" (36). A "lost man of letters" (39), Gray stubbornly upholds the notion of artistic integrity ("the integrity of the writer as he matches with the language" [48]) and the idea that the creative process involves resistance—whether to capitalist commodification or totalitarian oppression. As the inheritor of romantic and modernist traditions, Gray believes in the power of the word, the ability of the sentence to trace the symmetry of truth and shape subjectivity itself: "the language of my books has shaped me as a man. There's a moral force in a sentence when it comes out right. [. . .] The deeper I become entangled in the process of getting a sentence right in its syllables and rhythms, the more I learn about myself" (48). For Gray, the creative process is a quest for an original vision or innocent eye: "The pure game of making up. You sit there suspended in a perfect clarity of invention. [. . .] It's the lost game of self, without doubt or fear" (46).

Gray's "lost game of self" involves a sacrificial dimension inherent in the modernist aesthetic, a sacrifice, according to T.S. Eliot, that involves the artist's "continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (qtd. in Lentricchia and McAuliffe 39). Gray's modernist heroics involve living a solitary and sacrificial life, chained to a desk, hostage to the creative process. For Gray, writing is "a chronicle of gas pains and skipped heartbeats, grinding teeth and dizzy spells and smothered breath" (135). Indeed, the sacrificial role of the creative artist involves a reduction of self to a support system for writing, a degeneration of bodily processes, an entropic trajectory of lint and hair in the typewriter, trips to the bathroom to spit up mucus, with little more to show for the struggle than another draft that demands revision. Ultimately this sacrificial process of "symbolic exchange" does not take place in the nexus of social reciprocity (as it will for Baudrillard) but is entirely solitary and interior: the exchange of the artist's subjectivity for a moment of

vision, for the creative insight that might be delivered up in the work of art. In Susan Sontag's words, this involves "the idea of the author as a tormented self raping its own unique subjectivity" (16). Yet in Gray's romantic, sacrificial conception of writing, the outcome of the creative struggle may be redemptive, for the literary work is itself an irreducible singularity, yet a particular with universal significance, a form of language surpassing language, a "great secular transcendence" (*Mao* 72).

Gray has sought out seclusion as a way of preserving his aesthetic values in a commodified and media-driven world in which saleable writers achieve celebrity status. Yet, ironically, his seclusion has only intensified his fame. He has taken in two live-in assistants, both children of the media age. Scott Martineau seeks out the famous recluse precisely because Bill Gray is a celebrity, and insinuates himself into Gray's life, functioning as archivist, kitchen hand, and self-appointed guardian of Gray's public image. As one who understands the inverted and hyperreal logic of postmodernism, Scott urges Gray not to publish. Publication "would be the end of Bill as a myth, a force" (52). Failure to publish stimulates media interest in and speculation about Gray's fiction and increases his status as a celebrity. Scott's partner, Karen Janney, is also a child of postmodern culture. An ex-Moonie who is not quite deprogrammed, she watches television with the sound turned down and mimics media voices. A pure product of a simulational culture, she measures the verisimilitude of a televised image of a poster of chairman Mao Zedong in Tiananmen Square against an equally hyperreal image, Warhol's silk screen *Mao II*: "she is pretty certain there is no wart in Andy's drawing" (178).

If Gray has withdrawn from the image world, that world has come to him in the form of Scott and Karen. As a hostage to his creative struggle and his modernist obeisance to aesthetic and critical distance, Gray now leads a life centred around "concealment, seclusion, ways of evasion." His evasive tactics take on a monolithic quality and are driven by an unremitting inner logic: "The way religion takes over a life. The way disease takes over a life" (45). A devout modernist in a postmodern world, Gray struggles against the prison house of his own media-hyped reputation, yet, ironically, Scott's plan to make Gray a prominent figure in postmodern celebrity culture works too well: as Gray complains to his literary agent Charlie Everson, his life has become "a kind of simulation" (97).

Desperate to reconnect with the real, Gray accepts his agent's proposal that he come out of hiding, fly to London, and talk on behalf of a young Swiss poet, Jean-Claude Julien, who has been kidnapped by a terrorist group in Beirut. Gray flies to London to read the work of the poet, but the poetry reading is cancelled by a bomb blast. Gray agrees to meet a go-between in Athens, a Lebanese academic named

George Haddad (Haddad links a committee on free expression with the terrorist group) and continue talks about releasing the poet privately. An extended conversation between Gray and Haddad provides a nodal point in the narrative for an exploration of the relation between novelists and terrorists. For Bill Gray, novelists and terrorists are locked in a "zero-sum game": "What terrorists gain, novelists lose. The degree to which they influence mass consciousness is the extent of our decline as shapers of sensibility and thought. The danger they represent equals our own failure to be dangerous" (157). In the new media society, terrorists have taken centre stage, usurping the artist's traditional role of transforming the crucial "inner life" of culture. Yet, at a fundamental level, Gray remains convinced that art's complexity of form evades monolithic thought. For Gray, the novel itself is a "democratic shout" (159) of multi-vocal texture and discursive interrelations. Literature is therefore deeply incompatible with, and antagonistic to, fundamentalism and totalitarianism, and the task of the artist must be, as it always has been, to extend the "pitch of consciousness and human possibility" (200).

Haddad provides the disturbing counterpoint to these assumptions. Haddad agrees with Gray that novelists and terrorists play a zero sum-game, and occupy an integrally connected yet mirror-like, inverse space; as he puts it "the more clearly we see terror, the less impact we feel from art" (157). Yet Haddad dismisses Gray's Western democratic ideals, asserting that terrorism brings the message of totality, faith, and belief, a message that inevitably accompanies the break up of older nations and political blocks, and the emergence of a new power politics of nationalisms and tribalisms: "This is crucial Bill. In societies struggling to remake themselves, total politics, total authority, total being" (158). And, according to Haddad, no one should be surprised when this message is propagated as spectacle in the global mediascapes, when terrorism becomes a device to galvanize attention in a media saturated world: "In societies reduced to blur and glut, terror is the only meaningful act. [. . .] Everything else is absorbed" (157). Terrorism becomes a media "grand narrative," organizing the flux of ephemeral images and giving dramatic shape to the constant flow of information: "It's confusing when they kill the innocent. But this is precisely the language of being noticed, the only language the West understands. The way they determine how we see them. The way they dominate the rush of endless streaming images" (157–58).

Haddad's view suggests some grim underlying truth about the new world of postmodern terrorism, one that has resonances with Jean Baudrillard's work. As Baudrillard puts it, "a hyperreal, imperceptible sociality, no longer operating by law and repression, but by the infiltration of models, no longer by violence, but by deterrence/persuasion—to that terrorism responds by an *equally hyperreal* act, caught up

from the outset in concentric waves of media and of fascination" (*Shadow* 50). In a society of ubiquitous hyperreality, the primary goal of the terrorist is media spectacle, "the only language the West understands." Simultaneously brutal, repugnant, and fascinating, the terrorist's repertoire—kidnappings, hijackings, and assassinations—convey their message by becoming part of the obscene delirium of televisual flows, informational anxiety, and technological catastrophe of media spectacle. But DeLillo's novel asks the crucial question: how can a writer like Bill Gray "born under the old tutelage" (215), living in the elongated shadows of modernism, armed with democratic values and an aesthetic of critical distance and resistance, respond to the challenge of postmodern terrorism?

Ultimately, Gray does so by taking his sacrificial aesthetics into the world. Gray decides to travel independently to Beirut by freighter and give himself over to the terrorists, to exchange himself for Jean-Claude Julien. Yet Gray's confrontation with the world of global terror suggests that no space remains for humanistic notions of moral agency, no space for the sort of "symbolic exchange" that Gray proposes. Hostage-taking occurs in the dehumanized regime of sign value, where the code of general equivalence triumphs; it is about the interchange or exhibition of commutable signs. As Baudrillard writes, "neither dead nor alive, hostages are suspended in an incalculable term of expiry. […] They are in a state of exhibition pure and simple. Pure objects […] made to disappear before their death. Frozen in a state of disappearance. In their own way, cryogenised" ("Figures" 170, 176). That the exhibition of abstract signifiers and empty signs is central to the terrorist enterprise is precisely what George Haddad implies when Gray discusses with him the planned exchange. Gray asks Haddad what Abu Rashid, the fundamentalist faction's leader, is likely to do after Gray takes Jean-Claude's place; will Rashid gain attention for his cause and then release Gray? Haddad replies: "Gain the maximum attention. Then probably kill you ten minutes later. Then photograph your corpse and keep the picture handy for the time when it can be used most effectively" (164).

Gray boards a ferry bound for Junieh, Lebanon, to carry out the final stages of his plan of exchanging himself for the poet-hostage. The arduous journey—and the exchange—will ultimately be justified, Gray believes, by the act of writing, his own writing on the incarcerated hostage, an act that will "return a meaning to the world that had been lost to the world when they locked him in that room" (200). Gray imagines himself rebuffing Haddad's arguments: "He could have told George a writer creates a character as a way to reveal consciousness, increase the flow of meaning. This is how we reply to power and beat back our fear. By extending the pitch of consciousness and human possibility" (200). Yet, ironically, after his imagined defense of the

writer's ability to pose a counternarrative to terrorism, Gray dies of internal injuries sustained in Athens where he is hit by a car, and his very identity is absorbed into the nexus of terrorism's sign exchange. An old man discovers Gray's body on the ferry.

> When he came to the man lying in the bunk he looked at the bruised and unshaved face and the dirty clothes and he put a gentle hand to the pale throat, feeling for the slightest beat. He said a prayer and went through the man's belongings, leaving the insignificant cash, the good shoes, the things in the bag, the bag itself, but feeling it was not a crime against the dead to take the man's passport and other forms of identification, anything with a name and a number, which he could sell to some militia in Beirut. (216–17)

Gray's sacrificial gesture, his idea of exchanging himself for the prisoner, calls to mind Baudrillard's comment on sacrificial hostage exchange: "In offering himself as a substitute for the hostages of Mogadiscio [in 1977], the Pope [Pious VI] also sought to substitute anonymous terror with *elective* death, with sacrifice, similar to the Christian model of universal atonement—but this offer was parodic without meaning to be so, since it designates a solution and a model which are totally unthinkable in our contemporary systems, whose incentive is precisely not sacrifice, but extermination, not elected victims, but spectacular anonymity" ("Figures" 172). Indeed, the hostage-poet, Jean-Claude Julien, achieves precisely this "spectacular anonymity," becoming a captive to a dissemination of signs that ultimately eclipses the self and transforms reality into models and information grids. Thus, having "tumbled into a new culture, the system of world terror," the hostage is given a "second self," a hyperreal identity and ironic immortality, his very being reconstituted and preserved, "cryogenized" in digital codes and wavebands:

> He had tumbled into the new culture, the system of world terror, and they'd given him a second self, an immortality, the spirit of Jean-Claude Julien. He was a digital mosaic in the processing grid, lines of ghostly type on microfilm. They were putting him together, storing his data in starfish satellites, bouncing his image off the moon. He saw himself floating to the far shores of space, past his own death and back again. But he sensed they'd forgotten his body by now. He was lost in the wavebands, one more code for the computer mesh, for the memory of crimes too pointless to be solved. (112)

DeLillo's exploration of the "the new culture, the system of world terror" (112), leaves us with a flow of images and information in which disembodied signs circulate globally and become their own referent. Even decimated Beirut, as Brita Nilsson (photographer of writers and terrorists) observes, resembles "a millennial image mill" (229). Brita's response to advertisements for a new soft drink, "Coke II," slapped on

cement block walls is telling: "she has the crazy idea that these advertising placards herald the presence of the Maoist group. Because the lettering is so intensely red" (230). Such a state of hyperreal indifference—where "Coke II" echoes Warhol's *Mao II,* where ideological and political distinctions are conflated under the sign of commodity and spectacle—evade art's traditionally conceived power of illusion, its capacity to deny or critique the real by opposing another scene to the real. The disappearance of the event in information, the disappearance of values and ideologies in the global dissemination of signs—this is the Baudrillardian condition that DeLillo describes in *Mao II.* A hyperreal, simulational culture portends the demise of the symbolic—including symbolic exchange with its sacrificial dimension, and the demise of an aesthetics such as Bill Gray's based on the lonely struggle to exchange self for creative insight, the world for its meaning.

To be sure, many of Baudrillard's texts argue precisely along these lines: that in contemporary systems, all symbolic forms and sacrificial gestures have been eclipsed by "spectacular anonymity." However, Baudrillard's recent works take a different tack, making a case for the re-emergence of symbolic exchange in the global arena of contemporary terrorism. Foregrounding ideas introduced in early works, particularly *Symbolic Exchange and Death,* Baudrillard has reasserted the power of the symbolic to oppose, if not shatter, the hyperreal indifference of the West. Symbolic exchange includes processes that hark back to "primitive" formations: sacrifice, challenge, reversion, agonistic gift exchange, and outbidding. Baudrillard points to Marcel Mauss's study of gift and counter gift, Saussure's anagrams, and Freud's *Witz* (joke), as well as forms of sacrificial death, believed to yield a return in the form of favour from the gods. All these embody the principle of reversibility, and therefore fundamentally challenge western cultural ideals, for "cyclical reversal and annulment put an end to the linearity of time, language, economic exchange, accumulation and power" (*Symbolic* 2).

Baudrillard argues that symbolic exchange is the radical other of economic (and sign) exchange, yet the processes of symbolic exchange are in some sense basic to all cultures: on a fundamental level, "*reciprocity never ends:* every discrimination is only ever imaginary and is forever cut across by symbolic reciprocity, for better or worse" (*Symbolic* 168). While simulation may be an ascendant process in the West, the symbolic persists; indeed, its otherness continues to "haunt" the institutions of the West as a "prospect of their own demise" (*Jean* 119). Moreover, the symbolic is subversive of simulational culture because, unlike the indeterminate, fractal sign and the floating model, the value of symbolic processes "consists in their being irreducible" (qtd.

in Gane 185). If Baudrillard earlier claimed that the West was indifferent to sacrifice, he now believes that singular, "irreducible" acts such as sacrificial violence may momentarily reverse the logics of the system, disrupting its precarious balance. Symbolic events of a particular intensity ("the absolute event, the 'mother' of all events" [*Spirit* 4]) cannot be wholly contained or absorbed by the "blur and glut" of media society; such events may in fact transform the very relation between image and symbolic events.

According to Baudrillard, this was precisely what happened in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. In his recent *The Spirit of Terrorism,* Baudrillard argues that the September 11 attacks brought into play the reciprocal and sacrificial processes of symbolic exchange. Baudrillard argues that our world is utterly saturated with images, and our primary experience of 9/11 was as "image-event." The image takes the event "hostage"; it "consumes the event," and in that sense "absorbs the event and offers it for consumption" (*Spirit* 27). On the other hand, the modality of the hyperreal is always "fluctuating in indeterminacy" (*Jean* 120). The terrorist attacks did not signal a resurrection of the real, for our very reality principle has been lost, has become intermingled with the fictional, has been all but absorbed in the recursive processes of simulation. The image precedes the real, yet, in the terrorist attacks, the "*frisson* of the real" was superadded as an excess, an echo, "like an additional fiction, a fiction surpassing fiction" (*Spirit* 29). Baudrillard suggests that the "absolute event" of September 11 produced a breach between the real (however entwined in the fantastic and surreal) and media event, between event and medium. Such a breach constitutes a dismantling of the formal correlation of signifier and signified, a radical dismembering of the mechanisms of the code (McMillan and Worth 125–26). It transgresses the codification of signs and their semiotic/economic exchange (the definitive act is "not susceptible of exchange" [*Spirit* 9]). The attack on the World Trade Center constituted a condensed site of symbolic power that "radicalized the relation of the image to reality" (*Spirit* 27). It breached the bar between life and death, between semiologic and the symbolic, constituting an incandescent moment in which the semiotics of extreme spectacle and the symbolic dimension of extraordinary challenge were utterly melded and fused. The terrorist act was "at one and the same time the dazzling micro-model of a kernel of real violence with the maximum possible echo—hence the purist form of spectacle—and a sacrificial model mounting the purest symbolic form of defiance to the historical and political order" (30). The event constituted a singularity—something that subverts on a fundamental level a global system that assumes the primacy of exchange ("Terrorism is the act that restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange" [9]). As a "sacrificial model," the image/event entered our symbolic world and shattered its coordinates. Such dramatic and sacrificial

violence constituted a challenge to the West's denial of death's symbolic capacity for reversion. Indeed, the event was a challenge to the "real" of the Western world: the September 11 attacks made the vulnerability of an overly extended system suddenly palpable, its functional logic (which precludes reversion) was suddenly breached: "the whole system of the real and power [*la puissance*] gathers, transfixed; rallies briefly; then perishes by its own hyperefficiency" (18). The Twin Towers collapsed (a stunning image of violent and catastrophic implosion); in the immediate aftermath, the regime of signification (floating currency, floating signifiers) was thrown into chaos, the market plunged, jobs were lost, corporations became insolvent.

What possible "answer" or "counter gift" could America give to the symbolic challenge? Baudrillard suggests that the West is unable to suffer the weight of symbolic obligation precisely because this would annul the West's very being—capitalism totalizing itself "as a code producing all the world as exchangeable within an identical order" (McMillan and Worth 127). And herein lies the conundrum the West confronts: any response that recognized symbolic obligation would be undertaken at the risk of the West's becoming something other than it is, at the risk of bringing about its own "death." "At odds with itself, it can only plunge further into its own logic of relations of force, but it cannot operate on the terrain of the symbolic challenge and death—a thing of which it no longer has any idea, since it has erased it from its own culture" (*Spirit* 15).

Yet if the United States has "erased" symbolic challenge and the spectre of death from the positive, linear calculus of its culture, traces and residues persist. In spite of the United States' (and the West's) efforts to reassert the indifference of simulational culture (embedded reporters in Iraq; Bush's appearance in *Top-Gun* uniform aboard an aircraft carrier to declare victory), the profound challenge of the terrorist attacks has shaken the United States to the core. The West's claim to the universal code is troubled and unsettled by the after-effects of calamitous and seismic sacrificial violence. In the "unforgettable incandescence of the images" (4), spectacle entered a new phase of symbolic challenge and reversal, and the virtual consensus of globalism was engulfed by a void. Symbolic violence created a breakthrough, an *effraction* that shook the West's self-certainty to the core, leaving it haunted with the spectre of that which undoes the illusion of order and well-being posited by society, haunted by that which "dismantles the beautiful order of irreversibility, of the finality of things" (qtd. in Gane 55).

What are we to make of the positions of Baudrillard and DeLillo in respect to art and terror? For Baudrillard, the September 11 attack was symbolically potent because its sacrificial violence constituted a singularity, and, as Baudrillard noted in

an interview, "singularity can assume all forms, including the vicious or terroristic. It remains all the same an artwork" ("Fourth" para 52). Singularity is analogous to a work of art in that it is not commutable or exchangeable; its ontological status cannot be reduced to any terms that are not its own. A singular event such as 9/11 is irreducible, unanswerable except in its own terms (challenge, sacrifice), unforeseeable ("the foreseeable event merely verifies the models and codes of a hyperreal culture" [*Impossible* 135]). Moreover, the terrorist act (like the aesthetic act in the romantico-modernist tradition) renovates consciousness; it provokes an "incandescent" and wrenching epiphany, "a terrifying awakening that would undo the West's economic and cultural order, whose origin was the Industrial Revolution and whose goal is global saturation, the obliteration of difference" (Lentricchia and McAuliffe 2).

Like Baudrillard, DeLillo believes that the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center was an irreducible event. In his "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September," an essay on the 9/11 attacks, DeLillo, too, invokes the notion of singularity: "In its desertion of every basis for comparison, the event asserts its singularity." Yet unlike Baudrillard, DeLillo argues that precisely in its singularity, the event lies outside symbolic meaning: "The event itself has no purchase on the mercies of analogy or simile. We have to take the shock and horror as it is." The terrorist attack does not, in and of itself, "speak" in symbolic terms; rather it leaves a gaping hole in representation, and our sense of the event's meaning comes belatedly, through the process of articulation: "There is something empty in the sky. The writer tries to give memory, tenderness, and meaning to all that howling space" (39). After the attack there were "a hundred thousand stories crisscrossing New York" (34), and it is precisely these stories that shape our response to the event. Moreover, such "crisscrossing" narratives are needed to set against official, reductive, and ideological versions of the event, and "to set against the massive spectacle that continues to seem unmanageable, too powerful a thing to set into our frame of practiced response" (34–35).

DeLillo writes this some 10 years after the publication of *Mao II;* nonetheless such ideas are already emerging in the novel, if not specifically in terms of terrorist violence, then in terms of one of terrorism's chief modalities—spectacle. The opening section, "At Yankee Stadium," depicting a mass wedding conducted by Reverend Moon, foregrounds the "unmanageable" aspect of spectacle. The narrative hovers in an indeterminate space, between third and first person, now describing the crowd at the stadium, now describing the crowd, now the interior monologues of the observers of the mass wedding. The nomadic narrative and "suspensive irony" point to a fundamental aspect of postmodernity that renders the traditional novelist (such as Bill Gray) virtually helpless: the lack of an ontological fulcrum point, a stable or unified

"point of view," the way spectacle exceeds traditional interpretive grids (as Debord reminds us, spectacle manifests itself "as an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute" [15]). The Moonie ritual is characterized by the bizarre and incongruous, by signs severed from referents: "From the bandstand at home plate the Mendelssohn march carries a stadium echo. [. . .] Flags and bunting everywhere" (5–6). Spectacle outstrips critical distance and "practiced responses," utterly confounding Karen's father's "old college logic" (8). Moreover, DeLillo emphasizes the "terroristic" and totalitarian potential of spectacle, the way its free-floating signification mimics transcendence, and galvanizes group identity around "the blast of Master's being, the solar force of a charismatic soul" (10). As John Carlos Rowe puts it, DeLillo understands that postmodern spectacle invokes "the need for some absolute, totalitarian principle or ruler, to govern what no individual can command" (26).

Yet the section also implies strategies that resist spectacle's totalitarian possibilities. Alternating among various points of view and interior thoughts of the characters, the narrative includes the crisscross of stories, of narrative and counternarrative. The section underscores this process by emphasizing the visual. As Marco Abel observes, DeLillo's language often "performs the meandering look of the neorealist camera eye, following no narrative in particular, yet many at once, thus intensifying the experience and concept of narrative as a mode of *seeing*" (1240). This is an apt description of "At Yankee Stadium," with its emphasis on the language of visuality—Karen's father watches the crowd with binoculars, and as the binoculars (mimicking the camera) scan the crowd, we alternate between various points of view: the "blessed couples," parents snapping their photos in an effort to "neutralize the event" (6); Karen's parents' anxieties, Karen's fear of being deprogrammed and snatched "back to the land of lawns" (9); and, finally, the panoramic view that includes another group outside the stadium, "men in tipped backed chairs against walls of hollow buildings, sofas burning in lots" (7). Such a narrative is an attempt to evoke the event as a field of singularities, as radically heterogeneous, and, as such, it provides a counterpoint to the "single floating eye of the crowd" (8). Visuality is used to deconstruct the dynamics of spectacle, and to point toward modes of representation better suited to grapple with a new world of media saturation, mass fundamentalism, and spectacular terrorism.

Thus, if Baudrillard sees the symbolic power of the terrorist spectacle issuing from its transparency and irreducibility, DeLillo sees language and artistic representation as crucial in making sense of the event, and in (re)configuring and restoring heterogeneity to something that is inevitably reduced by "practiced response." But what, then, might DeLillo think of Baudrillard's view that ancient rituals of symbolic exchange provide an antidote to the political economy of the sign? We get an indication in the

scene, late in the novel, in which the photographer Brita Nilsson stands on the balcony of her hotel room and witnesses a Beirut wedding party. The wedding party is preceded by a tank and "followed by a jeep with a recoilless rifle mounted at the rear": "The bride and groom carry champagne glasses and some of the girls hold sparklers that send off showers of excited light. A guest in a pastel tuxedo smokes a long cigar and does a dance around a shell hole, delighting the kids. The bride's gown is beautiful, with lacy appliqué at the bodice, and she looks surprisingly alive, they all look transcendent, free of limits and unsurprised to be here" (240). The ceremony is freighted with a symbolic charge; it is a kind of concrete universal of human reciprocity, a moment of reversal in which the blasted and death-ridden landscape takes on the promise of life. This reversal is underscored by the *Witz,* the "smutty joke" in the midst of the ceremony, as Brita waves to the celebrants, and the groom raises a glass to Brita: "'Bonne chance' and 'Bonheur' and 'Good luck' and 'Salám' and 'Skål,' and the gun turret begins to rotate and the cannon eases slowly around like a smutty honeymoon joke and everyone is laughing" (240). The scene embodies a moment of the "transcendent," a "singularity" in the midst of the "image mill" of the Beirut landscape. As such, it suggests that archaic rituals of symbolic exchange are, as Baudrillard would have it, in some sense, the radical other of image and informational glut. And yet this moment of opposition and reversal is fleeting. Brita sees a flash out by a major checkpoint: "Someone is out there with a camera and a flash unit. Brita stays on the balcony for another minute, watching the magnesium pulse that brings an image to a strip of film. She crosses her arms over her body against the chill and counts off the bursts of relentless light. The dead city photographed one more time" (241). Here, death reasserts itself precisely as the West's image culture of repetition, and the momentary expressions of a traditional symbolic culture are quickly swallowed by simulacra. The scene, therefore, casts doubt on the notion that "archaic" rituals of reciprocity and obligation inherent in traditional cultures provide a pivotal point of sustained opposition to simulational culture.

For DeLillo, our last best hope against simulation culture—where everything from images to currency to value floats—is not to be found in terroristic acts of sacrificial violence, but in novels—or other works of art—that break the paradigms that perpetuate our "practiced response" and keep art from having an impact on society. DeLillo's use of photographs in the novel, as well as his "cinematic" narrative mode, indicate that literary texts do not have exclusive claim on an aesthetic of resistance. As well, they indicate DeLillo's sense that the discourse of images must be strategically used against the power of spectacular terrorism. Perhaps for this reason, the photographer Brita Nilsson appears in the final section of the novel, "In Beirut." Beirut represents an emerging

landscape of global instability and terrorism, and Brita's decision to resume photojournalism in the war zone and abandon her project of photographing literary "geniuses" suggests a response to this development—a turn from a modernist logic of artistic autonomy, authenticity, and "origins" toward the unexpected, the accidental, the emergent. During her interview with terrorist leader Abu Rashid and his interpreter, a hooded boy, devoted follower of Rashid, stands in the background. Brita impulsively "walks over to the boy at the door and removes his hood. [. . .] Doesn't lift it very gently either. She is smiling all the time. And takes two steps back and snaps his picture" (236). What is captured in Brita's photograph is suggested by the narrator's description of the boy's reaction to Brita's act—an irreducible moment (like those in the best Winogrand photos) of "incidental menace" (51): "His hair is matted and sweaty from the hood and he hates her not because she has humiliated him but because he knows who she is, there is pleasure in his knowing, a violence in the eye that shows how hate and rage repair the soul" (237). Brita has been dogged by a sense that her photojournalism has been vitiated by a (modernist) impulse to order the ugliness of the contemporary world: "No matter what I shot, how much horror, reality, misery, ruined bodies, bloody faces, it was all so fucking pretty in the end" (24–25). But her photograph of the young terrorist suggests not modernist aestheticism and formalism, but "turmoil," the disruptive presence that arises out of the heterogeneity of the event. The subject emerges in a singular and irreducible complexity of being, thus challenging Rashid's totalitarian logic of unity and identity in the revolutionary struggle: "All men one man." (233). In photographing the terrorist, the "lethal believer, the person who kills and dies for faith" (157), Brita "increases the flow of meaning" by proving an image that counters the empty and commutable signs of media-driven terrorism. In that sense, her imagistic strategies resemble those of Edith Wyschogrod's "heterological historian" who "must invent ways to disrupt specularity, not by ignoring its cultural omnipresence but by creating a specific form of negation that is intrinsic to it" (71).

DeLillo thus holds out the prospect of a postmodern aesthetic of resistance, while, for Baudrillard, the whole project of representation is (as he so often says) "over with." In a regime where signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real, artistic representation has been annihilated. The only viable form of "art" capable of violating a hyperreal system is the "definitive act": symbolic violence, with its inherent principles of challenge, reversibility, and death, that haunts the positivistic order of the West: "at the height of their coherence, the redoubled signs of the code are haunted by the abyss of reversal" (*Jean* 123).

Baudrillard's speculations on the way the symbolic continually haunts the logic

of capitalist exchange remind us that there are cultural logics alien to that of the liberal New World Order, and that America, commonly viewed as a cultural colonizer, penetrating other cultures, is eminently penetrable by, and vulnerable to, such logics. Yet Baudrillard's notion of the irrevocable event and its unmediated symbolic import has the effect of subsuming the particularities of terrorism under the logics of challenge and sacrifice, and of reducing the terrorist event such as 9/11 to a dualism between "archaic" symbolic processes versus contemporary signification, Western versus non-Western. DeLillo, on the other hand, seeks, through a logic that is properly textual—with multiple narrative positions, deferral, and belatedness—to provide a space for critical reflection. DeLillo's narrative strategy, employed in the name of heterogeneity, aims to "alter the slant of our perceptions" ("Ruins" 34–35). In this sense, DeLillo's challenge seems more significant than that of Baudrillard, for altering the slant of our perceptions implies deferring judgment and undermining consensus. This seems crucial in relation to the terrorism of 9/11, the aftermath of which produced a scramble to take a position, and a righteously simplistic moralism, a war of "good against evil" and "freedom against fear."

Finally, for DeLillo, novels (and other artistic forms), rather than terrorism, embody elements of the singular and heterogeneous, the irreducible and heterological, moments of "otherness" that resist and undo what Baudrillard calls the code, global capitalism's logic of the universal equivalence and exchangeability of all things. This, at any rate, is what Bill Gray suggests in a conversation with terrorist sympathizer George Haddad (and here, I think, DeLillo concurs with his beleaguered protagonist), defending the novelist against the terrorist: "One thing unlike another, one voice unlike the next. Ambiguities, contradictions, whispers, hints. And this is what you want to destroy" (159).

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