### 1NC

#### Welcome to the ecstasy of communication—free speech is overwhelmed by the saturation of networks with an incessant circulation of hyper-visible signs

**Baudrillard 87**

Jean Baudrillard (cultural critic). “The Ecstasy of Communication.” 1987. <http://www.brianschrank.com/Intro_to_Media_Studies/resources/Ecstasy.pdf>

\*\*ellipses in original

We are no longer a part of the drama of alienation; we live in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. The obscene is what does away with every mirror, every look, every image. The obscene put an end to every representation. But it is not only the sexual that becomes obscene in pornography; today there is a whole pornography of information and communication, that is to say, of circuits and networks, a pornography of all functions and objects in their readability, their fluidity, their availability, their regulation, in their forced signification, in their performativity, in their branching, in their polyvalence, in their free expression….It is no longer the traditional obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary, it is the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible. It is the obscenity of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication. Marx set forth and denounced the obscenity of the commodity, and this obscenity was lined to its equivalence, to the abject principle of free circulation, beyond all use value of the object. The obscenity of the commodity stems from the fact that it is abstract, formal and light in opposition to the weight, opacity and substance of the object. The commodity is readable: in opposition to the object, which never completely gives up its secret, the commodity always manifests its visible essence, which is its price. It is the formal place of transcription of all possible objects; through it, objects communicate. Hence, the commodity form is the first great medium of the modern world. But the message that the objects deliver through it is always extremely simplified, and it is always the same: their exchange value. Thus at bottom the message already no longer exists; it is the medium that imposes itself in its pure circulation. This is what I call (potentially) ecstasy. One has only to prolong this Marxist analysis, or push it to the second or third power, to grasp the transparence and obscenity of the universe of communication, which leaves far behind it those relative analyses of the universe of the commodity. All functions abolished in a single dimension, that of communication. That’s the ecstasy of communication. All secrets, spaces and scenes abolished in a single dimension of information. That’s obscenity. The hot, sexual obscenity of former times is succeeded by the cold and communicational, contractual and motivational obscenity of today. The former clearly implied a type of promiscuity, but it was organic, like the body’s viscera, or again like objects piled up and accumulated in a private universe, or like all that is not spoken, teeming in the silence of repression. Unlike this organic, visceral, carnal promiscuity, the promiscuity that reigns over the communication networks is one of superficial saturation, of an incessant solicitation, of an extermination of interstitial and protective spaces. I pick up my telephone receiver and it’s all there; the whole marginal network catches and harasses me with the insupportable good faith of everything that wants and claims to communicate. Free radio: it speaks, it sings, it expresses itself. Very well, it is the sympathetic obscenity of its content. In terms a little different for each medium, this is the result: a space, that of the FM band, is found to be saturated, the stations overlap and mix together (to the point that sometimes it no longer communicates at all). Something that was free by virtue of space is no longer. Speech is free perhaps, but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want, the space is so saturated, the pressure so great from all who want to make themselves heard. I fall into the negative ecstasy of the radio.

#### The impact is psychic death—the affirmative is locked within contemporary culture, which depletes our vitality

**Ruti 10**

Mari Ruti (professor of critical theory at the University of Toronto). *A World of Fragile Things: Psychoanalysis and the Art of Living*. SUNY Press. March 25th, 2010. Google Books, pgs. 30-31.

It is worth noting right away that where traditional accounts of the art of living talked about cultivating a self—about improving and refining the self’s character to meet an elevated ideal—the contemporary pursuit of authenticity is often couched in terms of recovering a core or kernel of being that has gotten lost in the turmoil of living. That is, where the philosophical art of living aimed to activate the subject’s capacity to become a more fully realized version of itself, to reach potentialities that exceeded its current configuration of traits, the contemporary notion of authenticity asks the subject to become what it already, deep down, is. Where the art of living in its older forms often deemed certain character traits and aptitudes more esteemed than others, the contemporary culture of authenticity pursues the “truth” of the individual’s being without much attention to the quality of the characteristics that constitute this “truth.” In effect, where the traditional art of living was designed to rid the subject of certain disagreeable or undesirable attributes—or, as in Nietzsche, at the very least to transform such attributes into valuable ingredients of a refined whole—for the current culture of authenticity the important thing is less what the self is like than that the self gets to be what it, in some inherent sense, already is. The contemporary cult of authenticity, in other words, has largely lost sight of the notion of the self as an ongoing process, upholding instead a static vision of essential traits. It is perhaps not altogether surprising that present-day subjectivity is haunted by the fear that the self’s essence can be buried, that genuineness and sincerity are somehow in short supply. Though the masks and personas of social life may not be any more artificial now than they were in earlier times, there is arguably something about the contemporary cultural moment—a moment characterized by an unrelenting exposure to external stimulation, multiple demands on our time and attention, an accelerated pace of life, a surface-oriented tone of personal interactions, and a fragmentation of communal space—that makes it demanding to fend off the sensation of personal inauthenticity. While our culture (sometimes deservedly, sometimes not) prides itself on its unprecedented fluidity and versatility—the fact that it allows for a diversity of existential styles to coexist in a heterogeneous space—it is also one of the hallmarks of this culture to deplete our vitality and put us on the defensive. As Jean Baudrillard conjectures, “Speech is free perhaps, but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want, the space is so saturated, the pressure so great from all who want to make themselves heard.” Contemporary culture is vibrant, but at its worst it can scatter us in so many directions that we come to feel overwhelmingly disjointed. Paradoxically, we come to feel so frantically alive—agitated and overstimulated—that we die inside. This suggests that aliveness comes in various forms and that not all of these forms are equally conducive to psychic well-being.

#### Universities have ceased to be institutions of meaning—the system is destined to implode because of the dissemination of signs which swallow the real

**Robinson 12**

Andrew Robinson (political activist from the UK). “Jean Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Implosion.” Ceasefire Magazine. August 10th, 2012. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/>

Implosion Baudrillard’s account of a functionally-obsessed code does not conclude with a smoothly functioning totality. The system which results depends on the constant maintenance of a regime of control. **Such a system is very unstable, open to collapsing at the slightest rupture.** For instance, systems of power depend on a master-signifier, which is ultimately arbitrary and contingent. (There is no longer a master-signifier of the entire system, but agencies such as states and companies still have leaders for example). When it is obvious that it is arbitrary and contingent, power is unpinned from its apparent obviousness. It comes to seem purely arbitrary, and this interferes with its functioning. When power occupies the empty place of power, it comes to seem obscene, impure and ridiculous, and eventually collapses. **Baudrillard refers to this instability as implosion.** This means that he sees the system collapsing from within. The system is no longer expanding – hence the turn to deterrence instead of war. It is in ‘involution’ – collapsing in upon itself. For Baudrillard, the system has reached its culmination. It is accelerating towards its limit, which today is expressed as implosion (rather than explosion or revolution). The growing density of simulations is destroying it. Implosion is swallowing all the energy of the real. Implosion is similar to the idea of ‘internal contradictions’ in Marxism. It refers to a tendency to collapse arising from the system’s own dynamics. Implosion arises from the destruction of meaning and the reality-effect due to the precession of simulacra. The problem for the system is that signs need a separate reality in order to refer to something, and hence to function as signs. In the current regime of simulation, social realities are generated from signs and models which precede them. The model produces the “real”, the medium, and the message all at once. **Reality separate from the regime is either destroyed, denied, or incorporated**. As a result, the signs stop referring to anything. At the same time, therefore, a total system of meaning is created, and its **meaningfulness is destroyed**. All signs or referentials are combined in a vicious circle or Moebius strip. **Truth, equivalences, rational distinctions break down**. Without a clear outside or referent, the reality-effect breaks down. Without a focus of intensity, meaning breaks down. Meaning can no longer be pinned-down in particular places. It circulates at increased speed, without any referent or guarantee. For instance, economic growth is increasingly unstable. Economic bubbles form and burst, commodities (such as Internet companies or real-estate) are immensely valued and then collapse, emerging “tigers” from Korea to Ireland to Mexico suffer sharp collapses. Baudrillard sees the same thing happening with everything from fashion to art to politics. **The problem is structural**. Once the system reaches saturation, it starts to fall in on itself, like a black hole. Saturation leads to inertia. For Baudrillard, global cities have already become black holes, eating up past social phenomena and meanings. They are entirely functional zones, arranged around sites such as hypermarkets (massive supermarkets), shopping centres and transport networks. The system is based on functionality. Yet in hypermarkets and modern universities, functions seem to become indeterminate – hence cities seem to disintegrate. This is because they have lost their distinct purposes or use-values. They become polyfunctional black-boxes with different input-output combinations. Usefulness is itself an ideology, which relies on the simulation of shortage or the creation of artificial scarcity. It is actually a moral convention, not a fact of nature. Today, supermarkets are also insurance companies, banks, pharmacists, government information dispensers, home-delivery services; today’s universities are also corporate research subcontractors, vocational trainers, immigration monitors, producers of brand-name merchandise, profiteers on debts, affiliates of regional development councils, housing providers, monitors of student dissent… This kind of hyper-functionalism renders them almost functionless – they can no longer be defined by a particular core function. They become a means without end. An operationalism without specific functions. All the different functions become simultaneous, without past, future or distinction. All mental, temporal, spatial and signalled coordinates become interchangeable in the simulated world. Hence, institutions cease to be related to specific functions, and cease to be believable as guarantors of meaning. This has social effects. Power has ceased to believe in the university. Degrees no longer have the value they once did. Like work, they persist on the basis of a dead referential, as a simulation. **The real function of these functionless institutions is deterrence** (see below). Their hyperreality, their simulation of functions, neutralises the surrounding territory. People won’t notice the absence of education when there’s a “world-class” university next-door. And if they do, they won’t feel they can compete with such a monolith. There are, of course, exceptions, but on the whole, **such simulations shut down social life.**

#### The alternative is to endorse symbolic, revolutionary media which, through exchange, disrupts the non-responsive nature of communication

**Merrin 5**

\*\*note: Merrin is summarizing Baudrillard and does not agree with this argument.

William Merrin (Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, department of political and cultural studies at Swansea University). *Baudrillard and the Media: A Critical Introduction*. 2005. Google Books, pgs. 19-21.

THE GIFT OF SPEECH With this background we can identify the existence in Baudrillard of a Durkheimian theory of human relations and communication. Formulated as the symbolic, this serves as the basis for his critique not only of our semiotic society but also of our electronic media which, for him, constitute one of the primary sites for the production and dissemination of the sign. The emphasis on the form of media and its effects immediately highlights the influence of Marshall McLuhan and his claim that ‘the medium is the message’ (1994:7), that the real message or significance of a medium is the technology itself and its psychic and social consequences (1994:4). Baudrillard employs this insight in his own critical project to argue that the most important effect of the electronic media is the transformation of the symbolic into the semiotic. ‘In their very form and very operation’, he argues, ‘the media induce a social relation’: one that involves ‘the abstraction, separation and abolition of exchange itself’ (RM, 169). Thus, if we understand communication from this Durkheimian perspective as ‘an exchange…a reciprocal space of a speech and a response’ (RM, 169), then it is this communication that is explicitly lost in our contemporary media. As Baudrillard argues, their form is one of ‘non-communication’, being based on the abolition of the symbolic relationship and its communication. Baudrillard’s critique of communication also operates as a critical of established positions within media theory. His arguments were directly aimed at Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s essay, ‘Constituents of a theory of the media’ (1970), which attempted to recover communication for Marxism, opposing its reduction to a superstructural effect and rethinking it as a productive force which could be liberated for democratic use (RM, 166-9). In contrast, Baudrillard rejects such hopes for a mediated communality, arguing that they abolish rather than promote human relations. ‘Media ideology operates at the level of form’, he argues, in the ‘separation’ of humanity it produces (RM, 169). Alongside a critique of Enzensberger, Baudrillard also targets the ‘communication theory’ formalized by Jacobsen and its picture of isolated poles of ‘transmitted’ and ‘receiver’, artificially reunited by a ‘message’ (RM, 178). This is ‘a simulation model of communication’, he says, excluding the scene of the symbolic: ‘the reciprocity and antagonism of interlocutors, and the ambivalence of their exchange’ (RM, 179). Real communication, Baudrillard says, involves more than ‘the simple transmission-reception of a message’ (RM, 169). Our media, however, follow this model, constituting a ‘speech without response’ (RM, 170), locking us into a unilateral power relation. Thus no liberation of the media is possible. For Baudrillard the only revolution ‘lies in restoring the possibility of a response’, allowing speech to ‘be able to exchange, give and repay itself’, though this would require ‘an upheaval in the entire existing structure of media’ (RM, 170). Baudrillard finds this model of ‘non-response’ reproduced throughout our society (RM, 170), in the unilaterality of the media, of semiotic consumption, of the hyperrealized image that leaves no room for investment, phantasy or response (Seduction (Sed.), 30), and in the west’s ‘non-wars’ that employ overwhelming technological force to exclude all opposition and realize their perfected model of warfare (The Gulf War Did not Take Place (GW)). Everywhere, unilaterality and the exclusion of the symbolic reign. The media no more create a community, Baudrillard says, than ‘the possession of a refrigerator or a toaster’ (RM, 171). As we silently gather round it at night, we can see his point: television is killing the art of symbolic exchange. We find in Baudrillard, therefore, a counter-intuitive image of a mediatized society of non-communication in which ‘people are no longer speaking to each other’, being ‘definitively isolated in the face of a speech without response’ (RM, 172). Only controlled, preprogrammed feedback is acceptable, in phone-ins, polls and letters that are a simulacrum of a response, reinforcing the media’s operation and functioning to censor anything that challenges their power (RM, 181). May 1968 provides proof of this process for Baudrillard (RM, 172-7). Far from spreading the revolutionary uprisings, he argues, the media transformed a living movement, with its own rhythm and time, into a media object and event, short-circuiting its occurrence. ‘Mass mediatization’ functions through the ‘imposition of models’, Baudrillard says, so the media administered ‘a mortal dose of publicity’ to the events (RM, 174), imposing the media’s own models of meaning, development and resolution, resulting in the revolution’s ‘decompression’, ‘asphyxiation by extension’ and ‘defeat’ (RM, 176). If, therefore, the revolution will be televised, is any symbolic co-optation of the media possible? Baudrillard finds it in the streets: the real revolutionary media during May were the walls and their speech, the silkscreen posteers and the hand-painted notices, as it was only there, in that immediate, reciprocal and external space, that ‘speech began and was exchanged’ (RM, 176). Transgressive, ephemeral, dualistic, both inviting and producing a response, these graffiti breach ‘the fundamental rule of non-response enunciated by all the media’ (RM, 183). In it, Baudrillard says, ‘an immediate communication process is rediscovered’ (RM, 182).

#### Symbolic exchange exists outside of the logics of production and representation—vote neg to refuse the aff’s attempt to accumulate meaning

**Robinson 12**

Andrew Robinson (political theorist and activist based in the US). “Jean Baudrillard: Symbolic Exchange.” Ceasefire Magazine. February 17th, 2012. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-1/>

Symbolic exchange and initiation Symbolic exchange – the aspect of life which is missing today according to Baudrillard – is central to his entire theory. If simulation is the exchange of signs with signs, symbolic exchange is the exchange of signs with the real. Baudrillard treats the symbolic as an “outside” to representation, the code, value, production, the law, master-signification, and the unconscious – hence as radically other to most of the familiar institutions and roles of capitalist/statist systems. Baudrillard’s idea of symbolic exchange is loosely based on Marcel Mauss’s analysis of gifts in indigenous social life, though he takes it in a different direction from Mauss, using it to analyse what is missing in today’s capitalist societies. There were, according to Baudrillard, societies without the social. They existed without the kind of representational systems which create the appearance of social life in modernity. Instead, they were based on networks of symbolic ties. They were outside production because their social forms were instead based on excess, expenditure and the symbolic. Excess exists instead of surplus or accumulation. Nothing is taken from nature without being returned. They were neither societies of scarcity, nor did they limit their “production” to avoid a “surplus”. They were simply outside the logic of production. Symbolic exchange is fundamental to the nature of ‘society’ in such groups. People in indigenous groups are not simply born, biologically. They become part of society through initiation. This is a process marked by exchanges and rituals. Forms of marking, such as tattoos, turn people and the world into material for symbolic exchange. They then enter into an uninterrupted, ongoing process of exchange. According to Baudrillard, initiation is a second birth, into a symbolic order. It breaks the Oedipal nexus of natural birth. The whole body can be used in exchange. Initiation, torture, tattooing, as well as sexuality were used to perform symbolic exchange. The idea of seduction (more on this later) is closely linked to symbolic exchange. Seduction is a type of initiation. Those who ‘seduce’ someone become the second, initiatory parents. Initiation is a pure ‘event without precedent’ which is the beginning of a destiny. Destiny is taken to escape history, causality, determination and genesis, at least on the level of experience. It is something which ‘happens without your having anything to do with it’ – in other words, it is experienced as extra-subjective. Symbolic exchange allows people and objects to enter a realm of destiny, where things aren’t arbitrary. Destiny is distinct from chance, probability and the aleatory – which are central aspects of modernity. The chance happening, such as birth, does not create an event. A true event only occurs via a second birth or death. Only through true events do we attain intensity. Crucially, symbolic exchange establishes a relationship between signs and reality. It allows signs to “mean”. Reality is here conceived as subjective, experiential, and expressive. In one passage in The Consumer Society, Baudrillard identifies the symbolic with a childlike emotional response to a new object or gadget. Such a response is intense, ignorant of fashion, and disregarding of others’ demands for particular meanings. It is the opposite of how consumer society works. The introduction of combinations of elements, rules of the game and so on is seen as eliminating such libidinal investment of objects. Passion is replaced by indifferent fascination or curiosity. He also suggests there was initially an absence of reproducibility in indigenous society, to the point where the existence of two identical books is bewildering. Symbolic exchange also gives us a singularity or uniqueness. Symbolic exchange gives objects an individuality which rips them out of sign-, use- and exchange-value. Each object becomes unique, ambivalent and reciprocal or reversible with other objects. Initiation is based on the possibility for any system or category to overflow into others – to escape its path-dependency and jump tracks. It also removes the separation, and therefore the meaning, of things. This removal of separation causes an intense enjoyment. Indeed, Baudrillard sees this reversibility or ambivalence as the sole source of enjoyment. (Enjoyment should here be seen, as in Lacanian theory, as distinct from ‘pleasure’). Humour is a remnant of this kind of reversible enjoyment. There is also no bar between subject and object in symbolic exchange. The subject does not attempt to master the object, but rather, accepts being analysed by it in turn – a relation of reversibility. Similarly, humans and animals are part of an interchangeable cycle. Genders are reversible (it is modernity which strictly establishes gender binaries). According to Baudrillard, we should respect the inhuman. Cultures dismissed as fatalist actually find their law from the inhuman. Symbolic exchange also destroys the other cherished separations of modernity. Sexuality, for instance, does not exist outside modernity. Sex is simply part of a cycle of exchanges. Initiation is fundamentally a group, rather than a privatised or massified, phenomenon. It is a passage through the cycle of life and death, through a symbolic event in which one is reborn as a social being and hence enters the field of symbolic exchange. It summons away the splitting of life and death, and therefore fatality towards life. In the symbolic order, life is to be exchanged and returned, eventually returned to death. As a group event, it also separates a particular group from the whole of humanity. The specificity of a symbolic society also depends on a boundary against other groups, a “them and us”. This process is also not individualised, as in Oedipal psychology, but occurs through a collective movement of exchanges. Symbolic exchange is based on the pact, challenge or alliance, which are consciously artificial and initiatory. It is based on ritual defiance and obligation, rather than liberty; metamorphosis, rather than the accumulation of energy. Although it grounds an experience of things as meaningful, symbolic exchange is not heavy with meaning and truth. For Baudrillard, the most intense human experiences don’t come from bodies or from the natural. They come from artificial systems. Rituals produce ecstatic connections based on esoteric rules. They have no meaning. They instead introduce people into initiatory cycles or appearance and disappearance. Baudrillard argues that symbolic ritual is esoteric, whereas Christian ideas of love are exoteric. Symbolic exchange occurs as a light, superficial play of signs without meaning. This contrasts with later systems of emotional investment heavy with meaning. Rules are necessary to symbolic exchange, but are something people simply invent, with ‘the intensity and simplicity of child’s play’. Symbolic change is based on reversibility. Its structure is based on reciprocal exchange between peers rather than a master-signifier or ruling father-figure. It is thus ‘an autonomous principle of social organisation’ – a horizontal principle, compatible with autonomous groups. Baudrillard is here deeply critical of the Lacanian view on which he has otherwise drawn so extensively. He does not believe that social life requires a master-signifier. According to Baudrillard, indigenous groups have access to the symbolic without passing through the mediation of the master-signifier. They instead ground the symbolic in the cycle of reversible exchanges. Real communication is reciprocal – it invites a response, and a stance of responsiveness or responsibility for the other. This reverses or undermines the linearity of time on which capitalism is grounded. It establishes time as cyclical instead of linear. This reversal is connected to the idea of destiny. If time runs in both directions – forward and backward – it is in a sense reversible. Modern culture only sees time moving forward. Baudrillard argues that the modern unconscious is arranged around the ideas of killing, devouring and possessing. The indigenous unconscious is instead arranged around the ideas of giving, returning and exchanging, which organise collective processes of exchange. These ideas assume a reversible, cyclical logic. Indigenous systems are also based on kinship and direct needs. The transition to consumer society occurs through the invention of artificial needs, akin to Barthes’s second-order significations. Despite its group-defining function, symbolic exchange is also defined in terms of the overcoming of separations, segmentations and boundaries. Symbolic exchange is a regulated play of signs and appearances, including ceremonies of metamorphosis. It doesn’t accumulate profits or meanings. It doesn’t alienate people from each other or the world. For Baudrillard, the symbolic also puts an end to all the other bars and splits. It puts an end to the ‘effect of the real’, the experience of real disjunctions based on categories. Symbolic exchange also refuses any separation of life and death. Life given over to death, or death given meaning for the living, are forms of symbolic exchange. It also does not know the nature-culture split, since the territory is different from the modern idea of nature. The relationship to the dead exists instead of alienation. In the west, people are alienated by internalising an abstract agency. The relation to the dead and with shadows or doubles instead occurs through a concrete connection, a ‘non-alienated duel-relation’. Death, seen in this way, is a kind of social openness, an undoing which breaks down social separations – perhaps even a form of reproduction prior to sexuality. This is similar to Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque. In this process, parts of the body and of language are made autonomous, as separate agencies. This process overcomes the splits and separations which characterise modern thought. It multiplies one being into many others just as alive as the first. This is a process beyond the economic. The fusion of phenomena beyond the boundaries of categories creates a field of festivity, loss, and eroticism, instead of a field of general equivalence. It is also beyond science, because it involves contaminations and exchanges across categories. Life and death are exchangeable, rather than mutually exclusive. Meaning is mortal, but images, and seduction by images, are immortal. Ceremonies function as a kind of violence against meaning and against linear time. This is what makes them seductive. Ceremonies have a slowing effect, drawn from their connection to destiny. They are counterposed to spectacle and spectatorship. They are immanent to the experiences of participants, and work through power rather than pleasure. Baudrillard sees ceremony as operating at an extra-subjective level, creating zones of intensity which are not those of the ego. Rather than survival and existence, ceremony and destiny focus on appearance and disappearance, and metamorphosis. This is the field which is seductive, which creates the ‘scene’ of fantasy. It is not, Baudrillard argues, a transgression. The reversibility of indigenous cultures is dissimilar from the repression-liberation dynamic of repressive cultures. Things are reversed, not to overturn, but to cyclically return. The initiation governs our relationship to violence. Therefore, violence has become a ‘problem’ today, something that can’t be conceptualised. It is also a situation where collective rituals produce signs – rather than signs producing culture. For Baudrillard, symbolic exchange is fundamental to human psychology and existence. All differences are ultimately exchangeable. Reversibility or reciprocity never ends. Every discrimination, every creation of an unmarked term or a privilege, is imaginary. The term which is subordinated returns in greater force. Whereas the code (see below) is linear and repetitive, the symbolic is cyclical and reciprocal. The territory of the group is the site of a complete cycle of exchanges, such as cycles of wealth distribution, exchange of partners, and ritual exchanges – an indefinite cycle. Only once the territory is lost do people develop an unconscious instead. It is a homeplace, an ecological site to which the organism is densely connected. It is the site of exchanges between the organism and the ecosystem – an ecologically non-alienated site. This view is posited as a critique of ideas of liberation of desire and of deterritorialisation. For Baudrillard, a return to territory is instead what people secretly desire. The accursed share is the secret of symbolic exchange. This is a fragment of one’s own life which is given away, thereby entering cycles of giving, receiving and returning. According to Baudrillard, the accursed share cannot be breached or recuperated by the dominant order. It remains irreducible to it, and fatal to it. This, for Baudrillard, is the key to bringing down the system. Secrets are also central to symbolic exchange. Secrets do not conceal something specific, but rather, stand in the place which would show there is nothing to reveal. Secrets are seductive. They are very different from repressed content, which can be interpreted. Indigenous groups tend to confuse signifier and signified to the advantage of the signified content. In contrast, consumer society confuses them to the advantage of the signifier. Culture is fundamentally connected to initiation, secrets and symbolic exchange. Hence the loss of culture today.

### Extra Impact Card

#### The ecstasy of communication leads to the implosion of both self and society—the smooth space of information technology becomes utterly devoid of symbolic or personal investment

**Leon 9**

Carol Leon (associate professor of English at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur). *Movement and Belonging: Lines, Places, and Spaces of Travel*. 2009. Google Books, pp. 9-11.

In trying to understand the impact of postmodernity on the self and the self’s relationship with place, I found Fredric Jameson’s and Jean Baudrillard’s reflections on postmodernism especially illuminating. Postmodernism, Jameson observes, replicates “the logic of consumer capitalism.” Two important features of postmodernism—“the transformation of reality into images [and] the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents”—are consonant with an increasingly media-ridden society governed by consumerism and rapid change. One of the anomalies of this contemporary condition is “the death of the subject.” Jameson calls this a form of pastiche because it involves no norm or original. By extension, there is no distinct or personal identity. What exists is merely reproductions of imitations. Technology has created what Jameson refers to as a “schizophrenic experience” which is “an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifies which fail to link up into a coherent sequence.” What one encounters here is an instantaneous overload of information and the breakdown of temporal continuities. Not only is too much information revealed but the past becomes Other, lost in the deluge of information. Since there are no links between signifiers, the self loses grasp of its individuality because identity depends on a sense of the persistence of the “I.” Even familiar surroundings become unreal, lost to the self because the inner relationships between things cease to exist. This “new sonorous present” breaks down the sense of our past and exacerbates the loss of self- and place-identity. Baudrillard’s “The Ecstasy of Communication” also discusses the ways in which postmodernism overwrites foundations, originals and origins. Time has turned into pastiche and this means the loss of history. Communication networks have destroyed the meaningful opposition between subject and object in which people once projected themselves into their surroundings, creating a reflexive relationship with the external world. Electronic and computer technologies have replaced this relationship with a nonreflecting, “smooth operational surface of communication” so that everything becomes visible, transparent and void of personal meaning. Thus the intimate connections between self and universe are destroyed. Postmodernity, Baudrillard declares, is the epoch of hyperreality in which “what was projected psychologically and mentally, what used to be lived out on earth as metaphor…is henceforth projected into reality, without any metaphor at all, into an absolute space which is also that of simulation.” In this, as Baudrillard calls it, ecstasy of communication, the world is wrapped in a network of signs and culture becomes “the collective sharing of simulacra.” Indeed, Baudrillard’s theorising takes postmodernism a step further with this radical non-realist definition which images the human being as a “terminal of multiple networks.” With the “death” of the human body, geographical significance becomes obscure: “The countryside, the immense geographic countryside, seems to be a deserted body whose expanse and dimensions appear arbitrary (and which is boring to cross even if one leaves the main highways), as soon as all events are epitomized in the towns, themselves undergoing reduction to a few miniaturized highlights. Places are configured not only by “distance” but also “a well-defined geographical lack.” “Travels in hyperreality,” to borrow Umberto Eco’s expression, blur the boundaries between reality and illusion. The self loses its interior relationship with a place where the latter becomes unreal and is emptied of personal projection. Hyperreality has threatened the self’s relationship to the outer world and this considerably unsettles the self’s sense of belonging. Baudrillard’s arguments are particularly relevant because, as also suggested by Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner, they collude with most of the conventions used to manage normality in everyday life. Within the postmodern condition lies a very real danger of people losing their way in the labyrinth because while it is liberating to play numerous, diverse roles, there is also “something stressful and deeply unsettling about it.” “Speech is free perhaps,” Baudrillard declares, “but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want.” The voyeurism, the emptying of interiority and the loss of both private and public spaces—implode self and society. In this space of simulation, historical continuity and memory and replaced by an obsession with instantaneity. When simulacrum becomes reality, the self loses its sense of identity and its intimate relationship with its world. Displacement and homelessness become part of the rhetoric of contemporary discourse. Thus the questions who am I and where am I are endlessly deferred and, effectively, left unanswered.

### Security Link

**The imperative to securitize, to secure the economy, the energy supply, and society writ large, is the means by which the system blackmails us into conformity—this kills value to life and makes crises inevitable**

**Robinson 12**

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The state dreams of dissuading and annihilating all terrorism pre-emptively, through a generalised terror on every level. **This is the price of the security of which people now dream**, as Baudrillard already observed in 1983 – eighteen years before the state’s dream was realised. Overt and selective repression transmutes over time into generalised preventive repression. For instance, the police according to Baudrillard do not reduce violence – they simply take it over from crime and and become even more dangerous. The code deters every real process by means of its operational double. For instance, **it prevents real revolutions by means of simulated revolutions, real wars by means of simulated wars**, and so on. This leaves no space for the real to unfold of its own accord or for events to happen. Baudrillard thinks prisons and death are being replaced by a more subtle regime of control based on therapy, reform and normalisation. The right and left are now represented mainly by the split between direct repression and indirect pacification. Baudrillard sees these options corresponding to the early, violent phase of capitalism, with its emphasis on conscious psychology and responsibility, and its more advanced, ‘neo-capitalist’ form, which draws on psychoanalysis and offers tolerance and reform. A therapeutic model of society, promoted by advertisers, politicians and modern experts, actually covers up real conflicts and contradictions. It seeks to solve social problems by re-injecting simulations such as controlled smiles and regulated communication. He also refers to a regime of social control through security and safety, **blackmailing people into conformity with the threat of their own death.** He sees this as surrounding people with a sarcophagus to prevent them from dying – **a kind of living death.** Deterrence functions by an anxiety to act because action brings about massive destruction. Nuclear states can’t go to war because of mutually assured destruction. Workers won’t strike because the entire economy would be shut down. Small powers which get nuclear weapons actually buy into their own deterrence. Memory of the Holocaust is neutralised by its constant repetition on television. While this shuts down resistance, it also makes the system’s power unusable. Power becomes frozen and self-deterred. It creates a ‘protective zone’ of ‘maximum security’ which radiates through the territory held by the system. It is a kind of ‘glacis’, a zone where any assailant is constantly under fire from the system’s defenders. In a simulated world, events are prevented because no social logic or story can be deployed according to its own logic. A social force risks annihilation if it tries this. This leads to an evacuation of any historical stake from society. We are now living through the death pangs of strong referentials, including of the sense of being in the march of history or in hope/at risk of a pending revolution. It might actually be better to think of it as incapacitation rather than deterrence. People become unable or afraid to act because the capacity to fight and win has been taken away. This means that everything is neutralised, and reinscribed in the system. This ‘absolute model of security’ is according to Baudrillard **elaborated from nuclear war**. The nuclear battle station is the point from which the model of deterrence radiates out through social life. Deterrence is directed against a range of phenomena such as complexity, finality, contradiction, accident, rupture, chance, and transversality. Yet paradoxically, events continue to happen ‘at ground level’, below the level of data-control. Misfortunes and personal crises multiply. **The social becomes organised like a disaster-movie script, with constant struggles to survive**, states of exception, discourses of risk-avoidance and risk-management – a situation of everyday precarity. The function of deterrence is not to prevent this permanent crisis. It is rather to prevent it from having system-level effects. Phenomena such as the Gulf War, Watergate, and other political/media events are treated by Baudrillard as instances of deterrence. They are based on a simulation of a situation where the old stakes still matter, keeping old antagonisms and lost phenomena artificially alive as simulacra. They thus exude ‘operational negativity’ – preventing the emergence of real antagonisms.

### 2NR AT Nihilism

#### Nihilism is good—we should welcome the destruction of meaning in order to push hegemonic systems to their limit

**Baudrillard 81**

Jean Baudrillard (cultural critic). *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981.

I am a nihilist. I observe, I accept, I assume the immense process of the destruction of appearances (and of the seduction of appearances) in the service of meaning (representation, history, criticism, etc.) that is the fundamental fact of the nineteenth century. The true revolution of the nineteenth century, of modernity, is the radical destruction of appearances, the disenchantment of the world and its abandonment to the violence of interpretation and of history. I observe, I accept, I assume, I analyze the second revolution, that of the twentieth century, that of postmodernity, which is the immense process of the destruction of meaning, equal to the earlier destruction of appearances. ~~He~~ [One] who strikes with meaning is killed by meaning. The dialectic stage, the critical stage is empty. There is no more stage. There is no therapy of meaning or therapy through meaning: therapy itself is part of the generalized process of indifferentiation. The stage of analysis itself has become uncertain, aleatory: theories float (in fact, nihilism is impossible, because it is still a desperate but determined theory, an imaginary of the end, a weltanschauung of catastrophe).\*1 Analysis is itself perhaps the decisive element of the immense process of the freezing over of meaning. The surplus of meaning that theories bring, their competition at the level of meaning is completely secondary in relation to their coalition in the glacial and four-tiered operation of dissection and transparency. One must be conscious that, no matter how the analysis proceeds, it proceeds toward the freezing over of meaning, it assists in the precession of simulacra and of indifferent forms. The desert grows. Implosion of meaning in the media. Implosion of the social in the masses. Infinite growth of the masses as a function of the acceleration of the system. Energetic impasse. Point of inertia. A destiny of inertia for a saturated world. The phenomena of inertia are accelerating (if one can say that). The arrested forms proliferate, and growth is immobilized in excrescence. Such is also the secret of the hypertelie, of what goes further than its own end. It would be our own mode of destroying finalities: going further, too far in the same direction - destruction of meaning through simulation, hypersimulation, hypertelie. Denying its own end through hyperfinality (the crustacean, the statues of Easter Island) - is this not also the obscene secret of cancer? Revenge of excrescence on growth, revenge of speed on inertia. The masses themselves are caught up in a gigantic process of inertia through acceleration. They are this excrescent, devouring, process that annihilates all growth and all surplus meaning. They are this circuit short-circuited by a monstrous finality. It is this point of inertia and what happens outside this point of inertia that today is fascinating, enthralling (gone, therefore, the discreet charm of the dialectic). If it is nihilistic to privilege this point of inertia and the analysis of this irreversibility of systems up to the point of no return, then I am a nihilist. If it is nihilistic to be obsessed by the mode of disappearance, and no longer by the mode of production, then I am a nihilist. Disappearance, aphanisis, implosion, Fury of Verschwindens. Transpolitics is the elective sphere of the mode of disappearance (of the real, of meaning, of the stage, of history, of the social, of the individual). To tell the truth, it is no longer so much a question of nihilism: in disappearance, in the desertlike, aleatory, and indifferent form, there is no longer even pathos, the pathetic of nihilism - that mythical energy that is still the force of nihilism, of radicality, mythic denial, dramatic anticipation. It is no longer even disenchantment, with the seductive and nostalgic, itself enchanted, tonality of disenchantment. It is simply disappearance. The trace of this radicality of the mode of disappearance is already found in Adorno and Benjamin, parallel to a nostalgic exercise of the dialectic. Because there is a nostalgia of the dialectic, and without a doubt the most subtle dialectic is nostalgic to begin with. But more deeply, there is in Benjamin and Adorno another tonality, that of a melancholy attached to the system itself, one that is incurable and beyond any dialectic. It is this melancholia of systems that today takes the upper hand through the ironically transparent forms that surround us. It is this melancholia that is becoming our fundamental passion. It is no longer the spleen or the vague yearnings of the fin-de-siecle soul. It is no longer nihilism either, which in some sense aims at normalizing everything through destruction, the passion of resentment (ressentiment).\*2 No, melancholia is the fundamental tonality of functional systems, of current systems of simulation, of programming and information. Melancholia is the inherent quality of the mode of the disappearance of meaning, of the mode of the volatilization of meaning in operational systems. And we are all melancholic. Melancholia is the brutal disaffection that characterizes our saturated systems. Once the hope of balancing good and evil, true and false, indeed of confronting some values of the same order, once the more general hope of a relation of forces and a stake has vanished. Everywhere, always, the system is too strong: hegemonic. Against this hegemony of the system, one can exalt the ruses of desire, practice revolutionary micrology of the quotidian, exalt the molecular drift or even defend cooking. This does not resolve the imperious necessity of checking the system in broad daylight. This, only terrorism can do. It is the trait of reversion that effaces the remainder, just as a single ironic smile effaces a whole discourse, just as a single flash of denial in a slave effaces all the power and pleasure of the master. The more hegemonic the system, the more the imagination is struck by the smallest of its reversals. The challenge, even infinitesimal, is the image of a chain failure. Only this reversibility without a counterpart is an event today, on the nihilistic and disaffected stage of the political. Only it mobilizes the imaginary. If being a nihilist, is carrying, to the unbearable limit of hegemonic systems, this radical trait of derision and of violence, this challenge that the system is summoned to answer through its own death, then I am a terrorist and nihilist in theory as the others are with their weapons. Theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left us. But such a sentiment is Utopian. Because it would be beautiful to be a nihilist, if there were still a radicality - as it would be nice to be a terrorist, if death, including that of the terrorist, still had meaning. But it is at this point that things become insoluble. Because to this active nihilism of radicality, the system opposes its own, the nihilism of neutralization. The system is itself also nihilistic, in the sense that it has the power to pour everything, including what denies it, into indifference. In this system, death itself shines by virtue of its absence. (The Bologna train station, the Oktoberfest in Munich: the dead are annulled by indifference, that is where terrorism is the involuntary accomplice of the whole system, not politically, but in the accelerated form of indifference that it contributes to imposing.) Death no longer has a stage, neither phantasmatic nor political, on which to represent itself, to play itself out, either a ceremonial or a violent one. And this is the victory of the other nihilism, of the other terrorism, that of the system. There is no longer a stage, not even the minimal illusion that makes events capable of adopting the force of reality-no more stage either of mental or political solidarity: what do Chile, Biafra, the boat people, Bologna, or Poland matter? All of that comes to be annihilated on the television screen. We are in the era of events without consequences (and of theories without consequences). There is no more hope for meaning. And without a doubt this is a good thing: meaning is mortal. But that on which it has imposed its ephemeral reign, what it hoped to liquidate in order to impose the reign of the Enlightenment, that is, appearances, they, are immortal, invulnerable to the nihilism of meaning or of non-meaning itself. This is where seduction begins.