TRANSPOLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

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Abstract: As political geography searches in desperation for new (theoretical) directions to follow, this paper argues that the category of the 'political' has already curved back on itself, attaining the status of the 'transpolitical.' Hereinafter, politics will never finish replaying its own disappearance as effect. This curvature is itself associated with profound shifts in the experience of history and time, of geography and space, and of the very ideas of theory, politics and events—shifts which continue to fascinate, haunt and transfix political geography in the enigmatic hereafter of the transpolitical. Adopting the motifs of s(ed)uction, transpearing, superficial abysses, and hypertelia (the 'end of the end'), the paper assesses: the transpolitical figures of anomaly, ecstasy, obesity and obscenity; the irruption of the hyperreal (the more real than the real); the mutation of the political scene of representation into the transpolitical ob-scene of pornogeography; the fatal strategies pursued by the masses in relation to the spectre of the (trans)political; and the challenge of a transfinite universe for conjuring theoretical practice at the end(s) of political geography. Beginning with the transition from the political era—dominated by the transgressive figure of anomie and the emancipatory promise of revolutionary subl(im)ation—to the transpolitical simulacrum—characterized by the errant figure of anomaly and the superficial abyss of potentialization, the paper attempts to animate a transpolitical geography which affirms the s(ed)uction of superficial abysses and instantiates an ethics of the transpearing event.

TRANSPOLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The era of the political was one of *anomie*: crisis, violence, madness and revolution. The era of the transpolitical is that of anomaly: an aberration of no consequence, contemporaneous with the event of no consequence

Baudrillard, 1990d, 26

Violence is anomic, while terror is anomalous.

Baudrillard, 1990e, 170

1 Terror degree-zero: The end of the end or the dawn of the dead?

politics will never finish disappearing—nor will it allow anything else to emerge in its place. A kind of hysteresis of the political reigns

Baudrillard, 1993a, 11

This is our destiny: the end of the end. We are in a transfinite universe.

Baudrillard, 1990e, 198

Conflict, crisis, violence, madness, revolution and transgression no longer play themselves out according to the (dialectical) laws of the political, on the scene of the political, and through the transgressive figures of anomie—except as a kind of haunting, a spectral 'second coming' as pure simulation, a transpearing and transparition of the political within the malefic curvature of the *trans*political. Hereinafter, we are at the end of the political and (revolutionary) (ex)change; we are forever caught in the anomalous stutter of a cataleptic and hypertelic seizure. Truly, we are at the end (of the end...) of politics—and by the same token, we are at the end (of the end...) of political geography. But despite transpearances, this is no real cause for concern. Politics, like political geography, has always insisted on this: speculating on its own finality, death and disappearance—but "why must that which must be completed be completed at the end of time, at the end of history?" (Baudrillard, 1986, 23). *Anticipating its end(s)*; that is the definition of all (trans)politics, a definition which is invariably couched within a teleological, eschatological and

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onto-theological horizon of expectation and (non)arrival. To that extent, (trans)politics has always and already everwhere overextended its own finalities and entered (barely alive) into the ecstasy, obesity and obscenity of transfinity, flickering between the folds, creases and wrinkles of the end of the end of the end... Welcome to the dawn of the undead; hereinafter, politics lives on (transpears) through its speculation (anticipation and investment) in the vampiric and superficial abysses of the transpolitical (Clarke, *et al*, forthcoming; Doel and Clarke, forthcoming).

Politics, then, has never failed to be seduced and adandoned by *its end(s)*: that which limits it, and from which it draws its own essence, definition, orientation, legitimation, and production. But in anticipating its end(s), in recognizing it *as such*, in expecting it, politics misses it. By appropriating the end for itself, politics disposes of it, misses it, or still better misses (the) missing (of) it, which, as concerns the end, always amounts to a continuation of the Same. Or again: politics "has recognized, conceived, posited, declined the limit according to all possible modes; and therefore by the same token, in order better to dispose of the limit, has transgressed it" (Derrida, 1982, x-xii). Hereinafter, politics is caught in the transparition of an unending end. Such is the dawn of the undead: "At the zombie dance, nobody moves. They tap their toes—and wiggle their wrists a bit" (The Cramps, 1980).

Hastening its own end(s); that is the definition of all (trans)politics. This is why (trans)politics grows from its end(s), from its edge(s), swelling out and distending, like a cancer or fractal, to fill all of the dimensions of time-space made available to it. Or rather, politics never finishes transpearing through the eternal recurrence of its end(s); it is predestined to eternally replay its own disappearance as effect. (And it is this which gives it its teleological, eschatological and onto-theological character). But as we have seen, at the end (of the end...) of the end, there is no end, only a vampiric dawn of the undead and the relentless irradiation of the political with the objective indifference of terror. Why terror? Becuase hereinafter the end(s) of (trans)political geography will have been rendered unexchangeable. Terror is the state of a system which has passed from *anomie* (conflict, crisis, violence, madness, revolution, but above all, transgression)—a system of limits, security and surveillance—to *anomaly* (variation, modulation, errancy, and mutation)—a system of undecidability, unlimited liability and radical exception. Such is the régime of hypertelia: "history... lives on because the moment in which

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history might have realized its end was missed. Where the world was once 'ripe' for the culmination of history, it is now 'overripe'... the 'jaded society' (Martin, 1992, 48).

RETAKE: Somewhere along the line, the trajectory and ordination of the political within a field governed by a transcendental law has been adsorbed onto the curve of an immanent norm. It is a norm which is so normalized that anomie, transgression and even abnormality itself no longer have any place beneath its asymptotic curvature: every event and occurrence, no matter how extreme and senseless, will have been accounted for and rendered banal in the continuous variation of the norm(al)—"Anomie is that which escapes the jurisdiction of the law, while anomaly is that which escapes the jurisdiction of the norm... Anomaly operates in an aleatory and statistical field, a field of variations and modulations now oblivious to that margin or transgression characteristic of the field of law, since all this is neutralized in a statistical and operational equation" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 164). Or again: the hypertelic end(s) of the political are not only interleaved to the nth power, the $n+1^{th}$ power—forming an interminable series of limits and thresholds to be endlessly crossed and re-crossed on the way to the hereafter of political and emancipatory perfection—they are also holed. It is precisely in this sense that politics loses itself in a labyrinthine complication, that the norm(al) loses itself along an asymptotic curvature, and that anomally loses itself through continuous variation. For all of these reasons, the (trans)political has a *stutter*, rather than a direction, forming a block of *becoming*, rather than a system of (unequal) exchange (Doel, forthcoming).

Consequently, "Anomaly no longer has the tragic face of abnormality, nor even the dangerous and deviant face of anomie... Anomaly has no critical incidence with the system. Rather, it forms the figure of a mutant" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 164). Hereinafter, a cell departs from its usual metabolism; a program momentarily loses its code; a difference emerges in the serial repetition of the Same; and a mutant figure cuts a dash for a concrete underpass. Things happen. And herein resides the locus of ambient fear: to be always and already everywhere (over)exposed to the probabilistic occurrence of events without consequence—*a* cigarette, *a* drink, *a* diet, *an*

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assassination, *a* fault, *an* accident, *a* particle, *a* riot—rather than to be targeted by an apparatus of power or an harbinger of violence. Henceforth, each and every event has the potential to change everything. Such is the reign of banal fatalities and fatal banalities (Doel and Clarke, forthcoming). Hence the need to monitor vigilantly even the banal minutiæ of everyday life, forcing the real to become ever more overexposed and hyperreal. Under such conditions we move beyond liberty and security, and beyond the threat of violence, to a diasporic state of terror and a "search for responsibility out of all proportion to the event—this hysteria of responsibility which itself results from the disappearance of causes and the omnipotence of effects" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 170-1). "Liberty, security, terror: in every domain, we have passed through these successive stages" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 172). In this way, we have become hostage to a stroboscopic pulsation of hæcceities, to a statistical indifference that inaugurates a *socius* of total anonymity, total responsibility, and unlimited liability.

In the passage from anomie to anomaly, events have thus attained an escape velocity with respect to the political. Anomaly thus presents itself as the transpolitical event *par excellence* insofar as an event is "Not a thing, but... a cæsura in space-time" (Lyotard, 1987, 11); it is a transparition in the order of things. Or again: "An event is neither substance, nor accident, nor quality, nor process; events are not corporeal. And yet, an event is certainly not immaterial; it takes effect, becomes effect, always on the level of materiality" (Foucault, 1982, 231). Events are always singularities, hæcceities, and arrivals; hence the question: *Is it (but what?) happening?* (Lyotard, 1988). In short, events exceed the calculus of speculation, expectation and anticipation; events *arrive*. "An arrival must be absolutely different: the other that I expect to be unexpected, that I do not await," notes Derrida (1994, 33). "And the arrival... may never arrive at all. It is within the ever-open hollowness of this possibility, the possibility of a non-arrival, of absolute disconvenience, that I relate to the event: it is what may always fail to come to pass." Consequently, by *insisting* that the limits, transgressions, ends, events and arrivals *belong* to its horizon of expectation and anticipation, nothing will happen through the scene of the political

that has not already happened. Nevertheless, and as we have alreday seen, this speculative horizon is thoroughly holed; to the extent that its porosity "regularly change[s] transgressions into 'false exits'" (Derrida, 1982, 135). Accordingly, "Let us say that the philosophy of the event should advance in the direction, at first sight paradoxical, of an incorporeal materialism" (Foucault, 1982, 231). Look at the transpearing (w)holes in the unending end (of the end...) of the end, if you can. Or still better, look at the dead points and omega points which hinge the transpearing folds of the (trans)political together.

Little wonder, then, that political geography should find itself seeking new directions beyond the hypertelic end(s) of the old ones. And yet, have we exhausted the terrain already available to us? Have we reached the end of the 'old' political geography? Are we not staging the closure of the extant scene of political geography in an attempt to make room for the irruption, displacement and transcendence of that scene? And so we dally awhile and languish at the ends of political geography. But rather than a climactic or climacteric revelation or revolution, we have already entered the waiting period or dead space of transpolitical geography: cryogenics, catalepsy, inertia. But this passage is not so much over the interleaved *limits* of political geography, as through its *holes*. During the course of this passage across the heterotopic text(ure) of political geography, transpolitical geography "tries to say no longer *from where* the text comes (historical criticism), nor even *how* it is made (structural analysis), but how it is unmade, how it explodes, disseminates—by what coded paths it *goes off*" (Barthes, 1984, 127). To that extent, the transpolitical is a 'motionless voyage' or a 'stationary trip;' it is a movement *in place* and *in things*, a transpearing or transparition of the political (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, 1988; Doel, 1993, 1994a, 1994b). Moreover, it is only in the duration of such a motionless trip that the political takes on a retroactive transpearance and coherence, quilting itself between and along its own hypertelic ends, just like the retroactive transpartition of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis.

In a certain sense, then, the transpolitical could be said to *precede* the political; it is the political's condition of (im)possibility. (Truly, we are suspended at the end(s) of periodicity.) This is why we have always and already passed through the dead, vanishing or omega point of the political, and live on in the curved simulacrum of the transpolitical, wherein the events of political geography have been nudged into a superficial abyss—a 'depth without depth' (Blanchot, 1981, 75)—from which there is no return: "starting from a precise moment in time," suggests Baudrillard (1987a, 68), "the human race has dropped out of history. Without ever being conscious of the change, we suddenly left reality behind... History isn't over, it is in a state of simulation." From such a perspective, "*time is finally annihilated by pure circulation...* The year 2000 will perhaps not take place" (Baudrillard, 1986, 25). And yet the speculation over a new direction for political geography persists: continuation, rejuvenation, resurgence. Welcome to the 'second coming' as resurrection effect, to the 'second coming' as dawn of the dead; hereinafter, a moribund backwater gives birth—rebirth—to a zombie infested swamp.

The only plausible strategy—a fatal strategy, to be sure—is to take the hypertelic, porous and anorectic ends of political geography hostage: "to take something hostage or remove it from its territory is to transfer it to the balance of terror" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 173). Such is the predestination of political geography to experience the random outburst of schizoid behaviour which exemplifies the terror of transparent events without consequence or meaning (Kroker and Cook, 1988). "The only way to break out of such a reality is to perform radical experiments, for to *ex-periment* means literally to go outside limits, to refuse accepted categories, to fight codification. There is no alternative, for in categories lies the status quo of conservatism, in codes the totalitarianism of the norm(al)" (Olsson, 1991, 111). Hence our resort to theoretical terrorism here: *Political geography has been taken hostage—it will not be returned, it will not be terminated, it will not be exchanged.* "The era of the transpolitical has commenced... To avoid capture, take hostages. Don't hesitate. In any case it's the accepted rule or general condition... The only transpolitical act is terrorism." (Baudrillard, 1990e, 174). *Seizing an-Other(s) end(s)*;

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that is the definition of all (trans)politics, an act of terrorism which is invariably transcoded into one of emancipation. Welcome to the reign of terror, fatal strategies, radical ex-perimentation, superficial abysses and the ob-scene promiscuity of events. We call it pornogeography—events so close that they merge with their re-presentation and disappear into the perfection of their vertiginous transparency. Lights. Camera. Action.

> there will be a slight jolt as we cross over
> thank you for flying with transnational commodification
> we shall shortly be arriving in mayhem
> if there is anybody on board who can impersonate a pilot
> it would be of comfort to the other passengers

<div align="right">Land, 1992, 219</div>

Despite our best efforts to feign conviction, we anticipate and expect an objective indifference to our seizure of the end(s) of political geography: "the worst thing is that hostages themselves risk nothing—they are perfectly covered, deprived of their own destiny" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 170). Terrorists seek to render events unexchangeable, "their action is to create a void. They put a path out of the system. They act, not by adding something to the system, but by subtracting something from the system... The hostage" (Baudrillard, 1992b, 290). Or again: "taking hostages never has negotiation as its goal: it *produces the unexchangeable*" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 181). Henceforth, in the hereafter of transpolitics, we have been left holding the unexchangeable hostage. We are being held hostage by the hostage. We are living—transpearing—at the end of exchange. And from here, looking back on the end(s) of political geography, we "now find ourselves in the situation of having overextended our own finalities, of having short-circuited our own perspectives, and of already being in the hereafter, that is, without horizon or hope" (Baudrillard, 1989, 34). Transpolitics is first and foremost a cancerization of the political discourses, wherein "phenomena of inertia accelerate, frozen forms proliferate, and growth is immobilized in excrescence" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 13). Such is the ecstasy, obesity, and obscenity of the transpolitical. As soon as the end of the end is posed, political geography is pushed beyond its own extremities and finalities into a delirious cancerization, simulation, and hypertelia, an

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overrun of the political into the transpolitical which is fatal rather than dialectical, anodyne rather than transgressive, and anomalous rather than anomic: "It's not a matter of being more expanded or extensive—it's more *intensive* in gradation. It's a kind of power, an upgrading of power—a movement to extremes... which multiplies itself effectively until it becomes fatal to itself" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 84). This is "objective irony: it is not an irony based on solipsism or on any separation of discourse from the subject. Objective irony is precisely the irony whereby one is able to turn the system, to make it work against itself, to play against itself" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 138). Hence the fatal strategy and objective irony of affirming anomalous and asignifying events which transfix and immobilize theory through an enigmatic and s(ed)uctive attack by fascination. Radicality has passed into the vacuous s(ed)uction of banal fatalities and fatal banalities (Calle/Baudrillard, 1988). There is a superficial abyss we can't escape.

At the end(s) of political geography we now find ourselves seduced and abandoned by the desire for other directions to follow. Yet "Beyond this point there are only inconsequential events (and inconsequential theories), precisely because they absorb their sense into themselves. They reflect nothing, presage nothing. Beyond this point there are only catastrophes... without consequence" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 16-17). Hereinafter, the movement of (trans)political geography is "Tentacular, protuberant, excrescent, hypertelic: this is the fate of inertia in a saturated world" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 13). This is also why (trans)political geography is predestined to boredom, banality, and indifference—to transpear through its dead, vanishing and omega points, forever caught in a cataleptic seizure of an-Other(s) end(s). Hereinafter, "One is in front of the screen; one is no longer in front of the mirror; it no longer reflects" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 84). The virtual depth of the mirror now shines forth in its pure an empty form: as the 'depth without depth' of the *tain* of the mirror; as the vertiginuous transparency of a superficial abyss. Moreover, through the stuttering and stammering of the end(s) of political geography, which now unfold to distend a screen-scape, rather than infold to excavate a mirror-depth, we have finally come adrift on the folds, creases and wrinkles of a transfinite universe. Ideographically, such a labyrinthine, fractal

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and fatal complication can be expressed through a succession of omega points (the last istallment of a series, the great O): ΩΩΩΩ... To that extent, politics will never finish transpearing insofar as it is caught in the eternal return, serial erasure, and cataleptic seizure of its own, hypertelic end(s). Truly, we have overextended our own finalities at the end(s) of (ex)change.

> Dead point: the dead centre where every system crosses this subtle limit of reversibility, contradiction and doubt and enters live into non-contradiction, into its own exalted contemplation, into ecstasy.

> Baudrillard, 1990d, 14

2 Scenarios of the transpolitical: three superficial abysses

> Theory is, at any rate, destined to be diverted, deviated, and manipulated. It would be better for theory to divert itself, than to be diverted from itself... What theory can do is to defy the world to be more: more objective, more ironic, more seductive, more real or unreal... The distance theory takes is not that of retreat, but that of exorcism.

> Baudrillard, 1988c, 100

As we have already begun to see, transpolitics is above all the s(ed)uction of superficial abysses, which draws events away from phantasmagoric transgression (anomie) towards anorectic hypertelia (anomaly). Such a s(ed)uction is exemplified in three transpolitical scenarios: the absolute speed of *ecstasy*, the metastasis of *obesity*, and the absolute proximity of *obscenity*. More specifically, as the political imperceptibly transmogrifies into the transpolitical, events themselves come to modulate according to the figures of *ecstasy* (a vertiginous, pure, and empty form), *obesity* (a cancerous mutation which simultaneously fills up and empties space of its meaning), and *obscenity* (the pornogeography of events without meaning or consequence). Each of these scenarios and figures is not only a superficial abyss, but also a happy void (active nihilism). It is to their structuration that we now turn.

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2.1 The ecstasy of a transfinite universe

> Ecstasy is the quality proper to any body that spins until all sense is lost, and then shines forth in its pure and empty form.
>
> Baudrillard, 1990d, 9

As Osborne (1994, 3) has recently remarked: "the historical present does not just resist interpretation along the lines of the currently available Hegelian models, it positively mocks them." Thus, the irruption of hypertelia necessitates a proliferation of heterological concepts capable of multiplying themselves to the nth degree. Through hypertelia, then, we have moved onto a terrain which is characterised by pure simulation, and into a world in which everything is faced with immanent (re)adsorption onto the surface of a malefic curvature. Such a world irradiates ecstasy in all directions.

As we have already begun to see, one way of defining this new world ordination through which all sense is lost is in terms of the relentless redoubling and concomitant hollowing of the hypertelic ends of the political: *"History has a stutter. It says wh-wh-whoo—watch out!"* (The Mekons, 1988). This stutter marks the irruption of an ecstatic, anorectic and transpearing world, a world where all apparently irreversible movements (of history, dialectics and production) pass imperceptibly into a metastatic, viral and fractal proliferation. It is a world ordination through which "Each atom follows its own direction to infinity, and loses itself in space" (Baudrillard, 1986, 18). This is the sense in which the transpolitical is not just a metastatic swelling, but also a kind of particle accelerator within which events are infused with sufficient energy so as to escape the gravitational pull of the political scene, hurling themselves into orbit, into an elliptical circumnavigation of the (trans)political: "Each fact, each political, historical, cultural act is endowed... with kinetic energy which flings it out of its own space forever, and propels it into hyperspace where it loses all meaning, since it can never return" (Baudrillard, 1986, 19).

Accordingly, one definition of the postmodern proposed by Kroker and Cook (1988) is precisely this fissiparous, scissile and transpearing event which suddenly flips mass into energy, and which

unexpectedly invaginates a labyrinthine depth into an overexposed surface. The attainment of such an escape velocity marks a first scenario for the adsorption and transpearance of history and politics onto the asymptotic curvature and superficial abysses of the transpolitical. Such a scenario provides one of the means through which the speculative end(s) of political geography will have been short-circuited, disseminated and overrun by a figure which exceeds all of our anticipations and expectations: the figure of anomaly. "The transpolitical is the mode of disappearance of all that (it is no longer the mode of production but the mode of disappearance which excites us); it is the malicious curvature that puts an end to the horizon of meaning" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 25).

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2.2 The obesity of the transpolitical

> Terrorists, feminists, flower children, black power militants, people who don't buckle up, guilty smokers, eaters, polluters, closet exercise resisters... Everywhere, immanent disaster.
>
> Massumi, 1992, 183

Imperceptibly, we have already passed into the second scenario of the transpolitical in which apparently irreversible processes can no longer attain the velocity required of them in order to breach the ends of the political. As always, the lonely moment of the last instance never arrives. Instead, these processes curve back on themselves and transpear into the density and inertia of their own amassing effects: energy flips back into mass and movement disappears into an empty, metastatic inflation. Hereinafter, we will have experienced the end of (ex)change: the eternal return of those events, singularities, hæcceities, happenings and arrivals which quite literally *made a difference*—insofar as they always arose under the cloak of undecidability, imperceptibility and clandestinity, and in the guise of anomic infractions of the existing order of things—slide into an endless repetition of the Same (Doel, 1994a). In a word, this second scenario for the passage of politics into transpolitics, and of anomie into anomaly, is one of *obesity*: "The body [politic], losing its specific traits, pursues the monotonous expansion of tissue... a revolution in things no longer through their dialectical sublation (*Aufhebung*), but through their potentialisation (*Steigerung*), through their raising to the... n^{th} power" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 168). Obesity is the revenge of reversibility, undecidability and indifference through a relentless swelling, massification and potentialization.

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If the first scenario of transpolitical geography signalled the acceleration of events beyond the referential spaces of the geopolitical, geohistorical and geophilosophical scenes of re-presentation—scenes which conjured virtual *depths* to trawl for meaning and which interpolated labyrinthine *limits* to transgress—then it does so only through a 'malicious curvature' which returns those transpearing events to an implosive and inertial mass. (Here, mass = earth.) It is in this sense that obesity is a superficial abyss, a vertiginuous transparency and a depth without depth; (trans)political events lose themselves in their amassing effects. However, it is important to realize that to become obese in this way is not to succumb to passivity. Rather, the obesity of the transpolitical is "that spectral environment where each cell (each function, each structure) is free in a sense, like cancer, to ramify and divide itself to infinity, to fill up potentially all space solely with itself" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 165). When politics is to be found everywhere and therefore nowhere, that is the obesity, transparency and promiscuity of the transpolitical. To that extent, the hypertelia of transpolitics is not only ecstatic and obese, it is also thoroughly obscene. Hereinafter, everything will have been overexposed (Doel and Clarke, forthcoming). "*Everything now returns to the surface*" (Deleuze, 1993, 45).

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2.3 The obscenity of the hyperreal in pornogeography

Obscenity is another world.

Baudrillard, 1993a, 62

We are now in a position to consider a third scenario for the disappearance of history and politics into the transpearing curvature of the transpolitical: the *ob-scene*. Whilst we have already seen how events can be seduced by superficial abysses and diverted from their end(s) by the transpolitical curvature of an ecstatic and obese destiny, all of this nevertheless remains dependent upon the *scene* and the *energy* of the political itself, in the form of a paracitation. (To that extent, and as we shall see more fully below, the superficial abysses of the transpolitical seduces, abandons and discharges the political—including its speculative horizon of anticipation and expectation—in a sort of interminable quarantine. Ideographically: Φ.) Specifically, the mutant figures of ecstasy and obesity trace the s(ed)uctive curvature of transpolitics only insofar as they employ the energy of the political scene in order to enclose the political within a

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vertiginous transparency, whilst simultaneously barring access to either this enclosure or this transparency. Nevertheless, although ecstasy and obesity cut a dash across the political scene, they are always already beyond the dead, vanishing and omega points of no return, set adrift in the hereinafter, bereft of orientation, horizon or hope, and transfixed through an enigmatic attack by fascination. Our third scenario for the transpolitical curvature in the order of things will therefore concern the irruption of the obscene screen in the political scene itself: *pornogeography*. Ideographically, this pornogeographical scene can be depicted thus: ◊. Specifically, this screen is the immaculate form of the depth without depth which animates the void and propels the s(ed)uction of its superficial abysses. (In due course we will specify the ideographic derivation of this transpolitical lozenge (◊), but suffice it to note here that it is also employed in Lacanian psychoanalysis to depict both insatiable *desire* and the *screen* upon which desire is projected. Likewise, we will similarly defer the derivation of the ideogram for barred encoslure (Φ), except to note here in passing that it also symbolizes the *phallus* in Lacanian psychoanalysis: a transpearing plenitude which the subject will never fail to miss (the) missing (of). (See, for example, Lacan, 1978.)

Just as obesity brings about the disappearance of the body politic in a metastatic proliferation of tissue and surface effects, so obscenity brings about the disappearance of the scene through a transparition "and a mad obsession with the real" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 23). "It produces too many. It destroys distance. It is the monstrous rapprochement of things" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 61). In short, the obscene is saturated, engorged and stuffed, with everything crammed into absolute proximity: "It is all too true, too near to be true" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 28). Quite simply, each event disseminates and disappears into the labyrinthine folds and tissue of the hyperreal. And yet as a paradoxical consequence, this obscene disappearance remains *visible* at every level of resolution: just like the disappearance of sex in the transparency of pornography, of value in the transparency of the socio-economic, and of meaning in the transparency of communication. It is in this sense that even though the speculative horizon of the political is entirely saturated, it is by

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the same token thoroughly holed beneath its basal line. This is why "Hyperrealism is not surrealism, it is a vision that hunts down seduction by means of visibility... by giving you *a little too much* one takes away everything" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 30).

> Obscene is that which eliminates the gaze, the image and every representation... Precisely because there is nothing to see, people approach, lean over and flair out this hallucinating hyperresemblance, haunting in its friendliness. They lean over to see an astounding thing: *an image where there is nothing to see*. Obscenity lies in the fact that there is nothing to see. It is not sexual obscenity, but the obscenity of the real... *in verifying to the point of giddiness the useless objectivity of things.*
>
> Baudrillard, 1988c, 22-32

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As with hypertelia, ecstasy and obesity, obscenity, hyperreality and transparency stage the disappearance of the political along the malefic curvature of the transpolitical by drawing events towards the s(ed)uction of the void. Through obscenity, the political simply disappears into the perfection of its (im)materiality and (in)corporeality, into the perfection of the *signs* of the (trans)political: events so close that they merge with their representation—*Is it live or is it Memorex?* Such is the régime of transvestism, transparition and anomaly, a régime in which "There is no more system of reference to tell us what happened to the geography of things" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 126). Hence the tendency for the apparatuses of social surveillance to become interminably suspended in the realm of the undecidable: *Is it (but what?) happening?* Hence also the tendency for these apparatuses to proliferate: *Neighbourhood Watch; Street Watch; Business Watch; Vehicle Watch; Body Watch; Bay Watch*—"class society has dissolved into mass society, and... mass society has dissolved into the TV blip" (Kroker and Cook, 1988, 279). "And where does that leave freedom?" asks Baudrillard (1988a, no pagination). "In nowhere land. There is no choice, no final decision." We are seduced, (over)exposed and abandoned to an "uncertainty that terminates our freedom," to an uncertainty that is ironically exacerbated through its statistical perfection. SOPHISTICATING THE UNDECIDABLE: SOPHISTICATING THE UNINSURABLE—the reign of the transpolitical has commenced. Hereinafter,

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everything becomes Cool-COOLER-COLD as we await retrospective confirmation that we will have been touched by an event without quality or consequence, (over)exposed to one event to many, to an hæcceity that changes everything, to a banal fatality and a fatal banality—a photon or a bullet or a virus or a crash... or ... or ... or... We are transfixed by "a general disaster that is already upon us, woven into the fabric of day-to-day life. The content of the disaster is unimportant. Its particulars are annulled by its plurality of possible agents and times: here and to come. What registers is its magnitude. In its most compelling and characteristic incarnations, the now unspecified enemy is infinite" (Massumi, 1992, 184-5). We are all *hostages* to the stroboscopic pulsation of banal fatalities and fatal banalities; we are all *terrorists* employing the fatal strategy of hastening (the seizure of) an-Other(s) end(s); and we are all *mutant figures* cutting an anomalous dash across the vertiginuous transparency of the s(ed)uctive void. This is truly ob-scene; it is also the destiny of (trans)political geography.

Thus the obscene unfolds as the surface upon which pornogeography is screened in its vertiginous and invaginated transparency: "obscenity—all structures turned inside out and exhibited, all operations rendered visible" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 166). This is why a desire for the real is predestined to pornogeography. In this scenario, there is "Everywhere the same stereo effect, the same effect of 'reproduction,' of absolute proximity to the real... we will never know what anything was before its disappearance in the completion of its model... Such is the era of simulation" (Baudrillard, 1986, 22-23). On the curved screen of the transpolitical, hyperreal events are "literally absorbed by the suction of the transparent void" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 22). Transparency is, therefore, not simply the perfection of visibility; it is also the disappearance of a focal point. Transparency is the disappearance of the real, the event and the image in an ecstatic, obese and obscene vision in which there is precisely *nothing to see*.

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In the wake of these scenarios, what more can be said of the transpolitical? Above all, one must say that its fatal inclination is not in any sense a passive nihilism; it is an *active* nihilism. Why? First and foremost, because there is nothing to lament; nothing has been lost. Specifically, insofar as the entire speculative horizon which gave the scene of the political its realist perspective trough a trick of the light was nothing more than a simulacrum, it should be clear why the transpolitical is above all an *exorcism*, rather than a retreat. Second, because active nihilism is the route to an-Other dimension, to an-Other register (Doel, 1994a). Finally, because active nihilism is inclined towards s(ed)uction, reversibility and the modalities of disappearance; it is the playing out of things, "an attempt to identify the curvature of things, the mode in which things try to disappear" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 38). And yet, the active nihilism of transpolitics is not "the perspective of a second future, pretending that the devastation of the order of world-images has been successfully left behind" (Kamper and Wulf, 1989, 2). Rather, it is the destiny of the political to speed ahead in this way, requiring a somewhat metaphysical, transcendental, and even pataphysical curiosity in order "to be able to see what goes on the other side of the end, in a sort of hyperspace and transfinity" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 133). For as we now know, everything takes place, grows and swells from the middle and the edge of its hypertelic end(s).

Transpolitics, then, is first and foremost a warning and a provocation, an objective irony and a fatal strategy: *Learn to let go!* Many, however, remain anchored down by an intense, nostalgic desire to act according to the phallogocularcentric law, dialectical transgression, and the heroic figures of anomie, rather than according to the curvature of the norm(al), with its continuous variation, and mutant figures of anomaly (Doel and Clarke, forthcoming); to misjudge the transpolitical as the anti-political and the apolitical (Mulgan, 1994), rather than as the transparition and exorcism of the political (Baudrillard, 1992a, 1992b); to search for the origin and end of things, rather than to grow from the middle (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988); and to stick to the illusory straight and narrow path that leads only to the barred enclosure of the political simulacrum, rather than to make the motionless trip through its basal (w)holes (Kroker and Cook,

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1988). Fortuantely, however, "The world is not dialectical—it is sworn to extremes, not to equilibrium, sworn to radical antagonism, not to reconciliation or synthesis" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 7).

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3 Figures of the transpolitical

> Any movement that believes it can subvert a system by its infra-structure is naive... There is no need to play being against being, or truth against truth; why become stuck undermining foundations, when a *light* manipulation of appearances will do... Every structure can adapt to its subversion or inversion, but not to the reversion of its terms.

<div align="right">Baudrillard, 1990a, 10 & 21</div>

RETAKE: The transpolitical is the curvature in things which short-circuits and scrambles the political scene, diverting its meaning, trajectory, topography and ends towards the s(ed)uction of a superficial abyss: "we don't know what happened after that. The traditional points of reference are no longer usable" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 113). Radicality has passed into the transpolitical figures of ecstasy, obesity and obscenity, and theory is compelled to adopt a fatal strategy of anenergetic volition—for example, that of s(ed)uction. However, such a strategy provides neither a metatheory nor a metalanguage; it does not seek to elicit or evince a meaning, essence or truth from events. This is why the transpolitical is far worse than the simulated catastrophes of relativism, perspectivism and passive nihilism insofar as it not only seduces events into the dead, vanishing and omega points of the political system, it also hunts down vision, interpretation and (e)valuation through an enigmatic attack by fascination. Hereinafter, political geography will have been seduced and immobilized by anomaly and doubt paralysis: *Is it (but what?) happening?* Accordingly, and from a transpolitical perspective: *Happy is the void!* It is to the figuration of this void that we now turn. Specifically, this figuration has three moments: the transparition of the banal and the fatal; the scission of infinitesimal extremities; and the Möbius spiralling of (trans)political events.

3.1 From passive nihilism to the transparition of the banal and the fatal: ☹ → ☺ ↔ ☺

Only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs, absorb us

Baudrillard, 1990b, 74

The emerging trajectory of the transpolitical might appear to be a prophecy of doom and despair, particularly when one recalls its inclination for banality, fatality, hypertelia, cancerization, ecstasy, obesity, obscenity and transparency. But this "is so only in relation to the idealism which colors our thinking" (Baudrillard, 1980, 142). First, these terms are not *negative*. To the contrary, they scramble the calculus through which such an (e)valuation could be composed.

Second, the political and the transpolitical are not *oppositional*. Rather, the relationship between them is one of s(ed)uction, challenge and provocation: intensification and massification (*more X than X*), rather than polarization and antagonism (*X against Y*). Third, the political and the transpolitical are not even *distinct*, and still less can one discern specifically political or transpolitical *events*. Rather, they are two aspects of a single process, and are differentiated by degree and inclination, rather than quality and essence. Although both trace the curvature of the objective indifference of events to the subject's desire for power, knowledge and mastery, politics does so through force and negativity (the *banal strategies* of exhausting oneself searching for the meaning of barred events: Φ), whilst transpolitics does so through pleasure and affirmation (the *fatal strategies* of nudging and seducing events into the superficial abysses of the transpearing void: Ω). But-again the relationship between them is not one of opposition and subl(im)ation, but of intensity and potentialization: "At the heart of banal strategies is the fiery desire of fatal strategies" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 188) and "Beyond meaning lies fascination"— ecstasy, obesity, obscenity (Baudrillard, 1980, 142: see also, Foucault, 1977).

Finally, the trajectory of the political and the transpolitical is therefore not linear, but *curved*. The transpolitical is not a catastrophic or apocalyptic event which interrupts the passage of the political from its origins to its ends, from its causes to its effects, from its intentions to its actions, and from its apparatuses of repression to its practices of emancipation. To the contrary, the political is always and already everywhere transpolitical, and both are diagrammed (in almost absolute proximity) through the differentiation and transparition of a single, Möbius curve. Transpolitics, then, is politics raised to the nth power, inflated to the $n+1^{th}$ power, and taken to extremes; the *trans*political forms the figure of a Möbius strip—a *single*, continuous, curved surface, with one edge, and *two* transversal and spinning directions.

In a rough approximation, the inclination of political geography is for "the radical destruction of appearances, the disenchantment of the world and its abandonment to the violence of interpretation and history," whilst the inclination of transpolitical geography is for "the immense process of the destruction of meaning, equal to the earlier destruction of appearances. Whoever lives by meaning dies by meaning" (Baudrillard, 1984, 38-39). In one sense, the motionless trip from the political to the transpolitical can be understood as the reversal and cancellation of all that has been accumulated during the prolonged and arduous work of political geography: "We're living through a great story—an historical moment of implosion, cancellation and reversal... the will to liquidation" (Kroker and Cook, 1988, 15). But in another sense, this whole cycle of accumulation and disaccumulation, underwritten as it is by reversibility, undecidability and doubt paralysis, is itself deceptive and s(ed)uctive insofar as the production of meaning was never anything other than a simulacrum—a *forced ventriloquism of events*. At this point it is worth recalling that "The original sense of 'production' is not in fact that of material manufacture; rather, it means to render visible, to cause to appear and to be made to appear: *pro-ducere*" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 21). In this sense, the transpolitical is simply the lifting of the huge imposition of forcing meaning onto events. (Hence the giddiness of transparency which arises when the objective indifference of events becomes visible at every resolution.)

3.2 The scission of infinitesimal extremities: $\Phi \leftrightarrow \Omega$

> Since it is a certain *sliding* that is in question... what must be found, no less than the word, is the point, the *place in the pattern* at which a word drawn from the old language will start... to slide and make the entire discourse slide.

<div align="right">Derrida, 1978, 263-4</div>

The banal strategies of the political trace the interminable repetition of their barred access to a meaningful event—they lose themselves in the hypertelia of undecidability, reversibility and doubt paralysis (hence the ideographic depiction of such a barred enclosure as: Φ), whilst the fatal strategies of the transpolitical trace the eternal return of their expulsion from an open event—they lose themselves in the infinite porosity of the superficial abysses of ecstasy, obesity and obscenity (hence the ideographic depiction of such an open and differential expulsion as: Ω). In short, the difference between the banal and the fatal is infinitesimal, one of almost absolute proximity; it is the difference—or still better, the *différance*—between *barring* and *expelling*, between *roots* and *rhizomes*, and between *being* and *becoming* (Doel, forthcoming). Moreover, the banal is predestined to become fatal to itself. For just as the political is always already transpolitical, so too is the banal always already fatal. To that extent, both fatality *and* banality trace the hypertelic stutter of the superficial abysses of ecstasy, obesity and obscenity; they are its obverse and reverse respectively, its transparition. This is why the (trans)political, like Derridean deconstruction, is diagrammed through "a double gesture, according to a unity that is both systematic and in and of itself divided" (Derrida, 1981, 41: see also, Doel, 1992, 1994b). This double movement, or pincer movement, can be encrypted into either the slogan: *extraction, graft, extension*, or the pictograms: $\Phi\Phi\Phi...$, $\Omega\Omega\Omega...$, $\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond...$

Given the foregoing encryption of the infinitesimal difference between the banal and the fatal, the political and the transpolitical, the scene and the obscene, and the anomic and the anomalous, it should now be clear why Derrida (1978, 260) insisted that through "repetition a barely

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perceptible displacement disjoints and penetrates all the points welded together by the imitated discourse. A trembling spreads out which then makes the entire old shell crack." For example, consider once again the almost absolute proximity of the figures of anomie and anomaly. Whilst the eternal return of anomaly spreads out and distributes itself in the form of a normalized curve, it nevertheless shatters and disperses the old shell of anomie and the norm(al). Or again, consider the hypertelic, anorectic and transpearing end(s) of (trans)political geography. Whilst the eternal return of barred enclosure endlessly reduces events, happenings, singularities and hæcceities to the Same null hypothesis ($\Phi\Phi\Phi$...), the eternal return and differential expulsion from an open event affirms a difference producing repetition through which something wholly Other may come ($\Omega\Omega\Omega$...). It is precisely in this sense that the fatal strategies of the transpolitical should be understood not as an apolitical or an anti-political (passive) nihilism, but as an 'ethics of the event'—"without a double-bind, there is no responsibility" (Derrida, 1994, 39: see also, Deleuze, 1993).

3.3 The Möbius spiralling of (trans)political events: from (Φ - Ω) to ($\chi \cong \delta$)

I pull only one thread in order to attempt, but still in vain, to capture what's coming.

Derrida, 1988, 25

The (trans)political is thus diagrammed as the almost imperceptible difference between barred enclosure and differential expulsion. Ideographically: Φ - Ω. Perhaps surprisingly, this diagram can also be expressed in the ideogram X or, more accurately, χ: the crossing—or still better, the scission and fission—of two heterogeneous paths, trajectories or movements. In particular, they express the scission of repetition and difference, of overturning and displacement, and of reversal and reinscription. Furthermore, the ideograms X and χ usefully draw attention to three of the most pertinent characteristics of the double movement of the (trans)political. First, these ideograms short-circuit every attempt to conceive of the two movements as separate. Hence our earlier insistence that the topology of the double movement of the transpolitical is akin to a

Möbius strip—a *single*, continuous, curved surface, with one edge, and *two* transversal and spinning directions; it renders questions of genealogy, filiation and propriety undecidable.

Second, insofar as one stroke of each ideogram extends beyond the reach of the other, it recalls the fact that the (trans)political operation is *asymmetrical*: emphasis (or force) is always exerted in the direction of difference, displacement, reinscription and extension, of hypertelia, ecstasy, obesity and obscenity, of liminal, incorporeal and ex-perimental materialism, and of s(ed)uction, fatal strategies and open events. Furthermore, this emphasis of force is similarly expressed in the third aspect insofar as the ideograms X and χ also recall that the (trans)political operation is undertaken for *an anonymous 'Name X'* who may always fail to come. And this (non)arrival? It happens—eternally, anonymously, banally, indifferently, fatally. Ideographically, it can be depicted thus: X^{∞} and χ^{∞}, or, more simply: XXXX... and $\chi\chi\chi\chi$... Such an expression of *love* for the (taking place of the) event is what constitutes liminal, incorporeal and ex-perimental materialism (Foucault, 1977). But note how the interstices of these ideograms form a series of Lacanian and pornogeographical lozenges: ◊◊◊◊...

RETAKE: The double movement of the transpolitical can be summarized in the following equation: $\chi \equiv \Phi - \Omega$ (where: $\Phi \approx \Omega$). The transpolitical is the difference (and it is worth noting the undecidability of the sign of this difference, or even whether it spins to the left or to the right) between the barred access to an enclosed event and the differential expulsion from an open event. Or again, the transpolitical is the almost infinitesimal difference between enclosure and escape, between repetition and difference, between overturning and displacement, between reversal and reinscription, and between extraction and extension. *Almost infinitesimal difference: that is the figuration of the (trans)political.* Ideographically, it can be depicted thus: δ. It should now be clear why this ideogram is the perfect encapsulation of the scissile, fissile, transpearing and s(ed)uctive movement of the (trans)political. But note how this double movement, initially composed of two heterogeneous lines, is nevertheless actualized and encountered as the *curvature*

of a *single* trajectory. χ becomes δ. Hereinafter, there is only one (trans)political geography, although it is thoroughly holed, infinitely porous and will never finish transpearing. χ is thus diagrammed by the continuous variation and eternal recurrence of δ. *Almost infinitesimal difference.* Such is the régime of transvestism, transparition, imperceptibility, clandestinity, undecidability, reversibility and anomaly. In short, "There is a curve we can't escape" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 127).

<div align="center">

δ

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4 The curvature of the transpolitical

> The law is a rule [*instance*], whereas the norm is a curve; the law is transcendental, whereas the norm is a mean.

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Baudrillard, 1990e, 164

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> If the infrastructure is curved, that changes everything.

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Baudrillard, 1990a, 68

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How, then, does the régime of transvestism, transparition and anomaly pan out into a general topography of the transpolitical? First and foremost, the transpolitical concerns movement rather than position. But this movement is not that of a relay from point to point. Instead, there is only a single bloc of becoming, which articulates two irregular 'motionless trips' in aparallel evolution (Doel, forthcoming). Transpolitics thus moves along the closure and abandonment of the scene of representation (perspectival or realist depth), and along the curvature of the ob-scene in pornogeography (transparent screens, hyperspace, virtual depth): "Things aspire to be straight, like light in an orthogonal space, but they all have a secret curvature. S(ed)uction is that which follows this curvature, subtly accentuating it until things, in following their own cycle, reach the superficial abyss whereon they are dissolved" (Baudrillard, 1988c, 70). This is the curvature of the transpolitical.

The rise and fall of the scene of the political can be traced as a pseudo-genealogy which is ruptured by the retroactive curvature of the transpolitical (Baudrillard, 1983a, 15-19). Such a retroactive puncturing or quilting of the political is parallelled in the curvature of representation (Baudrillard, 1983, 83 *et seq.*), of value (Baudrillard, 1975; 1981; 1993b, 5, 1993c), and of s(ed)uction itself (Baudrillard, 1990a, 154 *et seq.*). But the retroactivity of these movements mean that all of this will have been, quite literally, a *pointless* exercise in Foucauldian genealogy. "If you take this logic to the extreme, what you get is the readsorption of all genealogy" onto the simulacrum of the transpolitical (Baudrillard, 1987a, 70).

4.1 Duality: Counterfeit, use-value, strong s(ed)uction, the rule

> The *trompe l'oeil* does not seek to confuse itself with the real. Consciously produced by means of play and artifice, it presents itself as a simulacrum
>
> Baudrillard, 1990a, 63

The category of the 'political,' in its original form, represented a break from the "sure and referential symbols of an endogamous society" (Genosko, 1994, xv). For such signs were "corrupted by the emergence in the Renaissance of arbitrary signs freed from their referential obligation. These exogamous signs counterfeited an extra-systemic referent as they played together 'democratically'" (*Ibid.*). Thus, the political initially designated itself in terms entirely detached from the social, from the categories of truth and the real, allowing it its "maximum energy" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 16) in the form of a pure ritual, "a game... not yet given a reason" (*Ibid.*). As it emerged from the Renaissance, a pure game of signs, the political related entirely to the 'counterfeit;' to the order of simulation unleashed with the Renaissance *trompe-l'oeil* whereby "the political space, the locus of power, [*was*] *itself only an effect of perspective*" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 65). But this effect was not (yet) one of realism; it did not (mis)take itself for a re-presentation of reality, but for a relinquishing of the real in a purely allegorical resemblance. In short, its function was one of virtuosity, a pure use-value detached from any exchange with the economy of the real. Machiavelli exemplified the politics of this world, a

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politics of strong s(ed)uction, high stakes and of a 'hot' ludic character. And "Since Machiavelli politicians have perhaps always known that the mastery of a *simulated* space is at the source of their power, that politics is not a *real* activity" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 65). More importantly, this ritualized and virtuosic politics was initially defined in terms of an impossibility of transgression. And therein lies the difference between the rule and the law, a difference captured most succinctly in the old adage about rules being made to be broken, whilst laws are always appended with such qualities as 'cast iron' and 'universal.' Both the rule and the law are *seemingly* subject to transgression, to the crossing of limits—but remember that it is always already the *exception* that *proves* the rule.

4.2 Polarity: Representation, exchange-value, production, the law

> the political has taken a decisive turn. It took upon itself a social reference... At the same time, it entered into representation

> Baudrillard, 1983a, 17

In the eighteenth century, particularly following from the French Revolution, a second stage of politics was marked by the adoption of 'social ends', the abandonment of politics as pure means... the beginnings of the end(s)! The age of history, meaning and referentials—the transition from the rituality of the rule to the social contract and the law—saw the means of politics enter properly into representation; "its performance became dominated by representative mechanisms" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 17). Just as the perspectival space of realist painting and the theatre began to instantiate "a truth of space and of representation" (*Ibid.*), politics began to hold to a truth, a meaning framed in terms of a transcendental or "fundamental signified: the people, the will of the people etc." (*Ibid.*). Whilst this moment of politics attained an apparent depth, and an appearance of balance with the forces it sought to represent—itself signalling a "golden age of bourgeois representative systems" (*Ibid.*)—it was ultimately to implode. The growing hegemony of the social compelled the political into an increasingly institutional, legislative mode of operation. "With the Industrial Revolution, the [earlier] extermination of reference made

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possible the machinic replication of serial signs. These iconic simulacra of one another were dull, repetitive and operational" (Genosko, 1994, xv). In a phrase, the 'era of production' had commenced. In an ironic playing out of Marxist thought, which "openly postulates a dissolution of the political at some point in history, in the final transparency of the social" (Baudrillard 1983a, 18), we thus attain the degree-zero of the (trans)political and the end of the social.

4.3 Digitality: Simulation, sign-value, cold s(ed)uction, the norm

> Suddenly, there is a curve in the road, a turning point. Somewhere the real scene has been lost, the scene where you had rules for the game and some solid stakes that everybody could rely on.

> Baudrillard, 1987a, 69

The curvature of the (trans)political thus engenders a situation where signs proliferate in accordance with a sign-value no longer serving as a presence whose absence is marked in the exchange of the sign, but which redoubles and redefines the real as *that which is always already reproduced*; the hyperreal. The social thus assumes the status of an overexposed, de-specified category. This omnipresence of the social heralds the arrival of the transpolitical, which announces the endless simulation and hysteresis of the political. The retroactive curvature of the (trans)political thus changes everything, and as we have already seen, it relates precisely to the shift from anomie to that of anomaly. Anomie always entails a moment of transgression, the crossing of a limit, and an escape from the jurisdiction of the law—quite literally, anomie breaks the law. It is the ab-normal infraction of a system of cause and effect. In contradistinction, anomaly, *no matter how extreme*, is always contained and captured by the smooth curvature of a statistical norm in its asymptotic distension. In short, anomaly, whilst crossing the occasional threshold—such as those marking standard deviations—is fated to distend the jurisdiction of the norm(al) without ever breaking it. It is predestined to transpear—like an apparition—as an event with no significance other than that of another mutation, an event without meaning or consequence, an event always already rendered banal. And yet, insofar as the anomalous belongs

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to the norm, one could say that the jurisdiction of the norm(al) is always and already everywhere lost in hypertelia, ex-appropriated and dispersed in hyperspace.

Thus, politics began as a pure game—a ritual characterised by strong s(ed)uction—but in accordance with the malicious curvature of the transpolitical (δ), it terminates in the transparition of an hypertelic expuslion from a quarantined event (the Möbius spiralling of Ω and Φ), a game whose ludic parameters define a cold, soft and narcissistic form of s(ed)uction—"the playful eroticization of a universe without stakes" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 156). It is precisely in relation to this transfinite universe that the category of the political must meet the challenge of the transpolitical in all future thought.

5 Transpolitical geography: banal fatalities and fatal banalities

> There is, above all, a strategy of displacement (*se-ducere*: to take aside, to divert from one's path).
>
> Baudrillard, 1990a, 22

It remains to consider the challenge issued by the emergence of a *transpolitical* geography. In what way does this challenge serve to address the moribund and zombified state of political geography? In what ways does it provide for a new intensity of theorizing and of writing the event? The answer must be framed in terms that redress the principle of production, a ventriloquizing principle that relies on imposing meaning onto events, with the principle of s(ed)uction. Such a principle has as its logic "the power to make things disappear, and not simply a power of transformation" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 54). Nevertheless., such an anti-dialectical manoeveur is wholly affirmative, "it gives to that which disappears in the horizon of the other the opportunity to reappear" (*Ibid.*). It is not for nothing, therefore, that the masses adopt this principle, logic and manoueveur as the basis for the anenergetic volition of their fatal strategies with regard to the cool simulation of the political.

5.1 Fatal strategies: passivity, acceleration, hyperconformity, transparition.

> Fatal strategies consist... in pushing the old world towards its destruction... to push that which wants to fall.

> Baudrillard, 1993a, 22

> the masses would sentence the political to annihilation, they would be spontaneously transpolitical.

> Baudrillard, 1983a, 40

The transpolitical is the fatal aspect of the political system. This fatality, whereby "something responds of its own accord, something from which it is impossible to escape, but which you cannot decipher either" is borne of the system of pure simulation, being located "at its point of inertia, at its blind spot"—its dead, vanishing or omega point (Baudrillard 1993a, 50). If the sphere of the political, now in the throes of pure simulation and cold s(ed)uction, is destined to play with the vestiges of meaning—with the spectre of representation—the fatal is that which serves to nullify or deflect all attempts to recreate the critical distance of history upon the scene of politics. Hereinafter it is the masses, in their transpearing banality, who spontaneously assume the status of a fatal apogée to the sphere of the political. Note, however, that "the masses are not locatable in terms of population, they are not the sum of locatable individuals... This something which is there but doesn't produce any difference is an extrodinary challenge to symbolic order of any kind, be it political, social or whatever" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 45). Nor are the masses a structural category; they function at the *simulated* level of the *socius*. And, as with Deleuze and Guattari's schizoid body without organs, there is no possibility of (political) surgery. For the masses, by their very nature, posess a nebulous quality, which changes at every glance. For example, adopting a fatal strategy of hyperconformity, the masses constitute a happy void, fatal creators of their own history in conditions beyond the hypertelic end(s) of history (Gane, 1991b). And where conformity, apathy and apoliticism were classically fascist, under conditions of hypertelia these strategies take on a hyperrevolutionary status (Baudrillard, 1983a, 40). The

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extreme transpolitical conformity, the transparent hyperconformity of the masses, leaves the political to endlessly replay itself, and to become lost in the ecstasy of communication (Baudrillard, 1988c). Even the politics of the margin—micropolitics, the politics of identity, difference and the body—continues to function according to the law and anomie, in accordance with such polarities as oppression/resistance, limit/transgression—its mission being to reanimate the body politic on its way to political and emancipatory perfection. But, lacking any polar term, the masses act always and everywhere to short-circuit the representative efforts of the political; recall that mass = earth. Accordingly, the masses are spontaneously transpolitical, and their fatality has everywhere served to seduce and volatilize the political.

Electoral apathy, for instance, functions as a fatal strategy aimed at the idea of a democratic mirror of the masses. The masses, as a simulation of the social, defy representation and are always and already everywhere in the process of transpearing. This is their chief characteristic, as an imaginary referent whose 'presence'—the term must be suspended—is only brought into transpearance, like a stellar nebulous, by constant bombardment with stimuli, messages and tests undertaken by media and market research bodies (Baudrillard, 1983a, 21). The search to represent the social in the media, politics and the economy—the social body of consumers—thus assumes the form of a game with low stakes. No matter how complex the techniques of bombardment become—neurocomputing, Artificial Intelligence...—none of these forms will succeed in *re-presenting* anything. In the ecstasy of information there is only the hyperreal image in which there is nothing to see.

It is by now well established that opinion polls (we quaintly reserve a different name for this form of market research) and election results frequently, and entirely at random, fail to correlate, proffering notoriously different transparitions of the masses. Prior to the 1992 UK general election, for example, the polls happily represented the affiliations of the masses swinging towards a victory for the Labour Party. The election results readily produced a sound enough

majority for the Conservative Party to retain power. Politicians, who claim never to believe in opinion polls, were clearly shocked. Pollsters publicly played down the predictive power of opinion surveys—always only ever thermometers, never barometers—whilst conducting post-mortems in a private atmosphere of commercial panic. Concerns about quota-sampling, causal explanations (such as the idea that votes carry an economic cost unlike cost-free declarations to market researchers) provide 20-20 hindsight, but absolutely no theoretical forward vision. Thus the masses repeatedly demonstrate that which is disavowed by the political class: that for some time now, elections have been "digested as a form of entertainment... akin to TV game shows" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 37). As the public sphere is retranscribed into the magnetic circuitry of the television screen (Baudrillard, 1993, 80), the masses—the alibi for the existence of the political class—take revenge! This is a brute strategy of obscene passivity on the part of the masses: there can be no mirror of the masses, no reflection of the transparency of the obscene. Or again, the masses function as a black hole in the transpolitical order of things, absorbing everything, radiating back nothing.

This is not to say that the State does not still act as if to function. It functions as a pure simulation, in response to which the masses adopt such fatal and ironic strategies as accelerated hyperconsumption—as with all commodities, consuming ever more of the social services: "What greater mockery can their be than this craving for the *social* as an item of *individual* consumption?" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 47). This is precisely an obscene and obese strategy of acceleration which would result in the destruction of the entire system. If the political ideology of the right in the UK is to 'privatize' nationalized health care, to make it a part of the market, the fatal response of the mass is not to resist politically but to accelerate transpolitically. In the era of metastatic and auto-immune diseases, the masses themselves assume a kind of metastasis: indulging increasingly in 'prosumption' (production + consumption: a form of self-diagnosis and self-treatment using patent medicines) (Toffler, 1990); forcing the expansion of health care in new directions (alternative medicines); forcing 'integrated' medicine onto the 'orthodox'

system... bringing it to its knees with escalating demands at a time when State funding is simultaneously being squeezed in a (trans)political simulation of (right-wing) ideological integrity. There is no attempt to understand the ideology and genealogy of health care in order to resist (Foucault). The irruption of paralogies of the body, integrated with the virulent proliferation of the commodity system and the disparate attempts of the orthodox medical apparatus to cope, point only to an ironic strategy on the part of the masses; regarding the State "they are in the process of ruining its institution" (Baudrillard, 1983a, 47). If these fatal strategies of extreme passivity, hyperconformity, acceleration and transparition on the part of the masses produce revulsion and horror in the politician and the intellectual, the feeling can only be amplified in the consideration of other State apparatuses and other situations in which the ventriloquism of the political is increasingly rendered a pure simulation.

5.2 S(ed)uction

> Seduction... never belongs to the order of nature, but [to] that of artifice... This is why all the great systems of production and interpretation have not ceased to exclude seduction—to its good fortune—from their conceptual field... Every discourse is threatened with this sudden reversibility, absorbed into its own signs without a trace of meaning.

Baudrillard, 1990a, 2

In what ways are the fatal strategies of the masses hyperrevolutionary? And what lesson does this provide for theory? The answers lie in s(ed)uction. For s(ed)uction is that which permits— or which necessitates—a movement through the void and into an hypertelic destiny. But "the crucial moment is that brutal instant which reveals that the journey has no end, that there is no longer any reason for it to come to an end" (Baudrillard, 1988b, 10). Reaching for the end of the end is itself transpolitical; it is an indecipherable, undecidable and reversible movement of s(ed)uction.

Thus, the principle of s(ed)uction properly rests on a fatal fascination. It is the principle of all fatal strategies precisely because it serves to short-circuit meaning—again captured perfectly in

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the transpolitical ideograms X, χ and δ. In short, it is always the *a*signifying that is s(ed)uctive. Or again, signs of great significance always lose out to the s(ed)uctive power of the senseless. Hence, the following fable: A small boy is granted a number of wishes by a mischievous fairy— providing he does not think about the shade of red of a fox's tail. Of course, this prohibition results in him being unable to avoid bringing the colour to mind! Such is the s(ed)uctive power of the senseless. "That which doesn't say anything has every reason never to be forgotten. That which is arbitrary is simultaneously endowed with a total necessity" (Baudrillard, 1990a, 75). Hence also the s(ed)uctive attraction of a place deviod of meaning, which initiates a motionless voyaging from the here-and-now to the void—from now-here to no-where (Olsson, 1991). Such a movement is predicated on the circulation of secret, enigmatic, cryptic and elliptical signs—but above all, on the nature of the *challenge* such asignifying signs provide. "If you were to see written on a door panel: 'This door opens onto the void," Baudrillard (1990a, 75) proposes, "— wouldn't you still want to open it?" Such is the transpolitical attraction of non-sense.

Because the principle of s(ed)uction is, by definition, empty, senseless, and indecipherable, it is impossible to speak of s(ed)uction other than by way of s(ed)uction. But the *inclination* towards s(ed)uction in the fatal strategies of the masses is more than apparent. For fatal strategies work by diversion, by challenge, by raising the stakes of a cold ludic game. Think of the category of the political as the alibi of the political elite. Such a thought is inclined towards s(ed)uction precisely because it presents the great traditions of politics and democracy, the rationality and sense of the West, with a challenge capable of forcing it into a superficial abyss. What the fatal strategies of the masses display is that there is no call for rigorous and concerted critique: "why become stuck by undermining foundations, when a *light* manipulation of appearances will do." (Baudrillard, 1990a, 10).

The fatal strategies of the masses are not, therefore, characterized by pure s(ed)uction, but they are governed by a propinquitous asignifying logic. Similarly, is not a case of suggesting a

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necessary and widespread individual or collective *committment* to cynicism or apathy—though that is certainly increasing. Rather, the 'collective' actions of the masses are a pure form of apathy, which is itself predicated on a consummate *lack of committment*. Politics as spectacle and politics as reason thus invite only the s(ed)uctive challenge of hyperconformity and apathy. Hyperconformity reveals the necessary lack of representation which politics disconcertingly relies upon, whilst apathy reveals the 'soft' nature of the game, and the low stakes involved. In the USA, the pre-emptive response to electoral apathy amongst 'young people,' for instance, included a promotional campaign on *MTV* to encourage voting. From Athens to *MTV*: therein lies the objective irony of the masses! But this objective irony of the masses is a form of s(ed)uction precisely because it opens out onto the void, and the void is always a *superficial* abyss.

In other words, s(ed)uction initiates a movement into a tactile or haptic, rather than an optic space—a smooth space articulated by a principle of abstraction (as in modern art) rather than representation (Doel, forthcoming). Such a s(ed)uctive surface is characteristic of the transpolitical, for the latter's principle figures—obesity, ecstasy obscenity and anomaly,—themselves invariably and inevitably unfurl and unfold into a superficial abyss: obesity is precisely a metastatic proliferation which, in and of itself, creates an entire space; ecstasy is itself a metastatic and obscene surface; the ob-scene, by definition, replaces the perspectival depth of the scene with the superficial depth of a screen, an heterotopic 'depth without depth;' and anomalies amass upon a smooth statistical surface, the radical and asignifying singularity of hæcceties objectively refusing to signify any meaningful depth.

Thus, it is in accordance with the principle of s(ed)uction, and the unfolding of the smooth haptic spaces of a superficial abyss, that the only remaining vestige of any geography resides. For s(ed)uction is a principle of (absolute) deterritorialisation: the potentialization of a line of flight. Such a movement requires that, on reaching a certain point, movement itself changes:

"Movement that moves through space of its own volition changes into an absorption by space itself... exactly as a jet engine is no longer an engine of space-penetration, but propels itself by creating a vacuum in front of it that sucks it forward" (Baudrillard, 1988b, 10). Thus is transpolitical geography s(ed)uctive; it is adsorbed onto the superfical abysses of the transpearing void. (The transpolitical therefore also achieves an ironic commentary on Jameson's (1988) desire to undertake a cognitive mapping of postmodern hyperspace: there is no more system of geography to tell us what happened to the referentiality of things (compare Clarke and Doel, 1994)). Hereinafter, only *empty* signs adsorb us; happy is the void! But let us be clear on the following point: there is nothing to lament in the s(ed)uctive fascination of the smooth spaces of superficial abysses. There is no alternative: "Seduction versus terror: such is the wager, since no other exists" (Baudrillard, 1990e, 183). Thus, transpolitical geography figures a curved space which sucks us onto the superficial abysses of the void; it is, precisely, an effect of disappearance. Hence the (fatal) destiny of our theories and practices to interminably transpear on the surface of things.

> The evil demon of language resides in its capacity to become object, where one expects a subject and meaning... If it no longer aspires to a discourse of truth, theory must assume the form of a world from which truth has withdrawn... it must itself be an event in the universe it describes
>
> Baudrillard, 1988c, 84-99

5.3 Modalities of disappearance

> I don't have any doctrines to defend. I have one strategy, that's all.
>
> Baudrillard, 1993a, 82

> It's not so easy to create a void
>
> Baudrillard, 1987a, 129

There is an enormous task awaiting us, which flows from the curvature of the transpolitical. Nudging political geography towards the fatal strategies of transpolitical geography calls out for

an inordinate effort of theory. This effort lies precisely in identifying "the curvature of things, the mode in which things try to disappear" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 38). This is a task that is routinely and spontaneously performed by the masses, but which is almost entirely misunderstood by theoreticians. The ability to accelerate a movement of s(ed)uction, to conjure a deterritorializing line of flight, and to attain the status of an anenergetic critique, rests on the ability to make those elements of theory that seek only to ground and anchor theory and practice in the quarantine of a barred enclosure to a meaningful event disappear into the transpearing void from whence they came. But, as Baudrillard (1987a) insists, disappearance is not an easy task.

The difficulty relates, perhaps, to the confusion of different modes of disappearance (Baudrillard, 1987a, 76). Disappearance can assume a *mortal* mode (in the form of death); a *metastatic* mode (in the form of cloning); and an *æsthetic* mode (in the art of disappearing). Death, murder or suicide is a modality of disappearance that effectively misses the point—or fails to go beyond a certain point: things "don't want to die, they want to see their disappearance as an effect" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 38). The question of death is, of course, a profound exclusion in many discourses, and a wayward counterdiscourse that possesses a radical and s(ed)uctive potential (Baudrillard, 1993c). But in relation to the transpolitical, death is a mode of disappearance of little interest. "Nothing (not even God) now disappears by coming to an end, by dying. Instead, things disappear ... as a result of their transformation into the secondary existence of simulation" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 38). Disappearance is also evident in the process of metastatic proliferation (*Steigerung*), a fractal and carcinogenic rather than a mortal mode of disappearance. In such a mode of disappearance, the serial cloning of the Same engenders a situation of simulation that is entirely ecstatic and superficial, but which, in its serial erasure, maintains a thoroughly banal rather than a fatal potential; nothing will happen through it that has not already happened.

In contrast, the only mode of disappearance which presents itself as being of some importance is to be found in the form of a game: in the art of disappearance. The æsthetics of disappearance

(compare Virilio, 1991) involve and invoke the idea that "the disappearance of something is never objective, never final—it always involves a sort of challenge, a questioning, and consequently an act of seduction" (Baudrillard, 1987b, 39). In forcing such a challenge one raises the stakes from the banal to the fatal in an attempt to push the destiny of a concept *beyond* good and evil, *beyond* truth and falsity. This mode of disappearance can be conceived of as the only alternative to cool simulation. It involves a kind of play which raises the stakes of the universe by issuing a challenge "to meaning and to reality, to seduce them and to play with them" (Baudrillard, 1987b, 39). In short: "Theory is simply a challenge to the real. A challenge to the world to exist" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 124); it is the only line of flight from the real. And in absolute contrast with all theory of a representational bent, it recognises that "The realization of the world is a utopia which has lost in advance" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 184). Thus, transpolitical geography presents itself as a challenge and a game with the highest of stakes. It cannot be emphasised enough that the superficiality of transpolitical geography is an absolute fact, and that this facticity demands an effort of theory to engage in the æsthetics of disappearance. "From that point on, theory maintains absolutely no relation with anything at all; it becomes an event in and of itself... Strictly speaking, nothing remains but a sense of dizziness, with which you can't do anything" (Baudrillard, 1987a, 127-128). Or again: "The real joy of writing lies in the opportunity of being able to sacrifice a whole chapter for a single sentence, a complete sentence for a single word, to sacrifice everything for an artificial effect or an acceleration into the void" (Baudrillard, 1990b, 29).

RETAKE: The arrival of the saturated pornogeography and the excrescent hypertelia which mark the irruption of the hyperreal world we have considered here in terms of a transpolitical transparition is characterized by the curvature of an asymptotic norm—an anomalous depth without depth—that renders everything beneath its surface senseless, banal and fatal. It is only through the affirmation of such an event, and in the assumption of an attitude that is objectively indifferent—a position captured by a thoroughly liminal, incorporeal, and ex-perimental

materialism—that we are able to engage with a mode of disappearance (a fatal strategy of s(ed)uction) capable of engaging with the paradoxical and s(ed)uctive space of the transpearing void (δ). Such a condition demands that theory and practice themselves must adopt a range of fatal strategies in order to hasten the reign of the anomalous and the banal, for these latter set off on an hypertelic, ecstatic, obese and obscene curve we can't escape. However, and as we have seen throughout the course of this paper, it is not so easy to create and affirm a superficial abyss in the order of things. "Struggling against the vivaporous obscenity of the confusion of ideas, struggling against the promiscuity of concepts—that is theory (when its radical)" (Baudrillard, 1990d, 178). Such a theoretical-practice leads to a kind of giddiness; it portends a vertiginous geography of the transpolitical which has to achieve a certain speed in order to force things to transpear. "There is a game, which has nothing to do with the forced realization of the world, a game in which things demand to be solicited, diverted, seduced. You've got to be able to make them appear as well as disappear; to play the whole game. Writing is nothing but that, and theory as well" (Baudrillard, 1993a, 45). Hereinafter, there is a transpolitical seizure of the end(s) of an-Other(s) political geography which we can't escape. Welcome to the day of the dead.

☺ ◊ δ

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