

THE ERASURE OF THE “REAL” BY THE “HYPERREAL” IN
POSTMODERNITY THROUGH JEAN BAUDRILLARD’S *MODE OF
APPREHENSION*

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Abstract. This article exposes the views of the French philosophical theorist, Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), in relation to the dramatic shifts wrought to the world after being swamped with infinite forms of mass culture, ranging from mass production and consumerism to the invasion of the virtual cybernetic life to man’s reality across the globe. It is postmodernity as a condition characterized generally by the superabundance of quantitative provision whether of goods or leisure that Baudrillard seeks to study. This paper sets focus on Baudrillard’s conceptualization of the “real” in such a postmodern condition where he deems is kept shrunk, dissipated and eventually erased altogether by the omnipotent might of the “hyperreal.” The latter substitutes the “real” while incorporating in it infinite contrarities of profound alternatives and never-ending options offered to man, on the one hand, countered by the sheer absence of referentiality, representation and even originality, on the other.

Keywords: Baudrillard, erasure, (hyper)real, implosion, (post)modernity, sign, values, simulacra, simulation, subject(ivity)

INTRODUCTION

The Baudrillardian project endeavors to study modernity, namely signs and indices evincing its end as a phase of history that marks a considerable part of the twentieth century. To ascertain the end of modernity presupposes a skeptic attitude towards the pillars that constitute its structure as a whole. It is to question what Richard G. Smith calls “the values of modernity, bound up with the Enlightenment dream of the progressive emancipation of humanity

through the application of reason” (Smith 2010, 169). Smith detects this urge from the fact that “Baudrillard rarely uses the term ‘postmodern/ism/ity’ in his body of writing, precisely because all his works are concerned with modernity, or rather the ‘end of modernity’ [...] The multiplicity of ends scattered throughout Baudrillard’s writings are a part of modernity coming to an end, not a new postmodern beginning” (Smith 2010, 217). Implicitly, then, the prefix ‘post’ attached to ‘modernity’ is indicative of a state of exhaustion in which no longer is it possible to tap any resource from the ‘values of modernity’ that keep witnessing a process of ending.

In reality, the question of whether postmodernity is a rupture with or continuation of modernity soon gives way to deeper investigations of such a postmodern condition from within. Certainly, this is because the postmodern condition becomes an undeniable phenomenon possessing its unique features whose subtleties of operation ought to constitute the actual field of study, rather than the mere pondering over the conjectural rupture or continuation it makes with modernity. The latter (modernity) would be mostly evoked only if there were an aim of highlighting the changing nature of man’s preoccupations in postmodernity. As Brian Nicol states, “theorists have tended to portray modernity (that is, from early to mid-twentieth century) as increasingly industrialized, mechanized, urban and bureaucratic, while postmodernity as the era of the space age, of consumerism, late capitalism, and most recently, the dominance of the virtual and the digital” (Nicol 2009, 2).

Baudrillard’s study of the end of modernity is anchored in his attempt to envisage it as a parenthesis that is closed once for all. Meanwhile, postmodernity presents itself as another parenthesis that is open, yet its contours are puzzling enough to lead him to embark on deciphering them. It comes as no surprise, then, to find Baudrillard’s works veer towards studying postmodernity as a condition, rather than ruminating on the demise of modernity. Indeed, such postmodern proper concepts as ‘hyperreality,’ ‘simulation’ and ‘simulacrum,’ along with ideas related to

fragmented subjectivities and the loss of control of the subject over the object do, all, furnish the grounds of his writings. All these concepts and ideas are closely interrelated with each other, in the sense of functioning as tools through which Baudrillard problematizes the existence of something called the “real” in postmodernity. Rather, it is the “hyperreal” that is holding sway over the “real” and, therefore, gains prominence in Baudrillard’s works. My aim in this article is to elicit the Baudrillardian conceptualization of the “real” and the “hyperreal” and the process that leads him to derive the superseding authority of the latter over the former in postmodernity.

1. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE “REAL” IN POSTMODERNITY

It is quite pertinent, at first, to expose the constituents of the postmodern condition itself as a mode of life that has its own peculiarities. This is certainly conducive afterwards to gather illuminating insights into the disruptive nature of that condition to the seamy order of the “real” and the subsequent ascendancy of the “hyperreal” instead. Besides, a scientific analysis of a given condition, such as that of postmodernity, requires an overall strategy that takes into account both materialistic aspects (like the goods being produced and sold, socio-economic choices, political machinery etc) and immaterial ones (embracing generally thoughts and culture). In either case, man remains the locus on whose territory the specificities of the condition being studied could be unraveled and sound conclusions would be generated. This means that the study of postmodernity must include within its canon the response of man to the diverse forms of (im)material life, no matter how passive that response may be. Indeed, the incorporation of man’s passivity in the study of postmodernity is revealed through the use of the term “subject” which “serves as a substitute for the older terms *person*, *individual*, and *self* to designate a fractured, decentered, language-shaped creature” (Quinn 1999, 312).

Dealing with man on the basis of being a “subject” implies destabilizing the position of man in the universe so that s/he is no longer viewed as an agent of action. The paradigm of “subject / object” within a postmodern context comes to signify an ever-rising competent and even warring atmosphere wherein the “object,” whose sources never cease multiplying and possessing almost inexplicable and undetectable subtleties, functions often anathematically to the “subject.” Actually, while expounding on postmodernity, Baudrillard tries to pinpoint the causes that incur the “subject” in a decentered state vis-à-vis the “object” and the serious effects produced out of that degenerating process. All the while, he stresses the paradoxical fact that it is out of the proliferation of what Douglass Kellner calls “hi-tech inventions” (Kellner 2006, 22), meant originally to facilitate life and speed the rhythm of service and information, that the decentralization of the “subject” by the “object” is slyly implemented. In his book *The Intelligence of Evil*, Baudrillard points to the mesmerising aspect of these very hi-techs: “you enter the screen and the visual image unimpeded. You enter life itself as though walking on to a screen. You slip your own life like a data suit” (Baudrillard 2005,75).

What takes place is an underlying context of fusion and even inseparability between man and the “screen,” bringing about a different sort of human being. For Baudrillard, the postmodern condition makes out of the screen “a partner in a general negotiation on lifestyles; or something (or someone, since at this stage there is no more difference) to which you are wired” (Baudrillard 1988, 13). This close bond established between man and the screen pertains, in reality, to the deluge of digital networks of communication and information characterizing postmodernity. Expatiating on the Baudrillardian conceptualization of such a “screen-wired” human being, Richard. G. Smith underscores “the emergence of a new modality of the human. The human gives way to the *post-human* when the virtual replaces the actual as the primary mode by which we conceptualize and experience reality” (Smith 2010, 16). Constituting an indivisible entity with the “virtual” while losing

touch with the “actual,” this “post-human” man in postmodernity ends up forsaking the “real” altogether. As Smith continues to argue, “humans have become virtualized – immersed within digital circuits of instant and excessive information technologies – to the point we can no longer maintain a critical difference from the cyberspaces that surround us” (Smith 2010, 16).

When the “virtual” and the “real” become inextricably mixed, the latter is rendered an elusive concept, sharing the same insubstantiality as the former. Hence, Baudrillard notices “the ‘real’ has disappeared, and that is the mystery: why is there nothing rather than something” (Baudrillard 1996, 2)? Baudrillard’s wonder is certainly ascribed to the sheer difference between the aims of such a digital revolution in postmodernity (revolving, in their congregate, around the achievement of speed of service and information) and the shortcoming of its findings, consisted chiefly in banishing man from the “real” while ensnaring man in a “virtualized” mode of being. So, rather than adding “something” to the reality of man, this all-encompassing digital circuit invading the world puts its virtual weight on man as to cause the “real” to be crashed and turn into “nothing.” Brian Nicol adeptly expresses this paradox in postmodernity: “we have become alienated from those aspects of life we might consider authentic or real [...] Existence has become more virtual than real” (Nicol 2009, 4).

1.A. CODIFICATION OF THE “REAL” THROUGH SIGN-VALUES

Inauthenticity of the “real” in the postmodern condition becomes the watchword for Baudrillard. Revisiting the Saussurean one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and the signified, Baudrillard posits a new semiology based on liberating the signified from the stranglehold of the signifier. In his book *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard maintains that “the arbitrariness of the sign begins when the signifier starts to refer to a disenchanted universe of the signified, the common denominator of the real world,

towards which no one any longer has the least obligation” (Baudrillard 1993, 50). Clearly, Baudrillard adopts a wider reading of “arbitrariness” than Saussure who used it as signifying the absence of any relational logic in nature that binds the signifier to the signified. Baudrillard reads it, too, in conjunction with the representational urge of the sign, namely the inescapable inaptitude of the signifier to bear any tie to “the real world” which, by its elusive nature, remains “nothing” and therefore, “no one has the least obligation” to in such a postmodern condition. Hence, the essence of liberating the flow of the signifier in the Baudrillardian semiological enterprise is meant essentially to stress its being cast into “the metaphysics of indeterminacy and code” (Baudrillard 1993, 57).

What is most important, here, is not mainly the irrepresentationability of the signifier to the “real” due to the context of “indeterminacy” surrounding its journey of reference. This is just a parcel of a well-known fact typifying post-structuralist studies at large which have come to oust the Saussurean structuralism wherein for each signifier there is a signified that is fixed and well-determined. So, Baudrillard’s “metaphysics of indeterminacy” is there to enhance the post-structuralist breakthrough of destabilizing fixity and determinacy from within the system of signification as to highlight the capacity of the signifier to have multiple signifieds. It is, rather, the “metaphysics of code” which Baudrillard propounds, too, that deserves to catch much attention, especially that the Baudrillardian conceptualization of the “code” entertains the same disruptive potential to the signifying process as does the indeterminate signified in relation to the signifier in a post-structuralist framework.

Baudrillard does not content himself with elaborating just a post-structuralist reading of the “code,” but inscribes it in a postmodern condition where “the subject becomes a node in the network and an absorbent screen” (Smith 2010, 201). Within the Baudrillardian usage of the term, the “code” does actually reveal much anchorage in such a virtualized digital world characterizing postmodernity. As

he affirms, “a code is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (Baudrillard 1981, 2). Baudrillard is talking about the codification of the “real” which culminates eventually in causing it to evaporate and be “substituted” by mere “signs” iconizing it. It is as though the “real” in postmodernity had undergone a symbolic death after which to be subjected to a monumentalizing process through icons seeking to construct thereby a substitutable existence which, though possesses materiality, remains lifeless. It is exactly like a dead body being embalmed to preserve it from decay. The reduction of the “real” to a set of “codes” ends up, then, giving worth to “signs” rather than what they refer to so that, as Kellner observes, “sign-values predominate over use values and exchange values [...] Signs take precedence over the ‘real’ and reconstruct human life. The subject of praxis is fractured and objects come to rule human beings” (Kellner 2006, 15).

With the overthrow of the “real” by the “signs of the real,” crucial implications take place, all of which flow to the same container: the erasure of the “real.” As Baudrillard maintains, “the question of the signs and their rational destinations, their ‘real’ and their ‘imaginary,’ their repression, reversal, the illusions they form of what they silence or of their parallel signification, is *completely effaced*” (Baudrillard *Simulacra and Simulation* 1994, 42, my emphasis). As the “real” completes its effacement under the thick layers of its own “signs,” there comes to the forefront whether the set of codes replacing it are able to carry on doing the mission they are supposed to do at the referential level. The question concerns the viability of the code to refer to the objective world of reality when the “real” loses any ground of existence. This is certainly what leads Baudrillard to metaphysicize the code. While the aforementioned “metaphysics of indeterminacy” is related to the sign-system in which open-endedness of reference is stressed, the “metaphysics of code” pertains to the coreless outcome of “sign-values” where referentiality itself is effaced following the substitution of the “real” by mere “signs of the real.” Baudrillard presents the latter’s metaphysics as follows: “the code does not claim to prove itself, to

verify itself” (Baudrillard 2003, 91).

1.B. THE IMPLOSION OF THE “REAL” IN ITS OWN SIGNS

The non-referential aspect of the “sign of the real” to the “real” begets serious implications in the study of postmodernity. Even the scale of differentiation whereby to establish parameters of variations between daily practices is made a vain endeavor that cannot be other than void of purport in such a codified sort of reality governed by mere “signs.” For example, there occurs “the breaking down of the distinction between high art and low or mass culture” (Capezio 2012, 2-3). This means that the non-referentiality of the “sign” to the “real” soon yields an inescapable unoriginality in which all that man produces in life remains a mere construct that is caught under the umbrella of sign-values. Therefore, whatever is done and how skilful a product is manufactured are but forms of a larger “code” which is, by its metaphysical nature, always elevated to man’s empirical reality inasmuch as the “code” can do without “proving” and/or “verifying” its presence there. By analogy, the “code” follows the same itinerary of slippage from the “real” as the signifier does in relation to the set of signifieds in the poststructuralist sign-system.

Accordingly, the shrinkage of the liminality separating the “sign-values” that the “code” may possess from their mere systemic essence as unstable constructs results in the eventual loss of values attached to them. Hence, rather than talking about the so-called elevation of the “code” to the laws of reality where “proving” and “verifying” processes are demanded, Baudrillard detects its elusive and even duplicitous nature in man’s life in postmodernity: “it is reality itself that disappears in the game of reality” (Baudrillard 1983, 146). So, if the “code” were to produce “signs of the real” not the “real” itself, all that it does would be a mere “game” of signification, sharing thus not just the same elusiveness of reference, but also the artificiality of reference itself of the signifier in the poststructuralist

sign-system. In the words of Martin Golab, “having lost connection with reality and substituting it for operational value, all differentiation in such a sign-system is achieved artificially and all meaning can be manipulated at will” (Golab 2016, 29). The context of “artificiality” and “manipulation” is certainly indicative of a tricky situation where there is no room for “values.”

As the “real” is played with by the very “signs” of its own representation, it witnesses an explosion from within, known as “implosion”: “strictly speaking, this is what implosion signifies: the absorption of one pole into another, the short-circuit between poles of every differential systems of meaning, the effacement of terms and of distinct oppositions, and thus of the medium and the real” (Baudrillard 1983, 102). Being so, the implosion of the “real” in its own “signs” means, in the final analysis, its generation of its own “effacement” through its mutual act of absorbing and being absorbed in its own compositional “medium” which is, given its anchorage in codality, remains prone to “artificiality” and “manipulation.” Hence, Baudrillard moves a step further in gathering the impossibility of gaining any identifiable and well-grounded meaning from the “real” in the aftermath of its implosion into its own “signs.” As he said maintains, “by the very play of appearances, things are becoming further and further removed from their meaning, and resisting the violence of interpretation” (Baudrillard 2001, 19).

What is being articulated, then, is an imploded state in which the difference between the “real” and “signs of the real” is completely blurred, causing the former to be implicated in the same characteristics as the latter. By extension, no longer is it possible for Baudrillard to talk about a “real” that is untarnished by the “artificial” and “manipulative” aspects of its own “signs” which function always as the “medium” through which that “real” is communicated. Thus, Baudrillard differentiates between the “Real” as a hypothetical concept that has no bearing to the postmodern condition and the actual “real” of postmodernity that is witnessing implosion from within culminating in its erasure. He said, “the Real

implies an origin, an end, a past and a future, a chain of causes and effects, a continuity and a rationality [...] And its disappearance is the dislocation of this whole constellation” (Baudrillard 2000, 63). The ultimate result of the implosion of the “real” in its own “signs” is the total erasure of the common parameters wherewith man can conceptualize the world, whether tempo-spatially (a past and a future) or logically (a rationality), or even metaphysically (an origin and an end).

2. THE “HYPERREAL” AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE “REAL”

Baudrillard posits that the erasure of the “real” in postmodernity has brought about a new mode of reality called the “hyperreal.” He delineates the condition of “hyperreality” as that in which “images are no longer the mirror of reality. They have invested the heart of reality and transformed it into hyperreality where, from screen to screen, the only aim of the image is the image” (Baudrillard 2005, 43). It is the cult of the image for its own sake that typifies the “hyperreal,” creating, thus, “a metastatic mode of self-reproduction” (Genius 2002, 226). This metastasis affecting the “image” engenders a paradox revealed through taking “the heart of reality” as raw materials while doing a simultaneous “transformational” exercise whereby the “hyperreal” acts out its substitution of the “real” through the compositional structure of the “image” itself. The immediate effect of that metastatic situation where the “aim of the image is image,” light is shed on the process of construction, not on the image itself. Hence, “focus is shifted from what is being represented in the image towards how the image is represented and produced” (Capezio 2012, 4).

We are, then, in front of a form of implosion whereby the “image” acts at once as possessing a content that needs to be deciphered and as a constructed production whose structure triggers off the viewer’s interest. This duality begets “the immanent logic of the image as the center of Baudrillard’s analysis” (Saulius 2002, 94).

The sense of amplitude that “immanence” is suggestive of does not exceed, however, the space of the already-imploded postmodern subject in relation to the object being represented by the “image.” Implosion, which is there to endorse “dedifferentiation” (Kellner 2006, 12), narrows down and even eliminates the gap separating the subject from the object so that neither of them grows distinguishable from each other. This indistinguishability does typify the tie binding the subject and the “image” where the idea of “immanence” indicates an endless absorption of the former in the latter, rather than a distanced elaboration of contact. Actually, Baudrillard evokes in his book *Simulations* “implosion as an absorption of the radiating model of causality, of the differential model of determination, of meaning” (1983, 57).

Interestingly, the “hyperreal” emanates from this exhaustive aspect of “absorption” generated by implosion whose magnitude takes on a metaphysical proportion given its implication in the laws of “causality,” “determination” and “meaning.” As G. Smith maintains, “implosion signifies the birth of a new order – that of the hyperreal” (Smith 2010, 76). Ironically, tantalization of the postmodern subject in relation to the “image” as an object characterizes such a “metaphysics” that the “hyperreal” is likely to produce. This is certainly the effect of the amalgamation of the amplitude of “the immanence of logic of the image” with the detainment of the subject in it through the process of implosion whereby the subject’s absorption in the “image” is carried to such an extent that both grow indistinguishable from each other. Hence, rather than possessing the ability to mobilize the “image” from within through such conventional acts as symbolic renderings of it via analysis and interpretation (whether of its content or structural form), the so-called “hyperreal metaphysics” atrophies the subject’s agency in relation to it.

For Baudrillard, the evaporation of the subject’s agency over the “image” yields “glaciation of meaning” (Baudrillard 2001, 181) which affects, too, the notions of “determination” and “causality.” Ultimately, this all-inclusive form of “glaciation” is indicative of the

entanglement of the “hyperreal metaphysics” in a perpetual context of negation and even cancellation of any destination for the “image” outside its space. Accordingly, the confinement of the “image” within its own orbit reverberates, too, the movement of the “sign” in poststructuralism. So, “if the destination of the signs is found in their link to referents, the destiny of signs is to lose their referential function” (Kellner 2006, 97). The same loss of “referentiality” despite the plurality of “referents” characterizes the “hyperreal” journey the “image” undertakes in postmodernity. On the one hand, the “image” suggests a wide array of “referents” thanks to the “immanent logic” it possesses at the level of form. On the other, due to its incessant implosion into a metastatic state of “self-reproduction,” the “image” tends to elude a “real” referential potential, at the level of content. Thus, its meaning is “glaciated” by sinking into a mere “hyperreal” construct” that is just there to simulate reality, not to “represent” it.

2.A. SIMULATION OF THE “REAL” BY THE “HYPERREAL”

While talking about “simulation,” Baudrillard begins with distinguishing it from “dissimulation.” He observes that: “to dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one does not have” (Baudrillard *Simulacra and Simulation* 1994, 3). In postmodernity, simulation has to do with the trajectories of both the “real” and the “hyperreal” whereby the latter constitutes a space of “feigning” representationality of and referentiality to the former. The whirl in which the postmodern subject is kept caught pertains, thus, to the perpetual unsettling of the “real” from within by the intruding visitations of the “hyperreal” which does so only to simulate other alternatives of “realness” to the “real.” However, whatever amount of simulation the “hyperreal” produces in relation to the “real” remains a fruitless endeavor since, by its metaphysical nature, the attempt in itself is hinged on falsifying the subject who is kept duped into believing the possibility

of having “what one does not have” actually. This might have led G. Smith to hold that “Baudrillard has always sought to undermine any confidence we have in the possibility of establishing an objective knowledge of the world” (Smith 2010, 4).

This lack of “confidence,” however, does not distance, for Baudrillard, the hapless postmodern subject from the germinating outgrowth of different sources of simulation nourishing the hyperreal sway. In the postmodern condition where reality is bombarded by “signs” and “images” iconizing it in formulaic rules and principles, no room is left to the “real” to be unaffected by the vagaries of simulation. As G. Smith continues to argue, “this hallucinated real – the hyperreal – is more real than the real, with heightened reality effects that the merely existent cannot match” (Smith 2010, 179). Certainly, Baudrillard adopts this hallucinatory aspect of the “hyperreal” through portraying it as a fatal obsession fettering the postmodern subject in its shackles that are made, nonetheless, imperceptible and even appealing by dint of simulation. He highlights the importance of such “heightened reality effects” of the “hyperreal” in diverting the subject’s attention to it, stressing the primacy of the form over the content even at the linguistic level: “the signifier, considered as a form rather than content, produces the effect of the real or referent as mirage, alibi or simulation” (Baudrillard 1990, 197).

Emanating from “the effect of the real,” rather than from the “real” itself, the “hyperreal” finds in simulation a fertile soil to consolidate its own metaphysics of presence in postmodernity. Simulation, which gives the impression of the capacity to transform what is not had into being had, nurtures the “hyperreal” mode of life where the “mirage” of the “real” is endowed with its own “alibi” to defend its appeal to the postmodern subject. Ultimately, what is being feigned to be had, though it is not had, is but a form of anesthetization whereby the “real” is deadened at the expense of dynamizing the “hyperreal,” which requires the subject’s embrace of the falsification of simulation wholeheartedly. As Baudrillard puts it, “to assert that ‘we are in a state of simulation’ becomes meaningless,

because at that moment one enters a death-like state. The moment you believe that you are in a state of simulation, you are no longer there” (Baudrillard 1993, 184). Implicitly, simulation is made like a boon that has its own prerequisite to be obtained, the chief of which is to do without awareness while succumbing into constructing what cannot be had in the “real.”

For Baudrillard, simulation has already achieved its tight hold over the awareness of the postmodern subject whose enchantment to “hyperreal” fabrics reaches its utmost, culminating in a condition where no space is left to the “real” to exist. As Oscar Capezio elaborates it, “the problem Baudrillard sets up is how to speak against this simulation when there is nothing to compare it, when there is nothing outside it. This is his hypothesis of simulation which is not only the loss of true reality, but also its very possibility” (2012, p.8). The main effect of simulation, then, is to cover such a devastation wrought to the “real” in postmodernity while working all the time to convince the postmodern subject that s/he knows the tenure of it. As this state (based on the subject’s mistaken belief in controlling the “real”) lingers, even the “very possibility” of such an act is retarded and cancelled altogether, giving full primacy to the “hyperreal” to keep consolidating its foundations that are based on mere simulations of the “real.” Hence, “simulation is an experience that artfully *mimics* but otherwise has no connection to the reality it presents” (Smith 2010, 199 my emphasis).

2.B. SIMULACRUM AS A MEANS OF HYPERREAL SIMULATIONS

With the intrigues of its “artful mimicry” of a simulated “real,” the “hyperreal” manages to provide the postmodern subject with a much wider space to navigate than what the “real” can do, no matter how elusive that space may be. In fact, Baudrillard stresses the possibility to live out the most extreme form of rapture by the spell of hyperreal simulations. He evokes, for example, “the ecstasy of communication [where] the subject becomes a pure screen, a pure

absorption and re-absorption surface of the influent networks” (Baudrillard 1988, 27). Much emphasis needs to be put, then, on the essence of these “influential networks” that are instrumental in “purifying” and, by extension, purging the postmodern subject from within in the simulatory process of hyperreal beguilements. It is actually from that need that Baudrillard introduces the term “simulacrum” (“simulacra” as the plural form), defining it as follows: “the simulacrum is not that which hides the truth, but that which hides the absence of truth” (Baudrillard 1990, 35).

To consider these “networks” as “simulacra,” then, is to confer on them the ability to blind the postmodern subject from apprehending the erasure of the “real” by the “hyperreal” in postmodernity. Put differently, “simulacrum” serves to veil the simulatory aspect of hyperreal constructions. Unsurprisingly, then, “the realm of the hyperreal (ie. media, simulations of reality, Disneyland and amusement parks, malls and consumer fantasy lands, TV sports and other excursions into ideal worlds) is more real than real, whereby the models, images, and codes of the hyperreal come to control thought and behavior” (Kellner 2006, 12). It is through these variegated forms of “models,” “images” and “codes” that “simulacrum” operates and perpetuates its full seizure of the postmodern subject both from within and without. This leads Baudrillard to talk about “the transaesthetic society of simulacrum as a new dematerialized society of signs, images and codes” (Baudrillard *Simulacra and Simulation* 1994, 39). In this “society of simulacrum,” boundaries are transgressed, causing an exhaustive implosion of contrarities into each other, affecting the whole metaphysics of the “real” and the “hyperreal.” As G. Smith puts it, “the real and the hyperreal are both orders of simulacra, that is, they are generated by images and signs, firstly through representation and then simulations” (Smith 2010, 237).

Under simulacra, no longer does the question of whether “signs, images and codes” represent the “real” or just simulate it through the “hyperreal” matter at all. All is enmeshed in one continuum where the very metaphysics of reference itself is cancelled altogether

so that “no analysis would know how to contain this diffuse, decentered, molecular reality” (Baudrillard 2007, 55). What gears the paralysis of analysis is the irrelevance of the question of relationality with respect to the simularcal mode of life whereby there grows no need of copies, models and constructs at large to have an origin of reference. That is why Baudrillard characterizes postmodernity as a condition dominated by “pure simulacrum” while putting forward Disneyland as a construct that “exists in order to hide that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real” (Baudrillard *Simulacra and Simulation* 1994, 12). In other words, it is a mild embrace of the falsifications of hyperreal simulations ingested imperceptively to the postmodern subject after being simulacraly administered as the only locus of the “real” that is longed and striven for.

Under the aegis of simulacral exercises, the hyperreal simulatory constructs keep confounding the representational potential of the “real,” unblocking thus the channels of their mutual communication causing them to transfuse with each other. G. Smith evokes the importance of the prefix ‘trans’ in Baudrillardian philosophical enterprise while maintaining that “‘trans’ means movement between, a confusion of boundaries, of being neither here nor there, a contagion across states” (Smith 2010, 226). Actually, Baudrillard highlights more often than not the way the postmodern subject, on functioning as “a terminal of multiple networks, becomes as much a spectacle as a spectator” (Baudrillard 1988, 16), incorporating in his/her own person such a confusion of movement that the prefix ‘trans’ implies. The Disney-like world of simulacrum gestates too much just to bring forth further forms of erasure, including even separating the subject from the object. As such “everything becomes trans-economic, trans-political and trans-sexual,” resulting, ultimately, in “fractal stage of values” in which the erasure of the subject’s need for referentiality and relationality produces an individual who “no longer differs from himself, and is therefore, undifferent to himself” (Baudrillard *The Illusion of End* 1994, 108),

sustaining what might be deducibly called “the molecular metaphysics of life”.

CONCLUSION

Baudrillard’s study of postmodernity allows him to detect exhaustive aspects that have been changing the nature of life itself, mostly without being felt and/or noticed by man. Generally, the matter concerns the subtle ways through which the “real” has been withdrawing from underneath the feet of the postmodern subject by the “hyperreal.” The latter raises the interest of Baudrillard who works to dissect it from within, despite the delicacy of its operation, in order to be able (and also to allow his readers) to decipher its composition and the way it wields such a power that makes it substitute the “real.” All the while, what seems to baffle Baudrillard most is the vertiginous implosion of opposites into each other, culminating not just in the erasure of the “real” by the simulacra of the “hyperreal,” but more importantly the instigation of further and further dissipations of any entity that is built, regardless of its anchorage in the “real” or the “hyperreal.” It is, rather, the erasure of closure that Baudrillard is announcing in his works. As he puts it succinctly in an interview, “our destiny is the end of the end [...] It would no longer even be possible to live or confront our own end” (Baudrillard 1993, 163), envisaging postmodernity as a condition of ever-suspension.

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