### Overview:

This an advanced art course in studio photography, but it is also much more. Photography is, after all, much more than a mere technical or artistic phenomenon. It is also a cultural, historical, political, aesthetic one. Together, we will interrogate the myriad dimensions of the medium through a combination of lectures, demonstrations, hands-on experimentation, and the group critique forum. Your full and energetic participation in each of these components of the course--especially the critiques--is mandatory for success in the class. Why "constructed reality"? Because after fourteen or so years of teaching at U. Albany, it has occured to me that I might want to take a turn teaching that which I do (and therefore know best). We will be creating sculptural objects and and environments, designing sets, lighting them, and photographing them, utilizing a number of technical and conceptual strategies (both traditional and digital). It is assumed the end result will be photographs, but how we get there may surprise you. This course will furthermore require you to work collaboratively to an extent you have not previously experienced. It will be challenging and fun, like most worthwhile endeavors.

### Required Texts:

All readings are provided online--no textbooks to purchase. It is imperative that you keep up with the assigned readings for each project, as the information they contain and the conversations we will have about them will come to inform your studio work to, a large extent. Fall behind at your peril.

### Attendance:

Note: To print this document, place your cursor in this window, right-click, and choose "PRINT FRAME".
Please try not to miss any classes, as attendance is absolutely essential for success in this class. We will move at a very fast pace in order to accomplish our goals and nearly all information vital to the completion of your work is delivered via in-class conversations. Miss the class: miss the info.

I do not rigorously audit attendance precisely because there’s no need to: it is virtually impossible to pass this course if you miss more than three classes. Attendance, in other words, is up to you. If you miss class, it is up to you to get notes and/or handouts, and you are responsible for all assigned work regardless of attendance in class. When all is said and done, I evaluate the work you produce. It is categorically impossible to get the information and produce the work required unless you are in class—period. Excused absences do not excuse you from the requirement to produce the work. That said, failure to attend any formal scheduled critique will result in an overall reduction of one letter grade for each crit missed. Failure to attend an informal, unscheduled critique will result in a diminished participation grade. Failure to attend the final critique will result in an automatic "F" in this course, regardless of grade average going into it. This policy is not negotiable.

Assignments:

Late projects will absolutely not be accepted. One project of your choosing may be redone to improve the grade. If the work was turned in on time, the higher grade will be recorded. If the work was late, the re-done project grade will be averaged with a zero. It is, therefore, always to your benefit to turn in the work--even if it is not completed--so that you may receive feedback from me and the others in the class and so that you avoid this formidable grade penalty.

Plagiarism:

All work turned in must be yours; copying or claiming another's work as your own is specifically prohibited. Any instances will result in an "F" and a recurrence will cause the student to be dropped from the course with an "F", and possibly to be expelled from the University. Please note that appropriating imagery from the media for purposes of commentary is acceptable, provided it does not violate copyright laws. We will talk extensively about the difference, both conceptually and legally, but please see me before you submit the work if you are in doubt as to whether you are appropriating or stealing.

Grades:

Grades will be figured on the conventional percentage scale. More importantly, grades are an indication of how well you are doing in the course. Please note that I consider a "C" as nominal completion of the work, i.e., "average". You will have to do above average work or superior work to get a "B" or an "A", respectively. I encourage you to give realistic and thoughtful consideration to the grade you expect to receive on a project before said grade is assigned. Whereas I am always--at any point in the semester--willing to give feedback, I have never changed a student's grade once it has been assigned.
A (90 - 100%) = Outstanding; pushing the limits of both the student's creativity and the assignment.
B (80 - 89%) = Thorough, thoughtful, and creative approach to the assignment.
C (70 - 79%) = AVERAGE; minimum project requirements met.
D (60 - 69%) = Poor; does not meet minimum requirements.
F (0 - 59%) = Fail; failure to complete the assignment.

Grading Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Projects (3 @ 20% each)</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses (3 @ 10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation (energy/initiative/willingness to take creative risks)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Extra Credit Options:

Students are invited and encouraged to seek ways to expand upon the basic guidelines of the projects to receive extra credit. If you should feel confined or limited by one of my projects, please contact me at the earliest opportunity so that we might discuss other options. Do not settle for producing work at the minimum level required because you do not feel engaged. There is a grade for such performance, and you don't want it (see table above).

Special Needs:

If you require any additional help from me or the facility to accommodate a disability, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will make every effort to insure that you are able to get the work done. We can be incredibly flexible and creative when it comes to finding ways to help students make art.

Materials:

Studio art classes can be quite expensive, as most of you already know. That said, this can be an exceptionally expensive class, depending on the type and amount of work that you choose to do. Please budget carefully to insure that you are able to produce the work required. Students typically spend around $300 (on average) on consummable supplies and materials. Some spend more than twice as much, some get by on much less. In addition to a working 35mm camera or a reasonably high-resolution digital still or video camera, you will be required to provide the expendable supplies described below. If you choose to work with a digital camera, it must be capable of capturing and easily uploading high-resolution images, therefore I must inspect it before I can give you permission to use it for our projects. Likewise, if you wish to use your own digital video camera, you will need to show it to me before beginning your project so that we may quickly insure that it is compatible with our DV equipment.

You have already been charged, as part of your tuition for this course, a non-refundable lab fee of $100.00 to cover chemistry in the traditional dark room, as well as ink usage and maintenance on the state-of-the-art archival fine art printers we use in our labs. This
fee applies to all photography and digital media students, regardless of whether or not you foresee printing. You will not be required to pay further for ink usage—with some rare exceptions (as in the case of the student who printed an entire portfolio of "life-size" full-body portraits). If faculty or the lab technician observe you printing well in excess of that which is covered by the fee, we will ask you to pay another fee to cover those materials and maintenance. Fear not, for your materials fee—even if you have to pay two times (very rare, unless you are a grad student)—will be much less than if you attempted to produce your work through a local service bureau. I encourage you to compare pricing for large-format archival inkjet (also known as "giclée") prints if you are in doubt. Pigment-based archival inks are not compatible with low-end hobbyist papers (such as glossy Kodak, Polaroid, HP, etc.) available at office supply stores. Your results will be disappointing and the printer could actually be damaged. Toilet paper, as one ambitious student learned the hard way, doesn't work too well either. Students wishing to print large-format (larger than 24 x 30") should consider splitting the cost of a roll of paper with other students. The best sources for the widest range of affordable high-quality printing papers are B&H Photo-Video, K&M Photo and Adorama (all in NYC and all offering student discounts).

The best source for professional film development (and the only source for large-format film processing) is McGreevy Pro Lab on Broadway in Albany. If you identify yourself as my student at the time of drop-off, you'll receive a 10% discount on lab services.

A great source for set-building and lighting-control supplies is Set Shop in NYC.

Additionally, you may be required to purchase the following items:

- CAMERA: You must have either a 35mm single lens reflex camera with at least a normal (50mm) lens and a working light meter or a 10-megapixel or higher resolution digital camera. In either case, your camera must be capable of fully manual exposure and focus. A phone camera may work, but you will likely want to use a more professional device. I must inspect and approve your camera before you are allowed to remain in this course. It's a good idea to have a strap and a lenscap as a minimum. A good quality camera bag is ideal.

- We will shoot extensively with the 4x5 view camera in this class, so you'll need to invest in a few boxes of B&W or color sheet film. Speak to me before you purchase film (PLEASE!)

- 35mm archival plastic negative pages

- A three-ring binder or archival folder for storing negative pages and handouts.

- An anti-static cloth (Ilford Antistaticum)

- Staticmaster Anti-Static brush (1")

- Thermometer if you plan to process film (metal type with dial--no glass w/ mercury, please)

- Scissors

- Bottle opener

- A #000 or #0000 sable brush for spotting prints

- rubber gloves or barrier cream

- An old dishrag for wiping your hands when you're in the darkroom.

- A folder with pockets for turning in projects (contact sheets, etc.).

- Kodak 18% Grey Card

- X-acto knife (several #11 blades)
• Black photo masking tape (not electrical tape!)--1 roll
• White artists’ tape--1 roll
• Various consummable supplies as needed such as white and black mat board, 
tape, dry-mount tissue, spray mount, black spray paint, hot glue gun and glue 
melts, super-glue, set-wax, fun-tac, etc.
• Inexpensive lupe (i.e., Agfa 8X)
• Not required but strongly recommended: a tripod and a long cable release

Please note that most students spend, in addition to the cost 
of their camera (which ranges from $200 - $1000), 
approximately $300 - $400 per semester on a college-level 
photography course for supplies and materials. This is an 
expensive and extremely time-consuming course. If you are 
in doubt as to whether you can afford either the materials or 
(especially) the time investment, please contact me as soon 
as possible. If we cannot find a way for you to afford the 
materials required to do the work, or if you are unable to 
devote an average of 10 hours a week outside of class to 
work on studio projects, you should consider dropping the 
class before the deadline to receive a full refund and to avoid 
receiving a "W" (Jan. 28).

Other Requirements:

Although we are lucky to now have a full-time technician supervising the computer labs, 
all intermediate and advanced students in Photography and Related Media are asked to 
assist in monitoring the lab a minimum of three hours a week. In exchange for this work, 
you will receive a code which enables you to 24/7 access to both imaging labs. You will 
report directly to Jason VanStaveren, the MFA Teaching Assistant assigned to this area. 
Your duties will include: monitoring access to facilities and preventing unauthorized 
users from accessing the lab, routine cleaning and maintenance. So that the schedule 
for open hours for both the darkroom and digital labs can be posted by the second week 
of classes, I ask you to look at your schedule now and determine when you can be 
available to work three hours each week (in a row--duh). We have a fantastic studio 
facility and, if we all pitch in just a little, it will remain so (and, in fact, is poised to improve 
tremendously).

You will also create and maintain a portfolio website and we will definitely hold 
discussions via class listserv and blog. In order to participate in these activities, you will 
be required to have an e-mail account (if you do not already have one). This does not 
have to be a campus account, but should be the one you check most often, as the 
listserv will be the means by which I contact you most often. I encourage you to post 
routine questions to this list, so that all may benefit from the information. If, however, you 
need to send private messages to me, do not post them to the list, but rather send them 
to dgoodwin@albany.edu. This is by far the most reliable means of contacting me. While 
calling me at home late at night may earn you points for "creative risk" (see grade 
requirements above), it is in truth a very bad idea.

For those of you considering purchasing a computer for your creative work this year, 
please be advised that the Art and Art History Department has arranged for special
discounts on Apple wireless laptop computers and software. These discounts are available only to University At Albany students and they are only available by logging in to your MyUAlbany account. Scroll to the bottom and you'll find, on the left, a link to "Technology Discounts", under which you'll find a link to "Apple Store". This link takes you directly to our custom store. On the far right, you'll find a link to our "Recommended Systems". These are the most aggressively discounted machines and are pre-configured to meet the specs of Art and Art History faculty requirements.
### Schedule

#### Week 1 / Jan. 22
- **Introduction**: Course Philosophy, Objectives, Materials, Requirements, plus my favorite subject (me and my work)
- **Intro**: Project 1: Appropriation/Reconstruction/Deconstruction
- **Lecture**: Artists' work relevant to this project

#### Week 2 / Jan. 29
- **Demo**: The 4x5 View Camera and Copy Lighting Techniques for Project 1
- **Lab**: Project 1, part A
- **View**: Episode 1 of John Berger's Ways of Seeing

#### Week 3 / Feb. 5
- **Lab**: Project 1, parts A & B
- **View**: Episode 2 of John Berger's Ways of Seeing

#### Week 4 / Feb. 12
- **Field Trip**: View work in Permanent Collection of University Museum (meet in front of Fine Arts to walk over to Management Services Center)
- **View**: Episode 3 of John Berger's Ways of Seeing

#### Week 5 / Feb. 19
- **Lecture**: Artists' work relevant to this project
- **Lab**: Project 1, Parts B & C
- **Read**: *The Paradoxes of Digital Photography* by Lev Manovich (in preparation for his lecture at RPI on Feb. 20 at 5 pm)
- **Intro**: Project 2: Small World (Models and Miniatures)
Week 6 / Feb. 26
- Classes Suspended
- View: Episode 4 of John Berger's Ways of Seeing
- Read: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction by Walter Benjamin

Week 7 / Mar. 5
- Critique Project 1 (meet in FA223)
- Discuss online: Manovich and Benjamin essays

Week 8 / Mar. 12
- (Midterm Point)
- Demo: Model Building and Miniature Set Design
- Read: Simulacra and Simulations by Jean Baudrillard

Week 9 / Mar. 19
- Classes Suspended

Week 10 / Mar. 26
- Discuss online: Baudrillard essay
- Demo: Advanced View Camera and Lighting Techniques
- Labwork: Project 2
- Intro: Project 3: Breaking out of the Box (Taking the Studio On Location) OR Camera-less Photography

Week 11 / Apr. 2
- Critique Project 2 (meet in FA223)
Week 12 / Apr. 9

- Classes Suspended
- Read: foRm by Kevin Moore in Words Without Pictures, pp. 62 - 83

Week 13 / Apr. 16

- Demo: Bringing it all Together in Photoshop
- Lab: Final Project

Week 14 / Apr. 23

- Discuss online: Moore essay
- Last-chance mounting and matting for Final Project (no printing)

Week 15 / Apr. 30

- Final Critique: Project 3 plus any other work (meet at Uncommon Grounds, Campus Center)

Week 16 / May 7

- Mandatory Lab Cleanup
NOTE: This is a working syllabus and, as such, is subject to change. You will be notified in class or via listserv or blog of any changes to this schedule.

A word about class participation:

Regular and punctual attendance will earn you a passing grade (C) in class participation. In order to receive an A or a B you will be required to fully participate in all discussions/critiques/reading/lab days. You will, in other words, be required to put in your two-cent's-worth. Sleeping in my class or messing with your phone (especially during a critique) will earn you a big steaming pile of flunk. Remaining enrolled in this class after the first week constitutes an agreement to the requirements detailed in this syllabus.

Project 1: Appropriation/Reconstruction/Deconstruction

For this three-part project, we will cover a range of set design, lighting, and camera techniques--from very basic to somewhat advanced--as we work toward an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the codified meanings manifest in popular imagery.

Step A: Working closely with me, you will select a single photograph from a print ad or other mass-produced photographic image from a magazine or book. Yes--it must exist physically on paper. An online ad or image won't work. Employing the techniques we will cover in class, please produce an exact copy of the ad--not by scanning it, but by lighting, re-photographing and printing it. Sounds easier than it is.

Step B: Having spent some hours looking at the photographs and discussing the possible ways they may have been executed, we will select a few to re-produce from scratch. Working in teams assigned by me, you will design a set and lighting scenario and shoot your own version of the image--aiming for as much fidelity as possible. Any products shown in the original image must be made by you--not purchased, to the extent possible. We'll work together on this, so don't panic...yet.

Step C: Having discussed the work with your peers in the class and me, you will now identify and articulate the underlying meaning of the original ad and produce a work which problematizes (challenges or contradicts) it. This may be a close parody of the original ad, or simply a stark alternative work that refers to it somehow. You will produce this final work with either the the 4x5 view camera, the 6x7 cm Mamiya, or a high-resolution Digital SLR using electronic flash in the studio and will continue to work in teams.

We will critique your finished, printed triptych (3-paneled work) of prints on Wednesday, March 5 in Fine Arts 223.
Project 2: Small World (Models and Miniatures)

Photographer and educator Gary Kolb has said of the terms "construction" and "control", as they relate to studio photography: "...these words are not exclusive to photographic techniques but also refer to meaning. Both image and meaning are crafted. One unique aspect of most studio photography is that in the studio the photographer builds an image from a knowledge of potentials rather than edit from a reality of continuous space and time; photographers contrive both space and time." Many of the artists whose work we will examine for this project opt to create the world in which their images exist entirely in the studio. This often means fabricating simulations or models of reality that may appear more "real" than the real world might, when photographed. According to Baudrillard, "...simulation is . . . the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1988), pp.166-184.) Hyperreality refers to the phenomenon in which the real and reproductions of the real are indistinguishable. Surely this describes much of the work we will view for this project. For Baudrillard, the reality in which we think we live each day is actually a construction--based on models whose precession is increasingly difficult to trace.

Your aim need not be overly ambitious in the technical execution of your model to be photographed, however. Let us say that you will strive merely to produce a single "plausible fiction". Working in groups of three or more (taking turns as photographer and assistants), you will help each other sketch, plan, acquire materials, and build the small models to be brought in to the studio and photographed. You'll need to study the work of the photographers seen in class very carefully in order to get ideas for how to design backgrounds and lighting scenarios.

The following restrictions will be imposed on this project:

- Any figures (actual human beings) you photograph for this project must be shot in the studio and collaged into your photographed environment in Photoshop.
- Your set must be small enough to fit onto a 4 x 5 foot table top surface.
- Final print output should be at least 24 x 30" and no larger than 44 x 60".
- If final output is video, it must be HD/NTSC and at least one minute but not more than 5 minutes in duration.

We will critique your finished prints (at least 8) on Wednesday, April 2 in Fine Arts 223.

Project 3: Breaking out of the Box (Taking the Studio on Location) OR Camera-less Photographs

For this, our final project, we'll apply many of the technical and conceptual strategies developed in the more controlled confines of the studio, coupled with your increasingly effective collaborative skills, to do one of two things: create a series of images out "in the world", or produce a plausible photographic fiction without using a camera at all. I will ask you to choose one of these two approaches and then break you into two teams--each working collaboratively in one of these directions.
Team A: For the Breaking Out of the Box team, you will still be, theoretically, working in the studio. Meaning: you will not walk out and take photographs, but will be engaged in making them. Consider the distinction in the terms. Collectively, you will propose a manageable project (given the amount of time we have remaining) that requires a specific location or context that would be difficult or impossible to reproduce in the studio. You'll work with your team to select the locations and design the lighting scenarios for each shot. You will then present the work together as a unified project. Consider dividing up tasks or roles so that the outside-of-class work moves along as efficiently as possible (i.e., have two people working on sets/props, two working out lighting design, two doing the actual photography and two to manage scanning/printing.

Team B: For the Camera-less Photography team, you will be asked to produce a series of photographs that exploit the medium's inherent ability to convincingly describe 3-dimensional space in a 2-dimensional image plane, as well as its built-in narrative potential. You may utilize many photo-related techniques, but you may not make an image with a conventional camera that utilizes traditional optics. Scanners, 3-D (or 2-D) rendering or painting programs, photograms, etc., are all acceptable, but no images captured with cameras, please. Let's push the boundaries of what may be considered photographic with this project.

In both cases, the work will end as either black and white fiber-based photographs or inkjet prints on archival paper. Look carefully at the artists' work I'll show you in class and do please embark on your own additional research if you see something that is relevant to your ideas for the project. I will look to you to help me develop the finite list of technical concerns we'll cover in class. There is simply too much material to squeeze into a single semester to adequately cover all the variables inherent to either location shooting or cameraless photos, so we will try to solve only those problems presented by the realization of your ideas.

An additional, hopefully exciting, component of this project is the public exhibition of your work. I have arranged for you to mount your work in a public exhibition at Uncommon Grounds coffee shop in the Campus Center. In order to participate in this exhibition, you will work closely with Uncommon Grounds management to coordinate the hanging of the show and will write, as a team, a brief artist's statement to accompany the work.

We will critique your finished prints (minimum 8) on Wednesday, April 30 at Uncommon Grounds in the Campus Center. Please also bring any other work you wish me to critique and grade, including any re-done projects or outside work.

Guidelines for Group Critique

In preparing for a critique in this or any studio art class, it is at least as important to determine what you want or need from the critique, as it is to understand what is expected of you. Your critique should address form and content, and should consider the work of art in and of itself, and in the context of issues discussed in the reading assignments. Terry Barrett, in his book Criticizing Photographs, defines criticism as "...informed discourse about art to increase understanding and appreciation..." As such, criticism involves much more than the relatively simple act of judging--of determining
whether one "likes" or "dislikes" a piece. Rather, it is a means toward the end of understanding a work of art. Critical consideration usually consists of at least three main activities:

1. Describing the work (what does it look like? what is it made of?): Assume the audience has not and will not view the piece and that you are the sole mediator for their understanding of it's formal qualities.
2. Interpreting the work (what does it mean?): Here you are asked to synthesize any contextual or biographical information you have with your own subjective interpretation of the work's significance.
3. Evaluating the work (is it art? is it interesting? does it "work"?): This is, perhaps, the most difficult critical task, yet it is usually the one to which most people skip when criticizing a work of art. To thoughtfully evaluate a work of art, you must determine what your criteria are for judging its relative worth or effectiveness. Only you can provide this information. Do not assume the reader (or your fellow student) shares your point of view. Explain why you feel the way you do. "Thumbs up" or "thumbs down" will not cut it. This is college.

Here are some simple guidelines for a successful critique:

1. Listen! Most people new to the critique forum fail to understand that criticism of a work does not mean the work is "bad", or that the artist has failed in some way. In order to refine our ability to produce effective artworks, we must listen to what the participants in the critique have to say about it. This is not to discourage robust debate, by any means. Some of the most lucid insights arise out of heated arguments about a work of art. Rather, it is imperative that each point of view be expressed so as to maximize the benefit of this most unusual form of public discourse. The whole point of the exercise is to go make better work. Describe the image: What do you know with certainty about what you see? What do you see? What adjectives come to mind? What is the subject matter, really? What about form? How does the relationship between light and dark, contrast and tone affect your description? How does the technical treatment of the print affect your reading of it? Can you compare/contrast this image with another in the group? Interpret the image: What does this image mean? How is this meaning manifested? Can you discern a difference between what was intended and the result? Are there metaphors you can decipher? Although the denotative meaning may seem clear (a photograph of a still-life set that includes a roll of toilet paper, a plastic garbage bag, and a wad of aluminum foil can be said to denote (show) a roll of toilet paper, a plastic garbage bag, and a wad of aluminum foil), what is the connotative meaning? The same photograph could, for example, connote (suggest, imply) fragility, entropy, waste, excess, or any number of completely different ideas. Do the objects depicted in the image have a connotation that owes its context to the nature of the materials they resemble, or is the connotation based in something else like light, shadow, form, composition, color, etc.? Further, from what perspective do you bring your interpretation to this work? Comparative? Archetypal? Feminist? Psychoanalytic? Formalist? Semiotic? Biographical? Intentionalist? Technical? No work of art nor artist ever existed in a vacuum. Can you identify a combination of approaches or cultural influences in your interpretation? Can you categorize this photograph according to Terry Barrett's system? Is it Descriptive,
Explanatory, Interpretive, Ethically Evaluative, Aesthetically Evaluative, Theoretical, or some combination thereof? Explain your criteria for determining the appropriate category. What is this image's internal context (that which is descriptively evident)? What is its original context (what was physically, psychologically, and/or politically relevant to the artist at the time of the creation of the work? What is its external context (the situation in which the work is seen or presented)? How does the latter inform the former?

2. Is this a successful work of art? Why/why not? What criteria have you used to make your judgement? Be very specific.

3. Whereas it is mandatory that you respect your colleagues in the class (I don’t tolerate abusive behavior at all), we are here to get work done. Please check your ego at the door. I need you to be willing to say what you think about others’ work and to hear potentially harsh criticism about the work you’ve done. In order to become better artists, we must be willing to speak openly about the issues at hand and to dispense with qualifying opening remarks such as "this is just my opinion" and the like.

The most important thing to remember is that, although we may each be in this class for different reasons, we are all (presumably) striving to make more and better works of art. The old adage "...I don't know about Art, but I know what I like.." is no longer applicable to your mode of inquiry. Yours is to be a rigorous and rich process of taking your work apart and putting it back together--better than before--with the help of this lively critical forum.

**Artist's Statement**

An artist's statement is, perhaps, more easily defined by what it is not than by what it is. It should not necessarily explain your work. If, after all, one could easily and casually explain what one does, it might not be worth doing. Rather, the statement is an opportunity for the artist to establish the context within which the work may be understood and to provide the necessary framework for reception and criticism. The most successful artists' statements stir in the reader the interest to view or re-view the work.

There is no conventional length or format for an artist's statement. At least there is no point in adhering to any. It should be as brief or as thorough as you feel necessary. For the purpose of this class, however, I have set a minimum of one full typed page. If a bibliography or resume is appropriate to your work, include this in addition to the statement.

Here are some excellent tips from artist Nayland Blake:

1. **Tell the truth. Describe your work, and your life as it is, not as you think someone wants to hear it to be. Don’t anticipate your reader’s biases.**
2. Write often. Get into the habit of writing about what you do on a regular basis. It will give you much more material to pick from when the time comes for you to make a formal statement.

3. Rewrite often. It’s much easier to edit and rewrite an existing piece than it is to generate something new on deadline. Revising allows you to sharpen ideas and cut out redundancies. Allow yourself to make messy first drafts and then go back into them.

4. Use specific examples. Watch out for generalities about your work. If you want to make a point about how an idea functions for you, show how it functions in a specific piece. Don’t feel like what you have to say has to be equally true of everything you make. Practice describing pieces as if your audience was sightless.

5. Use history sparingly. Don’t assume that everyone will know what you mean when you refer to the work of other artists or artistic movements: their ideas may well be antithetical to yours and your point may be lost.

6. Big words do not make your work look better, or make it any more meaningful.

7. Phrases to watch out for:
   a. “As a…” often used to sneak in biographical information and as justification for the work, i.e.: “As a veteran my work is concerned with the ideologies of bodily distress…”, “as a volcano survivor I want my pieces to have a certain vibrancy…”. Find another way to tell people who you are and why you do what you do.
   b. “The viewer is invited…” or any of its variations. Often folks use this to try to force people into a specific experience of the work. It begs the questions How and Why is the viewer invited.
   c. “Interest, interesting, interests…” Try writing about your enthusiasms rather than your interests.
   d. “The body…” Resist the temptation to make an idea sound more theoretical by sticking the word “the” in front of it. Always ask yourself “which body, or whose body.”

8. Finally, imagine that you are writing in sand, not carving in stone. Your artist’s statement is not a contract made for all eternity: it is a snapshot of your thinking about your practice at a specific moment.

Nayland Blake
1.25.05

I would add one more to this list:
9. Remember that your statement is not a “piece”, i.e., a work of art. Unless you are a poet (and maybe even if you are), refrain from penning a statement that requires another statement to be understood.
1. Digital Revolution? Computerized design systems that flawlessly combine real photographed objects and objects synthesized by the computer. Satellites that can photograph the license plate of your car and read the time on your watch. "Smart" weapons that recognize and follow their targets in effortless pursuit -- the kind of new, post-modern, post-industrial dance to which we were all exposed during the televised Gulf war. New medical imaging technologies that map every organ and function of the body. On-line electronic libraries that enable any designer to acquire not only millions of photographs digitally stored but also dozens of styles which can be automatically applied by a computer to any image. All of these and many other recently emerged technologies of image-making, image manipulation, and vision depend on digital computers. All of them, as a whole, allow photographs to perform new, unprecedented, and still poorly understood functions. All of them radically change what a photograph is.

Indeed, digital photographs function in an entirely different way from traditional -- lens and film based -- photographs. For instance, images are obtained and displayed by sequential scanning; they exist as mathematical data which can be displayed in a variety of modes -- sacrificing color, spatial or temporal resolution. Image processing techniques make us realize that any photograph contains more information than can be seen with the human eye. Techniques of 3D computer graphics make possible the synthesis of photo realistic images -- yet, this realism is always partial, since these techniques do not permit the synthesis of any arbitrary scene. Digital photographs function in an entirely different way from traditional photographs. Or do they? Shall we accept that digital imaging represents a radical rupture with photography? Is an image, mediated by computer and electronic technology, radically different from an image obtained through a photographic lens and embodied in film? If we describe film-based images using such categories as depth of field, zoom, a shot or montage, what categories should be used to describe digital images? Shall the phenomenon of digital imaging force us to rethink such fundamental concepts as realism or representation? In this essay I will refrain from taking an extreme position of either fully accepting or fully denying the idea of a digital imaging revolution. Rather, I will present the logic of the digital image as paradoxical; radically breaking with older modes of visual representation while at the same time reinforcing these modes. I will demonstrate this paradoxical logic by examining two questions: alleged physical differences between digital and film-based representation of photographs and the notion of realism in computer generated synthetic photography. The logic of the digital photograph is one of historical continuity and discontinuity. The digital image tears apart the net of semiotic codes, modes of display,
and patterns of spectatorship in modern visual culture -- and, at the same time, weaves this net even stronger. The digital image annihilates photography while solidifying, glorifying and immortalizing the photographic. In short, this logic is that of photography after photography.  

2. Digital Photography Does Not Exist  

It is easiest to see how digital (r)evolution solidifies (rather than destroys) certain aspects of modern visual culture -- the culture synonymous with the photographic image -- by considering not photography itself but a related film-based medium -- cinema. New digital technologies promise to radically reconfigure the basic material components (lens, camera, lighting, film) and the basic techniques (the separation of production and post-production, special effects, the use of human actors and non-human props) of the cinematic apparatus as it has existed for decades. The film camera is increasingly supplemented by the virtual camera of computer graphics which is used to simulate sets and even actors (as in "Terminator 2" and "Jurassic Park"). Traditional film editing and optical printing are being replaced by digital editing and image processing which blur the lines between production and post-production, between shooting and editing. At the same time, while the basic technology of filmmaking is about to disappear being replaced by new digital technologies, cinematic codes find new roles in the digital visual culture. New forms of entertainment based on digital media and even the basic interface between a human and a computer are being increasingly modeled on the metaphors of movie making and movie viewing. With Quicktime technology, built into every Macintosh sold today, the user makes and edits digital "movies" using software packages whose very names (such as Director and Premiere) make a direct reference to cinema. Computer games are also increasingly constructed on the metaphor of a movie, featuring realistic sets and characters, complex camera angles, dissolves, and other codes of traditional filmmaking. Many new CD-ROM games go even further, incorporating actual movie-like scenes with live actors directed by well known Hollywood directors. Finally, SIGGRAPH, the largest international conference on computer graphics technology, offers a course entitled "Film Craft in User Interface Design" based on the premise that "The rich store of knowledge created in 90 years of filmmaking and animation can contribute to the design of user interfaces of multimedia, graphics applications, and even character displays."[2] Thus, film may soon disappear -- but not cinema. On the contrary, with the disappearance of film due to digital technology, cinema acquires a truly fetishistic status. Classical cinema has turned into the priceless data bank, the stock which is guaranteed never to lose its value as classic films become the content of each new round of electronic and digital distribution media -- first video cassette, then laser disk, and, now, CD-ROM (major movie companies are planning to release dozens of classic Hollywood films on CD-ROM by the end of 1994). Even more fetishized is "film look" itself -- the soft, grainy, and somewhat blurry appearance of a photographic image which is so different from the harsh and flat image of a video camera or the too clean, too perfect image of computer graphics. The traditional photographic image once represented the inhuman, devilish objectivity of technological vision. Today, however, it looks so human, so familiar, so domesticated -- in contrast to the alienating, still unfamiliar appearance of a computer display with its 1280 by 1024 resolution, 32 bits per pixel, 16 million colors, and so on. Regardless of what it signifies, any photographic image also connotes memory and nostalgia, nostalgia for modernity and the twentieth
century, the era of the pre-digital, pre-post-modern. Regardless of what it represents, any photographic image today first of all represents photography. So while digital imaging promises to completely replace the techniques of filmmaking, it at the same time finds new roles and brings new value to the cinematic apparatus, the classic films, and the photographic look. This is the first paradox of digital imaging. But surely, what digital imaging preserves and propagates are only the cultural codes of film or photography. Underneath, isn't there a fundamental physical difference between film-based image and a digitally encoded image? The most systematic answer to this question can be found in William Mitchell's recent book "The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-photographic Era." Mitchell's entire analysis of the digital imaging revolution revolves around his claim that the difference between a digital image and a photograph "is grounded in fundamental physical characteristics that have logical and cultural consequences." In other words, the physical difference between photographic and digital technology leads to the difference in the logical status of film-based and digital images and also to the difference in their cultural perception. How fundamental is this difference? If we limit ourselves by focusing solely, as Mitchell does, on the abstract principles of digital imaging, then the difference between a digital and a photographic image appears enormous. But if we consider concrete digital technologies and their uses, the difference disappears. Digital photography simply does not exist.

1. The first alleged difference concerns the relationship between the original and the copy in analog and in digital cultures. Mitchell writes: "The continuous spatial and tonal variation of analog pictures is not exactly replicable, so such images cannot be transmitted or copied without degradation... But discrete states can be replicated precisely, so a digital image that is a thousand generations away from the original is indistinguishable in quality from any one of its progenitors." Therefore, in digital visual culture, "an image file can be copied endlessly, and the copy is distinguishable from the original by its date since there is no loss of quality." This is all true -- in principle. However, in reality, there is actually much more degradation and loss of information between copies of digital images than between copies of traditional photographs. A single digital image consists of millions of pixels. All of this data requires considerable storage space in a computer; it also takes a long time (in contrast to a text file) to transmit over a network. Because of this, the current software and hardware used to acquire, store, manipulate, and transmit digital images uniformly rely on lossy compression -- the technique of making image files smaller by deleting some information. The technique involves a compromise between image quality and file size -- the smaller the size of a compressed file, the more visible are the visual artifacts introduced in deleting information. Depending on the level of compression, these artifacts range from barely noticeable to quite pronounced. At any rate, each time a compressed file is saved, more information is lost, leading to more degradation. One may argue that this situation is temporary and once cheaper computer storage and faster networks become commonplace, lossy compression will disappear. However, at the moment, the trend is quite the reverse with lossy compression becoming more and more the norm for representing visual information. If a single digital image already contains a lot of data, then this amount increases dramatically if we want to produce and distribute moving images in a digital form (one second of video, for instance, consists
of 30 still images). Digital television with its hundreds of channels and video on-demand services, the distribution of full-length films on CD-ROM or over Internet, fully digital post-production of feature films -- all of these developments will be made possible by newer compression techniques.[8] So rather than being an aberration, a flaw in the otherwise pure and perfect world of the digital, where even a single bit of information is never lost, lossy compression is increasingly becoming the very foundation of digital visual culture. This is another paradox of digital imaging -- while in theory digital technology entails the flawless replication of data, its actual use in contemporary society is characterized by the loss of data, degradation, and noise; the noise which is even stronger than that of traditional photography.

2. The second commonly cited difference between traditional and digital photography concerns the amount of information contained in an image. Mitchell sums it up as follows: "There is an indefinite amount of information in a continuous-tone photograph, so enlargement usually reveals more detail but yields a fuzzier and grainier picture... A digital image, on the other hand, has precisely limited spatial and tonal resolution and contains a fixed amount of information."[9] Here again Mitchell is right in principle: a digital image consists of a finite number of pixels, each having a distinct color or a tonal value, and this number determines the amount of detail an image can represent. Yet in reality this difference does not matter any more. Current scanners, even consumer brands, can scan an image or an object with very high resolution: 1200 or 2400 pixels per inch is standard today. True, a digital image is still comprised of a finite number of pixels, but at such resolution it can record much finer detail than was ever possible with traditional photography. This nullifies the whole distinction between an "indefinite amount of information in a continuous-tone photograph" and a fixed amount of detail in a digital image. The more relevant question is how much information in an image can be useful to the viewer. Current technology has already reached the point where a digital image can easily contain much more information than anybody would ever want. This is yet another paradox of digital imaging. But even the pixel-based representation, which appears to be the very essence of digital imaging, can no longer be taken for granted. Recent computer graphics software have bypassed the limitations of the traditional pixel grid which limits the amount of information in an image because it has a fixed resolution. Live Picture, an image editing program for the Macintosh, converts a pixel-based image into a set of equations. This allows the user to work with an image of virtually unlimited size. Another paint program Matador makes possible painting on a tiny image which may consist of just a few pixels as though it were a high-resolution image (it achieves this by breaking each pixel into a number of smaller sub-pixels). In both programs, the pixel is no longer a "final frontier"; as far as the user is concerned, it simply does not exist.

3. Mitchell's third distinction concerns the inherent mutability of a digital image. While he admits that there has always been a tradition of impure, re-worked photography (he refers to "Henry Peach Robinson's and Oscar G. Reijlander's nineteenth century 'combination prints,' John Heartfield's photomontages"[10] as well as numerous political photo fakes of the twentieth century) Mitchell identifies straight, unmanipulated photography as the essential, "normal" photographic practice: "There is no doubt that extensive reworking of photographic images to produce seamless transformations and combinations is technically difficult, time-consuming, and outside the mainstream of
photographic practice. When we look at photographs we presume, unless we have some clear indications to the contrary, that they have not been reworked."[11] This equation of "normal" photography with straight photography allows Mitchell to claim that a digital image is radically different because it is inherently mutable: "the essential characteristic of digital information is that it can be manipulated easily and very rapidly by computer. It is simply a matter of substituting new digits for old... Computational tools for transforming, combining, altering, and analyzing images are as essential to the digital artist as brushes and pigments to a painter."[12] From this allegedly purely technological difference between a photograph and a digital image, Mitchell deduces differences in how the two are culturally perceived. Because of the difficulty involved in manipulating them, photographs "were comfortably regarded as causally generated truthful reports about things in the real world."[13] Digital images, being inherently (and so easily) mutable, call into question "our ontological distinctions between the imaginary and the real"[14] or between photographs and drawings. Furthermore, in a digital image, the essential relationship between signifier and signified is one of uncertainty.[15] Does this hold? While Mitchell aims to deduce culture from technology, it appears that he is actually doing the reverse. In fact, he simply identifies the pictorial tradition of realism with the essence of photographic technology and the tradition of montage and collage with the essence of digital imaging. Thus, the photographic work of Robert Weston and Ansel Adams, nineteenth and twentieth century realist painting, and the painting of the Italian Renaissance become the essence of photography; while Robinson's and Reijlander's photo composites, constructivist montage, contemporary advertising imagery (based on constructivist design), and Dutch seventeenth century painting (with its montage-like emphasis on details over the coherent whole) become the essence of digital imaging. In other words, what Mitchell takes to be the essence of photographic and digital imaging technology are two traditions of visual culture. Both existed before photography, and both span different visual technologies and mediums. Just as its counterpart, the realistic tradition extends beyond photography per se and at the same time accounts for just one of many photographic practices. If this is so, Mitchell's notion of "normal" unmanipulated photography is problematic. Indeed, unmanipulated "straight" photography can hardly be claimed to dominate the modern uses of photography. Consider, for instance, the following photographic practices. One is Soviet photography of the Stalinist era. All published photographs were not only staged but also retouched so heavily that they can hardly be called photographs at all. These images were not montages, as they maintained the unity of space and time, and yet, having lost any trace of photographic grain due to retouching, they existed somewhere between photography and painting. More precisely, we can say that Stalinist visual culture eliminated the very difference between a photograph and a painting by producing photographs which looked like paintings and paintings (I refer to Socialist Realism) which looked like photographs. If this example can be written off as an aberration of totalitarianism, consider another photographic practice closer to home: the use of photographic images in twentieth century advertising and publicity design. This practice does not make any attempt to claim that a photographic image is a witness testifying about the unique event which took place in a distinct moment of time (which is how, according to Mitchell, we normally read photography). Instead, a photograph becomes just one graphic element among many: few
photographs coexist on a single page; photographs are mixed with type; photographs are separated from each by white space, backgrounds are erased leaving only the figures, and so on. The end result being that here, as well, the difference between a painting and a photograph does not hold. A photograph as used in advertising design does not point to a concrete event or a particular object. It does not say, for example, "this hat was in this room on May 12." Rather, it simply presents a hat or a beach or a television set without any reference to time and location. Such examples question Mitchell’s idea that digital imaging destroys the innocence of straight photography by making all photographs inherently mutable. Straight photography has always represented just one tradition of photography; it always coexisted with equally popular traditions where a photographic image was openly manipulated and was read as such. Equally, there never existed a single dominant way of reading photography; depending on the context the viewer could (and continue to) read photographs as representations of concrete events, or as illustrations which do not claim to correspond to events which have occurred. Digital technology does not subvert "normal" photography because "normal" photography never existed. 3. Real, All Too Real: Socialist Realism of "Jurassic Park"

I have considered some of the alleged physical differences between traditional and digital photography. But what is a digital photograph? My discussion has focused on the distinction between a film-based representation of an image versus its representation in a computer as a grid of pixels having a fixed resolution and taking up a certain amount of computer storage space. In short, I highlighted the issue of analog versus digital representation of an image while disregarding the procedure through which this image is produced in the first place. However, if this procedure is considered another meaning of digital photography emerges. Rather than using the lens to focus the image of actual reality on film and then digitizing the film image (or directly using an array of electronic sensors) we can try to construct three-dimensional reality inside a computer and then take a picture of this reality using a virtual camera also inside a computer. In other words, 3-D computer graphics can also be thought off as digital -- or synthetic -- photography. I will conclude by considering the current state of the art of 3-D computer graphics. Here we will encounter the final paradox of digital photography. Common opinion holds that synthetic photographs generated by computer graphics are not yet (or perhaps will never be) as precise in rendering visual reality as images obtained through a photographic lens. However, I will suggest that such synthetic photographs are already more realistic than traditional photographs. In fact, they are too real. 1. The achievement of realism is the main goal of research in the 3-D computer graphics field. The field defines realism as the ability to simulate any object in such a way that its computer image is indistinguishable from its photograph. It is this ability to simulate photographic images of real or imagined objects which makes possible the use of 3-D computer graphics in military and medical simulators, in television commercials, in computer games, and, of course, in such movies as "Terminator 2" or "Jurassic Park."

These last two movies, which contain the most spectacular 3-D computer graphics scenes to date, dramatically demonstrate that total synthetic realism seems to be in sight. Yet, they also exemplify the triviality of what at first may appear to be an outstanding technical achievement -- the ability to fake visual reality. For what is faked is, of course, not reality but photographic reality, reality as seen by the camera lens. In other words, what computer graphics has
(almost) achieved is not realism, but only photorealism -- the ability to fake not our perceptual and bodily experience of reality but only its photographic image.[16] This image exists outside of our consciousness, on a screen -- a window of limited size which presents a still imprint of a small part of outer reality, filtered through the lens with its limited depth of field, filtered through film's grain and its limited tonal range. It is only this film-based image which computer graphics technology has learned to simulate. And the reason we think that computer graphics has succeeded in faking reality is that we, over the course of the last hundred and fifty years, have come to accept the image of photography and film as reality.

development of digital computers (1940s) followed by a perspective-generating algorithm (early 1960s), and then working out how to make a simulated object solid with shadow, reflection and texture (1970s), and finally simulating the artifacts of the lens such as motion blur and depth of field (1980s). So, while the distance from the first computer graphics images circa 1960 to the synthetic dinosaurs of "Jurassic Park" in the 1990s is tremendous, we should not be too impressed. For, conceptually, photorealistic computer graphics had already appeared with Émile Zola's photographs in the 1840s and certainly with the first films of the Lumière brothers in the 1890s. It is they who invented 3-D computer graphics. 2. So the goal of computer graphics is not realism but only photorealism. Has this photorealism been achieved? At the time of this writing (May 1994) dinosaurs of "Jurassic Park" represent the ultimate triumph of computer simulation, yet this triumph took more than two years of work by dozens of designers, animators, and programmers of Industrial Light and Magic (ILM), probably the premier company specializing in the production of computer animation for feature films in the world today. Because a few seconds of computer animation often requires months and months of work, only the huge budget of a Hollywood blockbuster could pay for such extensive and highly detailed computer generated scenes as seen in "Jurassic Park." Most of the 3-D computer animation produced today has a much lower degree of photorealism and this photorealism is uneven, higher for some kinds of objects and lower for others.[17] And even for ILM photorealistic simulation of human beings, the ultimate goal of computer animation, still remains impossible. Typical images produced with 3-D computer graphics still appear unnaturally clean, sharp, and geometric looking. Their limitations especially stand out when juxtaposed with a normal photograph. Thus one of the landmark achievements of "Jurassic Park" was the seamless integration of film footage of real scenes with computer simulated objects. To achieve this integration, computer-generated images had to be degraded; their perfection had to be diluted to match the imperfection of film's graininess. First, the animators needed to figure out the resolution at which to render computer graphics elements. If the resolution were too high, the computer image would have more detail than the film image and its artificiality would become apparent. Just as Medieval masters guarded their painting secrets now leading computer graphics companies carefully guard the resolution of image they simulate. Once computer-generated images are combined with film images additional tricks are used to diminish their perfection. With the help of special algorithms, the straight edges of computer-generated objects are softened. Barely visible noise is added to the overall image to blend computer and film elements. Sometimes, as in the final battle between the two protagonists in "Terminator 2," the scene is staged in a particular location (a smoky factory in this example) which justifies addition of smoke or fog to further blend the
film and synthetic elements together. So, while we normally think that synthetic photographs produced through computer graphics are inferior in comparison to real photographs, in fact, they are too perfect. But beyond that we can also say that paradoxically they are also too real.

The synthetic image is free of the limitations of both human and camera vision. It can have unlimited resolution and an unlimited level of detail. It is free of the depth-of-field effect, this inevitable consequence of the lens, so everything is in focus. It is also free of grain -- the layer of noise created by film stock and by human perception. Its colors are more saturated and its sharp lines follow the economy of geometry. From the point of view of human vision it is hyperreal. And yet, it is completely realistic. It is simply a result of a different, more perfect than human, vision. Whose vision is it? It is the vision of a cyborg or a computer; a vision of Robocop and of an automatic missile. It is a realistic representation of human vision in the future when it will be augmented by computer graphics and cleansed from noise. It is the vision of a digital grid. Synthetic computer-generated image is not an inferior representation of our reality, but a realistic representation of a different reality.

By the same logic, we should not consider clean, skinless, too flexible, and in the same time too jerky, human figures in 3-D computer animation as unrealistic, as imperfect approximation to the real thing -- our bodies. They are perfectly realistic representation of a cyborg body yet to come, of a world reduced to geometry, where efficient representation via a geometric model becomes the basis of reality. The synthetic image simply represents the future. In other words, if a traditional photograph always points to the past event, a synthetic photograph points to the future event. present by projecting the perfect world of future socialist society on a visual reality familiar to the viewer -- streets, faces, and cities of the 1930s. In other words, it had to retain enough of then everyday reality while showing how that reality would look in the future when everyone’s body will be healthy and muscular, every street modern, every face transformed by the spirituality of communist ideology. Exactly the same happens in "Jurassic Park." It tries to show the future of sight itself -- the perfect cyborg vision free of noise and capable of grasping infinite details -- vision exemplified by the original computer graphics images before they were blended with film images. But just as Socialist Realist paintings blended the perfect future with the imperfect reality of the 1930s and never depicted this future directly (there is not a single Socialist Realist work of art set in the future), "Jurassic Park" blends the future super-vision of computer graphics with the familiar vision of film image. In "Jurassic Park," the computer image bends down before the film image, its perfection is undermined by every possible means and is also masked by the film's content. This is then, the final paradox of digital photography. Its images are not inferior to the visual realism of traditional photography. They are perfectly real -- all too real.

substitute for the "real thing" -- a film-based image. Today, however, a new even lower quality image is becoming increasingly popular -- an image of computer multi-media. Its quality is exemplified by a typical, as of this writing, Quicktime movie: 320 by 240 pixels, 10-15 frames a second. Is the 35 mm film image going to remain the unchallenged standard with computer technology eventually duplicating its quality? Or will a low quality computer image be gradually accepted by the public as the new standard of visual truth?


Source: UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television;

“Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present, by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours. But the amazing growth of our techniques, the adaptability and precision they have attained, the ideas and habits they are creating, make it a certainty that profound changes are impending in the ancient craft of the Beautiful. In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.”

Paul Valéry, Pièces sur L’Art, 1931
Le Conquete de l'ubiquite
Preface

When Marx undertook his critique of the capitalistic mode of production, this mode was in its infancy. Marx directed his efforts in such a way as to give them prognostic value. He went back to the basic conditions underlying capitalistic production and through his presentation showed what could be expected of capitalism in the future. The result was that one could expect it not only to exploit the proletariat with increasing intensity, but ultimately to create conditions which would make it possible to abolish capitalism itself.

The transformation of the superstructure, which takes place far more slowly than that of the substructure, has taken more than half a century to manifest in all areas of culture the change in the conditions of production. Only today can it be indicated what form this has taken. Certain prognostic requirements should be met by these statements. However, theses about the art of the proletariat after its assumption of power or about the art of a classless society would have less bearing on these demands than theses about the developmental tendencies of art under present conditions of production. Their dialectic is no less noticeable in the superstructure than in the economy. It would therefore be wrong to underestimate the value of such theses as a weapon. They brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery – concepts whose uncontrolled (and at present almost uncontrollable) application would lead to a processing of data in the Fascist sense. The concepts which are introduced into the theory of art in what follows differ from the more familiar terms in that they are completely
useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity. The Greeks knew only two procedures of technically reproducing works of art: founding and stamping. Bronzes, terra cottas, and coins were the only art works which they could produce in quantity. All others were unique and could not be mechanically reproduced. With the woodcut graphic art became mechanically reproducible for the first time, long before script became reproducible by print. The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. However, within the phenomenon which we are here examining from the perspective of world history, print is merely a special, though particularly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth century lithography made its appearance. With lithography the technique of reproduction reached an essentially new stage. This much more direct process was distinguished by the tracing of the design on a stone rather than its incision on a block of wood or its etching on a copperplate and permitted graphic art for the first
time to put its products on the market, not only in large numbers as hitherto, but also in daily changing forms. Lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing. But only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography. For the first time in the process of pictorial reproduction, photography freed the hand of the most important artistic functions which henceforth devolved only upon the eye looking into a lens. Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech. A film operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the speed of an actor’s speech. Just as lithography virtually implied the illustrated newspaper, so did photography foreshadow the sound film. The technical reproduction of sound was tackled at the end of the last century. These convergent endeavors made predictable a situation which Paul Valery pointed up in this sentence:

> “Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.”

Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercussions that these two different manifestations – the reproduction of works
of art and the art of the film – have had on art in its traditional form.

II

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership. The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility. Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so vis-à-vis technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic
reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds not only for the art work but also, for instance, for a landscape which passes in review before the spectator in a movie. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus – namely, its authenticity – is interfered with whereas no natural object is vulnerable on that score. The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the
reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. This phenomenon is most palpable in the great historical films. It extends to ever new positions. In 1927 Abel Gance exclaimed enthusiastically:

“Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Beethoven will make films... all legends, all mythologies and all myths, all founders of religion, and the very religions... await their exposed resurrection, and the heroes crowd each other at the gate.”

Presumably without intending it, he issued an invitation to a far-reaching liquidation.

III

During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well. The fifth century, with
its great shifts of population, saw the birth of the late Roman art industry and the Vienna Genesis, and there developed not only an art different from that of antiquity but also a new kind of perception. The scholars of the Viennese school, Riegl and Wickhoff, who resisted the weight of classical tradition under which these later art forms had been buried, were the first to draw conclusions from them concerning the organization of perception at the time. However far-reaching their insight, these scholars limited themselves to showing the significant, formal hallmark which characterized perception in late Roman times. They did not attempt – and, perhaps, saw no way – to show the social transformations expressed by these changes of perception. The conditions for an analogous insight are more favorable in the present. And if changes in the medium of contemporary perception can be comprehended as decay of the aura, it is possible to show its social causes.

The concept of aura which was proposed above with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones. We define the aura of the latter as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by
accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. Unmistakably, reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye. Uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former. To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose “sense of the universal equality of things” has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.

IV

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura. Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the
unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty. The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of l’art pour l’art, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of “pure” art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (In poetry, Mallarme was the first to take this position.)

An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the “authentic” print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.
Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out; with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work. Artistic production begins with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult. One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not their being on view. The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. He did expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was meant for the spirits. Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden. Certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain Madonnas remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on ground level. With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products. It is easier to exhibit a portrait bust that can be sent here and there than to exhibit the statue of a divinity that has its fixed place in the interior of a temple. The same holds for the painting as against the mosaic or fresco that preceded it. And even though the public presentability of a mass originally may have been just as great as that of a symphony, the latter originated at the moment when its public presentability promised to surpass that of the mass.

With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature. This is comparable to the situation of the work of art in prehistoric times when, by the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art. In the same way today, by
the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental. This much is certain: today photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function.

VI

In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value all along the line. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance. They demand a specific kind of approach; free-floating contemplation is not appropriate to them. They stir the viewer; he feels challenged by them in a new way. At the same time picture magazines begin to put up signposts for him, right ones or wrong ones, no
matter. For the first time, captions have become obligatory. And it is clear that they have an altogether different character than the title of a painting. The directives which the captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.

**VII**

The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however; if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the development of the film. Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised. Soon the film theoreticians asked the same ill-considered question with regard to the film. But the difficulties which photography caused traditional aesthetics were mere child’s play as compared to those raised by the film. Whence the insensitive and forced character of early theories of the film. Abel Gance, for instance, compares the film with hieroglyphs: “Here, by a remarkable regression, we
have come back to the level of expression of the Egyptians ... Pictorial language has not yet matured because our eyes have not yet adjusted to it. There is as yet insufficient respect for, insufficient cult of, what it expresses.” Or, in the words of Séverin-Mars: “What art has been granted a dream more poetical and more real at the same time! Approached in this fashion the film might represent an incomparable means of expression. Only the most high-minded persons, in the most perfect and mysterious moments of their lives, should be allowed to enter its ambience.” Alexandre Arnoux concludes his fantasy about the silent film with the question: “Do not all the bold descriptions we have given amount to the definition of prayer?” It is instructive to note how their desire to class the film among the “arts” forces these theoreticians to read ritual elements into it – with a striking lack of discretion. Yet when these speculations were published, films like *L’Opinion publique* and *The Gold Rush* had already appeared. This, however, did not keep Abel Gance from adducing hieroglyphs for purposes of comparison, nor Séverin-Mars from speaking of the film as one might speak of paintings by Fra Angelico. Characteristically, even today ultrareactionary authors give the film a similar contextual significance – if not an outright sacred one, then at least a supernatural one. Commenting on Max Reinhardt’s film version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Werfel states that undoubtedly it was the sterile copying of the exterior world with its streets, interiors, railroad stations, restaurants, motorcars, and beaches which until now had obstructed the elevation of the film to the realm of art. “The film has not yet realized its true meaning, its real possibilities ... these consist in its unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable
persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural.”

**VIII**

The artistic performance of a stage actor is definitely presented to the public by the actor in person; that of the screen actor, however, is presented by a camera, with a twofold consequence. The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views which the editor composes from the material supplied him constitutes the completed film. It comprises certain factors of movement which are in reality those of the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc. Hence, the performance of the actor is subjected to a series of optical tests. This is the first consequence of the fact that the actor’s performance is presented by means of a camera. Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during his performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of a critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience’s identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing. This is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed.

**IX**
For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor represents himself to the public before the camera, rather than representing someone else. One of the first to sense the actor’s metamorphosis by this form of testing was Pirandello. Though his remarks on the subject in his novel Si Gira were limited to the negative aspects of the question and to the silent film only, this hardly impairs their validity. For in this respect, the sound film did not change anything essential. What matters is that the part is acted not for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance – in the case of the sound film, for two of them. “The film actor,” wrote Pirandello, “feels as if in exile – exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence .... The projector will play with his shadow before the public, and he himself must be content to play before the camera.” This situation might also be characterized as follows: for the first time – and this is the effect of the film – man has to operate with his whole living person, yet forgoing its aura. For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays.

It is not surprising that it should be a dramatist such as Pirandello who, in characterizing the film, inadvertently touches on the very crisis in which we see the theater.
Any thorough study proves that there is indeed no greater contrast than that of the stage play to a work of art that is completely subject to or, like the film, founded in, mechanical reproduction. Experts have long recognized that in the film “the greatest effects are almost always obtained by ‘acting’ as little as possible ...” In 1932 Rudolf Arnheim saw “the latest trend ... in treating the actor as a stage prop chosen for its characteristics and... inserted at the proper place.” With this idea something else is closely connected. The stage actor identifies himself with the character of his role. The film actor very often is denied this opportunity. His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances. Besides certain fortuitous considerations, such as cost of studio, availability of fellow players, décor, etc., there are elementary necessities of equipment that split the actor’s work into a series of mountable episodes. In particular, lighting and its installation require the presentation of an event that, on the screen, unfolds as a rapid and unified scene, in a sequence of separate shootings which may take hours at the studio; not to mention more obvious montage. Thus a jump from the window can be shot in the studio as a jump from a scaffold, and the ensuing flight, if need be, can be shot weeks later when outdoor scenes are taken. Far more paradoxical cases can easily be construed. Let us assume that an actor is supposed to be startled by a knock at the door. If his reaction is not satisfactory, the director can resort to an expedient: when the actor happens to be at the studio again he has a shot fired behind him without his being forewarned of it. The frightened reaction can be shot now and be cut into the screen version. Nothing more strikingly shows that art has left the realm of the “beautiful semblance” which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive.
The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera, as Pirandello describes it, is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one’s own image in the mirror. But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public. Never for a moment does the screen actor cease to be conscious of this fact. While facing the camera he knows that ultimately he will face the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This market, where he offers not only his labor but also his whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach. During the shooting he has as little contact with it as any article made in a factory. This may contribute to that oppression, that new anxiety which, according to Pirandello, grips the actor before the camera. The film responds to the shriveling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the “personality” outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the “spell of the personality,” the phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-makers’ capital sets the fashion, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today’s film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art. We do not deny that in some cases today’s films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property. However, our present study is no more specifically concerned with this than is the film production of Western Europe.

It is inherent in the technique of the film as well as that of sports that everybody who witnesses its accomplishments is somewhat of an expert. This is
obvious to anyone listening to a group of newspaper boys leaning on their bicycles and discussing the outcome of a bicycle race. It is not for nothing that newspaper publishers arrange races for their delivery boys. These arouse great interest among the participants, for the victor has an opportunity to rise from delivery boy to professional racer. Similarly, the newsreel offers everyone the opportunity to rise from passer-by to movie extra. In this way any man might even find himself part of a work of art, as witness Vertov’s *Three Songs About Lenin* or Ivens’ *Borinage*. Any man today can lay claim to being filmed. This claim can best be elucidated by a comparative look at the historical situation of contemporary literature.

For centuries a small number of writers were confronted by many thousands of readers. This changed toward the end of the last century. With the increasing extension of the press, which kept placing new political, religious, scientific, professional, and local organs before the readers, an increasing number of readers became writers – at first, occasional ones. It began with the daily press opening to its readers space for “letters to the editor.” And today there is hardly a gainfully employed European who could not, in principle, find an opportunity to publish somewhere or other comments on his work, grievances, documentary reports, or that sort of thing. Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer. As expert, which he had to become willy-nilly in an extremely specialized work process, even if only in some minor respect, the reader gains access to authorship. In the Soviet Union work itself is given a voice. To present it verbally is part of a man’s ability to
perform the work. Literary license is now founded on polytechnic rather than specialized training and thus becomes common property.

All this can easily be applied to the film, where transitions that in literature took centuries have come about in a decade. In cinematic practice, particularly in Russia, this change-over has partially become established reality. Some of the players whom we meet in Russian films are not actors in our sense but people who portray themselves and primarily in their own work process. In Western Europe the capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to modern man’s legitimate claim to being reproduced. Under these circumstances the film industry is trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations.

XI

The shooting of a film, especially of a sound film, affords a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this. It presents a process in which it is impossible to assign to a spectator a viewpoint which would exclude from the actual scene such extraneous accessories as camera equipment, lighting machinery, staff assistants, etc. – unless his eye were on a line parallel with the lens. This circumstance, more than any other, renders superficial and insignificant any possible similarity between a scene in the studio and one on the stage. In the theater one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot immediately be detected as illusionary. There is no such place for the movie scene that is being shot. Its illusionary nature is that of the second degree, the result of cutting. That is to say, in the
studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology.

Even more revealing is the comparison of these circumstances, which differ so much from those of the theater, with the situation in painting. Here the question is: How does the cameraman compare with the painter? To answer this we take recourse to an analogy with a surgical operation. The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient’s body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient’s body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. In short, in contrast to the magician - who is still hidden in the medical practitioner – the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him.

Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between
the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art.

XII

Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion. With regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. The decisive reason for this is that individual reactions are predetermined by the mass audience response they are about to produce, and this is nowhere more pronounced than in the film. The moment these responses become manifest they control each other. Again, the comparison with painting is fruitful. A painting has always had an excellent chance to be viewed by one person or by a few. The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is
an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses.

Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. Although this circumstance in itself should not lead one to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and, as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses. In the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages and at the princely courts up to the end of the eighteenth century, a collective reception of paintings did not occur simultaneously, but by graduated and hierarchized mediation. The change that has come about is an expression of the particular conflict in which painting was implicated by the mechanical reproducibility of paintings. Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their reception. Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.

XIII

The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment. A glance at occupational psychology illustrates the testing
capacity of the equipment. Psychoanalysis illustrates it in a different perspective. The film has enriched our field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory. Fifty years ago, a slip of the tongue passed more or less unnoticed. Only exceptionally may such a slip have revealed dimensions of depth in a conversation which had seemed to be taking its course on the surface. Since the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* things have changed. This book isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception. It is only an obverse of this fact that behavior items shown in a movie can be analyzed much more precisely and from more points of view than those presented on paintings or on the stage. As compared with painting, filmed behavior lends itself more readily to analysis because of its incomparably more precise statements of the situation. In comparison with the stage scene, the filmed behavior item lends itself more readily to analysis because it can be isolated more easily. This circumstance derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science. Actually, of a screened behavior item which is neatly brought out in a certain situation, like a muscle of a body, it is difficult to say which is more fascinating, its artistic value or its value for science. To demonstrate the identity of the artistic and scientific uses of photography which heretofore usually were separated will be one of the revolutionary functions of the film.

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring common place milieus under the ingenious guidance of the
camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones “which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions.” Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person’s posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.
One of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later. The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form. The extravagances and crudities of art which thus appear, particularly in the so-called decadent epochs, actually arise from the nucleus of its richest historical energies. In recent years, such barbarisms were abundant in Dadaism. It is only now that its impulse becomes discernible: Dadaism attempted to create by pictorial – and literary – means the effects which the public today seeks in the film.

Every fundamentally new, pioneering creation of demands will carry beyond its goal. Dadaism did so to the extent that it sacrificed the market values which are so characteristic of the film in favor of higher ambitions – though of course it was not conscious of such intentions as here described. The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sales value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion. The studied degradation of their material was not the least of their means to achieve this uselessness. Their poems are “word salad” containing obscenities and every imaginable waste product of language. The same is true of their paintings, on which they mounted buttons and tickets. What they intended and achieved was a relentless destruction of the aura of their creations, which they branded as reproductions with the very means of production. Before a painting of Arp’s or a poem by August Stramm it is impossible to take time
for contemplation and evaluation as one would before a canvas of Derain’s or a poem by Rilke. In the decline of middle-class society, contemplation became a school for asocial behavior; it was countered by distraction as a variant of social conduct. Dadaistic activities actually assured a rather vehement distraction by making works of art the center of scandal. One requirement was foremost: to outrage the public.

From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested. Duhamel, who detests the film and knows nothing of its significance, though something of its structure, notes this circumstance as follows: “I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images.” The spectator’s process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind. By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect.
The mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form. Quantity has been transmuted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation. The fact that the new mode of participation first appeared in a disreputable form must not confuse the spectator. Yet some people have launched spirited attacks against precisely this superficial aspect. Among these, Duhamel has expressed himself in the most radical manner. What he objects to most is the kind of participation which the movie elicits from the masses. Duhamel calls the movie “a pastime for helots, a diversion for uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries a spectacle which requires no concentration and presupposes no intelligence which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a ‘star’ in Los Angeles.” Clearly, this is at bottom the same ancient lament that the masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration from the spectator. That is a commonplace.

The question remains whether it provides a platform for the analysis of the film. A closer look is needed here. Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a
work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive.

Buildings have been man’s companions since primeval times. Many art forms have developed and perished. Tragedy begins with the Greeks, is extinguished with them, and after centuries its “rules” only are revived. The epic poem, which had its origin in the youth of nations, expires in Europe at the end of the Renaissance. Panel painting is a creation of the Middle Ages, and nothing guarantees its uninterrupted existence. But the human need for shelter is lasting. Architecture has never been idle. Its history is more ancient than that of any other art, and its claim to being a living force has significance in every attempt to comprehend the relationship of the masses to art. Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.
The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilize the masses. Today it does so in the film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway. The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.

**Epilogue**

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its Führer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the
violation of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values.

All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. War and war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property system. This is the political formula for the situation. The technological formula may be stated as follows: Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today’s technical resources while maintaining the property system. It goes without saying that the Fascist apotheosis of war does not employ such arguments. Still, Marinetti says in his manifesto on the Ethiopian colonial war:

“For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as anti-aesthetic ... Accordingly we state:... War is beautiful because it establishes man’s dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others ... Poets and artists of Futurism! ... remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art ... may be illumined by them!”
This manifesto has the virtue of clarity. Its formulations deserve to be accepted by dialecticians. To the latter, the aesthetics of today’s war appears as follows: If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war. The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the elemental forces of society. The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production — in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of “human material,” the claims to which society has denied its natural material. Instead of draining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way.

“Fiat ars – pereat mundus”, says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of “l’art pour l’art.” Mankind, which in Homer’s time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.
The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.

Ecclesiastes

If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where, with the decline of the Empire this map becomes frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts — the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing), this fable would then have come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra.

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory — precession of simulacra — it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own. The desert of the real itself.

In fact, even inverted, the fable is useless. Perhaps only the allegory of the Empire remains. For it is with the same imperialism that present-day simulators try to make the real, all the real, coincide with their simulation models. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction's charm. For it is the difference which forms the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real. This representational imaginary, which both culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer's mad project of an ideal coextensivity between the map and the territory, disappears with simulation, whose operation is nuclear and genetic, and no longer specular and discursive. With it goes all of metaphysics. No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept; no more imaginary coextensivity: rather, genetic miniaturization is the dimension of simulation. The real is produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models — and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times.

It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.

In this passage to a space whose curvature is no longer that of the real, nor of truth, the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials — worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, which are a more ductile material than meaning, in that they lend themselves to all systems of equivalence, all binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra. It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced: this is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather of anticipated resurrection which no longer leaves any chance even in the event of death. A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference.

The divine irreference of images

To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: "Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and pretend he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (Littre). Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between "true" and "false", between "real" and "imaginary". Since the simulator produces "true" symptoms, is he or she ill or not? The simulator cannot be treated objectively either as ill, or
as not ill. Psychology and medicine stop at this point, before a thereafter undiscoverable truth of the illness. For if any symptom can be "produced," and can no longer be accepted as a fact of nature, then every illness may be considered as simulatable and simulated, and medicine loses its meaning since it only knows how to treat "true" illnesses by their objective causes. Psychosomatics evolves in a dubious way on the edge of the illness principle. As for psychoanalysis, it transfers the symptom from the organic to the unconscious order: once again, the latter is held to be real, more real than the former; but why should simulation stop at the portals of the unconscious? Why couldn't the "work" of the unconscious be "produced" in the same way as any other symptom in classical medicine? Dreams already are.

The alienist, of course, claims that "for each form of the mental alienation there is a particular order in the succession of symptoms, of which the simulator is unaware and in the absence of which the alienist is unlikely to be deceived." This (which dates from 1865) in order to save at all cost the truth principle, and to escape the specter raised by simulation: namely that truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist. What can medicine do with something which floats on either side of illness, on either side of health, or with the reduplication of illness in a discourse that is no longer true or false? What can psychoanalysis do with the reduplication of the discourse of the unconscious in a discourse of simulation that can never be unmasked, since it isn't false either?

What can the army do with simulators? Traditionally, following a direct principle of identification, it unmasks and punishes them. Today, it can reform an excellent simulator as though he were equivalent to a "real" homosexual, heart-case or lunatic. Even military psychology retreats from the Cartesian clarifies and hesitates to draw the distinction between true and false, between the "produced" symptom and the authentic symptom. "If he acts crazy so well, then he must be mad." Nor is it mistaken: in the sense that all lunatics are simulators, and this lack of distinction is the worst form of subversion. Against it, classical reason armed itself with all its categories. But it is this today which again outflanks them, submerging the truth principle. Outside of medicine and the army, favored terrains of simulation, the affair goes back to religion and the simulacrum of divinity: "I forbade any simulacrum in the temples because the divinity that breathes life into nature cannot be represented." Indeed it can. But what becomes of the divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme authority, simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or is it volatilized into simulacra which alone deploy their pomp and power of fascination — the visible machinery of icons being substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God? This is precisely what was feared by the Iconoclasts, whose millennial quarrel is still with us today. Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of erasing God from the consciousnesses of people, and the overwhelming, destructive truth which they suggest: that ultimately there has never been any God; that only simulacra exist; indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum. Had they been able to believe that images only occulted or masked the Platonic idea of God, there would have been no reason to destroy them. One can live with the idea of a distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and that in fact they were not images, such as the original model would have made them, but actually perfect simulacra forever radiant with their own fascination. But this death of the divine referential has to be exorcised at all cost.

It can be seen that the Iconoclasts, who are often accused of despising and denying images, were in fact the ones who accorded them their actual worth, unlike the iconolaters, who saw in them only reflections and were content to venerate God at one remove. But the converse can also be said, namely that the iconolaters possessed the most modern and adventurous minds, since, underneath the idea of the apparition of God in the mirror of images, they already enacted his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations (which they perhaps knew no longer represented anything, and that they were purely a game, but that this was precisely the greatest game — knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them).

This was the approach of the Jesuits, who based their politics on the virtual disappearance of God and on the worldly and spectacular manipulation of consciences — the evanescence of God in the epiphany of power — the end of transcendence, which no longer serves as alibi for a strategy completely free of influences and signs. Behind the baroque of images hides the grey eminence of politics. Thus perhaps at stake has always been the murderous capacity of images: murderers of the real; murderers of their own model as the Byzantine icons could murder the divine identity. To this murderous capacity is opposed the dialectical capacity of representations as a visible and intelligible mediation of the real. All of Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could exchange for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange God, of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say, reduced to the signs which attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless; it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum: not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.

So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is Utopian, it is a fundamental ax—om).
Conversely, simulation starts from the Utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum.

These would be the successive phases of the image:

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

In the first case, the image is a good appearance: the representation is of the order of sacrament. In the second, it is an evil appearance: of the order of malefice. In the third, it plays at being an appearance: it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer in the order of appearance at all, but of simulation.

The transition from signs which disseminate something to signs which disseminate that there is nothing, marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs). The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognize his own, nor any last judgement to separate truth from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.

When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production. This is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us: a strategy of the real, neo-real and hyperreal, whose universal double is a strategy of deterrence.

Hyperreal and imaginary

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusions and phantasms: pirates, the frontier, future world, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But, what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturized and religious revelling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and affection of the crowd, and in that sufficiently excessive number of gadgets used there to specifically maintain the multidimensional affect. The contrast with the absolute solitude of the parking lot — a veritable concentration camp — is total. Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetize the crowd into direct flows; outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile. By an extraordinary coincidence (one that undoubtedly belongs to the peculiar enchantment of this universe), this deep-frozen infantile world happens to have been conceived and realized by a man who is himself now cryogenized; Walt Disney, who awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centgrad.

The objective profile of the United States, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here, in miniature and comic-strip form. Embalmed and pactified. Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (L. Marin does it well in Utopies, jeux d'espace): digest of the American way of life, panegyric to American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. To be sure. But this conceals something else, and that "ideological" blanket exactly serves to cover over a third-order simulation: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle.

The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness.

Moreover, Disneyland is not the only one. Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain, Marine World: Los Angeles is encircled by these "imaginary stations" which feed reality, reality-energy, to a town whose mystery is precisely that it is nothing more than a network of endless, unreal circulation: a town of fabulous proportions, but without space or dimensions. As much as electrical and nuclear power stations, as much as film studios, this town, which is nothing more than an immense script and a perpetual motion picture, needs this old imaginary made up of childhood signals and faked phantasms for its sympathetic nervous system.

Political incantation

Watergate. Same scenario as Disneyland (an imaginary effect concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter): though here it is a scandal-effect concealing that there is
no difference between the facts and their denunciation (identical methods are employed by the CIA and the Washington Post journalists). Same operation, though this time tending towards scandal as a means to regenerate a moral and political principle, towards the imaginary as a means to regenerate a reality principle in distress.

The denunciation of scandal always pays homage to the law. And Watergate above all succeeded in imposing the idea that Watergate was a scandal — in this sense it was an extraordinary operation of intoxication: the reinsertion of a large dose of political morality on a global scale. It could be said along with Bourdieu that: "The specific character of every relation of force is to dissimulate itself as such, and to acquire all its force only because it is so dissimulated"; understood as follows: capital, which is immoral and unscrupulous, can only function behind a moral superstructure, and whoever regenerates this public morality (by indignation, denunciation, etc.) spontaneously furthers the order of capital, as did the Washington Post journalists.

But this is still only the formula of ideology, and when Bourdieu enunciates it, he takes "relation of force" to mean the truth of capitalist domination, and he denounces this relation of force as itself a scandal: he therefore occupies the same deterministic and moralistic position as the Washington Post journalists. He does the same job of purging and reviving moral order, an order of truth wherein the genuine symbolic violence of the social order is engendered, well beyond all relations of force, which are only elements of its indifferent and shifting configuration in the moral and political consciousnesses of people.

All that capital asks of us is to receive it as rational or to combat it in the name of rationality, to receive it as moral or to combat it in the name of morality. For they are identical, meaning they can be read another way: before, the task was to dissimulate scandal; today, the task is to conceal the fact that there is none. Watergate is not a scandal: this is—what must be said at all cost, for this is what everyone is concerned to conceal, this dissimulation masking a strengthening of morality, a moral panic as we approach the primal mise-en-scene of capital: its instantaneous cruelty; its incomprehensible ferocity; its fundamental immorality — these are what are scandalous, unaccountable for in that system of moral and economic equivalence which remains the axiomatic thought, from Enlightenment theory to communism. Capital doesn't give a damn about the idea of the contract which is imputed to it: it is a monstrous unprincipled undertaking, nothing more. Rather, it is "enlightened" thought which seeks to control capital by imposing rules on it. And all that recrimination which replaced revolutionary thought today comes down to reproaching capital for not following the rules of the game. "Power is unjust; its justice is a class justice; capital exploits us; etc." — as if capital were linked by a contract to the society it rules. It is the left which holds out the mirror of equivalence, hoping that capital will fall for this phantasmagoria of the social contract and fulfill its obligation towards the whole of society (at the same time, no need for revolution: it is enough that capital accept the rational formula of exchange).

Capital in fact has never been linked by a contract to the society it dominates. It is a sorcery of the social relation, it is a challenge to society and should be responded to as such. It is not a scandal to be denounced according to moral and economic rationality, but — challenge to take up according to symbolic law.

Moebius: spiralling negativity

Hence Watergate was only a trap set by the system to catch its adversaries — a simulation of scandal to regenerative ends. This is embodied by the character called "Deep Throat," who was said to be a Republican grey eminence manipulating the leftist journalists in order to get rid of Nixon — and why not? All hypotheses are possible, although this one is superfluous: the work of the Right is done very well, and spontaneously, by the Left on its own. Besides, it would be naive to see an embittered good conscience at work here. For the Right itself also spontaneously does the work of the Left. All the hypotheses of manipulation are reversible in an endless whirligig. For manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another; where there is no longer any active or passive. It is by putting an arbitrary stop to this revolving causality that a principle of political reality can be saved. It is by the simulation of a conventional, restricted perspective field, where the premises and consequences of any act or event are calculable, that a political credibility can be maintained (including, of course, "objective" analysis, struggle, etc.) But if the entire cycle of any act or event is envisaged in a system where linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist, in a field unhinged by simulation, then all determination evaporates, every act terminates at the end of the cycle having benefited everyone and been scattered in all directions.

Is any given bombing in Italy the work of leftist extremists; or of extreme right-wing provocation; or staged by centrists to bring every terrorist extreme into disrepute and to shore up its own failing power; or again, is it a police-inspired scenario in order to appeal to calls for public security? All this is equally true, and the search for proof—indeed the objectivity of the fact—does not check this vertigo of interpretation. We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons. Simulation is characterized by a precession of the model, of all models around the merest fact— the models come first, and their orbital (like the bomb) circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of events. Facts no longer have any trajectory of their own, they arise at the intersection of the models; a single fact may even be engendered by all the models at once. This anticipation, this precession, this short-circuit, this confusion of the fact with its
model (no more divergence of meaning, no more dialectical polarity, no more negative electricity or implosion of poles) is what each time allows for all the possible interpretations, even the most contradictory — all are true, in the sense that their truth is exchangeable, in the image of the models from which they proceed, in a generalized cycle.

The communists attack the socialist party as though they wanted to shatter the union of the Left. They sanction the idea that their reticence stems from a more radical political exigency. In fact, it is because they don't want power. But do they not want it at this conjuncture because it is unfavorable for the Left in general, or because it is unfavorable for them within the union of the Left — or do they not want it by definition? When Berlinguer declares, "We mustn't be frightened of seeing the communists seize power in Italy," this means simultaneously:

1 That there is nothing to fear, since the communists, if they come to power, will change nothing in its fundamental capitalist mechanism.
2 That there isn't any risk of their ever coming to power (for the reason that they don't want to); and even if they do take it up, they will only ever wield it by proxy.
3 That in fact power, genuine power, no longer exists, and hence there is no risk of anybody seizing it or taking it over.
4 But more: 1, Berlinguer, am not frightened of seeing the communists seize power in Italy — which might appear evident, but not so evident, since:
5 It can also mean the contrary (no need for psychoanalysis here): I am frightened of seeing the communists seize power (and with good reason, even for a communist).

All the above is simultaneously true. This is the secret of a discourse that is no longer only ambiguous, as political discourses can be, but that conveys the impossibility of a determinate position of power, the impossibility of a determinate position of discourse. And this logic belongs to neither party. It traverses all discourses without their wanting it.

Who will unravel this imbroglio? The Gordian knot can at least be cut. As for the Moebius strip, if it is split in two, it results in an additional spiral without there being any possibility of resolving its surfaces (here the reversible continuity of hypotheses). Hades of simulation, which is no longer one of torture, but of the subtle, maleficient, elusive twisting of meaning4 — where even those condemned at Burgos are still a gik from Franco to Western democracy, which finds m them the occasion to regenerate its own flagging humanism, and whose indignant protestation consolidates in return Franco's regime by uniting the Spanish masses against foreign intervention? Where is the truth in all that, when such collusions admirably knit together without their authors even knowing it?

The conjunction of the system and its extreme alternative like two ends of a curved mirror, the "vicious" curvature of a political space henceforth magnetized, circularized, reversibilized from right to left a torsion that is like the evil demon of commutation, the whole system, the infinity of capital folded back over its own surface: transfinite? And isn't it the same with desire and libidinal space? The conjunction of desire and value, of desire and capital. The conjunction of desire and the law; the ultimate joy and metamorphosis of the law (which is why it is so well received at the moment): only capital takes pleasure, Lyotard said, before coming to think that we take pleasure in capital. Overwhelming versatility of desire in Deleuze: an enigmatic reversal which brings this desire that is "revolutionary by itself, and as if involuntarily, in wanting what it wants," to want its own repression and to invest paranoid and fascist systems? A malign torsion which reduces this revolution of desire to the same fundamental ambiguity as the other, historical revolution.

All the referentials intermingle their discourses in a circular, Moebian compulsion. Not so long ago sex and work were savagely opposed terms: today both are dissolved into the same type of demand. Formerly the discourse on history took its force from opposing itself to the one on nature, the discourse on desire to the one on power: today they exchange their signifiers and their scenarios.

It would take too long to run through the whole range of operational negativity, of all those scenarios of deterrence which, like Watergate, try to revive a moribund principle by simulated scandal, phantasm, murder — a sort of hormonal treatment by negativity and crisis. It is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary; proving truth by scandal; proving the law by transgression; proving work by the strike; proving the system by crisis and capital by revolution; and for that matter proving ethnology by the dispossession of its object (the Tasaday). Without counting: proving theater by anti-theater; proving art by anti-art; proving pedagogy by anti-pedagogy; proving psychiatry by anti-psychiatry, etc., etc.

Everything is metamorphosed into its inverse in order to be perpetuated in its purged form. Every form of power, every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to attempt to escape, by simulation of death, its real agony. Power can stage its own murder to rediscover a glimmer of existence and legitimacy. Thus with the American presidents: the Kennedys are murdered because they still have a political dimension. Others — Johnson, Nixon, Ford — only had a right to puppet attempts, to simulated murders. But they nevertheless needed that aura of an artificial menace to conceal that they were nothing other than mannequins of power. In olden days the king (also the god) had to die — that was his strength. Today he does his miserable utmost to pretend to die, so as to preserve the blessing of power. But even this is gone.
To seek new blood in its own death, to renew the cycle by the mirror of crisis, negativity and anti-power: this is the only alibi of every power, of every institution attempting to break the vicious circle of its irresponsibility and its fundamental nonexistence, of its deja-vu and its deja-mort.

Strategy of the real

Of the same order as the impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real, is the impossibility of staging an illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible. It is the whole political problem of the parody, of hypersimulation or offensive simulation, which is posed here. For example: it would be interesting to see whether the repressive apparatus would not react more violently to a simulated hold up than to a real one? For a real hold up only upsets the order of things, the right of property, whereas a simulated hold up interferes with the very principle of reality. Transgression and violence are less serious, for they only contest the distribution of the real. Simulation is infinitely more dangerous since it always suggests, over and above its object, that law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation.

But the difficulty is in proportion to the peril. How to feign a violation and put it to the test? Go and simulate a theft in a large department store: how do you convince the security guards that it is a simulated theft? There is no "objective" difference: the same gestures and the same signs exist as for a real theft; in fact the signs mimic neither to one side nor the other. As far as the established order is concerned, they are always of the order of the real.

Go and organize a fake hold up. Be sure to check that your weapons are harmless, and take the most trustworthy hostage, so that no life is in danger (otherwise you risk committing an offence). Demand ransom, and arrange it so that the operation creates the greatest commotion possible. In brief, stay close to the "truth", so as to test the reaction of the apparatus to a perfect simulation. But you won't succeed: the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with real elements (a police officer will really shoot on sight; a bank customer will faint and die of a heart attack; they will really turn the phoney ransom over to you). In brief, you will unwittingly find yourself immediately in the real, one of whose functions is precisely to devour every attempt at simulation, to reduce everything to some reality: that's exactly how the established order is, well before institutions and justice come into play.

In this impossibility of isolating the process of simulation must be seen the whole thrust of an order that can only see and understand in terms of some reality, because it can function nowhere else. The simulation of an offence, if it is patent, will either be punished more lightly (because it has no "consequences") or be punished as an offence to public office (for example, if one triggered off a police operation "for nothing") — but never as simulation, since it is precisely as such that no equivalence with the real is possible, and hence no repression either. The challenge of simulation is irreceivable by power. How can you punish the simulation of virtue? Yet as such it is as serious as the simulation of crime. Parody makes obedience and transgression equivalent, and that is the most serious crime, since it cancels out the difference upon which the law is based. The established order can do nothing against it, for the law is a second-order simulacrum transgression equivalent, and that is the most serious crime, since it cancels out the difference upon which function all power and the entire social stratum. Hence, failing the real, it is here that we must aim at order.

This is why order always opts for the real. In a state of uncertainty, It always prefers this assumption (thus in the army they would rather take the simulator as a true madman). But this becomes more and more difficult, for it is practically impossible to isolate the process of simulation; through the force of inertia of the real which surrounds us, the inverse is also true (and this very reversibility forms part of the apparatus of simulation and of power's impotency): namely, it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real.

Thus all hold ups, hijacks and the like are now as it were simulation hold ups, in the sense that they are inscribed in advance in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences. In brief, where they function as a set of signs dedicated exclusively to their recurrence as signs, and no longer to their "real" goal at all. But this does not make them inoffensive. On the contrary, it is as hyperreal events, no longer having any particular contents or aims, but indefinitely refracted by each other (for that matter like so-called historical events: strikes, demonstrations, crises, etc.5), that they are precisely unverifiable by an order which can only exert itself on the real and the rational, on ends and means: a referential order which can only dominate referentials, a determinate power which can only dominate a determined world, but which can do nothing about that indefinite recurrence of simulation, about that weightless nebula no longer obeying the law of gravitation of the real — power itself eventually breaking apart in this space and becoming a simulation of power (disconnected from its aims and objectives, and dedicated to power effects and mass simulation).

The only weapon of power, its only strategy against this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis, but also — why not? — the discourse of desire. "Take your desires for reality!" can be understood as the ultimate slogan of power, for in
a nonreferential world even the confusion of the reality principle with the desire principle is less dangerous than contagious hyperreality. One remains among principles, and there power is always right. Hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and of every objective; they turn against power this deterrence which is so well utilized for a long time itself. For, finally, it was capital which was the first to feed throughout its history on the destruction of every referential, of every human goal, which shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power. It was the first to practice deterrence, abstraction, disconnection, deterriorlization, etc.; and if it was capital which fostered reality, the reality principle, it was also the first to liquidate it in the extermination of every use value, of every real equivalence, of production and wealth, in the very sensation we have of the unreality of the stakes and the omnipotence of manipulation. Now, it is this very logic which is today hardened even more against it. And when it wants to fight this catastrophic spiral by secreting one last glimmer of reality, on which to found one last glimmer of power, it only multiplies the signs and accelerates the play of simulation. As long as it was historically threatened by the real, power risked deterrence and simulation, disintegrating every contradiction by means of the production of equivalent signs. When it is threatened today by simulation (the threat of vanishing in the play of signs), power risks the real, risks crisis, it gambles on remanufacturing artificial, social, economic, -political stakes. This is a question of life or death for it. But it is too late.

Whence the characteristic hysteria of our time: the hysteria of production and reproduction of the real. The other production, that of goods and commodities, that of la belle époque of political economy, no longer makes any sense of its own, and has not for some time. What society seeks through production, and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it. That is why contemporary "material" production is itself hyperreal. It retains all the features, the whole discourse of traditional production, but it is nothing more than its scaled-down refraction (thus the hyperrealists fasten in a striking resemblance a real from which has fled all meaning and charm, all the profundity and energy of representation). Thus the hyperrealism of simulation is expressed everywhere by the real's striking resemblance to itself. Power, too, for some time now produces nothing but signs of its resemblance. And at the same time, another figure of power comes into play: that of a collective demand for signs of power — a holy union which forms around the disappearance of power. Everybody belongs to it more or less in fear of the collapse of the political. And in the end the game of power comes down to nothing more than the critical obsession with power: an obsession with its death; an obsession with its survival which becomes greater the more it disappears. When it has totally disappeared, logically we will be under the total spell of power — a haunting memory already foreshadowed everywhere, manifesting at one and the same time the satisfaction of having got rid of it (nobody wants it any more, everybody unloads it on others) and grieving its loss. Melancholy for societies without power: this has already given rise to fascism, that overdose of a powerful referential in a society which cannot terminate its mourning. But we are still in the same boat: none of our societies know how to manage their mourning for the real, for power, for the social itself, which is implicated in this same breakdown. And it is by an artificial revitalization of all this that we try to escape it. Undoubtedly this will even end up in socialism. By an unforeseen twist of events and an irony which no longer belongs to history, it is through the death of the social that socialism will emerge — as it is through the death of God that religions emerge. A twisted coming, a perverse event, an unintelligible reversion to the logic of reason. As is the fact that power is no longer present except to conceal that there is none. A simulation which can go on indefinitely, since - unlike "true" power which is, or was, a structure, a strategy, a relation of force, a stake — this is nothing but the object of a social demand, and hence subject to the law of supply and demand, rather than to violence and death. Completely expunged from the political dimension, it is dependent, like any other commodity, on production and mass consumption. Its spark has disappeared; only the fiction of a political universe is saved.

Likewise with work. The spark of production, the violence of its stake no longer exists. Everybody still produces, and more and more, but work has subtly become something else: a need (as Marx ideally envisaged it, but not at all in the same sense), the object of a social "demand," like leisure, to which it is equivalent in the general run of life's options. A demand exactly proportional to the loss of stake in the work process. The same change in fortune as for power: the scenario of work is there to conceal the fact that the work-real, the production-real, has disappeared. And for that matter so has the strike-real too, which is no longer a stoppage of work, but its alternative pole in the ritual scansion of the social calendar. It is as if everyone has "occupied" their work place or work post, after declaring the strike, and resumed production, as is the custom in a "self-managed" job, in exactly the same terms as before, by declaring themselves (and virtually being) in a state of permanent strike.

This isn't a science-fiction dream: everywhere it is a question of a doubling of the work process. And of a double or locum for the strike process — strikes which are incorporated like obsolescence in objects, like crises in production. Then there are no longer any strikes or work, but both simultaneously, that is to say something else entirely: a wizardry of work, a trompe l'oeil, a scenodrama (not to say melodrama) of production, collective dramaturgy upon the empty stage of the social.
It is no longer a question of the ideology of work — of the traditional ethic that obscures the "real" labour process and the "objective" process of exploitation- but of the scenario of work. Likewise, it is no longer a question of the ideology of power, but of the scenario of power. Ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs; simulation corresponds to a short-circuit of reality and to its reduplication by signs. It is always the aim of ideological analysis to restore the objective process; it is always a false problem to want to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum.

This is ultimately why power is so in accord with ideological discourses and discourses on ideology, for these are all discourses of truth — always good, even and especially if they are revolutionary, to counter the mortal blows of simulation.

Notes

1 Counterfeit and reproduction imply always an anguish, a disquieting foreignness: the uneasiness before the photograph, considered like a witch's trick — and more generally before any technical apparatus, which is always an apparatus of reproduction, is related by Benjamin to the uneasiness before the mirror-image. There is already sorcery at work in the mirror. But how much more so when this image can be detached from the mirror and be transported, stocked, reproduced at will (cf. The Student of Prague, where the devil detaches the image of the student from the mirror and harrasses him to death by the intermediary of this image). All reproduction implies therefore a kind of black magic, from the fact of being seduced by one's own image in the water, like Narcissus, to being haunted by the double and, who knows, to the mortal turning back of this vast technical apparatus secreted today by man as his own image (the narcissistic mirage of technique, McLuhan) and that returns to him, cancelled and distorted -endless reproduction of himself and his power to the limits of the world. Reproduction is diabolical in its very essence; it makes something fundamental vacillate. This has hardly changed for us: simulation (that we describe here as the operation of the code) is still and always the place of a gigantic enterprise of manipulation, of control and of death, just like the imitative object (primitive statuette, image of photo) always had as objective an operation of black image.

2 There is furthermore in Monod's book a flagrant contradiction, which reflects the ambiguity of all current science. His discourse concerns the code, that is the third-order simulacra, but it does so still according to "scientific" schemes of the second-order — objectiveness, "scientific" ethic of knowledge, science's principle of truth and transcendence. All things incompatible with the indeterminable models of the third-order.

3 "It's the feeble 'definition' of TV which condemns its spectator to rearranging the few points retained into a kind of abstract work. He participates suddenly in the creation of a reality that was only just presented to him in dots: the television watcher is in the position of an individual who is asked to project his own fantasies on inkbolts that are not supposed to represent anything." TV as perpetual Rorshach test. And furthermore: "The TV image requires each instant that we 'close' the spaces in the mesh by a convulsive sensuous participation that is profoundly kinetic and tactile."

4 "The Medium is the Message" is the very slogan of the political economy of the sign, when it enters into the third-order simulation — the distinction between the medium and the message characterizes instead signification of the second-order.

5 The entire current "psychological" situation is characterized by this shortcircuit. Doesn't emancipation of children and teenagers, once the initial phase of revolt is passed and once there has been established the principle of the right to emancipation, seem like the real emancipation of parents. And the young (students, high-schoolers, adolescents) seem to sense it in their always more insistent demand (though still as paradoxical) for the presence and advice of parents or of teachers. Alone at last, free and responsible, it seemed to them suddenly that other people possibly have absconded with their true liberty. Therefore, there is no question of "leaving them be." They're going to hassle them, not with any emotional or material spontaneous demand, but with an exigency that has been premeditated and corrected by an implicit oedipal knowledge. Hyperdependence (much greater than before) distorted by irony and refusal, parody of libidinous original mechanisms. Demand without content, without referent, unjustified, but for all that all the more severe — naked demand with no possible answer. The contents of knowledge (teaching) or of affective relations, the pedagogical or familial referent having been eliminated in the act of emancipation, there remains only a demand linked to the empty form of the institution- perverse demand, and for that reason all the more obstinate. "Transferable" desire (that is to say non-referential, un-referential), desire that has been fed by lack, by the place left vacant, "liberated," desire captured in its own vertiginous image, desire of desire, as pure form, hyperreal. Deprived of symbolic substance, it doubles back upon itself, draws its energy from its own reflection and its disappointment with itself. This is literally today the "demand," and it is obvious that unlike the "classical" objective or transferable relations this one here is insoluble and interminable.

Simulated Oedipus.

Francois Richard: "Students asked to be seduced either bodily or verbally. But also they are aware of this and they play the game, ironically. 'Give us your knowledge, your presence, you have the word, speak, you are there for that.' Contestation certainly, but not only: the more authority is contested, vilified, the greater
the need for authority as such. They play at Oedipus also, to deny it all the more vehemently. The 'teach',
he's Daddy, they say; it's fun, you play at incest, malaise, the untouchable, at being a tease — in order to
de-sexualize finally." Like one under analysis who asks for Oedipus back again, who tells the "oedipal"
stories, who has the "analytical" dreams to satisfy the supposed request of the analyst, or to resist him? In
the same way the student goes through his oedipal number, his seduction number, gets chummy, close,
approaches, dominates- but this isn't desire, it's simulation. Oedipal psychodrama of simulation (neither less
real nor less dramatic for all that). Very different from the real libidinal stakes of knowledge and power or
even of a real mourning for the absence of same (as could have happened after 1968 in the universities).
Now we've reached the phase of desperate reproduction, and where the stakes are nil, the simulacrum is
maximal — exacerbated and parodied simulation at one and the same time- as interminable as
psychoanalysis and for the same reasons.
The interminable psychoanalysis.
There is a whole chapter to add to the history of transference and countertransference: that of their
liquidation by simulation, of the impossible psychoanalysis because it is itself, from now on, that produces
and reproduces the unconscious as its institutional substance. Psychoanalysis dies also of the exchange of
the signs of the unconscious. Just as revolution dies of the exchange of the critical signs of political
economy. This short-circuit was well known to Freud in the form of the gift of the analytic dream, or with the
"uninformed" patients, in the form of the gift of their analytic knowledge. But this was still interpreted as
resistance, as detour, and did not put fundamentally into question either the process of analysis or the
principle of transference. It is another thing entirely when the unconscious itself, the discourse of the
unconscious becomes unfindable — according to the same scenario of simulative anticipation that we have
seen at work on all levels with the machines of the third order. The analysis then can no longer end, it
becomes logically and historically interminable, since it stabilizes on a puppet-substance of reproduction, an
unconscious programmed on demand — an impossible-to-break-through point around which the whole
analysis is rearranged. The messages of the unconscious have been short-circuited by the psychoanalysis
"medium." This is libidinal hyperrealism. To the famous categories of the real, the symbolic and the
imaginary, it is going to be necessary to add the hyperreal, which captures and obstructs the functioning of
the three orders.
6 Athenian democracy, much more advanced than our own, had reached the point where the vote was
considered as payment for a service, after all other repressive solutions had been tried and found wanting in
order to insure a quorum.
Available: www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Baudrillard/Baudrillard_Simulacra.html