

TECHNOLOGY, REALITY, (RE)PRODUCTION

Interpreting a Baudrillard text*

by

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"It is a new generation of signs and objects which comes with the industrial revolution. Signs without the tradition of caste, ones that will never have known any binding restrictions. They will no longer have to be *counterfeited*, since they are going to be produced all at once on a gigantic scale. The problem of their uniqueness, or their origin, is no longer a matter of concern; their origin is technique, and the only sense they possess is in the dimension of the industrial simulacrum.

Which is to say the series, and even the possibility of two or of n identical objects. The relation between them is no longer that of an original to its counterfeit--neither analogy nor reflection--but equivalence, indifference. In a series, objects become undefined simulacra one of the other. And so, along with the objects, do the men that produce them. Only the obliteration of the original reference allows for the generalized law of equivalence, that is to say the *very possibility of production.*" (pp. 96-97)



Montreal. Silos, 1986.

The urban silo made possible through a modern technology is re-presented- and re-produced--(t)here. Like the endless elevated highway, the pervasive high-rise or its older counterpart, the walls, gates and towers of the medieval city, the modern silo has become "undefined simulation". Its silent proliferation marks the absence of an origin. Its presence in the urban landscape reminds us of a lost "post-technological future".

“...The fact alone that anything might be simply reproduced, as such, in two copies, is already a revolution; you only have to consider the shock of the African native seeing, for the very first time, two identical books. That these two products of technique should be *equivalent* under the sign of socially necessary work is less important in the long run than the *serial* repetition of the same object (which is also of individuals as force-of-

work). Technique as medium dominates not only the “message” of the product (it’s use-value) but also the force-of-work that Marx wished to make the revolutionary message of production. Benjamin and McLuhan saw this matter more clearly than Marx; they saw the true message: *the true ultimatum was in reproduction itself*. And that production no longer has any sense; its social finality is lost in the series. The simulacra win out over history.” (pp.99-100)

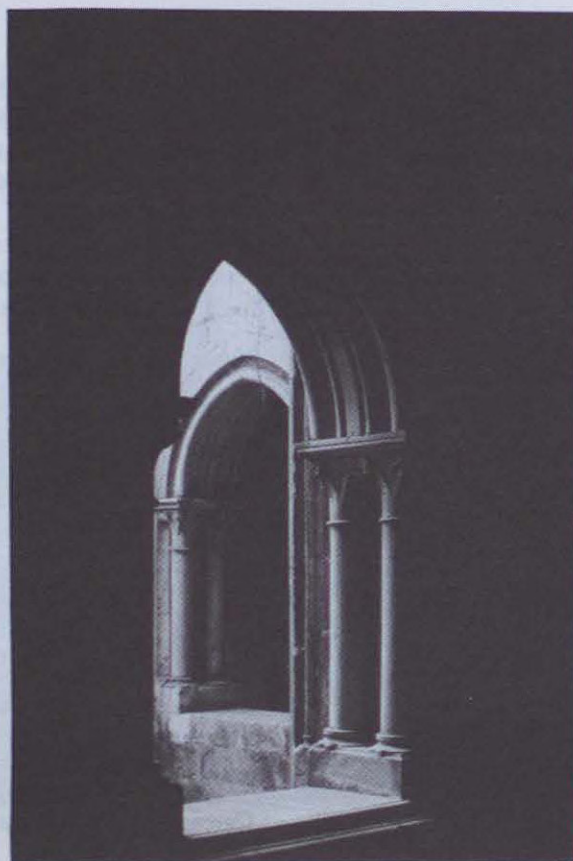


Carcassonne, France. Gateway to the Old City, 1984.

Layers of massive walls: stone, sand, metal--materials of a mythic past--produced and re-presented here thanks to light, the evasive medium of the photographer, the writer of light.

"Every image, every media message, but also any functional environmental object, is a test--that is to say, in the full rigor of the term, liberating response mechanisms according to stereotypes and analytic models. Today, the object is no longer "functional" in the traditional meaning of the word; it no longer serves you, it *tests* you. It has nothing to do with the object of yesterday, no more than does media news with a "reality" of facts. Both objects and information result already from a selection, a montage, from a point of view. They have already tested "reality", and have asked only questions that "answered back" to them. They have broken down reality into simple elements that they

have reassembled into scenarios of regulated oppositions, exactly in the same way that the photographer imposes his contrasts, lights, angles on his subject (any photographer will tell you: you can do anything, all you have to do is approach the original from the right angle, at that right moment or mood that will render it the *correct answer* to the instantaneous test of the instrument and its code). It is exactly like the test or the referendum when they translate a conflict or problem into a game of question/answer. And reality, thus tested, tests you according to the same grill; you decode it according to the same code, inscribed within each message and object like a miniaturized genetic code." (pp. 120-121)



Alcobaca, Portugal. Cloister, 1983.

Inside and outside, light and dark, black and white, solid and void, all adding up to the presence of presence and absence, all, ultimately speaking of difference. Is simulacrum a presence or an absence?. How is reality present now?



Alcobaca, Portugal. Cloister, 1983.

"The very definition of the real becomes: *that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction*. This is contemporaneous with a science that postulates that a process can be perfectly reproduced in a set of given conditions, and also with the industrial rationality that postulates a universal system of

equivalency (classical representation is not equivalence, it is transcription, interpretation, commentary). At the limit of this process of reproductibility, the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced*. The hyperreal." (p. 146)



Alcobaca, Portugal. Cathedral Facade reflected on Windshield.

Mode d'emploi:
CUT ALONG THE LINES.
RAISE SHEET IN FRONT OF
YOU. LOOK THROUGH THE
FRAME TO REACH, THERE, A
PRESENCE. WHERE IS THE
DIFFERENCE? HERE or
THERE?...AND THE REAL...?

Reality, now. Cut along the line and use it as a frame of reference.

* All excerpts, except the text in bold italics, have been quoted from Jean Baudrillard's "The Orders of Simulacra", in *Simulations*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983. Page numbers appear in parentheses after each quote.

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