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Reinventare il Reale: Jean Baudrillard (2007-2017)

Reinventing the Real. Jean Baudrillard (2007-2017)

CURATORI / EDITORS

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1. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Eleonora de Conciliis

Lo specchio dell'ironia • The Mirror of Irony

The article, which has to be intended as editorial too, in its first part gives a critical analysis about the different reception of Baudrillard's thought both in continental Europe (Italy, France, Germany) and in Anglophone area, deepening further the reasons of its actuality. Then it addresses the possible meanings of Baudrillard's quote "Reinventing the Reality", used as the title of the issue.

2. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Gerry Coulter

Baudrillard in the Future

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the passing of Jean Baudrillard it is worthwhile to reflect on the lasting relevance of his ideas. Will Baudrillard be read in the foreseeable and even in the distant future the way Plato, Pico, or Shakespeare are today? In an attempt to answer this question the essay points to six original contributions from Baudrillard's thought that are likely to contribute to the last relevance of his works: 1) the relationship he pointed to between philosophy and literature, 2) his embrace of 'emptiness', 3) his thought concerning the poetic resolution of the world, 4) his writings on reversibility, 5) the critique of Marx, and 6) his work on simulation. These aspects of his work, among others, may well see Baudrillard's work stand the rigors of the test of time.

3. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Tito Marci

Dalla critica al fatale. Della teoria in Jean Baudrillard • From the Critic to the Fatal. Of Theory according to Jean Baudrillard

The aim of this paper is to briefly reconstruct the theoretical proposal of Jean Baudrillard in light of the Mauss's study of the potlatch, the «system for the exchange of gifts» that consists of a festival

where goods and services of all kinds are exchanged and reciprocated with a dominant idea of rivalry and competition between the tribes assembled for the ritual. We will try to demonstrate that exactly on the basis of this perspective Baudrillard has rethought the social sphere emphasizing the dimensions of 'antagonism', 'dare', 'reversibility' and 'symbolic' (some of the typical traits of the potlatch). From here, beyond all critical and hermeneutics stances, we can find the development of a theory capable of replacing the dialectical movement of production with the fatal movement of seduction.

4. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Francesco Piluso

Forma (e) Segno in Jean Baudrillard. Deriva di una Prospettiva Semiotica • Form (and) Sign in Jean Baudrillard. The Leeway of a Semiotic Perspective

Jean Baudrillard provides a semiotic perspective on our consumer society by reinterpreting the Marxist categories of political economy in structuralist terms. According to Baudrillard, the sign-form is characterized by the same relative, systemic and abstractive logic which characterizes the commodity-form. A parallelism between these two forms permits to overcome the Marxist dialectic between economy and culture, and to relocate the ideology in the process of reproduction of the same structural and differential form (exchange-value and logic of signifiers) behind the alibi of the production of positive value (use-value and signified). Once Baudrillard revealed the naturalized and ideological role of the use-value, it seems paradoxical that the same author collapses signified and referent on the same plane in the shadow of the signifiers form. We will try to comprehend and criticize this complex theoretical passage in properly semiotic terms, to highlight how an ambivalent stress on the concept of form has progressively lead the author to an ontological plane of analysis which betrays the same formal premises of the semiotic theory and of the early Baudrillard.

5. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Nicholas Hardy

Du déclin de l'aura au simulacre: réflexion sur les affinités entre Benjamin et Baudrillard • From the Downfall of the aura to Simulacrum: Reflexions on the Affinities Between Benjamin and Baudrillard

In this article, we examine the affinities between the thought of Jean Baudrillard and that of Walter Benjamin. Through the analysis of central concepts drawn mainly from *Simulacres et simulation* and from Benjamin's *L'œuvre d'art à l'ère de sa reproductibilité technique*, notably through their respective critiques of culture, we believe that Benjamin foresees a cultural shift or historic rupture, which announces central analogous themes developed later by Baudrillard. The following exegetical work bridges the thought of these two thinkers, allowing a deeper understanding of their contributions to social theory, and to our understanding of culture.

6. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Jean Baudrillard

Recensione di Jean Baudrillard a M. McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man • Jean Baudrillard's Review of M. McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man

This long review to M. McLuhan's book, that perhaps influenced more than any other the contemporary sociologist, also starting a new aesthetical and philosophical reflection about media and new technologies, has been written by Jean Baudrillard in 1967. Here the French thinker goes ironically through McLuhan's theory of the civilizing process, in particular his interpretation of the so-called 'Civilization of Books'. Working on the distinction between 'hot' and 'cool' media, he demonstrates how McLuhan's sociological thought, although able to explain the revolutionary role of the electrical environments (those which lead man beyond the Age of Literacy and into the global village) is insufficiently equipped for a historical and social (and therefore political) comprehension of modern cultural processes.

7. INTERVISTA/INTERVIEW: Enrico Schirò

Ricordare Baudrillard. Intervista a Vanni Codeluppi • Remembering Baudrillard. Interview with Vanni Codeluppi

In this interview Vanni Codeluppi, a major sociologist in the field of consumption and media theory, as well as one who from the outset introduced Baudrillard in Italy, during the '80s, recounts his personal theoretical engagement with Baudrillard's radical sociology, also summing up the Italian reception of it. He highlights the significance of Baudrillard's concepts, and the singularity of his method, also advocating for the general relevance of this theoretical framework within the current context of the sociology of media.

8. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Rex Butler

Baudrillard as modernist: Jean Baudrillard and Michael Fried on Photography

We could not perhaps imagine a less likely pairing than the radical 'post-modernist' Jean Baudrillard and the well-known modernist art historian Michael Fried. Baudrillard is anti-aesthetic, while Fried defends art against minimalist anti-aesthetics. Baudrillard calls himself a nihilist, while Fried is widely regarded as conservative in his aesthetic choices. And yet both end up saying very similar things about photography. Why is this, and what does this unexpected connection or even coincidence have to tell us about Baudrillard's work more generally?

9. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Enrico Schirò

Simulacri e immanenza. Speculare Baudrillard • Simulacra and Immanence. Speculating Baudrillard

Jean Baudrillard has been mainly considered the theorist of the disappearance of reality: simulation, hyperreality, virtual. On the other hand, a speculative reading of Baudrillard's work – namely a reappraisal of Baudrillard theory of signs as a theory of immanence – could open new perspective about his relevance in contemporary philosophical debates. The aim of the article is to briefly review Baudrillard's dissertation about order and precession of simulacra, to highlight the speculative air of what I may name his logic of simulacra.

10. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Marina Christodoulou

"To be dead is an unthinkable anomaly". Reversed Necropolitics and the Death Imaginary

The concept or the theory of Death in the thought of Jean Baudrillard is not given the particular attention it needs. When one speaks of the thought of Baudrillard, one rarely will mention 'death' as one of the keywords of his corpus. I think, though, that it deserves such a key place, for three reasons. Firstly, because the theme of Death is a gargantuan concept in the history of Philosophy and it even emerges with the definition of Philosophy itself, since, at least, Plato. Every philosopher, more or less is preoccupied with it, as an archetypical necessity of both human culture and of philosophy in particular. It is always interesting to see how each philosopher or each person thinks on it, as their thoughts on Death are a departure point and an indication of their whole philosophical system or, for non-philosophers, of their whole way of life. Secondly, it is important to examine this theme in Baudrillard because it inseparably interconnects, explains, and is explained by all the other, key, and the less prominent themes in his philosophy (if it is possible to divide themes in the corpus of a philosopher in such a way). Baudrillard's thinking might take new dimensions when viewed through his thoughts on Death. Finally, Baudrillard is considered a difficult thinker, because, unlike other philosophers, he grasps themes which people are used to seeing as the pre-occupation or within the realm of fiction, even science-fiction (robots, clones, hyper-reality – The Matrix film). I would like to show, using simple language, that his philosophy, especially surrounding the subject of Death, is completely naked of any metaphysical, romanticised, fantastic, or fiction-like properties; it is realistic and political.

11. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Vincenzo Cuomo

La violenza simbolica e l'illusione estrema. Baudrillard e l'arte contemporanea • The Symbolic Violence and the Extreme Illusion. Baurdillard and Contemporary Art

Until in the last writings, Baudrillard oscillates between two different theoretical strategies: that of the symbolic violence, on one side, and that of the radical illusion, on the other side. This pa-

per, starting from the socio-economic analysis and sociological notion of rest and negative in the thought of Baudrillard, seeks to clarify the differences between his two theoretical strategies. In both cases, he is confronted with the function of art in our contemporary world.

12. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Daniela Angelucci

Estetica fatale - Fatal Aesthetics

In the Western thought, the aesthetic experience is mostly explained as an encounter between subject and object where the latter holds the role of stimulus, occasion, and the subjectivity of the user (or of the author) remains, somehow, the protagonist, central and active. The article wonders whether it is possible to describe the aesthetic experience in a different way, assigning to the object a more central role, more powerful. The thought of Jean Baudrillard – with the notions of seduction and fatality developed between the late seventies and early years eighty – can be particularly useful just in order to describe the aesthetic experience as an event in which the subject is taken, captured by the object.

13. INTERVISTA/INTERVIEW: Enrico Schirò

La sfida simbolica dell'architettura. Intervista a Francesco Proto • The Symbolic Challenge of Architecture. Interview with Francesco Proto

In this interview Francesco Proto, an architect, theorist and renown Baudrillard' scholar, retraces the deep and underestimate the relationship between Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation and the architectural field, also giving an account of his theoretical outlook about using Baudrillard to produce a theory of the contemporary. Moving from a general reconsideration of geometrical perspective as simulacrum, he shows the several crossing between the encoding process of space, simulation and the modern ideology of humanism, also debating the differences between arts and architecture within Baudrillard's theory, also regarding their respective symbolic and seductive dimension.

14. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Felice Cimatti

Verso il reale. Lacan e Baudrillard • Towards the Real. Lacan and Baudrillard

In the Seminar XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1964), Jacques Lacan switched from the previous exclusive attention to language toward a 'philosophy' more and more centered about the primacy of the Real. In particular, in the 'March 4th 1964' lesson, Lacan presents the famous anti-humanistic example of the 'look' of a sardine can. In this paper, I will try to show how Baudrillard late insistence on the subject less object derives from such a Lacanian 'real-

istic turn’.

15. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Eleonora de Conciliis

Baudrillard versus Foucault - Baudrillard against Foucault

This essay tries to understand the deep reasons for the attack Jean Baudrillard stroke against Michel Foucault in the well known 1977 pamphlet, *Oublier Foucault*, forty years after the event. Only historicizing critically this text – disregarded by many researchers of both philosophers, and by Italians in particular – it is possible to investigate the unspeakable and profound reflexing relationship between the two of them, their conflictual and therefore fruitful affinity.

16. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Guido Baggio

Capitalismo libidinale e scambio simbolico: un confronto fra Lyotard e Baudrillard • Libidinal Capitalism and the Symbolic Exchange: a Comparaison Between Lyotard and Baudrillard

Lyotard’s and Baudrillard’s intellectual path moves from the attempt to deconstruct the representational forms of structuralism and to criticize the various politically or culturally institutionalized versions of Marxism. This attempt implies re-exploring and rehabilitating the ‘symbolic’ as a third realm between the domains of the real and the imaginary. The notion of symbolic refers to the concept of relational exchange which is a functional device of an «empty place», a «margin», a «manque», and an «incommensurability». Lyotard and Baudrillard both refer to the idea of ‘actualization’ of the death pulsion meant as a radical immanentization in which the subject loses its own subjectivity, either by being involved in the symbolic exchange or by being prevented from desiring. However, they still have to acknowledge the role of the social subject as deeply involved in the cyclical tension between life and death, gift and counter-gift.

17. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Francesco Restuccia

Gli specchi invertiti. Vilém Flusser e Jean Baudrillard • The Reversed Mirrors. Vilém Flusser e Jean Baudrillard

During their philosophical careers, both Vilém Flusser and Jean Baudrillard have developed a unique and quite singular perspective about the broader impact of technology and media on humans, from an anthropological and sociological point of view. Despite they shared a general framework and a number of hypotheses, there are several differences – namely in regard to code and simulation – which could be interesting underline. The aim of the article is precise to reassess the intellectual and philosophical relation between these two major figures of contemporary media theory.

18. SAGGIO/ESSAY: René Capovin

Jean Baudrillard, Michel Houellebecq. Un gioco di specchi • Jean Baudrillard, Michel Houellebecq. A Game of Mirrors

They are against multiculturalism, human rights and feminism. They are charged with apocalyptic attitude. They wrote about the map-territory relation, cloning, orgy and death. In fact, even if it sounds strange, perhaps disturbing, Jean Baudrillard and Michel Houellebecq share a lot of things. Obviously, their works also show several, strong differences. Still, the total absence of reflection on the links between these major contemporary figures justifies the operation carried out in this article, i.e. to show only similarities and continuities 'from within', through a cutting whose rough materials are the works of both authors.

19. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Gary Genosko

How to Lose to a Chess Playing Computer According to Jean Baudrillard

Readers of Baudrillard know that he thought about competition in sport and games in terms of failure and frailty. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, exchange value and symbolic ambivalence are mutually exclusive domains; in the latter, desire is not satisfied through phantasmic completion, and this entails that desire may ride failure to an ignominious counter-victory. Baudrillard found in the failure to react positively to an inducement like winning a race – captured in that bizarre American football phrase appropriated as a handle by Ronald Reagan, «Win One for the Gipper!» – the principle of a radical counter-economy of needs. Losers come in all shades. But radical losers stand apart from the crowd in the virulence of their capacity to radiate loss that they throw down as a challenge. There are those who are irresistibly drawn to blowing it, and others who can taste failure and steal it from the jaws of victory. From the Beatles to Beck, the figure of the loser has fascinated lyricists and theorists alike as not merely sympathetic but as a foundation for a deliberate weakness in the face of overwhelming odds and the false pretenses of victory. Here I revisit Jean Baudrillard's speculations about computer chess programs, specifically IBM's Deep and Deeper Blue, and how best to play against them. Drawing on Baudrillard's theory of loss in sports as an act of contempt for the fruits of victory, institutional accommodation, and the cheap inducements of prestige and glory, I examine how chess masters like Garry Kasparov have met the challenge of the brute force programs – some of which were congealed models of his own play – with appeals to a kind of unforced play and even 'non-thought'. Considering the malevolent and fictional computer system HAL, as well as Deep Blue and subsequent programs, right up to IBM's Jeopardy-playing computer 'Watson', this paper looks at ways to defeat programming power by critically regaining the counter-technical and (dys)functional skills of the loser.

20. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Emiliano Ilardi

L'America di Baudrillard: un'utopia che non cessa di realizzarsi • Jean Baudrillard's America: An Utopia that Never Stop Realizing

Nearly 250 years have passed since the birth of the United States but for us, the old Europeans, it continues to be, in many ways, a mysterious and incomprehensible country, capable of being, at the same time, everything and its opposite: progressive and reactionary, pacifist and imperialist, authoritarian and libertarian, optimistic and paranoid, utopian and dystopian. At exactly thirty years after its first publication, *America* by Jean Baudrillard remains an unequalled book to understand the contradictions of American culture, as he reduces them to one factor: the relationship between space and time. And, traveling across the vast American deserts, Baudrillard also sends us back a dark and disturbing picture of the Old Continent. An image which Europe has not yet found the courage to cope with.

21. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Ian Buchanan

The Disappearance of Boredom

As Baudrillard's essay on the hypermarket makes clear, the mall is the true face of Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality. It is not merely the simulation of reality; it is in fact a vast, multilayered consumerist dreamscape in which everything you can imagine yourself wanting can be had in commodity form, even if that wasn't what you originally wished for. Today, though, Baudrillard's hyperreal hypermarket is to be found online and thanks to the smartphone it is constantly in reach. Smartphones are not just re-shaping space; they're also transforming time, most noticeably in our apparent loss of the ability to wait. Nowhere is that 'truth' felt more keenly than in airport departure lounges where waiting is widely considered torture. But contrary to the popular view, it isn't torture because it is boring – it is torture because boredom is no longer possible. We embrace our electronic thrall and thank the Gods for the fact we've conquered boredom once and for all. By conquering boredom consumer capitalism has extinguished its most potent critic. Boredom was our defence against the present.

22. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Massimo Canepa

Terroristi mascherati e ostaggi cannibali. Una lettura di Baudrillard • Masked Terrorists and Cannibal Hostages. A Reading of Jean Baudrillard

«A head! Just a head! That's not much» – exclaimed Mrs. De Lespinasse in D'Alembert's dream. Is it still like this? Is for this reason that the capture of «Bulldozer» – the giant Isis executioner – has

not been on the front page of newspapers and the killing of the gorilla in the zoo of Cincinnati to save a child fallen into his cage has created instead more emotions and press coverage than 21 beheaded Christians? «Do you want to get power thanks to the pictures? Therefore you will die of the feedback – pictures. The carnival of the pictures is also the (self) cannibalism through the pictures». This is a formula that reduces terrorism to an «idiocy» of an executioner captured and taken away as a hunting trophy and sees the «humiliation» of the killing of a gorilla getting more press coverage than the execution of 21 infidels. And yet this is a convertible formula that places Bataclan, Pulse, Charlie Hebdo, Nice, Berlin and Istanbul massacres into the frame of cannibals attacks to the Western carnival. Attacks no longer directed to its political-economical power symbols – as with the Twin Towers – but to its very places of freedom and entertainment, parties and transgression in which the pictures are everything that matters. If «the terrorism is the verdict and the sentence that our own society says to itself» (Robespierre ended up beheaded) what about the hostages? The unpleasant truth is «we are all hostages, all at the same time victims and executioners – lost in the same monopoly [...] that nobody owns anymore». Therefore, embrace the Evil Principle, the «cursed side» inside of us that still speaks sometimes, could be the main route for the Worse.

23. SAGGIO/ESSAY: Mike Gane

Ludicity, intelligence and power: Jean Baudrillard's unfinished project

Baudrillard began a final book project in 2004, three years before his death in 2007. Some of the projected chapters were presented at various conferences before his health no longer permitted work or travel. This article gives an account of the work of his final years as he attempted to reorganise his basic theoretical framework.

24. APPENDICE/APPENDIX: Marine Dupuis Baudrillard

L'effetto Baudrillard • The Baudrillard Effect

A short poetic memory of Jean Baudrillard, written by his wife Marine Dupuis Baudrillard

25. INTERVISTA/INTERVIEW: Marine Dupuis Baudrillard

Conversazione con Marine Dupuis Baudrillard • Conversation with Marine Dupuis Baudrillard

In this long interview with Tommaso Fagioli, Marine Dupuis Baudrillard talks about her life with Jean Baudrillard, revealing many interesting details about his intellectual and personal biography.