

# INSIDE THE SIMULACRUM: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

*Zoran Branković,  
Fakultet savremenih umetnosti  
Beograd, Srbija*

***Abstract:** Baudrillard writes of a new category – a virtual reality, a reality which is a double for the real reality and which is generated using powerful media systems. By regarding the media of the information society as ‘machines’ for the manufacture of reality, Baudrillard points to the difference between media reality and the world which surrounds us, as well as the future place and role of humans in nature.*

*He believes that reality, as it has traditionally been understood, is dead. True reality has become skewed by concepts and algorithms, distorted to the extent that it cannot be straightened out, brought back to its original position. All physical and all social concepts arise as a product of the functioning of the models refiguring the elements of reality. With the patterns which refigure time and space, matter,*

*energy- man has modeled the world he lives in. The reality with man in its centre is hyper-produced reality, a simulacrum, reality obscured by signs and symbols.*

*The simulacrum as a product of the model which precedes all reality, for man at least, is contained in representation. By endless representation, man draws contours, boundaries of reality, he creates reality.*

**Keywords:** *model, simulation, simulacrum, reality, virtual reality, nature, media, man (to signify humankind).*

## **1. Introduction**

Jean Baudrillard, French philosopher, sociologist, media and cultural theorist, achieved worldwide fame by analyzing society at the end of the old and the beginning of the new millennium. According to him, the basis of everything is post-structure - model, relation, interaction, which, as such, precedes reality itself.

Born in 1929 in northeastern France, he spent his childhood with his grandparents, parentless, as his parents had been (as he described them in one of his interviews) ‘civilian casualties’. He was the only member of his family for whom the opportunity to attend an elite university arose, when, in the late 1950s, he moved to Paris, and enrolled at the Sorbonne.

Baudrillard took full advantage of this opportunity.

Baudrillard’s elite education appears to have conditioned his path in life, channeled his thoughts and fed his ambitions. As a student of German language and literature, he translated the works of Holderlin and Brecht. His doctoral thesis advisor was Henri Lefebvre while the dissertation committee also included Pierre Bourdieu and Roland Barthes.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Baudrillard had ‘the privilege’ to be the contemporary of an entire generation of brilliant French minds interested in the structuralist semiotics and linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and the structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, such as the aforementioned Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida or Jacques Lacan. Thus, it comes as no surprise

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1 He later published his work under the title *The System of Objects* (*Le Système des objets*)

that all these names, including Baudrillard, are closely linked to post-structuralism, the movement embodied in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, semiotics.

In 1968 he accepted the invitation to take up the position of Assistant Professor at Nanterre at the University of Paris, where he was later promoted to the post of associate professor.

Less than two decades later and having already achieved fame, he left Nanterre and transferred to IRIS (Institut de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Economique), again at the University of Paris, where he continued his work.

Baudrillard's work is rich and diverse. Among his most significant writings are *The System of Objects* (1968), *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), *Forget Foucault* (1977), *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), *Fatal Strategies* (1983), *America* (1986), *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1987), *The Transparency of Evil* (1990), *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991), *The Illusion of the End* (1992), *The Perfect Crime* (1995), *Impossible Exchange* (1999), *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2002)...

In a manner of speaking, it is possible to view the entire bibliography of his writings as a series of individual studies based on a single logic of thought, as a 'series of individual simulacra within a model encompassing a complete edifice.'<sup>2</sup>

In the first<sup>3</sup>, early phase, he takes us into the sphere where world order is deliberated; the world which, beyond the symbolic systems, does not actually exist. Through analyzing the system itself and linking it to the system of values as a result of capitalist relations, Baudrillard explains the processes and courses pertaining to the transformation of society from one of production to a post-structuralist one.

The second<sup>4</sup> phase of Baudrillard's work begins with the change in his outlook in regard to that very society. Baudrillard ceases to focus on the 'production of material goods' and focuses instead on the 'production of reality' created on

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2 In each of his works Baudrillard covers a wide range of different topics, consistently following the course of the 'multidisciplinary concept' harboured by his 'ancestor thinkers' such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche Heidegger. Such a classification of his works is not generally accepted among analysts, it has been created for the purpose of this work, and thus should be treated as such.

3 During this phase Baudrillard published the following works: *The System of Objects* (1968); *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1970); *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972); *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976).

4 The most significant representative of this phase is, without a doubt, his renowned work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981).