REPRESENTATION AND ITS LIMITS

IN BAUDRILLARD, DERRIDA, ZELIG, AND LYOTARD

by

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PRÉCIS

From the beginning, the question of representation involved the question of the limits to representation. Various thinkers from Plato to Descartes spoke of the limits to representation, of what could and could not be known by means of representation.

All thought about representation has to repeat this initial gesture: it too has to speak of the limits to representation. But these limits can never be known: if representation is only possible because of its limits, there is necessarily also a limit to our ability to speak of these limits. A thought beyond the "Platonic" thought of representation would try to take account of this "limit"—a paradoxically necessary and impossible task. It must try to speak of that "limit" excluded to allow representation to speak of itself and its limits.

The three thinkers this thesis takes up—Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard—are all engaged in this project of thinking the "limits" to representation. They want to make this "limit" a standard of judgement by which to judge others, a politics or an ethics. They will argue against the attempts of others to represent this limit to representation; they will speak of this "limit" to representation as a limit that circumscribes, and yet makes possible, all thought, all judgement, all politics or ethics. It would be, again, a paradoxical task because precisely in speaking against the attempts by others to represent the limits to representation, they must themselves speak on or on behalf of these limits. If they speak of the limits to others, they must be aware of their own limits in saying this.

And, similarly, for us here, writing this. If we can say that Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard are engaged in a shared project of "presenting the unpresentable", we also cannot say this; whatever it is they are presenting would be excluded in representing it like this. If they can be grasped on an order of generality, they must also be understood as both singular
and universal. Each of them is speaking of something absolutely incommensurable, excluded by any comparison of it—but it is just in this manner that they are exactly the same.

These thinkers testify to nothing, try to give nothing a sort of power. It is a nothing that we are forced to think and yet are unable to. It is a nothing that is impossible to judge, to judge by, and yet that must form a standard of judgement.

Some forty years ago, in a series of dialogues with Georges Duhuit, Samuel Beckett said:

I know that all that is required now, in order to bring this horrible matter to an acceptable conclusion, is to make of this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure, a new occasion, a new term of relation, and of the act which, unable to act, obliged to act, he makes an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation.\(^1\)

To what extent might we see Baudrillard's, Derrida's and Lyotard's thought as an "expression" of Beckett's aesthetic here? It would be a project marked not only by a despair and hopelessness, but also, through the very thinking of this, by a humour, hope, and even triumph. In our first, second and fourth chapters, we look at the work of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard respectively and try to see how this question of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of thinking representation and its limits is played out there.

In our third chapter, we look at another "expression" of this thought: Woody Allen's film Zelig. But, already for us, the impossibility of saying whether the film is the expression of this thought or this thought an expression of the film. If it is always a question of the "limits" to representation or of the "failure to express", this would be impossible to decide. But how to take into account the impossibility of deciding what is imitated and what imitates? How to think that what is imitated is affected by its very imitation? These are questions that are raised by what we discuss here—and this impossibility too can form a standard of judgement that can and must be taken into account.

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In short, can an ethics or a politics be realised on the basis of representation, of a thinking through of the paradoxes of representation? This might be, finally, the project that Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, and even Woody Allen, set themselves. Which might be the same as asking: is there a thought of representation outside of Plato?
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How could one think Being and time otherwise than on the basis of the present, in the form of the present, to wit a certain now in general from which no experience, by definition, can ever depart? The experience of thought and the thought of experience have never dealt with anything but presence. Thus, for Heidegger, it is not a question of proposing that we think otherwise, if this means to think some other thing. Rather, it is thinking that which could not have been, nor thought, otherwise. There is produced in the thought of the impossibility of the otherwise, in this not otherwise, a certain difference, a certain trembling, a certain decentering that is not the position of an other centre. An other centre would be an other now; on the contrary, this displacement would not envisage an absence, that is an other presence: it would replace nothing.

Jacques Derrida, 'Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from Being and Time'
INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with a passage from Plato’s *Cratylus*:

*Socrates*: Let us suppose the existence of two objects: one of them shall be Cratylus, and the other the image of Cratylus, and we will suppose, further, that some god makes not only a representation such as a painter would make of your outward form and colour, but also creates an inward organisation like yours, having the same warmth and softness; and into this infuses motion, and soul, and mind, such as you have, and in a word copies all your qualities, and places them by you in another form; would you say that this was Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, or that there were two Cratyluses?

*Cratylus*: I should say that there were two Cratyluses.¹

What Plato is saying here is that two things resemble each other only insofar as they are different. There can never be a perfect resemblance; resemblance exists only in its imperfection, through the exclusion of the perfect copy. It is this perfect copy that every other copy tries to resemble (after all, the imitator always strives to get closer and closer to what he imitates), but it can only resemble it insofar as it is excluded. The relationship of resemblance, then, only exists within certain limits: not too far away, when the two things do not come into contact at all, but also not too close, when the two things cannot be distinguished from each other. There is no longer Cratylus and the image of Cratylus, for example, but two different Cratyluses.

Plato admits a limitation to representation in this passage: representation is only possible within certain limits. We might say that the perfect copy is the limit to representation: there can never be a perfect copy of the thing represented; it is the exclusion of the perfect copy that makes representation possible. Representation can represent its proper limits. But, in a sense, it is precisely in this that representation becomes perfect: if representation can never be perfect, if the perfect copy must always be excluded, representation in Plato can know *this* perfectly; it can make a perfect copy, as it were, of the limits to making a perfect copy. Or to put it another way, insofar as it can speak of the exclusion of the perfect copy that makes resemblance possible, it must be itself that

perfect copy, more perfect than even that perfect copy. This would be the ruse of Platonism, what we might say defines Platonism as such: it makes us believe that we can know what is excluded through its copies. Even though it says that there can never be a perfect copy, that it is the exclusion of the perfect copy that makes imitation possible, it still speaks of this perfect copy as such, as though we can know what it is, as though we can have a perfect copy of it, even if it is always excluded. (And, strangely enough, we can say the same thing for that difference between representation and what it represents, the argument that it is the difference between two things that allows them to resemble each other. In the same way, we believe we can know what this difference is as such, even though, as it itself argues, it is only because of our difference from it that we can know of it at all. In other words, there is always a prior "difference" between this difference and our representation of it—but this time a "difference" that cannot simply be named, that cannot simply be represented, for it is a "difference" that precedes and makes possible all naming, all representation.)

As we say, then, Platonism can stand a certain shaking, a certain statement of its limits. But it is precisely because of these limits, because it can state itself its own limits—that it is the exclusion of the perfect copy that makes representation possible, that it is the difference between two things that allows them to resemble each other—that it becomes limitless. These limits become the paradoxical proof of this system of resemblance: if resemblance is only possible because of them, they in turn would only be possible (could only be known or named) because of resemblance. And it is this, we have argued, that defines Platonism; it is this, we might argue, that is the essence of Platonism and all its heirs throughout the history of the various conceptions of mimesis.

There is a limit to Platonism that makes Platonism possible, but so long as it can name this limit, or thinks it can name this limit, it is still Platonism. Platonism is perhaps defined by this circularity or aporia between representation and its limits: again, if representation is only possible because of its limits, these limits exist only insofar as they are represented. But what we have argued is that, according to this logic, there always has to be a prior "limit" that allows us to name this limit: if two things resemble each other only because they are different from each other, we cannot finally speak of the exclusion of the perfect copy, of the difference between two things, as
though we can know exactly what they are. "Before" we can speak of this perfect copy, there always has to be a "perfect copy" that is excluded—something that, if it can only be known as a perfect copy, another perfect copy, is also only metaphorically, analogically, a perfect copy, a perfect copy of a perfect copy, and, therefore, not really a perfect copy at all. If difference excludes difference, if difference is always different from itself, there is also something excluded "before" this to make it possible—something that, if it can only be known as difference, is also only metaphorically, analogically, difference, is always different from itself, and thus not difference itself. There is always a "perfect copy" or a "perfect copy of a perfect copy" that precedes the perfect copy, the possibility of saying that the perfect copy is a perfect copy of itself. There is always a "difference" or a "difference from itself" that precedes difference as such, the possibility of saying that difference differs from itself.

Platonism unleashes a certain logic—that resemblance is only possible because two things differ from each other—but it always finally brings that logic to a halt. It believes that it can state its own limits, without thinking the limits to those limits, the limits to the limits to those limits, etc. An asymptote is implied here—and Platonism is defined by stopping it at a certain point and saying: this is far (close) enough, this is where my limits are. And this we would say no matter where the asymptote is stopped, whether it is on the first limit or on the nth. And in this sense, every system is Platonic: no matter how careful you are not to state your limits, you must always state them in some way. Even to not state your limits, to say that you cannot state your limits, is in a way to state your limits. At one of the infinitely many points down the asymptote, you will have to stop and say with Plato: this is far (close) enough, this is where my limits are.

Is there only Platonism, then? Are we doomed to repeat that Platonic "mistake", that Platonic "ruse", forever? This is the question this thesis asks. We look here at a number of contemporary thinkers who might be understood to be trying to think representation non-Platonically. That is, they might be understood to be trying to think the limits to Plato's attempt to name the limits to representation, to his own representation. But, of course, they too would have to name these limits, their own limits. What they are also trying to think, however, is why this is so, that "limit" that is excluded to ensure that this is so. They are trying to think that "limit"
excluded in every attempt to name the limit, that "limit" excluded to allow the limit to be named—and they want to think it not just as the next limit down the line, a limit contingently excluded, that will one day be named, but as a "limit" necessarily excluded, excluded by every attempt to name it; a "limit" that will always be excluded, and excluded precisely because it is included, spoken for, represented. They want to think not a limit that precedes representation and allows it, or not simply, because such a limit will always be found to be possible only because of representation; they want to think not a limit that comes after representation because it would be no limit at all. Rather, they want to think a "limit" that arises at the same time as representation, that is neither the beginning nor the end of representation, but precisely its limit: the fact that at the very same time as representation is perfect, that representation is able to speak of its object, something is missing, excluded: the perfect copy, representation itself. It is to speak of the way that in every representation, every representation of representation, of the limits to representation, something is excluded: precisely the representation (the difference) that allows this. But, of course, even in saying this, something is excluded, something that cannot simply be called representation or difference.

Those thinkers we look at in this thesis—the sociologist and critic Jean Baudrillard, the philosophers Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard—undoubtedly set themselves a paradoxical task. On the one hand, they want to argue for the unrepresentability of representation and its limits (they are ultimately the "same" thing). They want to show the way that others—and not just Plato—make the mistake of trying to do so. On the other hand, in order to do this, they have to represent representation and its limits themselves. After all, they have to argue against those they see as making this mistake that representation and its limits are not that but this. In a way, then, a certain "double strategy" must mark their work: they must at once write within the language of representation and its limits—this is the only possible position from which they can make an argument, this is the only position from which they can effectively intervene in the field—and think outside the language of representation and its limits, think that neither representation nor its limits can ever finally be named, think the "limits" to any "effective intervention".
One of the consequences of this is that they do not even see those they are arguing against as making a mistake in attempting to name representation or its limits: they see this as inevitable. What they are really taking up is their inability or unwillingness to see the limits to this naming, the necessity of a "double strategy": the fact that, if representation and its limits can and must be named, they also cannot be named. Indeed, it is according to this standard (which is also the impossibility of a standard) that we must judge those we are writing about too: to what extent are they faithful to this "double strategy", to what extent do they attempt to name representation or some outside to representation without also taking into account the "limits" to doing so? To what extent, finally, can this "double strategy" be taken into account: by those they write about, by them, by us here? These are some of the questions this thesis will (attempt to) consider. And, implicitly, though it will perhaps become more evident with our fourth chapter on Lyotard, we will be taking up some of the ethical and political "consequences" of this thinking of (the limits to thinking) representation and its limits. We use the word "consequences" in quotation marks here because, in a certain way, there can be no consequences of this thinking.

In this thesis, we argue that the work of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard is, more than anything else, about this question of representation and its limits—and we argue that, fundamentally, they are saying the same thing about it. But this is very difficult, for at the same time we are arguing (and we are arguing that they are arguing) that representation and its limits cannot be represented. We cannot say that their work is "more than anything else" about representation and its limits, we cannot say that "fundamentally" they are saying the same thing about them: representation and its limits would be precisely excluded in saying this. But it is this that we say is the subject of their work, it is this that we say they have in common. Again, we have the paradox of a representation that at once can be represented, allows a basis for comparison, and cannot be represented, does not allow a basis for comparison. On the basis of this representation, we can compare Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, and even say that one of them (Derrida) does a better job than the others in representing representation, the impossibility of representing representation; but at the same time what allows us to say this also makes it impossible. At the same time as representation forms a standard by which to compare the three,
each of the three is also himself that standard by which to judge the others. At the same time as each is like the others, more or less like some standard outside of them, each is exactly the same as the others in being incomparable, that standard by which those others must be judged. At the same time as we can formulate a generality concerning them, there is also a singularity and universality that at once allows and disallows it.

We might say this again and more slowly: there is something that is excluded to allow all else to represent it, to allow all else to be represented. We might call it representation, we might call it the difference between representations. In one way, we can and must represent it—and it is according to the standard it sets that we can compare Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard. We can say they are speaking about the same thing, and we can even say they are speaking more or less well about the same thing (more or less well about the impossibility of representing the same thing—it does not matter). But, in another way, this "thing" is precisely excluded in allowing this comparison, this representation: if it is always compared, represented, it is also what is excluded to allow this comparison, this representation. It is just this, however, that Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard might be understood to be speaking of. In each one of their oeuvres we find figures standing in for this paradoxical representation of representation that is at once included and excluded, that are the thinking of their own simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. In this sense, of course, it is not a matter of some outside standard by which to judge Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard: rather, each represents himself that standard (that standard of the impossibility of a standard) by which to judge the others. Each is incomparable, but in this exactly equivalent to—not like, which remains on an order of generality—those others. Each of them is at once singular, incomparable, and universal, exactly like the others.

And here, again, the necessity for a certain "double strategy": we at once have to write within an order of generality, as though we can say what representation, the limits to representation, are, as though we can compare arguments about representation, and we have to write on an order of singularity and universality, think how representation is always and never

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2 For this distinction between the general and the singular and universal, see the 'Introduction' to Gilles Deleuze's *Différence et répétition*, Presses universitaires de France, 1981.
represented, how we both must compare and never can compare arguments about representation. It might be objected, for instance, that we did not include such thinkers as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Serres, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray in this thesis. Why this selection of figures to exemplify our argument, and not another? Now, on the one hand, we can justify our selection by saying that we chose those figures we did because they allowed us to say all that we wanted to about representation. We arranged them in the sequence we did because this seemed to allow us to make our argument in the order we wanted to, in a linear, progressive, fashion. But, on the other hand, by the very terms of our argument, we cannot justify our selection here: everyone and no one exemplifies this argument about representation. There can be no more reason to select those figures we did than any others. There can be no order to any argument about representation: it is already implied in its entirety in the first word we say about it and it remains unfinished by our last.

We have spoken of the way that everything tries to speak of representation, this limit to representation, of the way it is always represented. We have spoken of the way that nothing can finally speak of representation, this limit to representation, the way it is excluded by any representation of it, excluded to allow any representation of it. In a way, both everything and nothing stand in for representation, this limit to representation (which is also to say that both everything and nothing can be represented). This will be the constant refrain of this thesis: the thought of something at once everything and nothing, everywhere and nowhere. It is the idea that, insofar as anything is represented, it stands in for that "perfect copy", that "difference" between representations; but that, insofar as it does stand in for it, representation, the representation of representation, is excluded; this thing is not the representation of representation itself, but only another representation of it. We might put it all in terms of money. (And one of the arguments of this thesis will be that mimesis and economics share the "same" structure, can be compared—but, of course here, what is excluded to allow their comparison? In a sense, it is the very comparison between them that precedes either of them as such—or, to put it otherwise, it is always a question of that "something" which is excluded to allow the representation of representation or medium of
exchange to be named\(^3\). Everything stands in for money, the medium of exchange, everything has value only insofar as it can be exchanged for money, but money itself has no value, can be exchanged for nothing. Even the money we speak of, insofar as it can be bought and sold, only stands in for that more abstract concept, that "gold standard", which allows its exchange, which allows us to say that something stands in for "money". That is to say, everything stands in for money, everything can be exchanged for money, and nothing can. We cannot finally say what money is.

Jorge Luis Borges has written an extraordinary parable about just this aspect of representation and the medium of exchange called 'The Zahir'. It concerns a man who picks up a Zahir—a kind of coin—in his change at a bar. It soon begins to obsess him; it is the only thing he can think of. He can see only the coin; the world has been reduced to the image of a coin. Borges writes:

> Time, which generally attenuates memories, only aggravates that of the Zahir. There was a time when I could visualise the obverse, and then the reverse. Now I see them simultaneously. This is not as though the Zahir were crystal, because it is not a matter of one face being superimposed upon the other; rather, it is as though my eyesight were spherical, with the Zahir in the centre. Whatever is not the Zahir comes to me fragmentarily, as if from a great distance: the arrogant image of Clementina; physical pain\(^4\).

The world is reduced to the Zahir—and, indeed, must be reduced to the Zahir because the Zahir, as money, is the very symbol of abstraction; it is the model, the metaphor, the classification, through which we make sense of life. Everything is this Zahir, everything is represented, because without it life is meaningless. There is a model of the world: everything is the Zahir, and the Zahir is everything. The history of the world can be and is written in terms of the Zahir:

> In Buenos Aires the Zahir is an ordinary coin worth twenty centavos. The letters NT and the number 2 are scratched as if with a razor-blade or penknife; 1929 is the date on the obverse. (In Guzerat, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Zahir was a tiger; in Java, a blind man from the mosque of Surakarta whom the Faithful petted with stones; in Persia, an astrolabe which Nadir Shah caused to be sunk to the bottom of the sea; in the Mahdi's prisons, along about 1892, it was a little compass which Rudolph Carl von Slatin touched, tucked into the fold of a turban; in the Mosque of Cordova, according

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\(^3\) This "theme" will be raised most directly in terms of Jacques Derrida's article 'Economimesis', trans. Richard Klein, *Diacritics*, Summer 1981, but we will also see it in the work of Baudrillard, Lyotard, and even in *Zelig*.

to Zotenberg, it was a vein in the marble of one of the twelve-hundred pillars; in the Tetuán ghetto, it was the bottom of a well.\footnote{Ibid, p. 189.}

But precisely because the Zahir is everything, because it is the key to the meaning of the world, we cannot say what it is; it is nothing. Because it is priceless, it is also worthless, like money itself: nothing can buy it, it is the source of all value, but for just this reason it is not worth anything, everything (or almost everything) is worth more than the paper it is printed on, the metal into which it is scratched. And in our third chapter, we will look at a "similar" parable concerning something (but we cannot finally say what it is) which is at once everything and nothing, the secret to the history of the world and meaningless, forgotten, arbitrary: Woody Allen's film Zelig. In a sense, all of our three authors here can be understood to be writing about the character Zelig there, Zelig can be seen as the perfect exemplum of all they are saying—and yet no one can write about Zelig, Zelig is always excluded by any representation of him; he is singular, exemplifies nothing. But, of course, it is just in this that he does (and again does not) illustrate their theories.

In our first chapter, we will look at the work of Baudrillard, and ask to what extent his work is an attempt to rethink representation and the limits to representation in a non-Platonic way. To what extent is this possible, and to what extent does Baudrillard realise the necessary limit to any simple anti-Platonism? Not that Baudrillard's work explicitly takes up Plato or even this question of representation and its limits; but, as we have tried to briefly argue, everything must repeat this problematic, everything reflects upon representation, can think nothing else like the narrator of 'The Zahir'—and, because of this, we cannot exactly say what this problematic is, what it is Baudrillard takes up.

Bearing this in mind (but what does it mean, to be responsible to this "limit" that cannot be thought, that exceeds every attempt to represent it?), we take up the same question in our second chapter, which looks at the work of Derrida. We want to argue that, of all the figures we look at
here, it is Derrida who best realises this representation and its limits, and the limits to realising these; but, if his work provides, on a level of generality, the best standard for judging those others, it is because it also realises the limits to doing this, the limits to understanding it as a standard of measure by which to judge those others. This is not to say that it is impossible, it is rather to think the limits to doing so: the fact that what makes it possible also makes it impossible.

In our fourth and final chapter, we look at at the work of Lyotard. His work raises, more explicitly than those others (but how can we say this?), that question of judgement introduced by this thinking of representation and its limits. How to make representation, the unpresentability of representation, a standard, when it can never be represented, never offer a definitive point of view from which to judge? How to make the paradox of something at once always represented and impossible to represent a standard of judgement? In a way, it is to ask: on what basis can we choose something to represent representation, to stand in for that excluded thing which makes representation possible, when everything and nothing is this thing? How can we choose something to contest another choice of something when our point is to show the limits to any such choice?
CHAPTER ONE

We shall begin here with three different examples of Baudrillard’s thinking of the limits to representation (or systems like representation): the essays 'The Precession of Simulacra'\(^1\), 'Oublier Foucault'\(^2\) and The Evil Demon of Images\(^3\). In these essays, we will see Baudrillard arguing against certain attempts to say what the limits to representation are, what we have called that "Platonism" involved in naming the limits to representation without also thinking the limits to naming them. In other words, he is contesting the pretensions of various systems to finally reflect upon themselves, to state their own limits, without thinking the "limit" necessarily excluded in doing so. But what we shall also see is Baudrillard making the same "mistake" himself: naming a limit to those systems without thinking the limit to his doing this. In another way, however, we can understand Baudrillard to be not making this "mistake": rather than simply naming some limit to those systems, he is thinking what is excluded to allow this limit to be named, to ensure that this limit is always named. In a kind of "double strategy", if he always must name this limit (even as nothing, as unnameable), he also attempts to think that "nothing", that "unnameable", which this naming stands in for, excludes.

'The Precession of Simulacra'

We shall start, appropriately enough, with Baudrillard’s essay 'The Precession of Simulacra'. Baudrillard gives us the wonderful story there of the stone-age Tasaday Indians of the Phillipines who, having been discovered, are returned to the forest, "out of the reach of colonists,

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\(^1\) Jean Baudrillard, 'The Precession of Simulacra', Simulations, trans. Paul Foss and Paul Patton, Semiotext(e) Inc., 1983. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'PS', followed by a page number.

\(^2\) Jean Baudrillard, 'Oublier Foucault', trans. Tony Thwaites and Sam Mele, Theoretical Strategies, ed. Peter Botsman, Local Consumption Publications 2/3, August 1982. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'OF', followed by a page number.

\(^3\) Jean Baudrillard, The Evil Demon of Images, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Tanguy, Power Publications, 1985. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials ED, followed by a page number.
tourists and ethnologists" (PS',13). Indeed, this was at the instigation of the very ethnologists who discovered them!

Now, the kind-hearted might think that this is ethnology's attempt to save the Indians, who rapidly decomposed upon contact with civilisation, "like a mummy in the open air" (PS',18), but Baudrillard sees it instead as ethnology's attempt to save itself. Ethnology, as any science, only exists at a proper distance from its object: too far away and there is no object (obviously), but also too close and the object disappears, becomes indistinguishable from the science studying it; the science and its object would no longer have any relationship with each other. This is what was happening with ethnology and those Tasaday Indians: the Indians were disappearing into that ethnology that had created them. They had to be banished.

This is what Baudrillard says:

"Doesn't every science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in the very process of its apprehension, and by the pitiless reversion this dead object exerts on it? [...]"

It was against this Hades of paradox that the ethnologists wanted to protect themselves by cordonning off the Tasaday with virgin forest. Nobody now will touch it: the vein is closed down, like a mine. Science loses a precious capital, but the object will be safe—lost to science, but intact in its 'virginity'. It isn't a question of sacrifice (science never sacrifices itself: it is always murderous), but of the simulated sacrifice of its object in order to save its reality principle. The Tasaday, frozen in their natural element, provide a perfect alibi, an eternal guarantee. At this point begins a persistent anti-ethnology, to which Jaulin, Casteneda and Clastres variously belong. In any case, the logical evolution of a science is to distance itself from its object until it dispenses with it entirely: its autonomy evermore fantastical in reaching its pure form.

The Indian thereby driven back into the ghetto, into the glass coffin of virgin forest, becomes the simulation model for all conceivable Indians before ethnology. The latter thus allows itself the luxury of being incarnate beyond itself, in the 'brute' reality of these Indians it has entirely re-invented—Savages who are indebted to ethnology for being Savages: what a turn of events, what a triumph for this science which seemed dedicated to their destruction (PS', 13-5)!

The paradox Baudrillard is exploring here is that, instead of proving itself by analysing these Indians, ethnology proves itself by not analysing these Indians, by sending them back into the forest beyond its reach, by hypostasising a pre-ethnological or an anti-ethnology, an other to ethnology, which ethnology can never know or analyse. Ethnology does not argue for ethnology: it
argues instead for an other to ethnology—but an other (it is literally true in this case) that would not be possible without ethnology. Ethnology invents its other, and this other becomes the a contrario proof of ethnology.

Baudrillard gives other examples of this "logic" in 'The Precession of Simulacra'. Disneyland is built as imaginary to save the reality principle: insofar as we can call Disneyland imaginary, there must be a reality to which it is opposed. Or, as Baudrillard also says: adulthood proves itself by speaking of Disneyland as childish. Insofar as we can speak of Disneyland as childish, there must be an adulthood to which it is opposed. Disneyland is built to conceal the fact that "real childishness is everywhere". The scandal of Watergate, by its very transgression, proves the political, proves that politics—the political contract between the government and its citizens—is not defunct. To the extent that we see Watergate as a scandal, the political order is not threatened, but on the contrary rejuvenated. It is only to the degree that we believe in politics that we can find Watergate a scandal ('PS', 26-30).

There is a kind of strategy here in these three examples: ethnology, Disneyland and Watergate. The systems of reality and power, far from trying to prevent crises or putting down their other, actually encourage them. After all, they figure, these crises, this other, would only be possible because of them. As long as they are in crisis, so long as they have an other, we know that they are alive and kicking. We pass from stable systems, in which crises have to be quelled, the other has to be absorbed, to metastable systems, in which crises are part of the system, in which the other only serves as proof of what it is other to. Deterrence has perhaps changed from the deferment of conflict to its precipitation and simulation in advance. The nuclear catastrophe can no longer happen, but only because it already has. This is the distinction Baudrillard makes in the following passage:

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

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4 'PS', 25. See more generally on Disneyland, 'PS', 23-6.
5 For this distinction between stable and metastable systems, see 'PS', 59-60. See also 'OF', 198.
crisis, it gambles on remanufacturing stakes. This is a question of life and death for it. But it is too late ('PS', 44).

But it is this "it is too late" that is interesting here. Baudrillard means to be speaking of the end of this system of deterrence, of power—but precisely what he has shown in the pages leading up to this conclusion is that this end is only ever possible because of what it is the end to; that this end, far from bringing a halt to proceedings, signals instead a new beginning. Would not Baudrillard, insofar as he names the limit to this system of simulation, only continue it, extend its reach still further? Would not any naming of the limits to representation have this effect? In what sense, then, can we speak of the "limits" to simulation, to this system of deterrence, Baudrillard analyses?

What is it that Baudrillard is finally saying in 'The Precession of Simulacra'? He is speaking of the way a science only exists because of the distance between it and its object: a distance that is unbridgeable on pain of it ending (it is this distance that ethnology tries to simulate by replanting the Tasaday back in the forest, but it is too late: insofar as ethnology can name its other, it is not really its other at all). This leaves us with a difficulty, however: science only comes into being with this other, but this other would only be possible because of science. Which comes first, then: science or its other? We might say that science comes first because the Indians are only possible because of it, but a science is not possible without that object which forms the justification for its enquiry. We might say that those Indians come first, but they are only possible because of that science which puts them back in the forest (it does not matter whether for the first or second time: the first time itself can only be imagined along the lines of ethnology, as a second time ('PS', 15)). It is this aporia between something and its limits that Baudrillard calls simulation. Within this aporia, we can neither say how something begins nor how it ends: it can begin only because it has already begun; it can end only to begin again.

What is the solution to this aporia? If science and its limit both presuppose each other, where do we begin? The answer is: with both and neither. For science to be possible—but this is also to make science impossible, it is the very "limit" to science—science and its other must be simultaneous. It is this simultaneity that Baudrillard calls seduction. Within seduction, science has
a different relationship to its limit: it is no longer a limit that science can name (to name such a limit would only be possible because of science; that limit presupposes the very science it is meant to explain). Rather, it is a "limit" that is excluded by its naming, that is excluded to allow its naming; it is a limit that is excluded at the same time as it is named. It is a limit that is excluded to allow ethnology, for example, to name its limit as those Indians. It is a limit that is excluded to allow that circularity between ethnology and those Indians. It is not a limit that comes either before or after science, that is either at the beginning or the end of science, but a limit that comes at the same time as science, expressing the fact that what makes it possible (the distance between it and its object) also makes it impossible at the same time. It is to speak of neither the beginning nor the end of science, but of its limits.

This is why we must read Baudrillard against himself—or at least very carefully—when he writes: "Doesn't science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in the very process of its apprehension, and by the pitiless reversion this dead object exerts on it?" It is not as though science is simply doomed here: it does apprehend its object; its object is only possible because of it. It is rather that at the very same time its object escapes, it is only possible because of its object—what Baudrillard means by the "pitiless reversion of the object". It is this simultaneity itself that Baudrillard is trying to describe here. It must be this and not the definitive victory of one side over the other, for—and this is Baudrillard's whole point—one is not possible without the other. And this is why, to come back to that point where we left off, if these systems of political reason manufacture crisis, and even need crisis in order to prove themselves, Baudrillard cannot finally say that this rejuvenation is too late, for this crisis (the one he describes in 'The Precession of Simulacra') is only possible because of the system it contests. It is a limit to it, but not its end.
'Oublier Foucault'

It is this "limit" that Baudrillard so brilliantly uses against Foucault in 'Oublier Foucault', but, as in that passage above, it is the consequences of this limit that he perhaps overlooks when putting forward his own claims there. If this limit is a limit to Foucault, it is also a limit to Baudrillard, to Baudrillard's critique of Foucault. It is not just a limit, but a limit to all limits, to the statement of all limits.

What is Baudrillard's basic disagreement with Foucault in 'Oublier Foucault'? As with those systems of order in 'The Precession of Simulacra', Baudrillard is not simply opposed to Foucault. Foucault is right, all too right, but this correctness is only a sign that his object has disappeared, "evanesced", that the era he describes so well is over. Baudrillard writes (and it is important to note that he does not simply name a limit to Foucault here: he says that the error lies hidden, in the "watermark" or "reverse side of this writing too fine to be true"—it is a caution he will forget later on):

The very perfection of this analytical chronicle of power is disquieting. Something tells us—but in the watermark, or in the reverse side of this writing too fine to be true—that if it is possible after all to speak of power, sexuality, the body and discipline with this definitive intelligence, down to their most fragile metamorphoses, it is because, somewhere, all this is no longer relevant ('OF', 189).

Power, sexuality and desire are only possible because of their other. But what is this other? This is the question 'Oublier Foucault' revolves around. In a sense, what Baudrillard will see Foucault doing is inventing this other, just like those ethnologists in 'The Precession of Simulacra'—but this other will not be the true thinking of the limits to power, sexuality and desire and they will die. For, as with all sciences, all concepts, they exist only within certain limits: not too far from and not too close to the objects of which they speak. It is only within the shadow of their immediate "end" (and not merely an other conjured up by them) that they could ever have been possible. As Baudrillard says:

Besides, the real has never interested anyone. It is the place of disenchancement par excellence, the place of a simulacrum of accumulation against death. Nothing is worse. What makes it and the truth sometimes fascinating is the imaginary catastrophe that lies behind it. Do you imagine that power,
economy, sex, all these great real gadgets, would have held for a single moment without the fascination that supports them, and which comes to them precisely from the inverse mirror where they are reflected, from their continual reversion, from the apparent and imminent jouissance of their catastrophe (OF, 203-4)?

But again here, it is important to pay attention to the actual words used: Baudrillard is not saying that it is their actual end that makes them possible, but only the possibility of their end: an "imaginary catastrophe", the "apparent and immanent jouissance of their catastrophe". It can only be a threat, a virtuality, because, if they are only possible because of this end, this end would only be possible because of them. If this end is a limit to them, they would be a limit to this end. It is always this simultaneity that must be kept in mind: the fact that, to use the metaphor of that passage above, if they do not exist before that "inverse mirror" which prophesies their end, this mirror would not be a mirror before it catches their reflection.

It is a "limit" in that rigorous sense we tried to characterise before. It is not a limit that can actually be stated, but a limit that is always only possible, excluded at every moment, simultaneous with every moment—a "continual reversion"—that Baudrillard is trying to think as the limit to power, sexuality and desire. It is a limit in this sense that he intends, as opposed to that simply commutative limit of Foucault, of that system of deterrence we looked at before. To say again: as opposed to that aporia of something like ethnology, in which ethnology is only possible because of its limit and this limit only because of ethnology, in which we cannot say how ethnology either begins or ends, Baudrillard is trying to think the paradox of an object and its limit arising at the same time, when what makes it possible also makes it impossible, not one because of the other but simultaneously. This for Baudrillard is the living principle of things: the fact that they are produced and decay at the same time. And it is this "limit" he is opposing to Foucault (and Deleuze), whose conception of the limits to power, sexuality and desire remains aporetic, trapped in the faulty logic of a science like ethnology. That is to say, he is opposing the status of his own work with that of science (and those scientific pretensions of Foucault); it can think its limits in a way science cannot.
For example, let us look at what Baudrillard says about power in Foucault. Foucault attempts to think the limits to power. Power for Foucault is never simply unitary, homogeneous, coherent. There is always a certain diffraction of power: it is constellated, cracked, diffused, like the lines of a smashed windscreen; but nowhere does it imagine its own end, nowhere does it think its own limit, except as a further miniaturisation, a further division. So that, for Baudrillard, Foucault is finally unable to say either how power started or how it will end. Foucault is unable to imagine either the inauguration of power or its final overthrow. As Baudrillard says:

Now this 'power' remains a mystery. Starting from despotic centrality, it becomes midway a 'multiplicity of relations of forces' (but what is a relation of forces without a resultant force?[...] to end, at the extreme terminal, in resistances (divine surprise!) so minute, so fine, that the atoms of power and the atoms of resistance become literally confused at the microscopic level. The same fragment of the gesture, of the body, of the gaze, of discourse, encloses the positive electricity of power and the negative electricity of resistance (where, one wonders, could it possibly come from, nothing [in Discipline and Punish] prepares us for it, except perhaps the allusion to the inextricable 'relations of force': but one could wonder exactly the same thing about power[...])

In Foucault, one always skirts political determination in the last instance. One form dominates, diffracting into carceral, military, institutional, disciplinary models. This form is no longer rooted in any relations of production (on the contrary, these model themselves on it) but seems to find its process in itself—and this is an immense progress on the illusion of founding power in a substance of production or a substance of desire. Foucault unmasks all the final or causal illusions in reference to power, but he tells us nothing in reference to the simulacrum of power itself (OF, 200-1).

To imagine power springing up as a result of resistances (always local, strategic, non-central) or resistances springing up as a result of power, as Foucault does: all this is for Baudrillard simply that deterrence he analyses in 'The Precession of Simulacra'. Power proves itself by its other: these resistances can only testify to power, to the power that makes them possible. That is why Baudrillard is able to trace what he calls the "profound synchrony" (OF, 142) between power and desire (resistance) in the work of Foucault and Deleuze: the way power and desire come to share the same mobile, decentred, tentacular structure, without finality. They are the same thing. This is why for Baudrillard the confusion between their principles, and why those strange by-products—the "joy of power", the "desire of capital" (OF, 142)—of desiring theory. This is why Baudrillard emphasises the fine, microscopic texture of Foucault's writing, its grilles and quadratures, its intricate mesh, why he stresses its concentration on the specific, the miniature (OF, 188-9), its
tracking down of resistance to the very muscles and pores of the body: because it is by the hypostasisation of this resistance to power in local practices, in everyday life (Baudrillard is perhaps speaking more here of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* than of Foucault), that power has been able to infiltrate, spread. Again, if power is not possible without some resistance to it, this resistance itself would not be possible outside of power. In a roundabout, tautological way, Foucault and Deleuze are only able to prove power all the more the more they detect instances of our opacity and resistance to it, the more distantly they locate the sources of our refraction of it. Again, it is by this aporia, this circularity, that power proves itself, that power remains alive.

Perhaps to give two more examples of Baudrillard's argument in 'Oublier Foucault'. In his book *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Foucault wants to think the founding moment of reason: that moment of the division between reason and madness. It is a moment he locates with the sending-off of the first Ship of Fools and the writing of Descartes' *Meditations*⁶. He wants to write a history of madness, in other words, not from the point of view of reason, not from a moment after this division, as though it has already occurred, but from a moment before this division; he wants to somehow speak of the arbitrariness of reason, of that founding act that established it, of the invention of reason. He wants to write a history of madness from the point of view of madness itself. It is a justly celebrated book. But, as Baudrillard might say, here is Foucault the ethnologist wanting to put the mad back where they were, this time not in the forest, far away, but on the streets, among us, close (it is the same thing). The very idea of writing a history of madness from the point of view of madness, or more precisely, the idea of showing the dependence of reason upon madness, would occur only to a certain reason, would be the ultimate act of a hyper-rationality. Foucault can never entirely recapture that moment before the division between reason and madness: he is always separated from it, at least, by the very words he uses to describe it. Again, as always, reason proves itself by its other: if madness is rediscovered, re-injected into rationality by means of those great madmen Foucault loves (Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Artaud), it is


only as a simulacrum; it is only as an alibi for reason; it is finally only as something more reasonable than reason itself.

The other example Baudrillard discusses is Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. The challenging hypothesis of that book, as is well known, is that sexuality is not repressed, but rather repressive. Here is Baudrillard's summary of its argument:

On the repression hypothesis: granted the need for a radical objection to it, but not on the basis of a simplistic definition. Now, this is what Foucault challenges: the repression of sex with a view to draining all energies towards material production. On this basis, it is too easy to say that the proletariat would have been the prime target of repression—history shows that this was first experimented within the privileged classes. Conclusion: the repression hypothesis doesn't hold up. But it is the other hypothesis that is interesting: that of a repression that has come from much further than the horizon of manufacture, simultaneously englobing the entire horizon of sexuality. The liberation of productive forces, the liberation of energies and of sexual speech: the same combat and same advance of a socialisation ever more powerful and differentiated. Which is as much to say that repression, in the maximal hypothesis, is never repression OF sex to the profit of I know not what, but repression BY sex—the repartition of discourses, bodies, energies and institutions by sex, in the name of 'the sex which speaks'. Repressed sex does not do more than conceal repression by sex ('OF', 193).

What does Baudrillard mean by this last sentence: "Repressed sex does not do more than conceal repression by sex"? What first of all needs to be recognised is Baudrillard's genuine admiration for Foucault's reversal: to break with the idea of a repressed sexuality is to break with the idea of some primitive bodily essence that is repressed; there is no longer that simple ideological repression by the ruling class of the proletariat, "draining all energies towards material production". But, if Foucault breaks with this original thesis and its idea of some fundamental human essence to be liberated, he nevertheless re-instates it—and more effectively—with his hypothesis of a sexuality that is itself repressive. Here it is not sexuality which is repressed, which is proved by its repression, but, as Baudrillard says, "discourses, bodies, energies and institutions" that are repressed, which are proved by their repression by sex. Foucault merely changes what is repressed: for a primal, centred, sexual "essence" he substitutes a sort of decentred, polymorphous, libidinal, mobile "desire". The logic—that logic of deterrence—remains the same.

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Again, it is with this circular logic that Baudrillard charges Foucault. For the first hypothesis, it is repression that leads to sexuality, but this repression would not be possible without something to repress. For the second hypothesis (Foucault’s), it is sexuality which leads to repression, but this sexuality would not exist before its repression. That is to say, Foucault’s hypothesis does not really break with the schema of a sexuality and its repression, but only inverts it; it does not really break with that first hypothesis, but is only its aporetic alternative. Both rely on that logic of deterrence; it is only their terms which change. As Baudrillard says:

Really, it is useless to argue about terms. One either says that the first injunction is to speak, and repression is only a detour (and on this score, work and exploitation are themselves only a detour and an alibi for something more fundamental—entirely agreed). Or one says that psychic repression comes first, and speech is only a more modern variant (‘repressive desublimation’). What’s the difference? Neither changes anything much. The awkward thing about the first hypothesis (Foucault’s) is that if psychic repression, or at least the effect of psychic repression (and that could hardly be contested) has existed somewhere, then it remains inexplicable. Why is the imaginary of repression necessary to the equilibrium of powers, if they work by induction, production and extortion of speech (OF, 198)?

What then does Baudrillard oppose to all this? He speaks in ‘Oublier Foucault’ of seduction, of seduction as opposed to simulation, of seduction as opposed to production. As we have said, simulation is for Baudrillard that aporetic logic by which the same proves itself by reference to its other: it is the logic of Foucault’s analyses of power, madness and sexuality. As opposed to this, Baudrillard wants to think what makes this ruse or trick possible, the fact that for simulation to work the same and the other must be simultaneous. This is the limit to simulation, what makes it both possible and impossible. As opposed, that is, to the production of simulation—the successive fabrication of two objects via an aporetic logic—seduction thinks the limit to this: a kind of disappearance that is simultaneous with its appearance. Or, more precisely, seduction is itself that simultaneity of appearance and disappearance that makes the appearance of productivity both possible and impossible. In this sense, it is not a matter of simply opposing seduction to production: opposed to it, seduction could only prove production all the more. Rather, seduction must be understood as simultaneous with production, its "limit" but not its end; not just a disaccumulation, or the impossibility of accumulation, but the "limit" to accumulation. It would be like an hourglass in which the sand flows out the bottom at the same rate as it is poured in the top.
Let us see how Baudrillard characterises this seduction in 'Oublier Foucault'. Firstly:

*Seduction* is everywhere and always what is opposed to *production*. Seduction withdraws something from the order of the visible; it runs contrary to production, whose enterprise is to establish everything in evidence, be it an object, a number or a concept (OF, 193-4).

Then, later on:

The axiom, the myth of a real or possible accumulation governs us everywhere, and yet we *know* that nothing is ever accumulated, that stocks devour themselves, like the modern megalopolies, like overrated memories. All attempts at accumulation are devastated in advance by nothingness. Something in us disaccumulates to death, defeats, destroys, liquidates, disarticulates, to allow us to resist the pressure of the *real*, and to live. Something basic to the entire system of production *resists the infinity of production*—without which we would already be buried there. Something within power—and here any distinction between those who exert it and those who submit to it no longer carries any sense, not that the roles are interchangeable, but because power in its form is *reversible*, because on both sides something resists the unilateral exercise and the infinity of power, as previously it resisted the infinity of production. This something is not a 'desire', it is what makes power defeat itself to the very degree of its *irreversible* logical extension (OF, 202).

And finally:

Seduction is stronger than power, because it is a reversible and mortal process, while power wants to be irreversible, cumulative and immortal like value—it shares all the illusions of the real and of production, it wants to belong to the order of the real and thus topples into the imaginary and superstition of itself (with the help of the theories employed to analyse, even contest it). Seduction itself is not part of the order of the real. It is never of the order of force or of force-relations. But precisely for this reason, seduction envelopes the entire *real* process of power, just as it does the entire *real* order of production, with this incessant reversibility and dissipation—without which there would be neither *power nor production* (OF, 203).

What is Baudrillard saying in these passages? He first of all *opposes* seduction to production, and to Foucault's and Deleuze's theories opposing production and power (theories which, in fact, only support and extend production and power, which are themselves only a more effective form of production and power). It is not a matter of shifting power, decentralising it, of opposing some other to it, as Foucault and Deleuze do—this is not to properly think power's limit or its end. Rather, what must be thought is precisely the *reversibility* of power, the reversibility between power and those upon whom it is exercised: the fact that neither is possible without the other. This for Baudrillard again is seduction: the *simultaneity* of power and those upon whom it is exercised (not one before the other, one allowing, the justification for, the other). This is the true "limit" to power:
the fact that it is not possible without those upon whom it is exercised, that if they die then power ends—power needs them just as much as they need power. And, knowing this, those upon whom power is exercised can reverse it: those in power (but, really, there is no one in power) are indebted to those upon whom it is exercised. It is the possibility of this mortal defiance—a defiance unto death—that Foucault and Deleuze do not think. It is no longer a specific resistance, a microscopic resistance—a resistance only comprehensible within the context of a pre-existing power, always allowing a further encroachment of power—but a total resistance to power, everywhere (and nowhere) at once.

Baudrillard first of all opposes seduction to power—and in a sense would always have to: it is only from a position outside of power that he can purport to judge it; we always have to name a limit to power: even to not name a limit to power is to name a limit to it. But this is only to repeat the very logic he is contesting. Insofar as Baudrillard speaks of power and seduction being devastated “in advance” by nothingness, insofar as this “nothingness” is distinguishable from power and production, it can only play the role of that other proving power and production. Insofar as Baudrillard speaks of seduction being “stronger” than production, it can only be production, it is only possible because of production. And it seems as though Baudrillard does make this “mistake” in ‘Oublier Foucault’: he names the limits to Foucault and Deleuze without thinking the limits to doing this, without thinking the “limit” that is excluded to allow this, to ensure that this limit is always named.

But, in another way, we can see Baudrillard thinking, within a kind of “double strategy”, both the necessity and impossibility of naming a limit to representation, to those systems of representation that Foucault and Deleuze both criticise and represent. That is to say, he thinks both that he always has to oppose Foucault and Deleuze, name another limit as opposed to theirs, and the limits to doing this, the fact that his “opposition” to them would lie precisely in the way he is not opposed to them. If that “nothingness” is always something, always other to production, it must also be understood to stand in for—and, therefore, exclude—that simultaneity of something and nothing, of production and seduction, that is excluded “in advance” to allow both something and nothing, production and seduction. To speak of production as “devastated in advance by
nothingness", then, is to speak of the way that production, and even the production of seduction, seduction as production, is constrained from the very beginning by this limit. It is this "simultaneity" that "precedes" production, making it both possible and impossible.

We might see this "double strategy" again in the following passage. If Baudrillard appears to be speaking of seduction as the other to sexuality here, he is not simply speaking of it as some other either repressing or being repressed by it. As he knows (or appears to know), there is nothing before sexuality, the productivity of sexuality. Or, more precisely, if he has to name it in the following passage as "uncontrolled, wild, unstable, or else highly ritualised forms", this is due only to a certain necessity within language, this is only to stand in for that "nothing", that "simultaneity", excluded to allow both sexuality and its other. Baudrillard writes:

Birth of the sexual, of sexual speech, like the birth of the clinic and clinical gaze, where there was nothing before, except uncontrolled, wild, unstable or else highly ritualised forms. Therefore, where there was no psychic repression either, none of that leitmotiv which we impose on all previous societies, even more than on our own (OF, 196).

This is why that "resistance" of which Baudrillard speaks is nothing—or not simply something—that can be named. It is not merely an other to power, because this other would only be possible because of power; it is not a direct alternative to Foucault's and Deleuze's opposition to power because this alternative could only be thought in terms of them. Seduction is not anything: rather, it is what is excluded by any naming of it, excluded to allow any naming of it. It is that "reversibility" excluded at every moment of power, that simultaneity (something included and excluded at the same time) that allows power, the aporia between power and its other. This is why, as "opposed" to Foucault and Deleuze, Baudrillard is not naming a new social fraction resistant to power: Foucault's mad, Deleuze's schizos. There is nothing repressed by power, or even by sexuality. Only this simultaneity is excluded, only this paradox of something at once included and excluded. So to think of Baudrillard's masses: they are not a new social fraction, recalcitrant to power—if they were, they would merely extend power beyond these minute social practices, that everyday intransigence, described by Foucault and Deleuze, to the very silence and indifference of

8 Reference is being made here to Jean Baudrillard, In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities... Or the End of the Social and Other Essays, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnson, Semiotext(e) Inc., 1983. We will return to this text in a moment.
their conformity. Or they are not simply this. If the masses are a new social fraction, they are also the last possible social fraction: they stand in for precisely what is excluded by being stood in for. In a sense, Baudrillard knows he can name them only to extend power; he knows that he can only produce the masses, that the masses can only be productive. But he also wants to think—in an impossible "double strategy"—the "masses" as what is excluded to allow this naming, this simulation; the "masses" as themselves this simultaneity that at once founds and destroys power.

It is in terms of this economy, finally, that Baudrillard must be judged. If he speaks of the limits to Foucault in 'Oublier Foucault', it cannot be in the sense that he can actually name them: this would be only to repeat Foucault; it would mean that Foucault is stronger than him. If Baudrillard is "stronger" than Foucault (as seduction is 'stronger' than production), it is because he can think his limits in a way Foucault cannot, can think the limits to naming Foucault's limits and even to naming his own limits. The paradox is that Baudrillard is "critical" of Foucault in not being critical of him, in not opposing anything to him. "Criticism" is the thinking of the limits to criticism. The question which remains for us is whether Baudrillard does this or not; thinks, as it were, the draw between him and Foucault, and thus wins—or does not, thinks that he beats Foucault, and thus loses. This is perhaps the real point of interest of 'Oublier Foucault'. It is to hint at the economy of all criticism, the way it is always indebted to the thing it criticises.

**The Evil Demon of Images**

The last example we might look at here is Baudrillard's short text, *The Evil Demon of Images*. In it he speaks, perhaps a little more directly than in those other two essays, of the limits to representation: the fact that, if two things resemble each other exactly, they no longer resemble each other at all. He is speaking, in other words, of what is excluded by the very perfection of the image, the absolute equivalence between the image and reality. He does so in terms of cinema:

Simultaneous with this attempt at absolute coincidence with the real, cinema also approaches an absolute coincidence with itself. This is not contradictory: it is the very definition of the hyperreal. Hypotyposis and specularity[...] Previously there was a living, dialectical, full and dramatic relationship between cinema and the imaginary (that is, novelistic, mythical unreality, even down to the delirious use
of its own technique). Today, there is an inverse negative relation between the cinema and reality: it results from the loss of specificity which both have suffered. Cold collage, cool promiscuity, asexual engagement of two cold media which evolve in an asymptotic line towards one another: cinema attempting to abolish itself in the absolute of reality, the real already long absorbed in cinematographic (or televised) hyperreality (*ED*, 31).

Baudrillard is speaking here of a certain limit to the image. There is a difference between the image and the real: a difference not because the image is inadequate or because the real is somehow different from the image, but because the image is *too* perfect, does *not* differ from the real. Baudrillard, that is, is trying to think a limit to representation that is not simply *de facto*, a limit that can be overcome, but also *de jure*, insurmountable by any effort. It is not a *contingent* limit to representation, *something* that cannot be represented, but a *necessary* limit to representation, which arises from the fact that there are *no* limits to representation, that there is *nothing* that cannot be represented. For Baudrillard, therefore, there is a kind of doubt or imperfection that precedes this certainty or perfection; the world must be seduced, or led astray, before it can be produced or represented. He says in an interview published at the end of the book, contrasting his project with that of Descartes:

> When I invoke the principle of evil, of an evil demon, etc., my aim is more closely related to a certain kind of Manichaeism [than it is to Descartes]. It is therefore anterior to Descartes, and fundamentally it is irrational. There are in fact two principles at stake: on the one hand there is the (Descartes') rational principle or principle of rationality—the fundamental attempt, through doubt or anything else, to rationalise the world—and on the other hand there is the inverse principle, which was, for example, adopted by the 'heretics' all the way throughout the history of Christianity. This is the principle of evil itself. What the heretics posited was that the very creation of the world, hence the reality of the world, was the result of the existence of the evil demon. The function of God, then, was really to try to repudiate this evil phantom—that was the real reason why God had to exist at all. So in this situation it is no longer a question of doubt or non-doubt, of whether one should exercise this doubt or whether this doubt could lead us to confirm or deny the existence of the world. Rather, it is once again the principle of *seduction* that needs to be invoked in this situation: according to Manichaeism, the reality of the world is a total illusion; it is something which has been tainted from the very beginning; it is something which has been seduced by a sort of *irreal* principle since time immemorial (*ED*, 40-1).

For Baudrillard, it is not God (we might say representation) who precedes the evil demon (we might say the limits to representation) and makes it possible, but the evil demon (the limits to
representation) who precedes God (representation) and makes Him possible. Baudrillard, in other words, wants to speak on behalf of the evil demon against God, on behalf of the limits to representation against representation: he can say what these limits are, he can represent them. But as soon as he attempted to name these limits to representation as the evil demon, the evil demon would be excluded: it would be the exclusion of the evil demon as the limit to representation that allows him to represent the limits to representation as the evil demon. Or, to put it another way, we can no sooner name an outside to representation, what is excluded by representation to make it possible, than it is included, represented—this being the very principle of the evil demon itself.

In a more subtle way, however, we can understand the evil demon not as a simple limit to representation, as in that first reading, but as the limit to any attempt to name the limit to representation. Baudrillard admits that he cannot name the outside to representation because this outside can only be represented, is only possible because of representation—but this, he is now saying, is the very limit to representation. What is excluded here is not so much something as representation itself: it is because this limit to representation (which is representation) is always represented that it is excluded. If we cannot name the limit to representation, it is because of the limit to representation, which can be named, even if to name it is always to replace one limit with another. For Baudrillard, in this second reading, the evil demon is not simply a limit to representation, what is excluded to allow representation, but a limit to his own representation, what is excluded to allow his own representation of the limits to representation.

There is a certain self-consciousness here, an attempt by Baudrillard to account for his own analysis, to take the limits of his own analysis into account. But, again, the same difficulty: he can no sooner name the limit to his own representation of the limits to representation than it is excluded, that is to say, represented, included; there is always another "limit" excluded (this time perhaps unnameable, even as excluded, even as the limit to representation) to allow him to name his own limit. If he goes beyond the Plato of the Cratylus in thinking the limit to his naming of the limits to representation, in another way he does not: he merely replaces Plato's limit with a certain limit to that limit. He does not think the "limit" excluded to allow this, he does not grasp the "limit" that ensures that the limit is always and never named.
And, ironically, it is perhaps Descartes himself who made this "innovation" within Platonism—the thinking of the limits to naming the limits to representation—that Descartes from whom Baudrillard so pointedly distinguishes his own project. It is fascinating to see how Baudrillard repeats Descartes in *The Evil Demon of Images*, that Cartesian gesture of finding certainty through doubt. Like those Manichaeans he cites, Baudrillard may not be sure of much, but he is at least sure that he is not sure, he can at least name his own limits. If even the limit to representation may prove to be an illusion of the evil demon, the effect only of another limit, we can at least be sure of this, that it is the evil demon who deceives us thus. But, precisely because of this, the evil demon is for Baudrillard a way of regaining certainty in a world of simulation, for our very ability to doubt its existence, our inability to say it is the limit to representation without once again excluding it, proves that it exists, is only able to be expressed in terms of: it is that limit to the representation of the limits to representation. It makes the limits to representation finally possible to name. And all of this like Descartes: for him too this evil demon, far from bringing knowledge to a close, was its very foundation, the one thing of which we could be sure. If everything could be doubted, we could not doubt the light that illuminated this darkness. If everything was metaphorical (for Descartes too, the evil demon was that "contagion" or "analogy" (*ED*, 20) Baudrillard speaks of in *The Evil Demon of Images*), we could at least metaphorically name this metaphoricity. This is the moment in Descartes' *Meditations* of the triumphant rediscovery of God: that God (like Baudrillard's evil demon) whose only proof is that He can be doubted. It is only God who would let us doubt Him; it is only God who could let us doubt Him. Again, if we cannot name the limits to knowledge because we can always be deceived, we can at least always be certain of this, that it is the evil demon who is responsible.

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9 We see another example of this logic in *The Evil Demon of Images* when Baudrillard speaks of the relationship between the film *The Day After* and the nuclear catastrophe it purports to represent. He says:
The real nuclear catastrophe has already happened, it happens every day, and this film is part of it. It is it which is our catastrophe. It does not represent it, it does not evoke it, on the contrary it shows that it has already happened, that it is already here, since it is impossible to imagine (*ED*, 25).

In the same way here, it is our very inability to name the limit to thought, to representation, that is this limit. If we cannot imagine the nuclear catastrophe, this is the nuclear catastrophe, we can think this.

10 On the surpassing of limits by thinking them in Descartes, we might refer to the following passage from the Fourth Meditation:
And we can never not make this mistake, we can never not name a limit to representation or a limit to the representation of the limit to representation—a limit that, like that deterrence we looked at in 'The Precession of Simulacra', would only be possible because of what it is the limit to. There is nothing outside or beyond this aporia. This is the modernity of the Cartesian (or even Platonic) project: it can only be doubted. But, in another way, Baudrillard can also be understood in *The Evil Demon of Images* to be asking: why is it always thus necessary to name this limit? Why is there only this aporia? What is excluded to allow this limit or aporia that is not simply another limit or aporia? The evil demon in this sense might be not merely a limit to representation or a limit to the representation of the limit to representation, but a way of thinking—within representation, the aporiae of representation—what is excluded to ensure that there is always only this representation or limit to representation. To think the evil demon would be to think a certain 'evil demon' that is excluded to allow everything to take its place, even the evil demon, the thought of the evil demon excluding itself to allow everything to take its place. To think the evil demon would be to think *something* excluded from representation that is not simply representation or a limit to representation, *something* excluded from representation to allow the very possibility of representation or a limit to representation\(^\text{11}\). This is one way of reading Baudrillard's insistence...

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Again, I cannot complain that I received from God a restricted or imperfect will or freedom; for I am aware of no bounds upon its scope. Indeed, the following seems to me very remarkable. Nothing else in me is so perfect or so great but that I understand the possibility of something still more perfect, still greater. For instance, if I consider the faculty of understanding, I discern at once that in me it is very slight and greatly restricted. I thereupon form the idea of a far greater faculty; indeed, of the greatest possible, an infinite one; and I perceive, from the mere fact that I can form the idea of this, that it belongs to the nature of God (René Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach, Nelson's University Paperbacks, 1977, p. 95).

All this could be related to an essay by Michel Serres on Descartes, 'Knowledge in the Classical Age: La Fontaine and Descartes', *Hermes: Language, Science, Philosophy*, trans. Josué V. Harari and David F. Bell, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981. Serres also sees Descartes' strategy as one of ceding the superior power to the other, only to regain it with interest, for, after all, only one superior to this superior power could decide to whom it is to be given. There is an essay which compares the various "demons" of Descartes, Baudrillard and Serres in relation to this question of naming limits, the limits to naming limits, etc.: Tony Thwaites, 'Miracles: Hot Air and Histories of the Improbable', *Futur*\(\text{Fall}^*: Excursions into Post-Modernity*, ed. E.A.Grosz et al., Power Institute Publications, 1986, esp. pp. 85-6.

\(^{11}\) It is this *unrepresentability* of the evil demon that Baudrillard emphasises in a later interview: 'Whether you call it the revenge of the object, or the Evil demon of matter, it is not representable. But it is a power all the same', 'Forget Baudrillard', interview with Sylvère Lotringer, *Forget Foucault*, trans. Phil Beitchman, Lee Hildreth and Mark
that for him it is fundamentally "no longer a question of doubt or non-doubt", that his evil demon is
"anterior" to Descartes. It is not that he opposes doubt to non-doubt, the evil demon to God—or it is
not just this. Rather, he is arguing for the simultaneity of both: the fact that at the very moment
there is non-doubt (even a non-doubt in doubt) there is always a certain "doubt" excluded; that at
the very moment there is God (even the evil demon as God) there is always a certain "evil demon"
excluded. It is not that Baudrillard simply names a limit to representation, a limit to the limit to
representation, etc. He is also trying to think that "limit" excluded to allow this infinite series of
limits, to ensure that there are only these limits, and that these limits, finally, are only possible
because of what they are the limit to. It is to read again the sentence: "Simultaneous with this
attempt at absolute coincidence with the real, cinema also approaches an absolute coincidence with
itself", and to think that, if the image can never absolutely coincide with the real but only
"attempt" it, so it can never absolutely coincide with itself but only "approach" it. The image can
never be entirely adequate to itself, to its own limit: there is always a certain "limit" excluded in
any attempt to account for itself. That "limit" which makes it possible, and even necessary, also
makes it impossible: it is this "asymptotic line" that Baudrillard is perhaps finally trying to trace
in The Evil Demon of Images.\(^{12}\)

If Baudrillard can only speak within the aporiae of representation of an evil demon that is
"anterior" to God, therefore, this evil demon is also outside these aporiae: it is not a question of the
evil demon coming either before or after God, being either the cause or the effect of God. The "evil
demon" is precisely what is excluded to allow this choice, what precedes the very distinction
between the evil demon and God: the simultaneity of the evil demon and God. If the evil demon can
be said to be "anterior" to God, it is in the sense that it is "anterior" to the aporia between the evil

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Polizzotti, Semiotext(e) Inc., 1987, p. 98. Indeed, more than this, we would say that the evil
demon is at once always represented and impossible to represent.

\(^{12}\) It is interesting to note in this regard that Baudrillard makes a distinction between two
types of perfection in The Evil Demon of Images:

- It is not really a question of perfection. Technical perfection can belong to the
  meaning, and in this case is neither nostalgic nor hyperrealist; it is an effect of art.

  Here it is an effect of the model: it is one of the tactical reference values (ED, 30).

On the one hand, that is, there is that perfection we can name, which excludes itself to
allow its copies, and on the other, there is that "perfection" that cannot be named, or which
stands in for what cannot be named. The first belongs to a Platonic conception of mimesis,
and the second to a non-Platonic. It is a distinction, then, not so much between two different
types of perfection as between perfection and something else.
demon and God, which is God's, which is God. Baudrillard, in other words, is playing on the opposition between the evil demon and God strategically, as part of a "double strategy". He at once inverts the usual hierarchy between God and the evil demon, arguing that it is the evil demon which precedes God and makes Him possible, and tries to think what is excluded to allow this hierarchy and even its inversion. As he says, justifying his use of the word "immoral" instead of "amoral" to characterise the order of the evil demon:

From the very moment that one goes beyond good and evil one can also play a sort of game with this 'amorality' itself—somewhat perversely perhaps. So there is a two-fold development here: there is at the same time both a transmutation of values (a denial of good and evil à la Nietzsche for example) and the game with the resulting amorality, a game which as it proceeds becomes more and more romantic, more and more pathetic. With this game one enters the domain of 'hypermorality', if you like. You play the game with amorality: you do not discard morality—rather you retain it, but purely as one of the rules, as one of the conventions which are completely perverse but nonetheless necessary if the game is to proceed at all. In fact, in this sort of game the whole question of what one does with morality remains completely open.

I can perhaps try to explain this more clearly in the following way: once you go beyond the question of morality, of good and evil, you have indeed entered the realm of amorality but you have not for all that exhausted the question. The game can continue, to involve amorality itself. And this is why I prefer the word 'immorality'. There is a play on words in the text—morality, amorality, immorality—which I think is absolutely essential here. The point is that amorality as a concept is not very interesting or challenging. The concept of immorality, on the contrary, is far more dramatic (ED, 35-6).

Two ways of reading The Evil Demon of Images, then. On the one hand, it can be read as merely repeating those aporiae that Baudrillard analyses there, trying to name a limit to representation, something or representation itself as a limit to representation. And, on the other, it can be read as thinking what is excluded to ensure that this limit is always named, what makes that first reading precisely necessary. Only another limit—this is its necessity—but also something ("nothing") that cannot be named as another limit, that is excluded "before" there are limits, that is excluded to allow the very possibility of representation and its limits. Two different readings that are not strictly distinguishable, but that always occur at one and the same time.
How Can We Write About Baudrillard?

There is undoubtedly a contradiction in what we have just said. We have argued that Baudrillard makes the mistake of trying to represent representation, the limits to representation, while at the same time proposing that representation and the limits to representation cannot be represented. He argues that the limits to those systems of reason, power and sexuality cannot be named and then attempts to name them. We might say he gets those limits wrong. And yet, of course, in saying this, we repeat the same mistake ourselves. In arguing against Baudrillard that these limits cannot be represented, we too must represent those limits (even as the impossibility of or limit to representing those limits). And it is perhaps Baudrillard himself who, more than anyone else, is speaking of just this simultaneous necessity and impossibility of representing the limits to representation.

Hence the difficulty in any discussion of Baudrillard's work of deciding whether it is we who are judging it or it which judges us, whether we merely repeat what Baudrillard has already put into play or whether what we see in him is only an invention of our reading. But it is perhaps this itself—the very enigma of all representation, all description, all commentary—that is Baudrillard's central question (how can we say this?). In a way, that is, Baudrillard's work is divided from the very beginning: it at once falls into those aporiae it analyses and is the thinking of why this is so, a certain thought outside of those aporiae. It at once can be judged against the "rule" of representation and is itself that rule. Baudrillard's work can be the subject of strong critique, but it is perhaps only by using the tools his own work provides that this critique might be mounted.

The fact that Baudrillard's work can only be criticised "in its own terms", however, can be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, as that Cartesian gesture of self-mastery: it is precisely insofar as Baudrillard can name his own limits that he is all the more masterful. There can be no outside to Baudrillard because Baudrillard is already his own outside. To criticise Baudrillard is only to be more Baudrillardian than Baudrillard himself (and therefore, finally, less Baudrillardian). But, on the other hand, it might be to think that it is not so much Baudrillard
who makes these limits possible as these "limits" that make Baudrillard possible. It is a question of a "limit" that precedes Baudrillard, and even Baudrillard's ability to name this "limit". For example, we will speak in a moment of the way the masses can be understood to be only conforming to Baudrillard's hypothesis of the masses' conformity. In one way, this is possible only because of his hypothesis: the masses conform to Baudrillard's hypothesis only insofar as they do conform. Baudrillard is right. But, in another way, it can be understood as hinting at the way Baudrillard's hypothesis is possible only because of the masses' "conformity" to it; a "conformity" that is not yet a conformity to Baudrillard's hypothesis, but what precedes it and makes it possible. And the real question with Baudrillard is: to what extent is he able to take this into account, to work with this possibility which necessarily outruns him? The real "mastery" of Baudrillard is to be found in the degree to which he can form a relationship to this rule of representation that cannot be mastered, or is the limit to any final mastery. How can he take account of his limits, and even of the limits to his ability to take account of his limits, in a way that does not simply repeat them?

But in our analysis, the two possibilities must be present at once. Baudrillard both repeats those aporiae he analyses and thinks why this is necessarily so, in a way outside of them. Arguments have been made that with his series of concepts Baudrillard merely repeats in another form the very oppositions he is trying to undermine—indeed, we have even argued this ourselves in 'The Precession of Simulacra', 'Oublier Foucault' and The Evil Demon of Images:

Simulation: more true than the true. Seduction: more false than the false. The obscene: more visible than the visible. The secret: more hidden than hidden. 'La spirale du pire': the strategy of inducing that which is worse, the spiral of worser and worser, the refusal to resort to primary opposition, but instead to intensify the same; the aggravation of the adjective outbidding its noun in an ecstasy of description[...] We might find in this venerable practice of medication traces of more modern solutions in both politics (destabilisation through terror, or toxic politics) and culture (the prescription to be beyond, or the present survived as 'post'—more present than present). We might also observe that the oppositional relation refused in a first instance is simply revived in a second: not true vs false, visible vs hidden, but simulation vs seduction, obscenity vs secrecy, banality vs fatality...[^13]

Just as, on the other hand, arguments can be made that, by means of these concepts, Baudrillard completely breaks with—"implodes"—all those polarities that have heretofore sustained

meaning. But any simple distinction like this simply repeats this aporia: if the aporia is only possible because of the solution to the aporia, this solution in turn can only ever be explained in terms of it, can only ever, as that passage above indicates, repeat the aporia in another way. (Just as, for its part, that passage above repeats the logic of the aporia it apparently contests when it argues that Baudrillard simply repeats it: the belief that there is any pure outside to the aporia, which Baudrillard fails to present, can only be itself an effect of this aporia, can only be itself aporetic\textsuperscript{14}. ) And if at times Baudrillard speaks as though there is a simple inside or outside to the aporia, at others he questions the possibility of such a distinction being made. In other words, he questions the possibility of there being an outside to the aporia, thinks the not otherwise to the aporia, what is excluded to ensure that there is no outside to the aporia, and thus, in a way, also questions the possibility of there being an inside to the aporia, thinks that this aporia is only possible because of what it excludes. Baudrillard can be characterised exclusively by neither the first nor the second of those positions above, but rather thinks how we cannot distinguish between them, why they are themselves aporetic—or that what allows us to distinguish between them also makes it impossible to.

It is on this basis, finally, that we must judge Baudrillard: not to the extent to which he either fails or succeeds in stepping outside of the aporiae of representation, either repeats them or solves them, but to the degree to which he realises that one is impossible without the other, that each is the limit to the other. What is at stake in Baudrillard’s work is the extent to which he realises that the limits to representation both cannot be represented and cannot not be represented, can never be represented and yet already are. We must judge Baudrillard’s work in terms of the way it can be seen to be about its own limits, and even about the impossibility of being about its own limits; the way it can be seen to evolve a strategy, within language, within the various aporiae and oppositions within which language and thought must operate, for thinking what lies "beyond"

\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, even Morris, after saying that Baudrillard merely restates in other terms those old oppositions—though this is not simply incorrect—qualifies this observation, begins to think that this is not all that might be at stake in his work: But both of these discoveries could be predicted by Baudrillard's texts. In the first case, any argument that the trick is all too familiar succumbs to the logic it might want to contest—and to which Baudrillard proposes ironic collusion as a better response than contestation. In the second, the higher-power oppositions turn out from text to text to be little more, and nothing less, than a formal rule (ibid, p. 92).
these aporiae and oppositions, what both allows and disallows them. And all this, of course, is to speak of the very "limits" to judging Baudrillard.

_In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities_

When we interview someone, we can never be sure that they are not giving us back the answers we want to hear. When we survey a population, we cannot be sure that the questions we ask are not in some way influencing the answers we receive, that they do not contain some sort of inbuilt bias, invisible to us, which skews the results. It is this uncertainty that remains fascinating about polls and statistics, long after their actual findings are forgotten. We cannot be sure whether we have found out anything at all or merely reconfirmed what we already knew. It is not that those we survey are lying—we and probably they will never know the answer to this—it is rather that this possibility can never be definitively exorcised. If we ask them whether they are, we can only only get back the same answer, we are only left with the same enigma: are they lying about this? It is never something actual, some real limit to the survey and questionnaire, but always only a possibility, virtual, excluded by every attempt to explicate it. The same thing with advertising. We can never say for sure whether our advertisements are working, whether they are getting through to those for whom they are intended, whether people are buying (or not buying) the products because of them. It is not that advertising is useless—in a way, we have to assume it has some effect—it is just that we cannot know for sure. There is a kind of "axiom of credibility"\(^{15}\) that underpins advertising, beautifully captured by William Lever, founder of Lever Bros: "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted, but I don't know which half". Advertising is a risk, a gamble: at the same time as it reaches out, influences, brainwashes the consumers into following its dictates, it is possible that it has no effect at all, is regarded as an object of derision and parody, even in our very conformity to it. As Lever recognises, like two halves of the same thing.

\(^{15}\) _In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities... Or the End of the Social and Other Essays_, op. cit., p. 34. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials SSM, followed by a page number.
It is out of this possibility that Baudrillard conjures his book *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. In his earlier 'The Orders of Simulacra', a chapter from *L'Échange symbolique et la mort*, Baudrillard spoke of the test and the referendum, and the way that they are perfect forms of simulation:

[T]he answer is called forth by the question, it is design-ated in advance. The referendum is always an ultimatum: the unilateral nature of the question, that is no longer exactly an interrogation, but the immediate imposition of a sense whereby the cycle is suddenly completed. Every message is a verdict, just like the one that comes from polling statistics. The simulacrum of distance (or even of contradiction between the two poles) is only—like the effect of the real the sign seems to emit—a tactical hallucination 16.

But one had the impression there that, if the subject of the survey or referendum was thereby excluded, this was an effect of the survey or referendum itself. In *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, on the contrary, it seems to be more a product of the will of the subject surveyed. Though Baudrillard hedges it with a caveat, this appears to be the meaning of the following:

Bombarded with stimuli, messages and tests, the masses are simply an opaque, blind stratum, like those clusters of stellar gas known only through analysis of their light spectrum—radiation spectrum equivalent to statistics and surveys—but precisely: it can no longer be a question of expression or representation, but only of the simulation of an ever inexpressible and unexpressed social. This is the meaning of their silence. But this silence is paradoxical—it isn't a silence which does not speak, it is a silence which refuses to be spoken for in its name. And in this sense, far from being a form of alienation, it is an absolute weapon (SSM, 21-2)

There is a lot we can say about *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*. In part, the book takes up those issues we looked at in 'The Precession of Simulacra' and 'Oublier Foucault'. The masses form a kind of limit to science and production, but the question here, as there, will be: are they simply an other that is only possible because of them, that merely serves to empower them, or can they be understood as that "other" that precedes both science and production and their other? For example, Baudrillard argues that it is the silence and disinterest of the masses that all sciences, both physical and social, are ranged against; it is this silence they must try to comprehend, or they will perish, sucked into the enormous gravitational pull of their inertia:

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All reserves are exhausted in maintaining this mass in controlled emulsion and in preventing it from falling back into its panic-inducing inertia and its silence[...]. Immense energy is expended in mitigating the tendentially declining rate of political investment and the absolute fragility of the social principle of reality, in maintaining this simulation of the social and in preventing it from totally imploding. And the system risks being swallowed up by it (SSM, 24, 26).

It is the masses here that precede the questionnaire and survey, that are the real object of their enquiry, and the only thing which precedes them. As Baudrillard says: "the only referent which still functions today is that of the silent majority" (SSM, 19).

On the other hand, however, immediately after arguing that the masses precede the social, are what the social must ceaselessly try to explicate, Baudrillard speaks of the masses as themselves a simulacrum, produced by the questionnaire and survey:

All contemporary systems function on this nebulous entity, on this floating substance whose existence is no longer social, but statistical, and whose only mode of appearance is that of the survey. A simulation on the horizon of the social, or rather on whose horizon the social has already disappeared[...].

The mass brings about the same insoluble boundary situation in the field of the 'social'. No longer is it objectifiable (in political terms: no longer is it representable), and it annuls any subject who would claim to comprehend it (in political terms: it annuls anybody who would claim to represent it). Only surveys and statistics (like the law of large numbers and the calculus of probabilities in mathematical physics) can account for it, but one knows that this incantation, this meteoric ritual of statistics and surveys has no real object, especially not the masses whom it is thought to express. It simply simulates an elusive object, but whose absence is nevertheless intolerable. It 'produces' it in the form of anticipated responses, of circular signals which seem to circumscribe its existence and bear witness to its will (SSM, 19-20, 31-2).

The masses can hardly be that end of all "objective determination" (SSM, 32) of the world, as Baudrillard suggests, because in a way they only exist after it. They cannot be simply opposed to the social because they are also only an effect of it. Baudrillard's analysis here is circular, just that circularity between question and answer, stimulus and response, that he condemns in science and statistics and that he spoke of in 'The Precession of Simulacra'.

We see the same thing when Baudrillard speaks of the relationship between the social and the masses later in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities. He puts forward three (or four) different hypotheses concerning the masses and the social: 1. the social has basically never existed (SSM, 70); 2. the social has really existed, it exists more and more (SSM, 72); 3. the social has well and truly
existed, but does not exist any more (SSM, 82); and 4., similar to 3., the implosion of the social into the masses (SSM, 91). In the second of these hypotheses, Baudrillard argues that the social functions as both "a 'rational' control of residues, and a rational production of residues" (SSM, 73), but that today its very success means that there is in fact no more residue to be reabsorbed:

Proportional to the reinforcement of social reason, it is the whole community which soon becomes residual and hence, by one more spiral, the social which piles up. When the remainders reach the dimension of the whole of society, one has a perfect socialisation. Everybody is completely excluded and taken in charge, completely disintegrated and socialised[...]. But what happens when everybody is socialised? Then the machine stops, the dynamic is reversed, and it is the whole social system which becomes residue (SSM, 74, 75).

But there is already a profound enigma here, for which is it to be: the social as the "control" of these residues, which suggests that they come before the social, or the social as the "production" of these residues, which suggests that the social comes before them? Baudrillard, without perhaps realising it, argues—and, indeed, in a way has to argue—for both. On the one hand, that is, he can speak of the "piquancy of an expression like: 'the responsibility of society vis-a-vis its underprivileged members', when we know the 'social' is precisely the agency which arises from this dereliction" (SSM, 74), when it is the social which seems to arise as an effect of these remainders. And, on the other, he can speak of 1544 as that date when "vagrants, lunatics, the sick" were "discarded as remainders" and "taken in charge under the emerging sign of the social" (SSM, 73):

Designated as refuse on the horizon of the social, they thus fall under its jurisdiction and are fated to find their place in a widening sociality. It is on these remainders that the social machine starts up again and finds support for a new extension (SSM, 74)

when it is these remainders which seem to arise as an effect of the social. (And the true irony is that, after criticising the logic of Foucault's Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason the year before, Baudrillard repeats it in almost the same terms in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities: as there, we have the same impossibility of deciding whether it is the social which produces the remainder or these remainders which produce the social. Substitute reason for the social and madness for the remainder and you have exactly the same aporia as Baudrillard exposes in 'Oublier Foucault'.)
The remainder, then, is not just the beginning of the social, but also its end—or, what is the same thing, the remainder is not just the end of the social, produced by the social more and more, but also its beginning, what the social starts up on. And this is to say that the remainder cannot be simply the end of the social, as Baudrillard proposes in his second hypothesis, because the remainder, the social itself as remainder, would not exist outside outside a certain social designating it as remainder. Again, we could no sooner name the remainder as the end of the social than it would be discovered that it is only possible because of it, an end of the social that makes the social possible. This is perhaps why, finally, Baudrillard is unable to choose between the first and second hypotheses here: the first in which the remainder means that the social never existed and the second in which the remainder means that the social exists more and more. They are the same thing, or are at least only aporetic alternatives: each is only possible because of the other. The remainder is both the end or impossibility of the social (as in hypothesis one) and the beginning or possibility of the social (as in hypothesis two)—and, indeed, we already see this ambiguity within hypothesis two itself. It is in this sense that we might understand hypothesis three, to which, Baudrillard says, hypothesis four is "akin": the social has well and truly existed, but does not any more. What this can be read to be expressing is the necessity that, for the argument to work, for the social either to exist (be simulated) and then not to (be desimulated), as in hypothesis one, or not to exist and then to exist more and more, as in hypothesis two, the social must at the same time both exist and not exist. For the aporia of Baudrillard's analysis to be possible, the social must at the same time both exist and not exist. Or, the social and its remainder must be simultaneous. All this is to hint at the way that the remainder in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities cannot be simply other to the social because only the social can state this limit, because this limit would only be possible because of the social. Rather, the "remainder" is a "limit" here in that sense we tried to explain before: if the remainder is a limit to the social, it is because it "precedes" the very aporia between the social and the remainder, the possibility of the social proving itself as social by designating itself as remainder.

And this is why it is surprising that Baudrillard can say:

But then, if the social is both destroyed by what produces it (the media, information) and reabsorbed by what it produces (the masses), it follows that its definition is empty, and that this term
which serves as universal alibi for every discourse no longer analyses anything, no longer designates anything. Not only is it superfluous and useless—wherever it appears it conceals something else: defiance, death, seduction, ritual, repetition—it conceals that it is only abstraction and residue, or even simply an effect of the social, a simulation and an illusion (SSM, 66).

For, as he shows himself, it is precisely only this tautology, this redundancy, that has any meaning, that is meaning, economy itself. The social exists only insofar as it designates itself: it does not matter whether as remainder or not, only so long as this naming takes place. It is this tautology or redundancy that is the social itself. To use the language of 'The Precession of Simulacra', we might say that to be persuaded that the remainder exists is to be dissuaded, deterred, from believing that the social does not exist. As Baudrillard says when he takes up the question of the remainder in economic terms:

But the social is never that [the optimal collective management of the use value of men and things]. Despite any socialist longing, it is insane, uncontrollable, a monstrous protuberance, which expends, which destroys, without any thought to optimal management. And it is precisely in this way that it is functional, that it fulfils its role (despite what idealists may cry). This is, to maintain a contrario the principle of use value, to save the reality principle by the roundabout but objective route of wastefulness. The social manufactures this privation necessary to the distinction between good and evil, and to the whole moral order in general (SSM, 80-1).

Baudrillard can be seen to err, that is, insofar as he names the masses as a simple other to the survey or questionnaire, the remainder as the other to the social. As we have said, however, this is also necessary: it is the only means of effectively intervening in the debate; even not to name a limit, even to say that nothing is excluded, is to name a limit, to say that something is excluded—this is the very perfection of the image Baudrillard speaks of in The Evil Demon of Images. And, in another way, Baudrillard can be seen to be thinking in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities that "limit" which is excluded to ensure that the limit is always named, that any dissent from the system of representation can only take the form of an aporetic opposition to it17.

17 Along these lines, we would want to read the essay 'Le reste' from Simulacres et simulations, Editions Galilée, 1981. There too two different readings are possible: the first in which the remainder (le reste) is simply a commutative other, what is left over after a certain subtraction; the second in which it is what is excluded to allow this very commutativity between the same and the other, the whole and the part. There is a similar ambiguity when Baudrillard writes in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities that he will start, as Freud did, "from this remainder, from this blind sediment, from this waste or refuse of meaning, from this unanalysed and perhaps unanalysable fact" (SSM, 15)—but where he says this is where the analogy with Freud ends,
Let us go back to what we said at the beginning of this section about the masses as the possibility that the answer only conforms to the question. It is not that the masses are anything there: if they were, they could always be rooted out by another question. Rather, they are what is excluded by every question, what ensures the circularity between all questions and all answers. It is not that they are unambiguously excluded (if they were, we could one day dream of including them): they are always included, they are the subject of perpetual investigation and enquiry. And it is in this that their exclusion lies. They are excluded in being included, to allow all inclusion, even their own. The masses are always and can never be talked about. This is the enigma of their silence, the paradox of which Baudrillard speaks, of which Baudrillard could never speak: "it isn't a silence which does not speak, it is a silence which refuses to be spoken for in its name". But we must be still more rigorous: there still remains traces here of a sort of voluntarism, a will of the masses (it is precisely with this that Baudrillard is trying to break). It is not that this silence simply "refuses to be spoken for in its name", as though it pre-exists the attempt to speak for it—or it is not only this. This silence also does not exist before this attempt to speak for it, to represent it. And it is always these two simultaneously. It is both that silence which excludes itself and that silence which is excluded, both that silence which is included and that silence which is excluded. And this for all attempts to speak of this silence: it is at once that silence only possible within language, that exists only insofar as it can be spoken of, and that "silence" that is excluded, broken, silenced, by being spoken of, thought.  

for his radical act ends in a hypothesis, that of repression and the unconscious, which again opens up the possibility, widely exploited since then, of producing meaning, of re-integrating desire and the unconscious in the partition of meaning" (SSM, 87).

For we would say that Freud (and after him Baudrillard) could only have begun after this hypothesis, that the remainder would be possible only after that economy its exclusion allows—or, to put it another way, we could never not make the mistake of understanding the remainder within a commutative "partition of meaning", because the remainder, the very possibility of beginning with the remainder, would only be possible within or after this partition. What the remainder might help us to think—and what it helps us to think in Baudrillard—is why this is so, what is excluded to ensure that there is only this commutative partition, in which there can be no "unanalysed and perhaps unanalysable fact" as such.

Hence if Baudrillard in SSM, as opposed to 'The Orders of Simulacra', wants to speak of the masses excluding themselves instead of being excluded, in another way, it is just this opposition he is trying to undermine. And this perhaps explains Baudrillard's interest in the joke or pun in SSM, why he attributes to the masses a certain "involuntary humour" (SSM, 26), "wit" (SSM, 36) or "irony" (SSM, 33); why we must speak of Baudrillard's theory of the masses as itself a kind of joke. Like the joke or pun, the masses (and Baudrillard's
This is why Baudrillard speaks of the masses as a mirror: "a mirror held out for an ever blind, ever absent recognition" (SSM, 24), "sending back to the system its own logic by doubling it[...] reflecting, like a mirror, meaning without absorbing it" (SSM, 108). Like a mirror, the masses can be seen as the reflection of or equivalent to all discourses; all theories can come to find evidence for what they are saying in the masses. And, like a mirror, the masses are also what is excluded to allow this reflection or equivalence (after all, it is only because we cannot see the mirror that we can see what it reflects). Like a mirror, the masses are only that endless series of reflections and are what is excluded to allow them. The masses perfectly exemplify what every theorist says about them and are that invisibility that ensures that all those who write on them (including Baudrillard and us here) are really only writing about ourselves. And, like a mirror—but what comparison can we make between the masses and the mirror when each is precisely what would be excluded to allow this comparison?—the masses would be not so much an end to the system of the social, something outside of it, as a kind of "curvature" (SSM, 104) or "catastrophe" (SSM, 103-4, 106), a bending back of the social and representation upon themselves to allow them to reflect upon themselves, at once inside and outside of their space. It is as though, Baudrillard reminds us—that this could never be seen—we were inside a black hole, in which light is trapped, reflecting itself endlessly, without being able to get free (SSM, 4).

In speaking of the masses, therefore, Baudrillard is always too soon because his questions are not possible until after the answer they seek (the masses do not exist until after the question has

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theory of the masses) must speak from two positions at once; their silence (and Baudrillard's theory of their silence) must mean two different things simultaneously: neither simply defiance (conformity as defiance) nor conformity (defiance as conformity), but defiance and conformity at the same time, both defiance and conformity and what precedes and makes possible the very distinction between them. Like the symbolic violence of that poetry or graffiti he analyses at the end of The Mirror of Production, trans. Mark Poster, Telos Press, 1975, pp. 164-7, and in L'Échange symbolique et la mort, op. cit., pp. 110-128, the masses' silence would represent an excess of signified over signifier, would contain two different and opposed signifieds (defiance and conformity) in one signifier (silence). This is perhaps why, finally, Baudrillard must suggest in SSM the "untenable hypothesis" that "it may be possible to communicate outside the middle of meaning" (SSM, 36), for here is a certain signified outside any signifier, a message outside any medium, two different and opposed signifieds that must be communicated at once—or rather, not simply outside the medium (for we could not say what this message was without once again attaching it to some signifier), but at once inside and outside the medium, something within the medium that cannot be accounted for by it; something not contingently excluded, that simply lacks a signifier, but necessarily excluded, excluded by its very signification.
been answered). And he is always too late because those answers are already implied in the question, in the very possibility of the question (it is only because of the masses that the question can receive an answer). It is the problem of conformity. On the one hand, we are always either too soon or too late to say what conformity is: too late because it is always possible that conformity precedes us, takes our description into account and conforms to it, and too soon because conformity cannot conform to us, cannot be conformity, until after we have attempted to describe it, conform to it. Conformity does not exist until after what it conforms to.\(^{19}\) But, on the other hand, conformity is also for Baudrillard a way of thinking what makes this aporia possible: the fact that the question and answer, what conforms and what it conforms to, must be present at the same time. At the very moment the question and answer are the same, that every question receives an answer and every question is only possible because of its answer, there is also a certain "question" excluded to allow this answer. At the very moment what conforms and what it conforms to are the same, there is also a certain "conformity" excluded to allow this. The paradox of In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities is that at the same time as the masses are the principle which ensures that every question receives an answer, that the answer is already implicit in the question, they are also a certain "question" without an answer, an insoluble riddle for the social. The paradox of conformity is that it is at once the principle that ensures everything can be represented, that nothing is excluded from representation, and something that conforms to nothing, the only thing that cannot be represented.

This is what Baudrillard is saying in The Evil Demon of Images, this is the "evil demon", but is it not in a way what Plato was already hinting at in the Cratylus? There too the enigma of representation, what makes it both possible and impossible, is the fact that at the very moment two things most resemble each other, are the same, they do not resemble each other at all, are completely different; that what allows all resemblance, what everything resembles, is precisely what is excluded, what nothing resembles: "resemblance" itself. And this circularity of question and answer applies first of all to all investigations concerning representation. How to speak of representation, the limits to representation, if the answer we seek is already implied in the

\(^{19}\) We see a marvellous example of this in Chapter Three with the White Room Session dialogue between Dr Fletcher and Zelig in Zelig.
question? How to think what is excluded by this circularity, and how to think that it might be "representation" itself that is excluded by this circularity?

It is in this sense that we can read In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities as being not simply about political representation but about "representation" as such, the necessity and impossibility of representing representation. The "masses" are not only always represented but the very medium of representation itself, what cannot be represented but what allows all else to be. The masses are—impossibly, because it is "representation" itself that would be excluded by this—representation itself. Baudrillard begins In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, as his translators note, by making a number of puns using the French word "masse": in French "faire masse" can mean both "to form a mass" or "to form an earth", as we say of electricity, and "to form a majority", as we say of a political party (SSM, 1). But the point Baudrillard might be trying to convey here is that, more than simply being metaphorical, the masses are themselves metaphor, the metaphoricity of language itself. Baudrillard speaks of the masses as a kind of "ground" or "earth", like that mathesis or table of representation with which Foucault begins The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, but as well as being metaphors, these are metaphors of metaphor itself. "Ground", "table", "earth", "masses" are metaphors of metaphor, stand in for metaphor, but for just this reason also exclude it. We can never say what metaphor is except through another metaphor: if it is this which allows us to say what metaphor is, it is this which also makes it impossible. That is to say, it is only because "metaphor" as such is missing that everything can stand in for metaphor, that we can have all these metaphors of metaphor. And in the same way for Baudrillard, it is only because the masses are missing that the masses can stand in for everything, that everything can stand in for the masses. As he says later on in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, the masses are not simply something represented, it is not just a matter of representing the masses through language, of constituting an equivalence between the masses and language. It is rather the more complicated relationship between the pun or metaphor and the masses that is at stake there. It is

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20 See the 'Preface' to The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, Tavistock Publications, 1977, where Foucault speaks of that "ground" or "operating table" that is necessary for representation, that is representation.

21 We are referring here to an argument made by Derrida in his essay 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass, The Harvester Press, 1982, esp. pp. 219-20. We will be returning to it in Chapter Two.
not that they can be represented by or exchanged for each other, but that both are what is excluded
to allow all representation and exchange, what is excluded to allow them to be compared to or
exchanged for each other like this. As Baudrillard says:

What they do have in common is that they are the most radical, most intense contemporary
form of the denial of the whole representative system. That is all. No one really knows what relation can
be established between the elements that are outside representation, this is a problem of which our
epistemology of knowledge permits no resolution, since it always postulates the medium of a subject
and of a language, the medium of a representation. We are really only acquainted with representative
series, we know little about analogical, affinitive, im-mediatised, non-reference series and other systems
(SSM, 52).

In fact, Baudrillard is speaking of the relationship between the terrorist and the silence of
the masses here, but the point remains the same, for, as he goes on to argue, the actions of the
terrorist must be metaphoric, symbolic, if they are to have any effect at all. The terrorist must try to
constitute a metaphoric or symbolic equivalence between his actions and the masses; he is trying to
represent the masses, who are themselves only metaphorical. It is thus a relation between two
metaphors—and, of course, at the end of that passage when Baudrillard speaks of "analogical,
affinitive, im-mediatised, non-reference series", he is speaking of nothing less than metaphor
itself.

And this goes for Baudrillard's attempt to represent the masses in In the Shadow of the Silent
Majorities too. It is not only a question of the comparability of two comparable things, but also of
the comparability of two incomparable things, both equally incomparable. It is not only a question
of something they have got in common which they both represent, but of that nothing they have in
common: the fact that neither represents anything, that both represent nothing. That is to say,
Baudrillard must have a double relationship to those masses and that conformity he describes. It
cannot be a matter of simply representing the masses and conformity, a resemblance which means
that they would be once again different from each other, a representation to which the masses and
conformity would only conform. It cannot be for Baudrillard a question of representing or imitating
the masses or conformity as things or products. Rather, Baudrillard's very text must "conform" to
the masses and conformity, must represent or imitate the masses and conformity in the very process
of conforming themselves, as *processes or productions*. He would represent or imitate the masses and conformity not in representing or imitating them as such, but in representing or imitating representation and imitation themselves, understood as the masses or conformity. Or, to use Baudrillard’s own distinction, it is not a matter of *producing* the masses or conformity, but of *seducing* them. Baudrillard’s text would be *terrorist* in that sense we tried to give before; it would represent the masses as the terrorist represents the masses, precisely in not representing them (despite perhaps the terrorist’s own claims):

> It [the terrorist act] is the only non-representative act. In this regard it has an affinity with the masses, who are the only non-representable reality. This is definitely not to say terrorism would *represent* the silence and the not-said of the masses, that it would violently express their passive resistance. It is simply to say: there is no equivalent to the blind, non-representative, senseless character of the terrorist act, but the blind, senseless and unrepresentational behaviour of the masses (SSM, 52).

But it is still more complicated than this, which can be understood as merely an inversion of that other kind of representation or imitation. It is not that Baudrillard imitates the masses or conformity by himself imitating nothing, or imitating nothing but imitation itself, for the masses themselves would not imitate imitation, would not imitate anything, until after Baudrillard had attempted to imitate them. It is not as though the masses simply precede Baudrillard’s analysis. And yet, on the other hand, Baudrillard’s analysis must imitate *something*: we cannot even say that it refers only to itself without some difference between it and itself—a difference that must be understood as precisely the position of the masses. It is impossible, in other words, to say which comes first here: Baudrillard’s analysis or the masses; whether Baudrillard’s analysis resembles nothing and therefore resembles the masses, or whether it resembles the masses and therefore resembles nothing. We are unable to decide which comes first: their equivalence to or difference from each other, their comparability or incomparability. And the masses are both caught up in this aporia and are the solution to it, both either imitate or are imitated and are the very simultaneity of imitating and being imitated that makes this choice possible. Or to put it another

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22 We might think here of the whole relationship between the comparative and the superlative in Baudrillard’s work, what has been described as the "more x than x" movement of his writing (Morris citing Salvatore Mele, ‘Room 101 Or A Few Of The Worst Things In The World’, op. cit., p. 92). We would like to one day relate all this in some detail to the "hyperbolic" method of Descartes.
way: if we are always either too soon or too late for representation, Baudrillard wants to think why this is so. This is the masses, this is seduction: the simultaneity of the same and the other, imitation and what is imitated, representation and its limit. It is both the thinking of the limit to representation (simultaneity) and the "limit" to that limit (the fact that we are always either too soon or too late for representation and its limit—or again simultaneity).

Seduction

It is this simultaneity of imitation and what is imitated, of representation and its limits, that Baudrillard calls seduction. Seduction is that "minute difference"23 between things which makes their resemblance both possible and impossible. And if it can be understood as being first of all a process or production as opposed to the product, it also undoes this very distinction: seduction undoes production, that is, just as it undoes the product. It is certainly in these terms that Baudrillard describes seduction in his book *De la séduction*24, where he speaks of a "minimal cycle" between the two parties in a relationship of seduction, of the way that seduction is not simply the imitation of the desire (the imitation) of the other, the desire of the other's desire, but also prevents us from distinguishing between the same and the other, the desire of the one and the desire of the other, in this way:

Power seduces. But not in the vulgar sense of a desire of the masses, of a complicitous desire (that tautology which comes to find seduction in the desire of others)—no: it seduces by this reversibility which haunts it, and upon which it institutes a certain minimal cycle. No more dominated and dominators than victims and executioners ('exploiters' and 'exploited', yes, they exist, clearly separated from one another, because there is no reversibility in production; but, really, nothing essential occurs on this level). There are no separate positions: power completes itself according to a dual (duelle) relationship, where it throws out a defiance to society, and where it defies it to exist. If it is not able to 'exchange' itself according to this minimal cycle of seduction, of defiance and the ruse, it simply disappears (*DS*, 69).

23 "Minute difference" is actually a phrase from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 234. Derrida also uses it to refer to that distinction between things that makes their resemblance both possible and impossible.

24 Jean Baudrillard, *De la séduction*, Éditions Galilée, 1979. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials *DS*, followed by a page number. All translations will be mine, unless otherwise indicated.
As in representation and imitation, therefore, if this "minimal cycle" separates the two parties in seduction, it also joins them, for neither party exists as such unless it can be reversed, take the other's place, unless the two poles are in a way the same. But as with representation and imitation, this "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" is always missing, can never be itself represented or imitated. It is its exclusion that allows everything else to come into being. It is because seduction cannot be represented that everything else can be; it is because seduction cannot be produced that everything else can be. In any attempt to say what this "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" is, there is always implied a previous "difference" or "cycle": it is this which makes seduction both necessary and impossible. Like representation, seduction cannot be represented or seduced, but only because it has already been; it can never begin, but only because it has already begun. Analogously, it is not a matter of simply beginning with the other, the imitation of the other, because this other would not exist until after he had been imitated (this is what Baudrillard means by speaking of that "tautology" which comes to find seduction in the desire of others in that passage above). If seduction must begin with the imitation, the seduction of the other, this other in turn would not exist until after he has been imitated or seduced.

This is why the Same and the Other are not simply opposed in seduction; but neither are they the same. If on the one hand, that is:

Seduction is that of which there is no possible representation, because the difference between the real and its double, the distinction between the same and the other, is abolished there. Bent over his spring, Narcissus quenches his thirst: his image is not 'other', it is his proper surface which absorbs him, which seduces him, such that he is not able to approach it without passing beyond it, because it is only beyond it that there is a reflective distance from him to it. The mirror of the water is not a surface of reflection, but a surface of absorption (DS, 95)

on the other:

It [seduction] does not act as a new form of universal attraction. The diagonals or transversals of seduction are easily able to break the opposition of terms, they do not lead to a fusional or confused relationship (that would be mystical), but to a dual relationship, not of the mystical fusion of the subject and the object, or of the signifier and the signified, or of the masculine and the feminine, etc., but of seduction, that is to say, a relationship both dual and antagonistic (duelle et agonistique) (DS, 144-5).
Seduction, in other words, is neither the same nor the other, Narcissus nor his reflection, but the very mirror between them. But, as with the masses, this mirror is a surface not so much of "reflection" as of "absorption". This simultaneity of the same and the other, Narcissus and his reflection, cannot be seen. It can be seen only through what it reflects—a reflection for which it must be rendered invisible. And this is why Baudrillard aligns seduction with the figure of woman, for in the "same" way woman is what is excluded to allow the reflection between men, woman is that medium of exchange which allows all else to be exchanged but cannot itself be:

All masculine power is the power of production. All that which produces itself, should woman produce herself as woman, falls into the regime of masculine power. The only, and irresistible, power of femininity is that inverse power of seduction. There is nothing proper to her, she has nothing proper, other than to annul the power of production. But she always annuls it[...]. The feminine is precisely neither of the order of equivalence nor of value (DS, 29, 32).

This is why Baudrillard opposes in *De la séduction* all those who would seek a "specificity" or "essence" of woman, a particular feminine body or desire, even as "diffracted", "decentred", a "diffuse polyvalence" (DS, 21). For woman, like all figures of seduction, which are figures of representation, has no essence to express, is nothing in herself. Her essence, if it may be put this way, is that she has no essence. What is specific to her is that she has no specificity:

[The feminine] is always elsewhere[...] [F]emininity has no being (neither of nature, of writing, nor of proper pleasure, nor, as Freud says, of a proper sexuality). Against all quests for an authentic femininity, for a woman's speech, etc., it must be said that woman is nothing, and that is her power (DS, 17, 28).

She is, like the mirror itself, that "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" between representation and what it represents; she is what allows them to resemble each other, but she herself resembles nothing, cannot be represented. And this is why, according to Baudrillard, it is Narcissus' twin sister and not Narcissus himself who is the key to the Narcissus myth, for it is she who is excluded from the myth to allow it to be told (DS, 97-8). It is she who cannot be seen to allow Narcissus to see himself in his reflection, it is she who is that "double" excluded to allow Narcissus to see himself in his double. Again, her essence is that she has no essence, she whose essence is foregone to allow everything else to have an essence, she whose image is blinded to allow
everything else to be reflected. Which is perhaps to say that she is essence, representation itself, as well as their impossibility.\footnote{We might compare Baudrillard's argument at this point to that of Luce Irigaray, who also aligns the figure of woman with the mirror and the medium of exchange in \textit{Speculum of the Other Woman}, trans. Gillian C. Gill, Cornell University Press, 1986, and in the essays 'Women on the Market' and 'Commodities among Themselves' from \textit{This Sex Which Is Not One}, trans. Catherine Porter, Cornell University Press, 1985.}

As Baudrillard tries to make clear in \textit{De la séduction}, we can have an essence, be ourselves, only insofar as we can identify with our reflection, exchange ourselves for another. But if this ability to compare ourselves allows us to have an identity, it also means that we cannot, for in a sense we can \textit{only} compare ourselves to another. We can know ourselves as such, as incomparable, only through another, because we can be compared.\footnote{See in general the chapter 'I'll Be Your Mirror' from \textit{DS}, esp. p. 96, where Baudrillard makes a distinction between the "psychological order" of alterity and seduction. Though what we say here is perhaps an extrapolation of Baudrillard, we feel that seduction can be understood as a way of speaking of the limits to the gaining of identity through exchange: the way that, if exchange makes identity possible, it also makes it impossible. The "arbitrary" order of seduction would be a way of thinking \textit{at once} the identity and the loss of identity guaranteed by the exchangeability of signs.} And the same thing for commodities: in the chapters 'Suprématic de l'objet' and 'La marchandise absolue' in \textit{Les stratégies fatales},\footnote{Jean Baudrillard, \textit{Les stratégies fatales}, Grasset, 1983. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials \textit{FS}, followed by a page number.} analyses which take us back to \textit{Le système des objets} \footnote{Jean Baudrillard, \textit{Le système des objets}, Denöel/Gonthier, 1968. See especially the section 'Modèles et séries', pp. 163-184.} and \textit{La société de consommation},\footnote{Jean Baudrillard, \textit{La société de consommation}, Gallimard, 1970. See especially the section 'La personnalisation ou la plus petite difference marginale (P.P.D.M.)', pp. 123-143.} Baudrillard is able to show that the exchange value (and even the use value) of any piece of merchandise cannot be known in itself, but only in what it can be exchanged for. Again, if this exchange allows us to know what the commodity is worth, can be used for, it also makes it impossible: we can know what it is worth or can be used for only through or as another.

And seduction for Baudrillard is this limit. But it is not simply the impossibility of identity, the fact that, if identity has to be defined through a previously existing other, and this other through another other, and so on, identity can never begin. This infinite regress can take place only because identity is possible, because at each turn identity is given by another. Again, we could no sooner state a limit to identity that it would be found that this limit is only possible because of it. If
identity is possible only because it is impossible, it is also only impossible because it is possible. Rather, seduction expresses both the fact that for identity and value to be known in themselves they already have to be exchanged for another, and ultimately for everything else, and that for this exchange itself to be possible there has to be some kind of identity or value in itself before its exchange or comparison. It is to think the fact that that everything is at once incomparable and infinitely compared; that what makes identity and value possible also makes them impossible at the same time. It is to think the fact that for identity and exchange to be possible everything must take the place of representation or the medium of exchange, which is nothing, which is excluded by every substitution of something for it; and that, therefore, everything and nothing is like this representation and medium of exchange. To think seduction is to think the paradox that everything has an identity, a value, within this system of comparison or exchange only insofar as it approaches representation or medium of exchange, which has no identity or value; that the only thing that cannot be substituted or exchanged in the system is this very substitutability or medium of exchange itself. The only thing that can be known as such, the only thing that is included, the "only referent which still functions", as Baudrillard says, is precisely what cannot be known as such, what is excluded in being included: representation or the medium of exchange itself. As opposed to everything else which is somewhere between essence and non-essence, identity and difference, each only possible because of the other, this representation or medium of exchange has, singularly, an essence, an identity: its essence is that it has no essence, its identity is that it has no identity.

But, again, insofar Baudrillard is trying to represent or exchange something for this representation or medium of exchange, any such representation or exchange would only be possible because of some prior representation or exchange. It is the very exclusion of "representation" and the "medium of exchange" that allows the masses and seduction, for example, to stand in for them. If seduction attempts to think that simultaneity which both allows and disallows representation, it could do this only because it is in a way too late (and in another way, of course, too soon). Seduction stands in for something which outruns it, precedes it, seduces it, or it does not stand for it at all. Any attempt to represent representation can only fail because there is always a previous "representation" excluded to allow it. But seduction is also the thinking of the necessity of this
failure, the fact that it is not otherwise. "Seduction" is the thought of what is excluded to ensure that this failure always takes place, what precedes the possibility of calling it representation or even seduction.

But if we can never represent representation, if representation is always excluded, it is nevertheless also, and for necessary reasons, representation and the medium of exchange that Baudrillard is trying to represent or exchange something for when he speaks of seduction. The sign or event which seduces you, the sign which you follow or which follows you, is something like representation or the medium of exchange: it is empty of meaning and value, and yet for just this reason full of all meaning, priceless. It is completely contingent, yet profoundly fated, predestined. To be seduced is to try to represent or exchange something for representation or the medium of exchange, to be represented as or exchanged for representation or the medium of exchange. Every sign stands in for this seductive sign, but this sign is precisely excluded by this standing in; it is the very exclusion of this seductive sign that allows this standing in.

Baudrillard takes all this up in a section of Les stratégies fatales called 'L'otage'. He writes there of a terrorism that is violent not so much because it kills as because it attempts to definitively represent representation or the medium of exchange, to do away with the necessary unpresentability of representation and exchange. Terrorism, for Baudrillard, is that final attempt to speak in the name of representation and the medium of exchange, in the name of the masses. It is not to know that representation and the medium of exchange are what is excluded to allow us to speak of them, are what is excluded when we speak of them. It is not to know that if representation

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30 These are the signs that Baudrillard calls diagonals, transversals or traits (DS, 102-3,142-6,154,158; see also the section 'L'anagramme' from the chapter 'L'extermination du nom de Dieu' from L'Échange symbolique et la mort, op. cit., and Jean Baudrillard, The Ecstacy of Communication, trans. eds., Semiotext(e) Inc., 1988, p. 60). They are signs that stand in for everything and nothing at the same time, and are in this sense signs of signs. There are several moments in Baudrillard's work where he speaks of these signs that, because they are arbitrary, mean nothing, seem predestined, to contain the very meaning of the world: see from DS the section 'La mort à Samarkand'(DS, 101-4), the story of the fox's tail (DS,104-5) and the sending back of the same letter to two different people (DS,141-2); from Les stratégies fatales, the stories of S. (FS, 187-90), A. (FS, 191-3), and again the sending back of the same letter to two different people (FS,193-7). Morris writes of these moments in Baudrillard, arguing that they are for him simply the end of meaning, but we think it could be argued that for Baudrillard they are precisely that paradoxical beginning and end of meaning, what makes meaning both possible and impossible: 'Room 101 Or A Few Of The Worst Things In The World', op. cit., pp. 105-6.
and exchange allow representation and exchange to be represented and exchanged, they also make it impossible, that they form a limit to what can be represented and exchanged.

We spoke a few pages ago, we know, of the way that "there is no equivalent to the blind, non-representative, senseless character of the terrorist act, but the blind, senseless and unrepresentationals behaviour of the masses". But it was there a connection that terrorism itself was blind to, a connection that terrorism did not try to represent. Terrorism and seduction in their "good" senses speak in the name of the unrepresentable, of the limits to representation, without trying to represent them themselves: they are this paradox. Terrorism and seduction in their "bad" senses simply attempt to speak in the name of the unrepresentable, to represent the masses and the masses' desire, without realising the limits to this; they attempt to seduce without being seduced, as Baudrillard puts it (DS, 164). They attempt to represent the rule of the game without realising that they are themselves caught up in it, that "no player is greater than the game itself" (DS, 181), that in a sense it is the relationship between terrorism and the masses that precedes either of them as such. It is a question of opposing terrorism and seduction in their "good" senses to terrorism and seduction in their "bad" senses—or, more simply, of opposing seduction to terror. As Baudrillard says: "Seduction against terror: such is the stake. There is no other" (FS, 72).

Nevertheless, in 'L'otage' from Les stratégies fatales, Baudrillard does speak of a significant attempt by terrorism to represent representation or the medium of exchange: it is just this that makes it terrorist for Baudrillard (in either its good or bad sense). The ambiguity of terrorism is that, by pushing exchange to its furthest extent, by trying to make one single individual responsible for all the world's suffering, one thing stand in for all things, it exposes the system of representation and exchange, operates as a critique of them. But, by the same token, by pushing exchange to its furthest extent, it precisely reveals the limits to representation ever finally representing representation, exchange ever finally exchanging itself for the medium of exchange. Insofar as we can say that the hostage stands in for representation or the medium of exchange, there is still one more exchange left, representation and the medium of exchange are excluded. Or, to put it another way: as soon as the hostage does stand in for representation or the medium of exchange, becomes infinitely convertible, he becomes inexchangeable, worthless, no longer negotiable. If the hostage is
not representation or the medium of exchange insofar as he is still exchangeable for something, he can also only be representation or the medium of the exchange insofar as he is exchangeable for something. It is this paradox itself itself that "good" terrorism tries to present—this paradox which is the limit to all terrorism:

The topic of hostages is crucial because it poses the question of inexchangeability. Exchange is our law, and exchange has its own rules. Now we are in a society where exchange is becoming increasingly improbable, where fewer and fewer things can really be negotiated because the rules of negotiation have been lost, or because exchange, in becoming more generalised, has brought about the emergence of those final irreducible objects in exchange, which have themselves become the true stakes.

We are living at the end of the era of exchange. It is only exchange that is protecting us from destiny. When exchange is no longer possible, one finds oneself once again in a fatal situation, a situation of destiny.

The inexchangeable is that pure object whose power forbids it being possessed and exchanged. It is a precious object we don’t know how to get rid of. It burns and it will not allow negotiation. It kills itself but it is also vengeful. The cadaver always plays this role. So does beauty. As does the fetish. It has no value, but it also has no price. It is an object of no interest and simultaneously it is absolutely singular, without equivalent and, as a result, sacred.

The hostage possesses the quality of two things at once: a nullified object, abolished and anonymous; and an object which is absolutely different, exceptional, highly intensified, sublime[...]

For all these reasons the hostage cannot be negotiated in secret. That is because he is absolutely convertible. Nothing can resolve this paradox: ripped from the circuit of exchange, the hostage can be exchanged with nothing at all. Having become sacred through subtraction, through the state of radical exception in which he is placed, the hostage becomes the fantastic equivalent of everything else.31

In seduction there is always something like this hostage at stake: something without value outside of the relationship between the two parties, yet of infinite value within it; something whose value is not known and in a way cannot be known. It is this thing which allows the two parties to relate to each other, to begin a secret negotiation with each other; it is this thing which forms a kind of "blind equivalence" between them (it is the hostage, after all, who allows the terrorist to begin communicating with the social or masses). But, in another way, seduction does not begin with this stake, for this stake would not exist outside of this relationship; it is only within

31 FS 66-8. We are using here a translation, 'Hostage and Terror—The Impossible Exchange', by Groupuscule Linguistique de la Nouvelle Ville, which appeared in the journal On The Beach, No. 1, Autumn 1983, pp. 40-1.
this relationship that this stake has any value. This is the ambiguity of the stake in seduction: it exists at once inside and outside, before and only after, the relationship between the two parties. On the one hand, neither party can finally "name" this hostage without once again excluding him; no party can definitively own the hostage, take him outside the game, without rendering him valueless. And, on the other hand, each party must try to "name", to own, the hostage: it is this which gives him his value. In other words, what makes the hostage valuable—the fact that there will always be another bid, another value, another who owns him—also makes him valueless: there will always be another bid, another value, nobody can ever finally keep him.

That is, if seduction links the two parties, if they are both bidding for the "same" object, it also separates them, for they would not be in this relationship, they would not be bidding, if they agreed as to what this object was or what it was worth. This is why Baudrillard distinguishes between the equivalence or equality of the law of contract, where the two parties agree as to the identity or price of the object, where the two parties are equal before the law, and the duel/duelleing game of seduction, where the parties do not agree as to the identity or price of the object, and where there is a radical inequality or discrimination between them (DS, 187-9). It is not that the two parties are simply different: they are, after all, bidding for the "same" object. It is rather that this object—representation or the medium of exchange itself—is precisely what is common to all these differences, representations or values. It is this difference itself, that "nothing" in common to this nothing in common ("nothing" because any attempt to say what it can only exclude it yet again, will always be followed by another bid, differing from the last)32 . Like the mirror, like woman, its essence is that it has no essence; it is always what is in common to the

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32 We can see all this in Baudrillard’s analysis of the art auction: 'The Art Auction: Sign Exchange and Sumptuary Value', For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, trans. Charles Levin, Telos Press, 1981. The painting there operates as a kind of medium of exchange, and there must always be both a bid before and a bid after any possible bid. The buyer and the seller can only agree if they disagree. But this is to say that the painting has a value only so long as we cannot say what it is, that the painting is only worth something insofar as you can sell it to another, so long as you do not have it. (We might think here of DS where it is said that the stake only exists while it is in the game, and has no value outside of it: DS, 193). The art auction opens up the complex question of judgement without criteria, therefore, and it is interesting in this regard to compare Baudrillard’s emphasis upon the actual time, place and rhythm of the auction (‘The Art Auction’, ibid, p. 116) with that "fitful rhythm" with which Samuel Weber characterises the process of judgement in his ‘Afterword’ to Jean-François Lyotard’s Just Gaming, trans. Wlad Godzich, Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 109.
various parties' disputes: the fact that they cannot agree, the agreement of non-agreement, the relationship of non-relationship; their differend.33.

How, then, might we summarise this game of seduction? We might say that the two parties in seduction resemble each other neither because they imitate each other, because they are the same, nor because they do not imitate each other, because they are different, but because they both imitate the very difference between them, what is excluded to make their relationship possible. Each tries to play himself as following the other, desiring the other's desire—not to choose but to be chosen by the other. Which is in a way to become the other's destiny, to make the other follow or choose you. Both try to become the very stake or hostage between them: representation or the medium of exchange itself. As Baudrillard says in 'L'otage', the most profound strategy of the terrorist, what is truly at stake in terrorism, arises when the terrorist takes himself hostage, plays himself, his own life, as what is to be negotiated34. Here is where seduction and reversibility begin to take place. Here is where stakes can be invented. It is a strategy analysed by Baudrillard in great detail in L'Échange symbolique et la mort: that seductive game of threatening to take one's own life, of pretending to disappear35.

This is the strategy of Johannes in Kierkegaard's Diary of a Seducer, analysed by Baudrillard in De la séduction (DS, 155-63). Johannes' strategy is simply to follow Cordelia, to do nothing she would not wish; not to choose but to be chosen by Cordelia—which is in a way to become her destiny, to make her follow or choose him. Johannes' strategy, therefore, is to become Cordelia's mirror, to reflect her and make her self-conscious, uncertain of her identity, to open her up to the infinite regress of having to define her identity through another, through her image in another's eyes. Johannes tries to play, in other words, the role of that "difference" that allows Cordelia's self-equivalence; it is not simply a question of imitating her but of imitating his difference from her,

33 Reference is being made here to Jean-François Lyotard's The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, trans. Georges Van Den Ababeele, University of Minnesota Press, 1988. We will return to this in Chapter Four.
34 FS, 60. 'Hostage and Terror—The Impossible Exchange', op. cit., p. 38.
35 See L'Échange symbolique et la mort, op. cit., pp. 63-6, and the section 'Le travail et la mort', pp. 68-73. This would be, of course, that "mortal defiance" spoken of by Baudrillard in 'Oublier Foucault'.
her own difference from herself. He introduces a gap or interval, a blind-spot, a self-consciousness or unconscious, between Cordelia and herself. That is to say, as well as playing Cordelia’s Other, Johannes also plays what is excluded to allow her to have a relationship with this Other. Johannes tries to play the role of representation or the medium of exchange itself. Baudrillard puts it very nicely:

This perfection of artifice, this sort of predestination which guides the actions of the seducer, only reflects, as in a mirror, the perfection and grace infused within the young girl, and the ineluctable necessity of her sacrifice. It is not then a question of anybody’s strategy: it is a destiny, of which Johannes is only the instrument of execution, though infallible (DS, 138).

But, as Baudrillard suggests in that last sentence, there is an aporia in all of this. What does he mean by saying: “It is not then a question of anybody’s strategy: it is a destiny of which Johannes is only the instrument of execution, though infallible”? It is possible, of course, that just as Johannes seduces Cordelia, so Cordelia seduces Johannes, plays herself the role of that representation or medium of exchange which allows the seducer’s self-image, his belief that he is following a strategy. Again, both parties would resemble each other by trying to imitate the very difference between them36. But this is the aporia; it is not the final statement of what seduction is. We say that the two parties resemble each other because they both imitate the difference between them, but this difference would also not exist until after they did resemble each other. In a way, what this points to (and what Baudrillard tries to make clear in that passage) is that the game precedes both of the parties as such, outruns any attempt to definitively state its rule. If there is no relationship until this strategy, there is also no strategy until this relationship. Before the possibility of one party seducing the other, both parties must be seduced. Which is to say that, if their relationship can be stated or given, it also cannot be stated, it simply gives—gives itself without any certainty of return, any certainty that it will be finally represented or mastered. And

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36 We get something like this in Baudrillard’s accounts of the Butcher of Chouang-Tseu (L’Échange symbolique et la mort, ibid, pp. 187-9) and the Peking Opera (FS, 250-5), where it is a matter of imitating emptiness or the space between things, between you and the thing you imitate. Baudrillard also speaks of his strategy as one of creating a “void” between him and his opponent, which his opponent will rush to occupy, or into which his opponent will fall: ‘Forget Baudrillard”, op. cit., pp. 117-8,129. But the question that will emerge here is: to what extent does Baudrillard realise that all this is aporetic, that if he tries to imitate emptiness or space, the void between him and his opponent, this emptiness, space or void would also not exist until it has been imitated?
hence the profound affinity of seduction with the gift. As opposed to "bad" seduction, the political economy of the gift, in which we are seduced only to in turn seduce, give the gift only for it to be given back, in "good" seduction, a symbolic economy, the gift is simply given, given without incurring a debt, without the certainty that it will be returned. You cannot say what the gift is, you cannot say if and why it has been given. As opposed to the probability or possibility of "bad" seduction and political economy, in which you give because you are given and are given because you give, the necessity and impossibility of "good" seduction and symbolic economy, in which you both give and are given at the same time.  

This is why Johannes in Diary of a Seducer is so seductive. He realises that not only is it possible that Cordelia is seducing him, which is merely an inversion of his own strategy, but also that there is a prior seduction which allows both his strategy and hers; not just a second seducing a first, but a third seducing both a first and a second. He does not simply imitate the mirror, but seduces it: at once realises the possibility and impossibility of his strategy, the fact that at the very moment the mirror is represented, it is also excluded to allow that representation. He "realises" the limits, and the limits to realising the limits, to his own strategy. And it is in this sense that he grasps the true stakes of the game. If it is a question of Cordelia's virginity, something that can be definitively either won or lost, this is only part of the wager for Johannes—as Baudrillard says, it remains in the game only as a kind of "economic remainder" (DS, 139). If the stake exists outside of the relationship between Johannes and Cordelia, if it can be the object of a strategy, it is also only an effect of this strategy and does not exist outside of the game—and Johannes "realises" this. This is why it is priceless while unattainable and worthless when finally

37 For the distinction between good and bad seduction in these terms, see the section 'La peur d'être seduit' and the chapter 'Le destin politique de la séduction', from DS. It might be interesting in this regard to look at how Baudrillard turns against Georges Bataille and his notion of the gift (The Ectacy of Communication, op. cit., p. 78; 'Forget Baudrillard', ibid., p. 86). Again, we would want to think the possibility of the gift not returning like that possibility of the message or answer not coming back in SSM, and we believe a reading of the chapter 'La passion de la règle' from DS might be undertaken along theses lines (see esp. pp. 184, 197-206).

38 On seduction as involving three rather than two, see DS, 237. There is an article by Louise Burchill, 'Either/Or: Peripetia of an alternative in Jean Baudrillard's De la séduction', which argues that Baudrillard's seduction is finally only aporetic - a circularity which would privilege the masculine (Seduced and Abandoned, op. cit., esp. 33-4, 36, 41). We are arguing against that reading here, or at least saying that it is not the only way of reading Baudrillard at this point.
obtained, when it falls into that objective world of the law outside of their relationship (and, in fact, in the end Johannes does not even take Cordelia’s virginity). If Johannes exemplifies “pure seduction”, that is, it is because he realises that there is nothing outside of the game, or nothing simply outside of the game; because he realises that in truly seducing Cordelia he must open himself up to the possibility that it is he who is being seduced, that he is himself only the effect of a certain strategy. Everything must be reversed in seduction, and if Cordelia is to be symbolically murdered, it is she who must do it, for the only equivalent to her murder is her own seductive innocence and virginity. It is never—or never only—a question of Johannes’ own actions:

The murderous form of symbolic exchange, such is the reversibility of sacrifice; it does not take any other form than beauty and seduction, which is its most dangerous form. In this sense, the seducer is unable to flatter himself that he is the hero of some kind of erotic strategy; he is only the sacrificial spectator of a process which surpasses him; and the victim, in turn, is unable to flatter herself as being innocent, virginal, beautiful and seductive, for she constitutes a defiance in herself, which is only able to end with her death (or by her seduction, which is the same thing) (DS, 137-8).

The second great example of seduction Baudrillard gives in his work is that of Sophie Calle and the game of ‘Please Follow Me’ 39, in which she simply follows a man around during his trip to Venice, taking pictures of him without him knowing. There too the question of whether she is following him—when he would be really be following her, she would be his destiny—or he is following her, when she would really only be following him, he would be her destiny. There too the question: who is seducing whom?

Did she at bottom want him to kill her, or, finding this shadowing unbearable (especially since she anticipated nothing, least of all a sexual adventure), to hurl himself upon her to do violence to her—or looking back at her like Orpheus leading Eurydice from the underworld, to make her suddenly disappear? Did she simply want to be his destiny, or for him to become her own destiny? As in every game, this had its fundamental rule: nothing must come of it, no event which might form a contract or relationship between them. Such is the price of seduction. The secret must not be broken, on pain of falling back into a banal history.

Of course, there is something murderous for the one who is followed. He can take offence and fall back into persecution. But that is not Sophie’s aim (even if the phantasm of awakening it was present the whole time—but she also runs the risk: the other, having detected the stratagem, can turn

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39 ‘Please Follow Me’, trans. Paul Foss, *Art&Text* 23/4, March-May 1987. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials ‘FM’, followed by a page number.
the situation around and submit her to any fate he chooses—he is not a victim, basically his power is the same as hers) (FM', 104).

But it is perhaps more complicated than this. It is not really a choice between following and being followed, that "the other, having detected the stratagem, can then turn the situation around and submit her to any fate he chooses". For this second game is finally no different from, is subject to the same limits as, the first: just as in that first game Sophie needs the man to remain unaware that he is being followed—a fact that he can turn to his advantage—so he in turn needs Sophie to remain unaware that he is leading her, that he is aware of her, in the second. Just as she needs him, so he needs her to keep on following him—a fact she can turn to her advantage. It is not in this simple inversion that the real stakes of the game are to be found : as long as either one party or another holds an advantage, it will always be Sophie who holds the ultimate advantage. The true risk of the game lies elsewhere: it is to be seen perhaps in the assumption that for this reversal to be possible it is necessary that the man has "detected the stratagem". For the game to be played, for this reversal to take place, Sophie must let him know he is being followed without doing anything to let him know he is being followed, for that would be the end of the game. She must at the same time both let him know and not let him know. Just as, for his part, the man must know that Sophie is following him without looking back to see if she is following him, for that too would be the end of the game. He must at the same time both look back and not look back. As Baudrillard says, "a whole life secret is contained in this metaphor of closed eyes"(FM', 109), that is to say, in this idea of seeing and not seeing, of being not too close and not too far, "not too quick, not too slow"(FM', 108), at the same time. It is just this "difference" or "distance", this relationship of non-relationship, the fact that neither party can know if the other knows, that makes the game both possible (for the stakes remain in play only so long as neither party knows if the other knows) and impossible (for neither party can know for sure whether the game is being played or not)40. The real wager of seduction, the real "inversion" of Sophie's strategy, is not simply that the man leads her, but more

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40 On this distance that makes the game both possible and impossible, and the question of judgement raised by it: "Thus you mustn't know how to play the game too well, you must know how to be unmasked and to endure this return of the rule of the game. Not too quick, not too slow", FM', 108. And on this idea that the object of seduction is both priceless and worthless, that seduction is a gift that must be given, without knowing how much it is worth or what it will be exchanged for, see FM', 106, where it is said that Sophie can profit from this game of 'Please Follow Me' only insofar as she does not attempt to profit from it.
precisely the impossibility of deciding whether the man is leading her or not, whether she is seduced into playing the game by the man or not. It is not so much a question of whether she is following him or he is following her as of whether she is following him or only herself, whether she is seduced by the man (who is only another version of her) or by a third of whom she is not aware, who leads both the man and her. In short, what is at stake in the game of 'Please Follow Me' is the impossibility of deciding whether the game is being played or not. It is only within this "limit" that the game can be played, that Sophie can have a strategy. And it is this limit—impossibly—that Sophie's strategy must try to take into account.

It is this, finally, that Baudrillard means by saying that we cannot but respond to defiance and seduction, that we have already responded to defiance, that we are already seduced. This is why Baudrillard can speak of an obligation to the rule of the game (an obligation which he distinguishes from the notion of debt which characterises the rule of law) (DS, 187, 189, 205). This is why the game of seduction is a destiny, not a strategy:

A ritual dramaturgy beyond the law, seduction is a game and a destiny, such that the protagonists are carried towards their ineluctable end, without infringing the rule—because it is that which binds them—and such is the fundamental obligation: it is necessary that the game continue, even up to the price of death. A sort of passion, thus, binds the player to the rule which binds him, and without which no game would be possible (DS, 181).

But at the same time as seduction is necessary, we cannot be sure we have been seduced; seduction is unexpected, a matter of chance. Seduction always arrives before sense, before communication: a song, a voice, a perfume, a reflection seen out of the corner of your eye... In a sense, therefore, like Borges' famous Lottery of Babylon—a byzantine conspiracy in which the whole of society is determined by a secret lottery to which no one is privy—like representation and the medium of exchange, seduction has to be assumed. Assumed because even the outside of

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41 DS,106-7; see also The Ecology of Communication, op. cit., p. 69.
42 DS, 207-10. Also on the same theme, see Baudrillard's very profound statement: The fatal, the obscene, the reversible, the symbolic, are not concepts, since nothing distinguishes the hypothesis from the assertion. The enunciation of the fatal is also fatal, or it is not at all (The Ecology of Communication, ibid, p. 101).
If all these concepts have to be assumed, however—this is why their enunciation is equivalent to their concept: once hypothesised, they cannot be tested in any other terms but their own—they are also the thinking of this assumption, the opening up of a certain otherwise through the thinking of their not otherwise.
seduction is only possible because of seduction, because it is seduction which is that difference or distance that makes representation and exchange possible. But assumed also because, if the outside of seduction is only possible because of seduction, seduction itself is only possible because of this outside. We can never have seduction as such, therefore—as 'Please Follow Me' shows, the game of seduction is no sooner known than it is over.

But this can be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, we can understand the fact that seduction is only possible because of its other as aporetic: if seduction is only possible because of its other, this other is only possible because of seduction. Thus, when we say that the alternative to the seducer's game is the possibility that the other seduces him, that he seduces himself, that there is no relationship between him and the one he seduces, all this can be understood simply as saying that seduction is only possible because of the seduction of the other, because the seducer is seduced. But, on the other hand—though there is no otherwise to this—seduction might be understood as precisely an attempt to think what is excluded in saying this, that this aporetic inversion would be itself only possible after the possibility that some "other" seduces both him and his other, that he seduces only himself, that there is no relationship between him and the one he seduces. Seduction would be the attempt to think not simply that there is no seduction, but what is excluded (the "possibility that there is no seduction") to ensure that we can only think the possibility that there is no seduction as a seduction by the other. It is this "limit" that Johannes and Sophie Calle discover: that seduction is only possible insofar as it is might not exist, which is the possibility not merely that the other seduces you, but that there is no seduction, no relationship at all between you and the one you seduce. It is only within this limit that seduction is possible; it is this limit we are trying to think when we suggest that for seduction to be possible it is necessary that a third "seduce" both you and the one you seduce, that there is always another possibility excluded in any relationship of seduction.

This is why, finally, Baudrillard speaks of seduction as a limit or horizon, a transfinite circle, neither simply inside nor outside the system of representation and exchange, but both at the same time. It is not, again, that representation and the medium of exchange are either represented or unrepresentable; it is rather that they are unrepresentable in being represented, excluded by being
included, always and never included. They are the "secret in [its] very sign". Seduction, like a circle or sphere, is both the beginning and the end, the cause and the effect, of representation and exchange, what makes them both possible and impossible. It is both what opens up and closes the system of representation and exchange, and what ensures that there is no opening or closing to the system of representation and exchange:

To reinvent a rule, it is to resist the infinite linearity of analytical space in order to regain a reversible space—because the rule turns on itself, in the proper sense: it is a convection towards a central point of the reversion of a cycle (it is thus that the primal scene functions in the cycle of the world), exterior itself to all logic of the origin and end, cause and effect.

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43 The Ecstasy of Communication, ibid, p. 66.
44 DS,186. And, in general, Baudrillard makes the following series of distinctions with regard to seduction, which we will see echoed in later chapters. Seduction is singular and universal as opposed to general (DS, 114); it is a question of aesthetics as opposed to ethics (DS,125,157), of obligation as opposed to causality (DS, 205). All of these themes come together in the analysis of the fête we see in DS, which for Baudrillard belongs to the rule of game rather than that of the law: the game as both the founding and the transgression, the beginning and the end of the law (DS,191). In this regard, it may be compared to what Deleuze says about the fête in Différence et répétition, op. cit., p. 8.
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

We spoke in our 'Introduction' of a certain generality: two things are like each other because they are different from each other. Two things are compared to a third, a third which allows us to say what they have in common. But, as we said there, it is only a generality—a likeness not an equivalence—because, if this third allows us to say how the two are alike, it is also the very difference between them. We saw this perhaps in our first chapter. Implicitly there we compared a number of figures for representation, or even for the unrepresentability of representation: seduction, the symbolic, death, conformity, the masses, etc. We can say they are alike, stand in for representation, but we can neither completely distinguish them from each other (they can only be understood in terms of each other, they can never be entirely taken out of context), nor really say what they have in common (that representation we say they have in common is excluded by this attempted equivalence). There is always a certain "representation" excluded from any attempt to say what representation is: precisely that "representation" between this representation of representation and representation itself. If it is this "representation" that allows us to represent representation, it is also this "representation" that makes it impossible. And, in a sense, this is all Baudrillard (and our text) can do: we can only compare a number of things to representation; a comparison in which both the specificity of the things compared and the universality of representation is lost (they can be understood only insofar as they are compared to representation, insofar as they are represented; we can never complete the list of all the things that can be compared to representation, that can be represented). This is what we meant by saying that we can neither really begin our argument, never start with something that does not already presuppose representation, nor really end it, never finally say what representation is. We are always either too soon or too late for representation, always between representation and the thing represented. This is the aporia of the history, the linearity, we are trying to construct in this thesis—perhaps that of all histories, all linearities.
But, in another way, each one of these terms is itself what is excluded to allow this comparison; each is itself what is excluded to allow it to be represented. They are thus not simply comparable; rather, each is that incomparable that allows all those others to be compared. But in this regard they are exactly the same. This is to grasp them not in terms of some pre-existing generality but as themselves singular and universal, as at once absolutely incomparable with and completely identical to those others. Or perhaps more subtly: it is not that each concept is itself that incomparable but, insofar as it stands in for it, is the thinking of that incomparable excluded to allow this, is the thinking of the limits to its ability to be compared to those others—and it is in this fashion again that they might be compared. This is to think the limits to our ability to say that it is the same question—representation—that we are taking up within different contexts in Baudrillard's work. It is "representation" itself that would be excluded in saying this. Again, if each of those terms can be compared because each is itself that "representation" which is excluded, "representation" would be excluded in saying this—but each can perhaps be compared in thinking this, or thinking its own limits like this. The paradox is that, if whatever they have got in common is excluded, if they have nothing in common, this "nothing in common" is "representation". It is the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of speaking of representation.

And this goes not only for the various terms within any system of representation (for example, Baudrillard's) but also for the comparison between various systems of representation (for example, between Baudrillard's and Derrida's). There is at once a generality—both stand in for representation, a representation that is excluded to allow this very comparison—and a singularity and universality—each is itself the figure for representation, stands in for what is excluded to allow this comparison. Each is at once represented (compared not only to other representations, but to representation itself) and itself the very representation of representation (what is excluded to allow its comparison, not only to other representations, but also to other representations of representation). And, along these lines, the question of this chapter and the next will ask is how a number of Baudrillard's "words" or "concepts" can (and cannot) be translated into Derrida's; how, as in Baudrillard, a series of Derrida's "words" and "concepts" can be understood to play the role of representation itself, at once absolutely translatable and non-translatable, equivalent to other
"words" or "concepts", both in Derrida's own work and in Baudrillard's, and what is excluded to allow this very equivalence\(^1\). Again, then, as in our first chapter, it is not just a matter of a series of parallels between various "words" and "concepts" within Derrida's work and between Derrida's work and Baudrillard's. Also at stake is what allows this comparison, and how Derrida's "words" and "concepts" might help us to think it.

It is just this representation or medium of exchange that Derrida means by différance, for example. Derrida's différance is in a way like Baudrillard's seduction, masses and symbolic. Derrida's différance is exactly like Baudrillard's seduction, masses and symbolic. But, as Derrida acknowledges, it is precisely insofar as différance is "representation" that it would be excluded by calling it representation—or even différance. Différance, like representation, is always different from itself, always excludes itself. But at the same time it is not that différance is simply outside this list of synonyms (a list we can draw up both from Baudrillard's work and from Derrida's own).

It is also in each of them, what all of them have in common: nothing. It is just because of this, at the same time as this, that it is excluded. Différance is at once both a word, merely another of that potentially endless list of substitutes, and a concept, what allows this translation from one word to

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\(^1\) For some introductory remarks on "representation" as a figure for this *generality* and *singularity* and *universality* in Derrida's work, see Jacques Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research* 49, No. 2, 1982. We might also think here of that paradox of translation, as outlined by Derrida in his *Des Tours de Babel*, trans. Irene Harvey and Avital Ronell, *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham, Cornell University Press, 1985: that while the text to be translated exists (survives) only in its translations, and even demands to be translated, these translations themselves cannot be translated. Here the "original" would have something in common with all its translations, but for any quality said to encompass this something in common, we could always find an exception—or, put otherwise, any attempt to say what this "something in common" is to the original would only have itself the status of another translation of it. This something in common would be a certain nothing in common; the "originality" of the first text would lie only in its total lack of originality, its complete transmissibility. It would be at once found in everything and nothing, like translation or representation itself. And we might think here of the "originality" of Kafka, as spoken of by Borges in his essay 'Kafka and His Precursors': Kafka himself would be a certain nothing in common to his various precursors, at once already to be found in them to a greater or lesser degree and bringing out some quality common to them that could not have been perceived before:

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have enumerated resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. The second fact is the more significant. In each of these texts we find Kafka's idiosyncrasy to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive this quality; in other words, it would not exist ('Kafka and His Precursors', *Labyrinths*, op. cit., p. 236).
another, that signified that all these signifiers have in common—and neither. It is excluded by any
naming, and yet would not exist without being named: in a sense, it is the name itself. Différance,
like all other words, all other concepts—but it is this which différance, uniquely, shows—at once
only stands in for this nothing, is no more privileged than any other term in the series, and is that
nothing itself, what is excluded to allow this series.

Différance, therefore, the choice of différance as the representation of representation, is at
once necessary and arbitrary. Precisely because representation is always represented, we can never
say what representation is, representation can be anything, and representation is always
determined, something always actually is the figure of representation. By definition, there can be
only one figure for representation or the medium of exchange—and yet this is only possible, we can
only say what it is, because of another, prior, representation of representation or medium of
exchange. There are always two and one at the same time. And in an interview in Positions, Derrida
speaks of this imposition, the fact that representation is never entirely free from what it
determines, is always caught up in a certain context, a certain materiality; the fact that, if
différance is what is excluded to allow all else to be represented, it is nevertheless always itself
represented:

Since it cannot be elevated into a master-word or a master-concept, since it blocks every
relationship to theology, différance finds itself enmeshed in the work that pulls it through a chain of
other 'concepts', other 'words', other textual configurations. Perhaps later I will have occasion to indicate
why such other 'words' or 'concepts' later or simultaneously imposed themselves; and why room had to
be left for their insistence (for example, gram, reserve, incision, trace, spacing, blank—sens blanc, sang
blanc, sans blanc, cents blancs, semblant—supplement, pharmakon, margin-mark-march, etc.). By
definition the list has no taxonomical closure, and even less does it constitute a lexicon. First, because
these are not atoms, but rather focal points of economic condensation, sites of passage necessary for a
very large number of marks, slightly more effervescent crucibles.²

All further references to this text will be indicated by the initial P, followed by a page
number. Rodolph Gasché emphasises the contingency of what he calls these
"quasitranscendentals" (The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection,
Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 317-8), but what must also not be forgotten is their
necessity.
On the other hand, however, if différence is only ever determined, within a specific context, it is also never entirely exhausted by this determination or contextualisation. If différence is always material, it can never be reduced to the material; and, indeed, in the last instance is even what allows materialism, is the very limit to materiality. It is this aspect of différence that Derrida emphasises in a later interview in *Positions*, with the Marxist literary critic Jean-Louis Houdebine. At the end of the interview, Houdebine addresses a letter to Derrida, in which he argues that for Marxism this nothing that différence is or tries to present is always something, is always situated, even if as "altery as such":

Because if, as you say, effectively 'spacing' [and we might, following Derrida's indication in that passage above, replace the word "spacing" here with "différence"] designates nothing, nothing that is, no presence at a distance, but is the index of an irreducible exterior, and, simultaneously, of a movement, a displacement that indicates an absolutely irreducible alterity—it remains that the motif of heterogeneity is not reduced to, is not exhausted by this 'index of an irreducible exterior'. It is also the position of this alterity as such, that is, the position of a 'something' (a 'nothing') that is not nothing (and this is why the motif of heterogeneity is the motif of a—of the?—basic dialectical materialist contradiction: 'spacing/alterity') (P, 91-2).

Derrida in his reply concurs with Houdebine: différence always is "something", is always historically, contextually situated; it is always "the position of this alterity as such", and dialectical materialism would be the best way of understanding this. But he also disagrees with him. Différence cannot be simply reduced to something; it is also what allows this very reduction, what is excluded to allow this inclusion. It is not merely the "position of this alterity as such", but also what allows this position: that which has no position as such, even that of "alterity". It is what precedes and opens up a—the—"basic materialist contradiction: 'spacing/alterity'". Différence is always in at least two positions. If all representation of this différence can only reduce it to "something", if this is the discovery of "dialectical materialism", in another way no discourse can ever finally master or speak for this différence (even Derrida's own)—and Houdebine's "dialectical materialism", precisely insofar as it thinks it can, might be the one least capable of doing so. Only a thought which is able to think its failure in this respect—and even its failure to think its failure—could think this différence. In other words, as "opposed" to Houdebine's "contradiction", for which différence either is or is not something, for Derrida it is
always a matter of both at once: différence both is something and nothing, is and is not. It is always a matter of positions:

I would not subscribe unreservedly to what you say, at least in these terms, in the sentence: 'this inscription of spacing is supported only by what it negates in the form of a "presence" (and which is indeed, in fact, a "non-presence"): other, body, matter'. I fear, precisely, that the category of 'negation' introduces the Hegelian logic of the Aufhebung. It has happened that I have spoken of non-presence, in effect, but by this I was designating less a negated presence, than 'something' (nothing, indeed, in the form of presence) that deviates from the opposition presence/absence (negated presence), with all that this opposition implies(...) 

If the alterity of the other is posed, that is, only posed, does it not amount to the same, for example in the form of the 'constituted object' or of the 'informed product' invested with meaning, etc? From this point of view, I would even say that the alterity of the other inscribes in this relationship that which in no sense can be 'posed'. Inscription, as I would define it in this respect, is not a simple position: it is rather that by means of which every position is of itself confounded (différence): inscription, mark, text and not only thesis or theme—incription of the thesis (P, 95-6).

In this chapter, then, we want to compare différence to what we have previously called representation and the medium of exchange. But, of course, as Derrida insists, these are already only to stand in for what we are speaking about, these are only the textual effects of a "différence" that "finds itself enmeshed in the work that pulls it through a chain of other 'concepts', other 'words'". We can do this precisely only because "différence" (and "representation" and the "medium of exchange") has already been excluded. On the other hand, however, if our argument leans more towards saying that différence, representation and the medium of exchange are not transcendental signifieds, are not some other forever excluded to allow all else to stand in for them, that there is always a prior "representation" to which they are compared, this would be itself possible only because this prior "representation" is a transcendental signified, something that is excluded to allow all else to stand in for it. But more than being either of these, finally, "différence" is the attempt to undo this very distinction between essence and appearance, the incomparable and the comparable, the representation of representation and a representation, the medium of exchange and an exchange, "différence" and différence. If our argument here is first of all one for the priority of appearance, the fact that nothing lies behind appearance, a radical materialism like Houdebine's, it also works to undo the very distinction upon which such a
materialism would be based\(^3\). To think différence is to think what opens up (and closes) the very space between these opposites, what precedes (though nothing precedes) the difference between representation itself and any representation, the medium of exchange and any exchange, "différence" and différence. It is to think what Derrida in *Positions* calls a "double science", or elsewhere a "double strategy" (much like that "double strategy" we saw in Chapter One). On the one hand:

We must traverse a phase of overturning. To do justice to this necessity is to recognise that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful co-existence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralisation that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively (P, 41).

And, on the other hand, we must go beyond this opposition, show how it (and its inversion) is aporetic, unsustainable. We must attempt to think what precedes it and makes it possible. But this again can only be another aporia because, if the two are opposed only because of some third they both resemble, this third in turn can only be one of another two. And this is true for any attempted solution to the aporia. More than simply showing and resolving any particular aporia, therefore, Derrida wants to think its simultaneous necessity and impossibility, the process itself rather than any particular stopping-point. It is to think what is excluded as ensuring not just any single aporia,

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\(^3\) We see Nietzsche, for example, arguing for the absolute priority of the metaphorical over the literal, culminating in his claim that everything is finally only metaphorical. Derrida too moves close to this—his position is often mistaken for this—but he would see in this inversion a simple repetition of the logic it apparently contests. See his 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', op. cit., pp. 217, 227 (esp. note 32). Derrida is more concerned to "deconstruct" the opposition upon which this reversal is based; he might be understood to be arguing for the "différence" between the literal and the metaphorical. Similarly in 'Différence', *Margins of Philosophy*, ibid., pp. 22-7, and 'The Retrait of Metaphor', trans. eds., *Enclitic*, Vol. II, No. 2, Fall 1978, he argues not so much for the priority of being(s) over Being as for their "différence", the presupposition of each by the other. We would want to read this in the context of Baudrillard's remarks concerning the relationship between the latent and the manifest in *DS* (DS, 22, 77, 94), and Deleuze's book *Logique du sens*, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969. Is Deleuze's book a simple privileging of surface over depth, as it has been understood by Foucault and others—see, for example, Foucault's 'Theatrum Philosophicum', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Basil Blackwell, 1977—or does it too try to "deconstruct" this opposition?
but the fact that we always remain within an aporia, the not otherwise to the aporetic. But it is also to think that, if there is no simple outside to the aporia, this is because there is no simple inside to it either, that there is only ever an aporia because something is excluded from it.

We take up these two ways of reading Derrida, perhaps like those two ways of reading Baudrillard, in this chapter. We will be looking principally at Derrida's essay 'Economimesis'\(^4\), but we will also be referring to two other essays Derrida has written about representation, 'The Double Session'\(^5\) and 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy'\(^6\). There are a series of implicit parallels made with Baudrillard in all of this (spelt out in more detail in Chapter Three), but throughout also the question of what the limits to such a comparison would be.

I

Let us begin with the reading Derrida opposes: that "idealistic" reading in which everything takes the place of a transcendental signified, excluded by any attempt to say what it is. It does not matter whether this transcendental signified is representation, the medium of exchange or différence (différence understood as difference). This corresponds to that attempt we saw in our 'Introduction' and Chapter One to name a simple limit to representation: to say what representation excludes, what is excluded by representation, to make representation possible. This first position is, in a way, indistinguishable from Derrida's final position, which we will outline in Part III of this chapter, which is why it is so often mistaken for it. It is precisely in order to expose this as a "mistake" that we have set out our chapter in what is perhaps a slightly over-rigid manner. Let us begin with 'Economimesis'.

\(^4\) Jacques Derrida, 'Economimesis', op. cit. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initial 'E', followed by a page number.
\(^5\) Jacques Derrida, 'The Double Session', Dissemination, op. cit. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'DS', followed by a page number.
\(^6\) Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', op. cit. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'WM', followed by a page number.
In 'Economimesis', Derrida engages in a reading of Kant's *Third Critique, The Critique of Judgement*. It is, as its title indicates, a study of the relationship between economics and mimesis there—a relationship which in a sense precedes both economics and mimesis as such. First of all, what does Kant mean by "mimesis" in the *Third Critique* (the answer will be the "same" for economics)? Mimesis in the *Third Critique* is not to be mistaken for a sort of "servile imitation", which Kant condemns and calls "aping". There is no rule in art that is held up before our eyes and which we are meant to follow, something that can simply be repeated from context to context without changing. This is Kant's distinction between art and science: in science, it is enough to know the rule in order to be able to reproduce an example of it, while in art, knowing the rule does not ensure that you can produce an example of it. Or to use a distinction Deleuze makes in his book *Différence et répétition*, in art it is a matter of "doing with" and not of "doing like".

For Kant, art is above all a kind of freedom from laws, constraints, purposiveness—from ends, either monetary or aesthetic. The pleasure it gives is singular and can neither be exchanged for something else nor formulated as a more general law. It is a singular pleasure and is a pleasure precisely in the singular. As Derrida says:

> The passage of mimesis cannot proceed by concepts but only—between freedoms—by exemplars with reflective value, quasi-natural productions which will institute the non-conceptual rules of art (E', 10).

Rather than being reproductive, then, art for Kant is defined by its productivity, and more particularly by its power to produce analogies or metaphors, analogies or metaphors (not copies) of itself. A great work of art, a work of genius, encourages us to produce another one like it, but ours would resemble it only insofar as it resembled nothing, just like that one it imitates. In other words, imitation for Kant is not so much of a thing, a reproducible rule, as in science, as of the very productivity and freedom of that first work of art itself. Just as that first work freely imitates the

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7 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, The Clarendon Press, 1982, §49. Because our references to Kant are usually citations from Derrida's article, we will merely indicate the section number from *The Critique of Judgement* from which they come. Indeed, because this is the version Klein is apparently using in his translation, many of our citations will come from the J.H.Bernard translation of *The Critique of Judgement*.

8 Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, op. cit., p. 35.
divine productivity of God as manifested in nature, so this second must imitate not the product but the production of the first, its ability to engender itself, to make a second follow it (a power which, intriguingly, would not exist until after a second work had imitated it). This imitation is analogous to the first work's power of analogy; it is an imitation precisely of imitation itself. Derrida continues:

In giving non-conceptual rules to art (rules 'abstracted from the act, that is from the product'), in producing 'exemplars', genius does nothing more than reflect nature, represent it: both as its legacy or its delegate and as its faithful image...

The non-conceptual role, readable in the act and off the exemplar, does not derive from imitation (genius is incompatible with 'the spirit of imitation'). Genius is not learned. To learn is nothing other than to imitate'. Beyond the fact that with this last proposition (§47) one returns to the language of the Poetics, the affinity is confirmed by the fact that the originality of genius and the exemplarity of its products must incite a certain imitation. A good imitation: one which is not a servile repetition, which does not reproduce, which avoids counterfeiting and plagiarism ('E, 10).

In a manner we have already seen, it is the worst imitation which is the best imitation here; art imitates best insofar as it does not imitate at all. Or better, it is imitation itself that is the limit to imitation: insofar as we simply imitate something, we do not imitate it, imitation is excluded. It is imitation that excludes itself, that cannot be imitated, so that everything else can be, so that everything else can stand in for imitation. Imitation here is that "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" which both allows and disallows imitation. And in the Third Critique, we get another name for this imitation: poetry. It is poetry that best exemplifies this paradox of imitation, this paradox which imitation is. It is as a poet that man is closest to the God who produces those analogies in nature; it is in poetry that he most closely imitates that productivity of nature and is, therefore, most free from nature. In being the highest of the arts, the most self-contained, the least imitative, poetry is the art most like nature, the most mimetic, the art which most truly captures a likeness. It is this paradox which perhaps most surprises us in Kant, opening up as it does the possibility of an abstract art. It is this which constitutes the essential modernity of the Third Critique, the way it can be seen to be arguing for a non-representational, avant-garde art.  

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At the centre, then, of Kant’s theory of mimesis in the Third Critique lies poetry, which "arouses more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words", and which enlivens the mind, "opening out to it the prospect of an illimitable field of kindred forms"\textsuperscript{10}. The ideas it expresses awaken, stir up, excite similar ideas, neighbouring, related, analogical ones, like those "laws of association" of nature itself\textsuperscript{11}. We might say, indeed, that there is a certain excess of signified over signifier in poetry, rather like a joke or pun. As in aesthetic judgement in general, there is more thought there than can be preserved or made sensible by being exchanged for signs. There is, therefore, a certain incomparability or inexchangeability in poetry, a certain loss of sense: an incomparability between the writer and the reader (as we have seen, one does not become a poet by simple imitation), an inexchangeability between signified and signifier (an inability to say what any poetic metaphor means except in terms of another metaphor, except by becoming a poet oneself). As Derrida writes in 'Economimesis', explaining this connection between poetry and aesthetic judgement in general:

So what is the relation [of the Fine-Arts] with economimesis? To be able to take pleasure in a reflective pronouncement without enjoying and without conceiving, belongs, of course, to the essence of man, of free man—capable of pure, that is non-exchangeable productivity. Non-exchangeable in terms of sensible objects or signs of sensible objects (money, for example), non-exchangeable in terms of enjoyment—neither as a use-value nor as exchange-value ('E', 8-9).

But it is for just this reason that Kant sees poetry as forming a standard by which to judge all else, and according to which a hierarchy can be constructed—a hierarchy that would have science at the bottom, which has no relation to poetry and is even in fact its opposite. Using poetry as a standard, for example, we can compare liberal art, that art which is done for its own sake and gives enjoyment, to mercenary art, that art which is not free but proceeds by rules and is exchanged for

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\textsuperscript{10} The Critique of Judgement, §49.
\textsuperscript{11} On these "laws of association", see the 'General Remark on the First Section of the Analytic', cited 'E', 6. On "awakening similar ideas", see §§46-7 of The Critique of Judgement. This passage is a paraphrase of 'E',11. See also Richard Klein, 'Kant's Sunshine', op. cit., pp. 28-9, on all of this.
money or some other sign (E, 6-7). Poetry allows this hierarchy to be constructed, but it does not itself belong to it, even as its summit, being in so doing it would be compared, have a value, even if the highest. It is the freedom and generosity of poetry which provide the model for the whole of this sublime economy, but which must remain outside of it: poetry must be excluded so that everything else can take its place. All the other arts would have value, paradoxically, to the degree to which they resembled poetry, which has no value. They would have value only insofar as they can be exchanged for poetry, which cannot be exchanged.\(^\text{12}\)

II

This understanding of mimesis is very sophisticated; it marks in a sense an advance over the "traditional" idea of two things resembling each other because they are the same. Here, two things resemble each other because they are different. It is to think a certain limit to representation, a limit that can be named: that which cannot be represented but which allows everything else to be is representation, poetry, itself. Now, the first gesture of Derrida's deconstruction will be to reverse this, to name the limit to this naming of the limit, to show that Kant's conception of mimesis is aporetic. He will show that that incomparable that allows all comparison in this conception of mimesis is already compared, that that inexchangeable is already exchanged; he will show that if two things resemble each other because they are different, they can be different only because they resemble each other. But precisely insofar as Derrida demonstrates that this argument is aporetic, this second reading cannot really be an alternative to that first, there can no real opposition between them; we can choose one only because of the other. If Derrida on the one hand argues against Kant that his argument is aporetic, on the other he wants to show how we can only repeat this aporia ourselves. To the extent that Kant's argument is aporetic, that is, it is both

\(^{12}\) Derrida writes of poetry in 'E', summarising the Kantian argument: By breaking with the exchange of values, by giving more than is asked and more than it promises, poetic speech is both out of circulation, at least outside any finite commerce, without any determinate value, and yet of infinite value. It is the origin of value. Everything is measured on a scale on which poetry occupies the absolutely highest level. It is the universal analogical equivalent, and the value of values ('E',18).
undenominstrable and irrefutable. The outside to the incomparable or inexchangeable, that comparison or exchange that makes them possible, can only be thought of as another incomparable or inexchangeable; we can name the limit to Kant's argument, the limits to his naming of the limit, only to ourselves name another limit. Thus the necessity for a second phase of deconstruction in order to speak of what is excluded to make this aporia itself possible, to ensure that this understanding of imitation has no outside. In a way, it is to return to that first argument, the one we have just canvassed (différence will be understood as an incomparable that allows all comparison, an unrepresentable that allows all representation). But the important thing to realise is that we can only ever have this first position because of the second, we can only ever return to it through the detour of the second. We said earlier that Derrida puts forward first of all this second, "materialist", position, showing how the incomparable is already compared, the inexchangeable already exchanged, how nothing is already something. This is perhaps true. It is also perhaps true that at times we will be arguing for the priority of something like that first position in Derrida's work: namely, that it is a question of a difference that allows identity, an unrepresentable that allows representation, etc.; a sort of "idealism". But, ultimately, it is not important; they are not real alternatives. He will argue either, according to the circumstances, pitting both a certain "materialism" against an idealism and a certain "idealism" against a materialism. Derrida's real argument concerns the aporetic nature of this choice itself, of any first first moment of critique. The second moment or phase of deconstruction would be precisely to think this aporia as such, the "limits" to any naming of the limits of representation—either "idealism" as the limit to "materialism" or "materialism" as the limit to "idealism"—and the "limits" even to thinking this. It is to think, finally, why there are always only these first or second alternatives, what is excluded, unthought, to ensure this. This will be the subject of our third section here. In our second, we take up Derrida's "inversion" in the context of Kant, the way that if comparison and exchange are only possible because of an incomparable or inexchangeable, this incomparable and inexchangeable is only possible because of a prior comparison or exchange.

To return, then, to what we were saying before about poetry being the highest of all the arts in Kant, that standard against which all must be measured:
At the summit of the highest of the speaking arts is poetry. It is at the summit because it emanates almost entirely from genius. It stands therefore in the greatest proximity, by virtue of its 'origin', to that free productivity which rivals that of nature. It is the art which imitates the least and which therefore resembles most closely divine productivity (E', 17).

As we have just said, Derrida's first gesture here is to show how this incomparable is always compared, this inexchangeable always exchanged. If the poet resembles God because he is incomparable, "imitates the least", he is also only incomparable because he resembles God, "resembles most closely divine productivity". Or, to put it another way, if the poet and God resemble each other because they both resemble the difference between them, this difference would not exist until after they did resemble each other. If the hierarchy of the other arts can only be constituted according to poetry, which is incomparable, at the summit, this summit itself is only possible because of this hierarchy; this summit can only be a position within this hierarchy, not opposed to those other arts as the incomparable to the comparable, but simply different from them:

And nevertheless this pure productivity of the inexchangeable liberates a sort of immaculate commerce. Being a reflective exchange, universal communicability between free subjects opens up space for the play of the Fine-Arts. There is in this a sort of pure economy in which the oikos, what belongs essentially to the definition of man, is reflected in his pure freedom and his pure productivity.

Why then mimesis here? The productions of the Fine-Arts are not productions of nature, that, as Kant repeatedly recalls, goes without saying. Facere and not agere. But a certain quasi, a certain als ob re-establishes analogical mimesis at the point where it appears detached. The works of the Fine-Arts must have the appearance of nature and precisely in so far as they are productions (fashionings) of freedom. They must resemble effects of natural action at the very moment when they, most purely, are works of artistic confection. 'In a product of the Fine-Arts, we must become conscious that it is art and not nature; but yet the purposiveness in its form must seem to be as free from all constraint [Zwang] of arbitrary rules as if [als ob] it were a product of pure nature' [§45][...]

What is the scope of the als if?

Pure and free productivity must resemble that of nature. And it does so precisely because, free and pure, it does not depend on natural laws. The less it depends on nature, the more it resembles nature. Mimesis here is not the representation of one thing by another, the relationship of resemblance or of identification between two beings, the reproduction of a product of nature by a product of art. It is not the relation of two products but of two productions. And of two freedoms. The artist does not imitate things in nature, or, if you will, in natura naturata, but the acts of natura naturans, the operations of the physis. But once an analogy has already made natura naturans the art of an author-subject, and, one could even say, of an artist-god, mimesis displays the identification of human action with divine action—of one freedom with another. The communicability of pure judgements of taste, the (universal,
infinite, limitless) exchange between subjects who have free hands in the exercise or the appreciation of fine art, all that presupposes a commerce between the divine artist and the human one. And indeed this commerce is a mimesis, in the strict sense, a play, a mask, an identification with the other on stage, and not the imitation of an object by its copy (E, 9).

Derrida concludes here: "The communicability of pure judgements of taste[...] presupposes a commerce between the divine artist and human one. And indeed this commerce is a mimesis in the strict sense". That is to say, the very freedom of man, of man from God, is only possible because of God, because of the law of freedom God allows, imposes. To make freedom the law, as Kant apparently wants to do in the Third Critique, is this not also the end or impossibility of freedom? Again, Derrida's point here is that the very freedom and spontaneity of the Fine Arts, their ability to engender themselves, are only possible because they are already compared to another, to Nature. We have to read Derrida very carefully, then, when he writes: "But a certain quasi, a certain als ob re-establishes analogical mimesis at the point where it appears detached", for it is not only a question of the "re-establishment" of mimesis: strictly speaking, mimesis would only have been possible from the very beginning because of this quasi or als ob. This quasi or als ob has always been re-established or is never not re-established. And also important to note here is that Derrida speaks of the way that mimesis presupposes a prior commerce, but that this commerce is already itself a mimesis. The argument of 'Economimesis' is that the very uniqueness of the representation of representation or medium of exchange, the fact that each is, singularly, what everything stands in for, is only possible because they are compared to each other. It is to hint at the way there is never only one representation of representation or medium of exchange, but always two: the representation of representation is already exchanged, the medium of exchange already represented.

We see the same thing in terms of the opposition Kant makes between liberal and mercenary art. If Kant speaks of the freedom of liberal art as opposed to the "constraint" (E, 7) of mercenary art, it can nevertheless not do without some form of constraint; it too seems to presuppose a certain "commerce". As Derrida says, citing Kant's qualification in this regard:

Without this coercive construction, this tight corset, the spirit which must be free in art 'would have no body and would evaporate altogether' [§43][...] Liberal art relates to mercenary art as the mind does to the body, and it cannot produce itself, in its freedom, without the very thing it subordinates to
itself, without the force of mechanical structure which in every sense of the word it supposes—the mechanical agency, mercenary, laborious, deprived of pleasure (E, 7).

The metaphorical richness of poetry, for example, the fact that it "arouses more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words", this incomparability between the signified and the signified: would this exist outside of words, outside of some comparison or exchange between the signified and the signifier—the very fact that we can say "more" here, can speak of "more" thought being aroused than can be expressed by words?

And, as Derrida is at pains to point out throughout 'Economimesis', Kant's Third Critique is almost entirely structured around such oppositions, within which one term is designated as good and the other as bad, or good only insofar as it resembles the first: not only liberal art/mercenary art, but also nature/art (E', 4), physis/techné (E', 4), man/animal (E', 5), art/science (E', 5), freedom/work (E', 5), soul/body (E', 7), gift/exchange (E', 11-2), poet/orator (E', 17), etc. As Derrida says of that opposition between liberal and mercenary art, but it would apply equally to all those others insofar as they are modelled on it, insofar as it is modelled on them:

Within art in general (one of the two terms of the preceding opposition) another split engenders a series of distinctions. Their logical structure is not insignificant: there is no symmetry between the terms, but rather a regular hierarchy such that any attempt to distinguish between the two is also to classify one as being more and the other less. The attempt is to define two distinct sorts of art, but in order to display two phenomena of which one is more properly 'art' than the other (E', 5).

But again here, the necessity for some prior comparison or exchange, the fact that both originally belonged to "art in general", makes it impossible, finally, to see them as opposites. They are opposed only insofar as both are part of, both can be compared to, some previous third: here "art in general". And, moreover, insofar as Kant argues that imitation is good insofar as it is bad and bad insofar as it is good, it would be impossible to properly distinguish between the two sorts of art, "of which one is more properly 'art' than the other". The very possibility of Kant's argument is also its limit; what allows him to distinguish between those two sorts of art, and even to call them opposites—the fact that they can be compared—also makes it impossible. This is why Derrida emphasises the way that Kant's Third Critique takes the form of finer and finer distinctions within successive categories, of always "dividing a genus into opposing species in order to place the
thing under investigation within the correct species\textsuperscript{13} : it is to remind us that in a sense he is reprising Aristotle's objection of the third man against Plato in 'Economimesis'.

We see this hierarchy, this opposition, again in the relationship between the poet and God. Derrida says of this relationship:

At the summit is the poet, analogous (and that precisely by a return of logos) to God: he gives more than he promises, he submits to no exchange contract, his over-abundance generously breaks the circular economy. The hierarchy of the Fine-Arts therefore signifies that some power supercedes the (circular) economy, governs and places itself above (restricted) political economy. The naturalisation of political economy subordinates the production and commerce of art to a transeconomy.

\textit{Economimesis} is not impaired by it, on the contrary. It unfolds itself there to infinity as 'Kantism' passes into 'Hegelianism'. An infinite circle plays [with] itself and uses human play to re-appropriate the gift for itself. The poet or genius receives from nature (from God), besides the given, the giving, the power to produce and to give more than he promises to men. The poetic gift, content and power, wealth and action, is an add-on \textit{[un en-plus]} given as a [power] to give by God to the poet, who transmits it in order to permit this supplementary surplus-value to make its return to the infinite source—this source which can never be lost (by definition, if one can say that of the infinite) (E,11).

There is much to speak of in this passage, but to begin with we might observe that what is at stake here in this relationship between the poet and God is the relationship between the gift and the gift to give, between the gift that is given without expectation of its return and the gift that is given back, that is given only in anticipation of its return. In short, it is a question of the relationship between excess and equivalence, the incomparable and the comparable, the breaking of the circle and the circle itself. And what Derrida can be seen to be saying here is that the poet can receive the gift from God, but only insofar as it is the gift of giving; he can receive it, in other words, only insofar as he has already given it (back). If it is the spontaneity and freedom of poetry which allows or gives economy, which provides a model or example for all else, this spontaneity and freedom is only possible within an economic system of return and debt (equivalence, calculation, deferral), in which everything is already owed or given back to the one who gives. But this is also to say that, if the poet can give only because he has been given to by God, God Himself can give only because He has already been given to by the poet. If the poet is indebted to God, God is also

\textsuperscript{13} Gilles Deleuze, 'Plato and the Simulacrum', trans. Rosalind Krauss, \textit{October} 27, Winter 1983, p. 45. This article by Deleuze also raises the Aristotelian objection of the Third Man against Plato.
indebted to the poet. God, like the concept, must give Himself metaphorically in order to return to Himself, must give to the poet the gift of metaphor so that he can sing His praises\textsuperscript{14}. There is a kind of aporia here in which the poet can give only because he has already been given to by God, can give freely to God only because he is indebted to Him, and God can give only because he has already been given to by the poet, can give freely to the poet only because He is indebted to him. The gift is possible only because it has already been given back; and it can be given back only because it has already been given.

III

This, as we have tried to sketch it, is that first moment or phase in Derrida's deconstruction: he is able to show that if comparison and exchange are only possible because of an incomparable or inexchangeable, this incomparable and inexchangeable is only possible because of a prior comparison or exchange; that if two things imitate each other because they imitate nothing or imitate the very difference between them, this is only possible because they imitate something, because they imitate or are imitated by each other. Derrida is able to show that Kant's argument is aporetic, is able to expose Kant's limits—or, better, the limits to Kant's naming of the limits to representation. But precisely insofar as Kant's argument is aporetic, this inversion itself can only form part of that aporia. If Kant's incomparable is possible only because of a prior comparison, this comparison is possible only because of a certain incomparable; any comparison that makes the incomparable possible can only be another, higher, incomparable. There is no simple argument against Kant, no way of naming his limits, because Kant already names his own limits. As soon as we name a limit to Kant, what makes his own argument, his own naming of these limits possible, it can only take the place of that very incomparable or inexchangeable which he himself represents. If his argument is undemonstrable, in that he can no sooner name a limit to representation than it is excluded, it is also irrefutable, in that we can no sooner say this than we have to name this limit.

\textsuperscript{14} On this indebtedness of the concept to metaphor, see 'WM', 241, 269.
ourselves; if what he is speaking about is always excluded from his argument to make it possible, it is always included in saying this, it is just this that he is speaking about.

In a way, then, we too always have to name this limit to Kant, we too are always within this aporia. Hence the necessity of that first moment of deconstruction—as Derrida says, it is the only "effective" means of intervening in the area. All we can ever do is reverse this aporia, to argue for one limit as opposed to another. But deconstruction is also the question of what is excluded to ensure that this is so, why we are always within this aporia, why representation and the medium of exchange are always represented. This is the second moment of deconstruction: it does not simply name a limit to representation but also thinks that "limit" which is excluded to ensure that the limit is always named—a "limit", finally, that is impossible to name. It does not simply name a limit to representation, but also thinks the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of naming a limit to representation. It is a matter of asking what precedes and opens up those aporiae between the comparable and the incomparable, the exchangeable and the inexchangeable, imitating something and imitating nothing, why each is only possible because of the other. Derrida's différence, that is, is not simply one half or the other of each of those aporiae (though it is always this), but also what makes them possible, and, indeed, necessary. It is neither simply inside nor outside Kant—an outside that would only be possible because of Kant—but the question of why there is no outside to Kant, in a certain way outside of him.

Différence can only be a transcendental signified, an unrepresentable that allows all representation, that excludes itself so that everything else can be represented; but it is also the very impossibility of all transcendental signifieds, what means that we can never name or even think any transcendental signified without the necessity for another, previous, "transcendental signified" (but, precisely, if it comes "before" all transcendental signifieds, is what is excluded to allow everything to be represented, in what sense can we still call it a transcendental signified, or anything at all?). Différence is at once the necessity and impossibility of a transcendental signified. Différence can only be represented, is what ensures that everything can be represented, but it is also what cannot be represented, and even means that in a way nothing can be represented.
But before we come to this, let us return for a moment to that aporia between God and the poet, giving and the gift of giving, we saw in Kant's *Third Critique*.

As we have just seen, part of what Derrida is saying in 'Economimesis' is that the gift is only possible because of the gift to give, because the gift is given back, and the gift to give, the gift is given back, only because of the gift. This is why he speaks of a circle there: "An infinite circle plays [with] itself and uses human play to re-appropriate the gift for itself". But what can he mean by speaking of an infinite circle? An infinite circle would be a circle of infinite diameter, whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere. It would be a circle at once everywhere and nowhere, from which nothing can be lost or given away, or in which loss and giving away already form part of the circle.\(^{15}\) Two things can be equivalent on this circle only if they are infinitely apart (just as the two most distant points on a circle touch), and they can be infinitely far apart only insofar as they are equivalent. One because of the other. It would be the "vicious circle" of the aporetic logic of economimesis, which we can show equally to be a kind of infinite regress. This gift or giving is only possible on the basis of the circle, and, inversely, this circle is only possible because of a certain gift or giving. We would like to say they are the same—this gift and this circle, this gift and this gift to give (the gift in return)—we would like to say that the breaking of the circle is the circle. But, in a way, it is the very impossibility of saying this which is the circle. The circle is not simply the equivalence of the incomparable and the comparable, but also that incomparable which makes this equivalence possible. It is not merely the equivalence of the circle and the breaking of the circle, but that breaking of the circle which makes this equivalence possible. One because of the other, the infinitely many combinations (upward, hierarchically) of this circle and its breaking. An infinite circle: a circle that can never come to an end or back to its beginning; but a deferral only

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\(^{15}\) We might think here of Borges' essay 'The Fearful Sphere of Pascal', *Labyrinths*, op. cit. Borges speaks there of a "sphere, whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere" (p. 227), but this would be equally to say that its centre is nowhere and its circumference everywhere. It is a circle that has to be *assumed*—and, indeed, the essay is perhaps about nothing so much as those "metaphors" by which we construct our world, which are in a sense everywhere and nowhere, which also have to be assumed. Borges concludes: "It may well be that universal history is the history of the different intonations given a handful of metaphors" (p. 227)—it would always be a "handful of metaphors" because there would be a once a metaphor and the "metaphor" of that metaphor. And here in 'E' this "infinite circle" would be that infinite circle of metaphor itself, which at once has already begun and can never begin.
possible because it has already reached its end, because its end is its beginning. As Derrida goes on to say after that passage concerning the circle:

As soon as the infinite gives itself (to be thought) the opposition tends to be effaced between restricted and general economy, circulation and expediary productivity. That is even, if we can still use such terms, the function of the passage to the infinite: the passage of the infinity between gift and debt (E, 11).

By "restricted economy" here, Derrida means that system in which the gift is given only to be given back, in which there is an equivalence made between giving and being given. By "general economy", he means that non-system in which the gift is given without return or expectation of return16. And by "economimesis" he means that economy or mimesis that comes between them in that it expresses the relationship between them aporetically, as though each were only possible because of the other. This is why he says that, within this thought of the infinite circle, the opposition between restricted and general economies "tends to be effaced". Only "tends to be effaced" because, if economimesis, analogy in general, is the equivalence between equivalence and inequivalence, restricted and general economies, it is also that infinity between them that allows us to say they are the same. In other words, if it is by analogy that they can be compared, it is also analogy that opens up the very difference between them. Economimesis exists in the passage between equivalence and excess, restricted and general economies, tending towards their equivalence—but a tendency that would continue forever without reaching its conclusion because what brings them together also separates them. An infinite circle, asymptotic, almost a straight line, "the passage of the infinite", as Derrida says: either the finite passage between one infinity and another or the passage of the infinity between two finitudes. One because of the other17.

Now, what is Derrida's argument against all this? In that first moment of deconstruction, he pointed out the limit to, the aporia of, Kant's argument. God gives Himself to be seen in the poet, gives the gift to the poet, gives the gift of giving to the poet. The incomparability of the poet is

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17 And the possibility of this "double reading" also exists in the original French. The passage just cited reads: "C'est même, si l'on peut encore dire, la fonction du passage à infini: passage de l'infini entre don et dette" (italics Derrida), 'Economimesis', Mimesis des articulations, ed. Sylviane Agacinski et al., Flammarion, 1975, p. 72.
only possible because of the incomparability of God. But this incomparability or gift is only possible in turn because it is already compared or given back. If the poet is only possible because of God, God is only possible because of the poet. Or, along the same lines, we might say that for Kant the second poet imitates not the product but the productivity of the first poet, his power to produce analogies or metaphors (not copies) of himself. But this very productivity would not exist until after that second poet had imitated him. What the second poet seems to be imitating, in other words, would not actually exist until after it had been imitated. To the extent that this argument is aporetic, however, this inversion does not change anything much: insofar as it is the poet, the giving back of the gift by the poet, that makes God, God’s gift, possible, it is simply the poet and the giving back of the gift that are the new God and gift. If God is only possible because of the poet, this poet is still only possible because of God; if the gift is only possible because it is given back, this giving back is still only possible because of the gift. And the same with the two poets: insofar as it is the second poet who seems to precede the first and imitate nothing, it is now the second poet and his imitation of nothing that are the new first poet and imitation of something. But what must be grasped here is that this circularity itself is only possible because of a certain "gift" or "imitation" outside of it, a "gift" or "imitation" that cannot be explained by it.

Let us go back over all this again more slowly. If the poet, the giving of the poet, is only possible because of God, the giving of God, this God and this giving are only possible because of the poet, because the gift is already given back. If the second poet (man) is only possible because of the first poet (God), this first poet is only possible because of the second. This can be understood—and can only ever be understood—as saying: if God is only possible because of the poet, the poet is only possible because of God; if the gift is only possible because it is given back, it can be given back only because it is given. But before this circularity, before this circularity which explains everything, there must be a certain imitation of nothing by the second poet, a certain gift or return of nothing. We say that the poet gives only because of God, gives only because he has already given back to God, which is true, but before this can be said, before this circle is formed, the poet must simply give or imitate nothing—must simply give or imitate nothing because this circle (this circle which says that you can give only because you have been given, because you have already given back) is not
possible until after the gift is given (back), because this circle (this circle which says that you can imitate the productivity of God only because of the productivity of God) is only possible after God has been imitated. If the gift is given only to be given back and given back only because it is given, this is only possible because of the "gift", because the gift has already been "given back". If we can imitate God only because of God’s power to produce analogies or metaphors of Himself, this is only possible because of "God", because "God" has already been imitated. There is thus a certain delay or difference—chance—opened up between the gift and its return, between the first and second poets: it cannot be assumed that the gift will be returned because this could be certain only after it has been returned; it cannot be assumed that God will be imitated because this could be certain only after he has been imitated. God, the first poet, must give the "gift", the "gift of giving", to man, to the second poet, without the surety that it will be returned because it is not a gift (a gift which, by definition, must be returned) until after it has been returned. Or, better if the gift is always returned (and it is nothing before this, can only be given because it is given back), this is possible only because it might have not been, only after the contingency that the second poet will return nothing.\footnote{There is thus a connection to be drawn here between Derrida’s analysis in 'E' and his argument against Lacan in which he says that it is always possible that a letter might not arrive ('Le facteur de la vérité', The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 444). It is not that the post-card does not arrive—even its non-arrival, its arrival at another place, is an arrival of sorts—it is rather that for any particular arrival it is possible that it might not have arrived. This like the gift: it is always given, always given back, but this only because it is possible that it might not have been given or given back. Derrida also speaks of this in 'Envois', The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, ibid, p. 123. One could relate this very well to what Baudrillard says about the masses: with them, it is always possible that the message does not arrive, that your questions will not receive a response. We will be returning to this in Chapter Four.}

There are always, thus, two gifts at the same time, a gift and a giving in return outside of the circle. On the one hand, there is the giving of the gift by God to the poet—a gift which cannot be explained by the circle because this circle does not exist until it has been given back by the poet. And, on the other, there is the giving back of the gift by the poet to God—a gift which cannot be explained by the circle because this circle does not exist until it has been given back by the poet. At once, therefore, the gift always returns, has already returned (the gift can be given only because it has already been returned and can be returned only because it has been given) and there is a certain "gift" or "gift in return" left over, that "gift" which allows this circularity. Not that this "gift" is
anything—we could no sooner say what it is than it would return, than it would only be possible because it has returned—or at the same time as it is, there is always a certain "gift" or "gift in return" excluded to allow us to say what it is, to allow this circularity. And this "gift" can be understood as the fact that for this circle to be possible the first and second poet must both imitate nothing, must both come before the other (the second poet does not exist before the first, obviously, but the first—and even the circularity between the first and the second—also does not exist before the second). Or, to put it another way, the first and second poets must be simultaneous, at the same time.

With this in mind, we might look at that comparison or exchange, that "commerce" which is "presupposed", that allows Kant to construct that hierarchy or opposition between the Fine-Arts and nature. We might just quote part of what Derrida says again. It is where he is speaking of that als ob or as if, that analogy or metaphor, which underwrites the third Critique:

But since an analogy has already made natura naturans the art of an author-subject, and, one could even say, of an artist-god, mimesis displays the identification of human action with divine action—of one freedom with another. The communicability of pure judgements of taste, the (universal, infinite, limitless) exchange between subjects who have free hands in the exercise or the appreciation of fine art, all that presupposes a commerce between the divine artist and the human one.

Earlier, we implied that Kant contradicts himself, that there is an aporia here, in that, on the one hand, he says that the Fine-Arts and nature are incomparable, and on the other, he compares them; their incomparability is only possible because they are already compared. This is true, but it is perhaps more subtle than this. Kant makes no direct comparison between the Fine-Arts and nature; rather, this contradictory comparison is insinuated in precisely a roundabout or indirect—a circular or metaphorical—way, via a comparison or commerce between the "divine artist" and the "human one". (And we might say this even of that comparison between liberal and mercenary art we looked at, where Kant speaks of the way that liberal art needs a kind of "constraint" or it has "no body and evaporates altogether". There too, the comparison is introduced

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19 This can be related to Derrida's distinction between polysemy and dissemination in 'WM' and 'DS': polysemy in which the loss or dispersion of meaning always turns a profit; dissemination in which there is a real "loss" of meaning—a "loss" that contains no truth, no meaning ('WM', 248-9, 264-6, 'DS', 268-9). In a way, therefore, there is no distinction between them, they cannot be distinguished.
via a prior comparison between the soul and the body: liberal art is to mercenary art as the soul is to the body.) That is to say, there are not just two elements here in this comparison between the Fine-Arts and nature, but four: the Fine-Arts, nature, the "divine artist" (God) and the "human one" (the poet), where the relationship of the Fine-Arts to nature would be like that of the poet to God. It is the prior analogy between the poet and God which allows the incomparability of and the comparison between the Fine-Arts and nature. It is the analogy between the poet and God that plays, as it were, the role of that incomparable that allows the Fine-Arts and nature to be compared. We might express it as a mathematical proportion, in which the fourth term—the Fine-Arts, what is sought to be determined—is given by the other three. Putting it diagrammatically (the Fine-Arts are represented by "x"):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{God} & = x \\
\text{nature} & \\
\text{poet} & = x
\end{align*}
\]

Again, it is not so much that the Fine-Arts and nature are directly compared. It is rather that the relationship between the Fine-Arts and nature that is like that between the poet and God. The Fine-Arts are determined by the other three elements of that proportion, can only ever come after that proportion is given. And this is certainly part of what Derrida is saying: it corresponds to that first moment of deconstruction we discussed above. But, again, if this was all that Derrida did, he would simply fall into the aporia in another way, for it can be shown that each of those four terms has to wait until that proportion is given before it can be determined; that if the Fine-Arts have to wait until that proportion is given, this proportion itself cannot be given, we cannot know they are in proportion, until the Fine-Arts are determined. Just as the proportion between the poet and God determines that between the Fine-Arts and nature, so that between the Fine-Arts and nature determines that between the poet and God. After all, if the analogy between the poet and God consists in the fact that they are both authors, they cannot be authors outside of what they have written. Which is to say, finally, that not only must each of those four fractions be determined by the proportion between the other three, given as comparable by it, but they must also determine that proportion, be that incomparable which gives it. They must come not only after that proportion, but also before it. At the same time as it. And this goes not only for each of the terms within any particular proportion, but also for each one of those proportions as such, that great chain
of proportions that Derrida shows makes up the *Third Critique*. The true enigma of proportion here—its ruse and naivety, its possibility and impossibility—is that each proportion in this endless, hierarchical series of proportions, as well as each element within each proportion, at once must model itself upon all those others, presupposes all those others, and is itself the model for all those others, is presupposed by all those others. Each is both that "x" which is determined by all those others and that "x" which determines all those others.

Derrida is not simply arguing, therefore, for the priority of the comparable over the incomparable, that the Fine-Arts are given by that proportion determining them. Rather, he is asserting the *simultaneity* of both over either. And this would be to say that proportionality itself can never be seen, that we are always either too soon or too late for proportion—as he says of Kant's attempt to classify the Fine-Arts using this proportion: "The rigorous criterion is lacking" (*E*, 6). But this is not to say, as in that first reading, that it is proportionality, a prior proportion, that is missing to ensure that all else is in proportion. Our very ability to say that it is *proportion* that is excluded is only an effect of a certain proportion; it can only be either too soon or too late. We can mean proportion here only "proportionately", comparatively; in a way, we cannot say what is excluded to allow proportion. Derrida himself is not choosing—or is not only choosing—what is excluded to allow proportion. Instead, he is saying that there is no possible basis, no "rigorous criterion", for saying what allows proportion, what is excluded to allow proportion. He is trying to expose the pure preference of Kant, of philosophy in general, for God and nature over the poet and the Fine-Arts, the pure preference for proportion as what is excluded to allow all else to be put into proportion\(^\text{20}\). Or, again, if we have already decided, if we must always prefer one over the other,

\(^{20}\) In the same way, we cannot finally say why poetry is the highest of the arts; that standard against which it is judged is always excluded (or, if poetry is this standard, we cannot finally say what poetry is, "poetry" itself is always excluded). From *E*:

The criteria here are those of *presentation*. Poetry, more and better, presents—the plenitude of thought. It binds presentation (on the side of expression) to a fullness of thought. It better 'binds' the presenting to the presented in its plenitude. Poetry, more and better, presents the fullness, the fullness of conceptual thought or the fullness of the idea, in so far as it frees us from the limits of external sensible nature. By remaining an art, a fine art, it certainly still belongs to the imagination. And like all language, it is still inadequate to the absolute plenitude of the supra-sensible (*E*, 18).

We might say, paradoxically, that in this reading poetry forms a standard of judgement because it, more and better, presents its own inadequacy in relation to the fullness of thought; because it, more and better, thinks the impossibility of finally naming the
say what is excluded to allow proportion, Derrida also wants to think—this would be the second moment of deconstruction—why it is impossible, finally, to impose this choice, why there is always something excluded to allow this imposition.

We have been speaking of analogy and metaphor in 'Economimesis' and arguing that they always involve the question of proportionality, that those proportionalities we see in Kant's *Third Critique* are also a series of metaphors—and in his 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy' Derrida says that metaphor is always a question of proportion, of four. We see the same enigma in metaphor in general as we see in this relationship between God, nature, the poet and the Fine-Arts, where the Fine-Arts are determined as a "metaphor" of Nature:

One can always convene four members, two by two, a kind of family whose relationships are evident and whose names are known. The hidden term is not anonymous, does not have to be invented; there is nothing hermetic or elliptical about the exchange. It is almost a comparison or a double comparison. Now, Aristotle remarks, there are cases in which one of the terms is missing. The term has to be invented then. More surprisingly, in these cases the impression is stronger and occasionally also truer, more poetic: the turn of speech is more generous, more generative, more ingenious. Aristotle illustrates this with an example: an example that is the most illustrious, that is illustrative par excellence, the most natural lustre there is. It is as concerns this example's power to engender that the question of the missing name comes to be asked and that one of the members of the analogical square has to be supplemented.

Aristotle's "example" takes up the relationship between the casting forth of seed and sowing and the sun and its rays. He remarks that, though the casting forth of seed is called sowing, the casting forth of rays by the sun has no name. One would think it does because because the "casting forth" of rays by the sun is like the sower sewing his seeds. We can thus construct a kind of proportion:


21 'WM', 242. See also 'WM', 231, 237, 249. On the whole question of this is to that as that is to that, see 'The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics', *Margins of Philosophy*, op. cit., where Derrida speaks of the relationship between Being, analogy and proportion—or, more precisely, of that "analogy" or "proportion" between Being, analogy and proportion that allows Being, analogy and proportion (p. 184).

22 Derrida writes, citing Aristotle's *Poetics*:

'It may be that some of the terms thus related have no special name of their own, but for all that they will be metaphorically described in just the same way. Thus to cast
The sun is what allows this analogy to be seen. That is to say, there is a prior analogy determining that between "casting forth seed" and "sowing" and that is that between the sun and its rays: the sun "sows" or "casts forth" its rays. The sun is what excludes itself to allow that proportion or analogy between the other three to be constructed, to allow "the question of the missing name" to be asked and one of the members of the analogical square to be supplemented. It is the sun that excludes itself to allow all else to be seen, to allow all metaphor concerning it. If everything can only be known metaphorically, it is because the sun is metaphor itself, the first metaphor, the metaphor of metaphor, as it were—a metaphor of metaphor that can be known as such, that is finally non-metaphorical. The sun is the non-metaphorical origin of all metaphor: it is only because we can say that the sun casts forth its rays that we can ask what is the word for this "casting forth" of rays.

But, as Derrida asks: "Where has it ever been seen that there is the same relation between the sun and its rays as between sowing and seeds?" (WM', 243) We can see it, as we have said, only because of the sun, that through which everything is seen: the sun "casts forth" its flames as the sower casts forth his seeds. But it is precisely this that we are seeking to determine here. Does the sun "cast forth" its rays as the sower sows his seeds? In order to make the analogy between the sun and the casting forth of flames, we already need that analogy between the sun and the casting forth of flames. This metaphor already supposes another metaphor, this analogy a prior analogy. This first example Aristotle gives, Derrida implies, is really no different from that one he gives immediately after it: "the case of a lexis that would be metaphorical in all its aspects" (WM', 243), in which,

No reference being properly named in such a metaphor, the figure is carried off into the adventure of a long, implicit sentence, a secret narrative which nothing assures us will lead us back to the proper name. The metaphorisation of metaphor, its bottomless overdeterminability, seems to be
inscribed in the structure of metaphor, but as its negativity. As soon as one admits that all the terms in an analogical relation are already caught up, one by one, in a metaphorical relation, everything begins to function no longer as a sun, but as a star, the punctual source of truth or properness remaining invisible or nocturnal (WM', 243-4).

But we should be more precise here. The paradox Derrida is hinting at is that the sun is at once determined by the proportion between those other three—whatever we can say of it is only by way of analogy with something else, for example, the sower and his seeds—and what allows them to be put into proportion: it is the sun, the "casting forth" of the rays of the sun, that which this proportion is trying to determine, which in fact allows this proportion to be seen. The sun is not just a fourth determined by those other three, but a fifth, as it were, that allows the question of the missing name to be asked and one of the members of the analogical square to be supplemented. That is to say, with the sun there is always a prior analogy or proportion, the fact that one of its terms is only possible because of a prior comparison (here the fact that the "casting forth" of flames is only possible because of the prior analogy between the sun and its rays and the sower and his seeds), but this prior analogy or proportion is the sun itself. Or, to put it another way, if the sun is usually understood as that incomparable which allows all else to be seen, what can be seen here is that it is itself only possible because of a prior comparison. This might be what Derrida means by the "bottomless overdeterminability" of metaphor above: if metaphor is only possible because of the sun as the metaphor of metaphor, this metaphor of metaphor is itself only metaphorical. But, as we have tried to show before, precisely because this argument is aporetic, this comparison or metaphor that precedes and allows the incomparable or metaphor of metaphor, this prior visibility that allows the sun to be seen as always compared, already metaphorical, can only take the place of that incomparable or metaphor of metaphor, the sun. It is, again, an incomparable that excludes the incomparable, a metaphor that excludes metaphor, the sun that excludes the sun. It is the sun that is implied in any attempt to say what the sun is; it is the sun that is necessary to define the sun.

But Derrida's point is that something is also excluded in saying this. If it is always the sun that is excluded to allow the sun, this cannot be said—we cannot say anything about this sun, or even that it is a sun—until after its exclusion, until after that exclusion which is its
metaphorisation. If it is always the sun that is caught up in this proportionality in which it is said that the sun "casts forth" its rays as the sower sows his seeds, it also cannot be the sun, the sun cannot be seen, until after it has been determined by this proportionality. At the same time as it is the sun that is excluded to allow the sun, as it is only the sun that can exclude the sun, something is excluded to allow this very circularity, this irrefutability and undemonstrability, in which what is to be defined is already implied in its definition. This is perhaps why Derrida speaks of all this as a "metaphorical redoubling" or an "ellipsis of ellipsis": it is at once the literalisation of metaphor via metaphor, a revealing, and the fact that this metaphor itself is only "metaphoric" two steps (at least) from the literal, an elision even of that elision, when we can no longer say what is hidden to allow the sun to shine through it.

These two readings are also possible for that passage: "no referent being properly named in such a metaphor, the figure is carried off into the adventure of a long, implicit sentence; a secret narrative which nothing assures us will lead back to the proper name". On the one hand, this "long, implicit sentence", this endless series of proportions, does lead back to the proper name, and indeed, can only lead back to the proper name. It is through them that we are able to properly name the sun, to say that the sun "casts forth flames", is "illustrative"—leads us back to the proper name because this process of metaphor is circular: it is because the sun "casts forth flames", is "illustrative", that we can say the sun "casts forth flames", is "illustrative". But on the other hand, this "long, implicit sentence" does not lead us back to the proper name. The proper name is only an effect of the sentence; that proper name which precedes the sentence and to which the sentence returns is only an effect of the sentence. And if we can say that this is merely circular—that if the proper name is only possible because of the sentence, this sentence in turn is only possible because of the proper name—this is itself only possible because of a certain "sentence" that is always excluded. This is why, when Derrida says that "each time that there is a metaphor, there is doubtless a sun somewhere" and "each time that there is a sun, metaphor has begun" in the following passage, these two phrases are not simply aporetic. Metaphor as sun-like and the sun as a metaphor do not entirely imply one another for, if the sun is metaphorical, then the very idea of metaphor can itself only be "metaphorical", we cannot literally say that metaphor leads to the sun. It is only
"metaphorically" that we can say metaphor leads to the sun. So that, if in one way we can say what leads to the sun—metaphor, metaphor as the sun—in another way, we cannot. At the very moment the aporia between them is constructed, there is also something outside of it, excluded from it, which makes it both possible and impossible:

Above we said that the sun is the unique, irreplaceable, natural referent, around which everything must turn. Now, following the same route, however, we must reverse the proposition: the literally, properly named sun, the sensory sun, does not furnish poor knowledge solely because it furnishes poor metaphor, it is itself solely metaphorical. Since, as Aristotle tells us, we can no longer be certain of its sensory characteristics as of its 'properties', the sun is never properly present in discourse. Each time that there is a metaphor, there is doubtless a sun somewhere; but each time that there is a sun, metaphor has begun. If the sun is metaphorical always, already, it is no longer completely natural. It is always, already a lustre, a chandelier, one might say an artificial construction, if one could still give credence to this signification when nature has disappeared. For if the sun is no longer completely natural, what in nature does remain natural? What is most natural in nature bears within itself the means to emerge from itself; it accommodates itself to 'artificial' light, eclipses itself, eclipses itself, always has been other, itself: father, seed, fire, eye, egg, etc., that is, so many other things, providing moreover the measure of good and bad metaphors, clear and obscure metaphors; and then, at the limit, the measure of that which is worse or better than metaphor ('WM', 251).

And what is all this to say about Kantian economimesis, which is, as Derrida reminds us, a kind of "helio-poetics" based on an analogy with the sun, "the generous over-abundance of a solar source" that gives itself "without counting" ('E',12)? God gives to the poet, as the poet gives to God, like the sun gives. Derrida notes that Kant speaks of the sun twice in the Third Critique. The first time, he cites a poem by King Frederick of Prussia in which the King illustrates or animates his intellectual idea by means of an aesthetic attribute, when he compares the waning of his career to the setting of the sun. It is to the sun that the waning of his career is compared; it is the sun which allows the King to make his comparison. In the second example, by contrast, it is the sun itself which is compared, made the object of an aesthetic attribute, when the King compares the sun's rising to the "springing forth of calm from virtue". This second example is surprising because, within the rhetoric of poetry, it is usually the intelligible concept which is regarded as unclear and the sensible sun which is presumed to be better known. Richard Klein in his article 'Kant's

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23 The Critique of Judgement, op. cit., §49
24 Ibid, §49
Sunshine', written to accompany his translation of 'Economimesis' into English, says of this inversion:

Here, conversely, it is thought that comes to vivify a sensible representation with more thought than can be expressed in words or 'can ever be comprehended in a definite concept'. Less than a concept, virtue here as an aesthetical attribute serves only as an approximate representation of the thing, not the concept itself; virtue in this comparison is also more than a concept since it gives more thought to be thought than a concept can express. What it gains on the side of extension, of the vastness which it lends to our idea of the sun's streaming, it loses on the side of concrete determinations of the quellen. 25

What we have here in this inversion is just that possibility that Derrida raised with regard to Aristotle: that the sun, far from being the "non-metaphorical prime mover of metaphor" (WM', 203), the metaphor of metaphor, metaphor or analogy as such, is itself only metaphorical or analogue the very beginning; that far from being that single known thing against which all else is compared, by which all else is known, the sun is itself unknown, illuminated from another source, here "calm from virtue springing". In that sense we have discussed before, however, this would remain a simple reversal: if the sun is only possible because of some prior illumination, this illumination could only be the sun; the sun would be the final guarantor of all illumination, even its own. The prodigality of the sun in giving itself, in being given in every comparison, ensures that it will always return. If the sun gives "more thought to be thought than a concept can express", if the sun is always excluded in any expression of it, this exclusion is the sun, is only possible because of the sun: the sun is this very excess or generosity, this giving, itself. But, in another way, precisely because of this, we cannot speak of this as the sun, the "sun" is obscured in its very naming as the sun.

If the "sun" always contains more thought than "can ever be comprehended in a definite concept", it must be greater than even this concept; it would be precisely what is excluded to allow us to speak of the sun as containing more thought than "can ever be expressed in a definite concept", as generous.

We cannot say what is excluded to allow all comparison, to allow everything to be compared to it. There is again here a kind of "metaphorical redoubling" or "ellipsis of ellipsis": at once a metaphor more and a metaphor less, the sun returning to itself, giving (to) itself, and the exclusion of something to ensure this, to allow us to say this. There is always a profit and a "loss" at the

25 Richard Klein, 'Kant's Sunshine', op. cit., p. 31. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'KS', followed by a page number.
same time\textsuperscript{26}.

\textsuperscript{26} For example, let us look at the following passage from 'WM':

If one wanted to conceive and to class all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, one metaphor, at least, would remain excluded, outside the system: the metaphor, at the very least, without which the concept of metaphor could not be constructed, or, to syncopate an entire chain of reasoning, the metaphor of metaphor. This extra metaphor, remaining outside the field that it allows to be circumscribed, extracts or abstracts itself from this field, thus subtracting itself as a metaphor less. By virtue of what we may entitle, for economical reasons, tropic supplementarity, since the extra turn of speech becomes the missing turn of speech, the taxonomy or history of philosophical metaphors will never make a profit. The state or status of the complement will always be denied to the terminable \textit{dehiscence} of the supplement (if we may be permitted to garden this botanical metaphor). The field is never saturated ('WM', 219-22).

Our first reading of this passage might be that there is always a metaphor of metaphor that is excluded to allow us to speak of metaphor, that it is only metaphorically that we can speak of metaphor. But here, if metaphor is always missing, it is already replaced by another metaphor; if there is always a loss involved in metaphor, this loss can only be understood metaphorically, it is already made up. That metaphor of metaphor that is excluded to allow metaphor, that metaphor of metaphor that every metaphor stands in for, can only be spoken of by means of a certain syncopation, a certain contraction, in other words, a certain metaphorisation—"to syncopate an entire chain of reasoning, the metaphor of metaphor". But, as before, if metaphor is only possible because of the metaphor of metaphor and this metaphor of metaphor only because of metaphor, if metaphor is only possible because of the loss of metaphor and this loss can only lead to a gain, Derrida also wants to think the "loss" involved in this very circularity, the fact that if we can only think what metaphor is metaphorically, what is excluded to allow metaphor metaphorically, we also cannot say what metaphor is, cannot say what is excluded to allow metaphor, because "metaphor" would be excluded by being called metaphor, because what allows metaphor would be excluded by being called metaphor. He wants to think that we cannot say what is excluded to allow metaphor because the possibility of calling what is excluded metaphor would only be possible after its exclusion. As with representation and exchange in general, if what is excluded to allow metaphor can only be represented, exchanged, metaphorised, it also cannot be; it is precisely what is excluded to allow all representation, exchange, metaphor. All this to say, finally, that if the loss of metaphor is only possible because of metaphor, if this loss can only be known metaphorically, in another way this would itself only be possible because of a certain "loss". And hence the inadequacy of Paul Ricouer's summary of Derrida's argument concerning metaphor as the destruction of "metaphysical discourse by reduction to aporias" (The Rule of Metaphor, trans. Robert Czerny et al., University of Toronto Press, 1977, p. 287), for precisely Derrida wants to show what is excluded to ensure this aporia, that in a way metaphysical discourse cannot be entirely reduced to aporiae.

This might be related to that "theme" of usury Derrida canvases at the beginning of 'WM'. One way of understanding it is to say that, if metaphor begins with a borrowing, if the concept of metaphor is assumed, this speculation always leads to a profit, allows us to repay our debts, to say what metaphor is. This would be that "unity of profit and loss" ('WM', 212) which characterises the Hegelian concept of metaphor. But Derrida also wants to show that at the same time as the debt is repaid, that it is by metaphor that we are able to say what metaphor is, this would itself only be possible because of another "borrowing"—but this time a "borrowing" of what we cannot say ('WM', 252, 255). There is always a certain interest owing on any loan. This would account for Derrida's emphasis on the question of interest throughout 'WM' ('WM', 209, 220). We will come back to all these issues of borrowing, assumption, interest and debt when we look at Samuel Weber's 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions', Institution and Interpretation, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, in Chapter Four.
We see the same thing with representation and metaphor in general: we are only able to define representation because of representation; we are only able to speak of metaphor because of metaphor. As with the sun, any attempt to attribute something to representation and metaphor is only possible because of representation and metaphor, because it has already been represented or metaphorised. And, indeed, in any attempt to ask what makes this circularity itself possible, we can only ever get the answer representation or metaphor. But Derrida is also trying to think what is excluded to allow this infinity, this "passage of the infinity" between profit and loss, in which, if representation and metaphor are always excluded, this always produces another representation or metaphor, this is only possible because of another representation or metaphor. In other words, Derrida is trying to think what is excluded to ensure that it is only ever representation and metaphor that are excluded to allow representation and metaphor, that what is excluded to allow this circularity of representation and metaphor can only ever be representation and metaphor. But he can only say what it is tautologically, repeat the very question he puts to himself. He can only say again that what is excluded to allow representation, the circularity of representation, is a certain "representation", that what is excluded to allow metaphor, the circularity of metaphor, is a certain "metaphor". But he wants to think what is excluded to ensure that this is so. As he says:

There is no answer to such a question [of what is excluded from economimesis]. One cannot say, it is this or that, this or that thing. We will see why. And the impossibility of finding examples in this case, Kant's inability to furnish any at a certain moment will be very noticeable. In the same way that we have often had to treat examples preceding the law in a reflective manner, we are now about to discover a sort of law without example; and first of all we shall state our answer in a tautological form, as the inverted duplication of the question (E, 21).

"A kind of law without example": what does Derrida mean by this? We have spoken of economimesis as a system of the example, of the example preceding the law. Economimesis proceeds by examples, as does aesthetic judgement in general: it is, as we have said, both a singular pleasure and a pleasure precisely in the singular (the example). The example for Kant, whether as a sensible representation of an intelligible concept or an intelligible attribute of a sensible representation,

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27 Similarly, in 'The Retrait of Metaphor', we might say that it is the withdrawal of Being that allows metaphor and metaphor that allows us to speak of the withdrawal of Being; but at the same time there would also be the "withdrawal" of something—"Being", "metaphor", "withdrawal" itself—that allows this circularity. See 'The Retrait of Metaphor', op. cit., pp. 23-4.
contains more thought than can be expressed in words or "can ever be comprehended in a definite concept". The example always exceeds the concept it wants to exemplify, but this excess is the example, the very power of the example, precisely what is being attempted to be exemplified in economism: we give there examples of the example's power to give, to give more than it gives. The relationship between the example and what it exemplifies is not that usual "constative function as reproducible copies of each other's form", but rather that between two modes of production themselves. As Klein says:

To speak more precisely, the way the sun is like virtue here is not to be understood in the way one image is said to resemble another—in their representational, constative function as reproducible copies of each other's form or content or essence. In this example it is the sun's shining that is compared to the streaming forth of calm from virtue. Two *quellen* are being compared, two modes of springing forth abundantly as from a source; two actions are placed side by side and compared as if one were the double of the other[...] Examples not only reflect, they touch; they not only illustrate, they transform. A good example, merely by performing itself being what it is, incites another to repeat the performance, to enact the same role (KS, 31).

Like representation and metaphor, therefore, the example in economism is caught up in its own definition: we can only give an example of the example. At once, *more* than a concept, the example is incomparable, enacts itself freely, contains more thought than can be "comprehended in a definite concept", and, *less* than a concept, the example exemplifies something only in *not* exemplifying it, imitates the law only in *not* imitating the law, in being the exception to the law. We cannot say what the example and what it exemplifies have in common. But, again, this loss, this "less than the concept", can be understood to be what is being exemplified: this itself is the example; it redounds to the profit of the example insofar as it can be shown to be less a concept, less conceptualisable, than what it exemplifies. But, as with representation and metaphor, it is at just this point that Derrida wants to insinuate a certain gap or difference, a limit to our ability to say what is excluded by the example. If the fact that we can only give an example of the example, an example of what is excluded to allow the example, *is* the example, it is also precisely for this reason that we *cannot* say what the example is or tries to exemplify, that we cannot even say that our inability to give an example of it is the example. The "example" is excluded by this law of the example, this law that says that the example is beyond the law. Whatever the example is,
whatever is exemplary about the example, is excluded by being made into an example, an example of the law of the example. This example without law is also a law without example. But this is not simply to replace reflective judgment with determinate judgment, an example without law for a law without example. If this inversion is always possible, it is also important to note that Derrida in that passage above speaks of this other of economimesis as only a "sort" of law—only a "sort" of law because it could no sooner be stated than it would be its own exception. And, in a way, this would be the "law" of economimesis itself.

The paradox of economimesis is that precisely insofar as it can speak of the example, it is no longer an example, the example is excluded; insofar as it can only give an example of what it is speaking about, it cannot really give an example of what it is speaking about at all. And if, again, this loss can be understood as the example, in another way, we also cannot say what this loss is: it is a loss that cannot be exemplified, cannot be turned to the profit of the example. We might say, indeed, that what economimesis excludes is the example, that what makes economimesis possible is the exclusion of the example, but this would be only to give an example of it—and, insofar as we can provide an example of it, it is not really outside economimesis at all. Insofar as we must provide an example of what is outside economimesis, there can be nothing outside it. But Derrida also wants us to think what is excluded to allow this tautology itself, what of the "example" is excluded in being made exemplary. Once more, not to actually say what it is, to exemplify it—but rather to realise that, if this is necessary, it is at the same time excluded by being described as excluded, as exemplary of what is excluded. If, on the one hand, there is nothing outside economimesis insofar as we always have to provide an example of it, on the other, there is nothing inside it either, we cannot say what its law or example is, insofar as we can only provide an example of it. If we cannot say what is outside economimesis because "one cannot say, it is this or that, it is this or that thing", it is for this reason also that we cannot say what it is inside it: "one cannot say, it is this or that, it is this or that thing". We can only give an "example" of it, and if this means that we cannot say what economimesis is not, it also means that we cannot say what economimesis is.
This is what Derrida says of analogy in economimesis (as we have said, to give an example of something is, in a way, to give an analogy of it; to give an analogy of something is, in a way, to give an example of it):

Analogy is the rule. What does that mean? It means that it means and that it says that it means that it wants and that it wants what it wants, for example.

For example. It is by example that it means that it means and that it says that it means that it wants and that it wants what it wants by example (E, 13-4).

It is important to note here that Derrida is not simply saying that it is by analogy that it says, by analogy that it means, by analogy that it wants; rather, he says that it is by analogy that it "means that it means", "says that it means that it wants", "wants what it wants" and "says that it wants what it wants". Because it is only by analogy or example that we can speak of analogy and the example, we cannot say, mean, want analogy or the example, but only, as it were, analogously, by example, say, mean, want, analogy and the example. If analogy and the example say, mean, want, we can only say, mean, want that saying, meaning and wanting. Thus, in that example Klein gives above, he gives the example of how the sun gives to explain how the example gives, or explains how the example gives by comparison with the sun. But it is just this necessity of giving the example of the sun as that which gives all examples which, if it does allow the example to be given, also means that it cannot be given; the fact that the example of all examples can only be given as an example means that the example cannot be given, that we cannot know what we are saying when we speak of the example and of the sun as the example of all examples. We can only mean that we mean, say that we mean, want what we mean and mean what we want, for example.

IV

This is the second moment or phase of deconstruction: if it can only be representation that is excluded to allow representation, metaphor that is excluded to allow metaphor, the incomparable or inexchangeable that is excluded to allow the incomparable or inexchangeable, Derrida is also trying to think what is excluded to allow this circularity, this self-definition. It is a question of the irrefutability and undemonstrability of all standards of measurement, judgement, taste and value,
the way they must be "like themselves alone"\textsuperscript{28}, self-evident, already implied in their own definition. If they are undemonstrable because there is nothing to prove them against, they are also irrefutable for the same reason. It is the enigma implicit in all representation, all thought. Even Derrida himself can only repeat it, insofar as différence is a kind of measure or judgement: différence must be assumed; even the very impossibility or non-presence of différence is only possible because of différence\textsuperscript{29}. But différence is also the thought of this assumption itself, as though it did not already exist, as though différence were not already implied in its own definition. Différence is also the attempt to think that something which is excluded to ensure that only différence allows différence—something that, if it can only be called différence, also precedes the very possibility of calling it différence, can only by means of a certain "différence" be called différence.

Derrida says something very interesting about all of this in his book \textit{The Truth in Painting}. In it, he compares the logic of Kant's Sublime to that of St Anselm's proof of the existence of God:

Kant has introduced comparison where he says it should have no place. He introduces it, he lets it introduce itself, in an apparently very subtle manner. Not by simple re-implying magnitude in the comparable, but by comparing the comparable with the incomparable. The logic of the argument, it seems to me, and perhaps the thing itself, are not without relation to the proof of the existence of God according to St Anselm (\textit{aliquid quo nihil majus cogitari potest})\textsuperscript{30}.

This proof of St Anselm's is usually translated as: God is something than which nothing greater can be thought. But the intriguing thing here is that God is not so much given as something—as soon as He was, something greater could always be thought, that which gives Him—but as nothing, a nothing than which anything greater can be thought. However, insofar as this thing is greater than God, it can only take His place, it can only be that God of which St Anselm speaks. God is not simply incomparable, but that incomparable which ensures that nothing is incomparable, that everything is compared, including Himself. In a sense, therefore, nothing itself becomes the

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{The Critique of Judgement}, op. cit., §49. Cited 'KS', 35.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{The Truth in Painting}, op. cit., p. 137.
proof of God's existence: it is because nothing cannot be thought without becoming something, without being compared, that God exists. That nothing which is excluded for everything to take its place is God. We can only name what is outside God, what is greater than Him and gives Him—and everything is greater than God and gives Him—as God Himself.

Derrida would be quite right in diagnosing this logic in Kant: as we have seen, there is always something that comes before and is greater than God, the first poet, the sun, metaphor and the example in Kant, but whatever it is can only take their place. There is nothing outside economimesis, whether it is understood as poetry, analogy or St Anselm's God: nothing is always something. We cannot think anything greater than "something than which nothing greater can be thought" because this nothing which can be thought as greater than something is always something. Or, if we are always outside economimesis because anything can be thought as something than which nothing greater can be thought, this is only to be inside it in another way because whatever it is can only be something31. But, as we have seen, it is at just this point that Derrida wants to rethink the problem, wants to asks what is excluded to make the undemonstrability and irrefutability of St Anselm's God possible. St Anselm is right insofar as his God not only has to be something, something than which nothing greater can be thought, but also nothing, that nothing of "than which nothing greater can be thought". St Anselm is right insofar as everything, every something, that is greater than God can only take the place of that nothing. But what is opened up here is the possibility that something—nothing—is excluded to allow us to say this, to allow St Anselm to say it is God who is excluded to allow God. That is to say, precisely insofar as God is not

31 We might think here of a review by Marion Hobson of The Truth in Painting, in which she writes:

In this perspective the colossal and the parergon would have a kind of dérailleuer function: maximising the play of what is not within man's scope and purpose, without the bike chain coming off altogether, and thought becoming impossible. In other words, is Kant's brand of teleology a constant recuperation, in the nick of time, of deconstructive forces? ('Scroll-Work', The Oxford Literary Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981, pp. 101-2).

In a way, Hobson is right. Derrida can be seen to be merely going one up on Kant in asking what precedes analogy and makes it possible. Derrida's différence can be understood as simply making analogy possible. Derrida would be recuperated by Kant for, in being higher than him, more God-like—if it were only a question of mastery—Derrida can only be compared to Kant within that system of analogy that Kant himself sets up. Derrida's différence would always be analogous to Kant's analogy. But is this all that Derrida means by différence? Can différence only be thought of as analogy, analogously?
just something but also what is excluded to allow all somethings, "He" would be excluded by being called God. To think God as at once something and that "nothing" that is excluded to ensure that He is always something is to think the very limits to calling Him anything, even God, even nothing. This is St Anselm's "mistake": if he is well able to think the limits to all those who claim to know what allows God, he fails to think the limits to his own naming of these limits, insofar as he says that it is God Himself who allows God. What we are speaking of as what allows representation or God cannot be represented, cannot be thought—or, if it must always be named, it is also what is excluded to allow this. Putting it a little epigrammatically, we might say that, as opposed to St Anselm, for whom nothing is the proof of God, for Derrida it is instead God who who testifies to the necessity of a certain "nothing", it is God who is the proof of "nothing".

If Derrida is always within this circle, then—if he can name what allows economimesis only because of economimesis, think that "nothing" that allows St Anselm's God only to name it, to repeat St Anselm's mistake—he also wants to think what precedes this circle and makes it possible. Thus, lurking behind the obvious subject-matter of 'Economimesis' is an argument about the Kantian transcendental a priori and the way that, if it allows all knowing or naming, it can itself only be known or named, as Kant attempts to do, by what it allows. It is a circle that perhaps bears some resemblance to that neo-Kantian hermeneutic circle, and it is this circle, in part, that Derrida wants to "deconstruct". This might explain Derrida's interest in 'Economimesis' in reconstituting some kind of "precritical time" in Kant, "anterior to all the disassociations, oppositions, and delimitations of critical discourse, 'older' even than the time of the transcendental aesthetic" 32, realising that it is a question of "thinking" what allows Kant to think or name these pre-conditions; the "pre-conditions", as it were, to those pre-conditions. Again, it is not that he can say what they are, not that they are simply outside the circle. It is, rather, a matter of thinking what is excluded by being included in this circle. And what is excluded might be called—anallogously, in a circular fashion—the circle itself, the mouth or source of all economimesis, all logos. It is a matter of

32 'E', 10. See also 'E' where Derrida speaks of the "distant origin of knowledge", "the point where all the distinctions, oppositions, limits remarked by the Kantian critique lose their pertinence" ('E', 8); the "root of pleasure" ('E', 9); an "immemorial time" ('E', 8, 10); the "origin of origin", which would also be a non-origin, "before" the origin ('E', 13); the "fold of mimesis" ('E', 13); the origin of "pure taste" ('E', 16) and value ('E', 18); the "ground of analogy, the logos of analogy" ('E', 19).
thinking what is excluded by the circle, the mouth, logos, what is excluded by representation. “Representation” itself. Or, in another sense, as we saw with St Anselm, nothing itself. Nothing is excluded by economimesis. Nothing is excluded by economimesis because it cannot be known or named without becoming something.

But before we return to ‘Economimesis’, we might briefly turn to another essay Derrida has written on this nothing, this O, this zero, that allows economimesis as the exchange or analogy between economics and linguistics: ‘The Double Session’. In ‘The Double Session’, Derrida takes up the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, whose poetry can be understood to trope in a way its own imitation. Everything in Mallarmé, that is, can be seen to figure its own mimesis, to stand in for representation itself. One of the examples Derrida gives of this is an essay Mallarmé once wrote on mime, ‘Mimique’. The mime of which Mallarmé speaks there can be seen to be a prosopopeia for Mallarmé’s own description of him: Mallarmé is writing not so much about mime as about his writing about mime. In other words, his writing is totally self-reflexive. And this is one way of reading Derrida’s “gloss” on ‘Mimique’:

The mime is acting from the moment he is ruled by no actual action and aims toward no form of verisimilitude. The act always plays out a difference without reference, or rather without a referent, without any absolute exteriority, and hence, without any inside. The mime mimes reference. He is not an imitator; he mimes imitation. The hymen interposes itself between mimicry and mimesis or rather between mimēsis and mimēsis (‘DS’, 219).

But this can become complicated, for Mallarmé knows that to imitate imitation it is necessary to imitate the very difference between the imitator and what he imitates, to imitate the very limit to imitation (that limit which makes imitation possible). Thus, when Mallarmé speaks in ‘Mimique’ of the mime, “white as a yet unwritten page”, who composes and sets down “a mute soliloquy” (‘DS’, 175), when he speaks elsewhere of the “windowpane” or “glass” (‘DS’, 232-3), of a “kind of wainscotting in scrollwork tracery, pretty enough to bring tears to the eye; shells, coilings, curves, reprises of motifs”(‘DS’, 180, 253), of the dancer’s “pirouette”(‘DS’, 240-1), of all the white objects in his poems—virginity, frigidity, snow, sails, swans’ wings, foam, paper, sperm, etc. (‘DS’, 253)—they all stand in for that white or blankness, that spacing, that makes representation possible. When he writes of that “wainscotting in scrollwork tracery”, with its “shells, coilings,
curves, reprises of motifs", that is, he knows that not only could his writing only resemble that scrollwork tracery by imitating the very difference between them, by "coiling", "curving", around it, but that it could only describe itself by "coiling", "curving", around itself, by not imitating itself. Mallarmé imitates that "scrollwork tracery" not as a thing but as a process, in the very middle of its "coiling" and "curving". And the same with his own writing: Mallarmé imitates it not as a product, but as a production, imitating not what it imitates but its very imitation. Another example perhaps: when Mallarmé writes of the "pirouette" of the dancer, he realises that he is only able to truly capture it by his own writing enacting its own pirouette, its own turning on itself, that his writing can only imitate itself by pirouetting, turning, around itself. That is to say that "difference" which makes imitation possible can be named and is, indeed, everywhere named in Mallarmé. Everything stands in for it: the mime, the "scrollwork tracery", the "pirouette" of the dancer's toe, the whites or blanks in his text, its punctuation, spacing, gaps, right down to the play between and within individual letters... And even if this difference is always actually excluded, even if this process of self-reflection is endless, abysmal, it can be named: this is the mimicry, the "scrollwork tracery", the "pirouette", of writing. If the actual hymen is always suspended, the hymen is this suspension. The hymen is not only the interval between the imitator and what he imitates, but also between that imitation of the hymen and the hymen itself, that imitation of the imitation of the hymen and the imitation of the hymen, and so on. If there is always another in between, the hymen is this in between; this in between can be named. Or, as Derrida says (or can be understood to be saying): "The hymen interposes itself between mimicry and mimēsis or rather between mimēsis and mimēsis".

But, of course, there is an aporia in all of this. If in this reading the difference between imitation and what it imitates precedes and makes possible imitation, this difference also does not exist before its imitation. If imitation is an effect of the difference between it and what it imitates, this difference is also only an effect of imitation. Or, to put it another way, if everything in Mallarmé begins with the interval, those blanks, whites or spaces between words or within words, this would also not be possible until after those words were on the page, until at least one letter or word had been written. If the hymen hymenises or suspends itself, the hymen is also not possible
until after a certain hymenisation. As Derrida says (or can be understood to be saying): "The hymen must be defined through the *entre* [*entre: cave, but also inter: space*] and not the other way around" ('DS', 220). We might say that if in that first, "idealist", reading of Mallarmé there is always something outside these textual effects, some ideality always excluded by its sign, excluded to allow its sign, here in this second, "materialist", reading, there is nothing outside those effects, everything is produced only as an effect of the text. Instead of imitating *imitation*, imitation as something forever outside the poem, here Mallarmé's poetry is understood as critically engaging with its own *textuality*, speaking only of itself, of the fact that there is nothing outside the poem.

As we have been trying to argue, however, Derrida does not finally choose between these two readings, but rather wants to show how they are aporetic, how we can choose one only to choose the other, choose one only because we have already chosen the other. If the first's "*x* differs from itself" is only possible because of a prior difference, the second's "*x* is only the effect of a prior difference" is only possible because of an *x*, an *x* that differs from itself. If the first's incomparability is only possible because of a prior comparison, the second's comparison is only possible because of a prior incomparability. As against both of these, what Derrida is gesturing towards is the *simultaneity* of a thing's inclusion and exclusion that allows us to say either that it is what excludes itself (our first reading) or that it is its exclusion that allows it (our second reading). What he is opposing to both the idealist and materialist readings of Mallarmé is this *doubleness*: the fact that everything in Mallarmé refers *both* to itself, is that *x* that differs from itself, and to something else, is only an effect of a prior difference (the two can even be reversed: in the first we can say that Mallarmé refers to something else and in the second only to himself—it makes no difference, each is only possible because of the other, each finally is only the other).

In other words, what Derrida is objecting to in both of these readings is the way that, if they break with that mimeticism which sees Mallarmé as imitative of the real world, both restate it on a second, higher level, seeing him as imitative either of imitation itself or of the textuality of poetry. Both oppose a first level mimeticism only to resurrect it on another level. That is to say, Derrida breaks both with the idea that there is any simple other to Mallarmé's poetry, to art in general, and with the idea that there is no outside to Mallarmé's poetry, to the text (this second
against consistent misinterpretations of him as saying that there is nothing outside the text\textsuperscript{33}. But, against our own simplification, it is not enough to say that Derrida is opposed to those first and second readings and the way they make Mallarmé mimetic, as though he sees Mallarmé as simply non-mimetic. Rather, Derrida shows—and breaks perhaps—with mimeticism all the more powerfully for it—that Mallarmé is always mimetic, but we cannot finally say of what; that Mallarmé is mimetic but precisely of nothing. Derrida’s reading, therefore, what we might call that second moment of deconstruction, is only barely distinguishable, by the width of a hymen, almost nothing, from those other two—and that is why, again, it is so often mistaken for them.

We only have time to show this for one example. Here is Derrida speaking of the pirouette, that pirouette not only of the dancer but of the word “pirouette” itself. It occurs in Mallarmé in a text which is, as Derrida says, “ciphered to the second power”\textquoteleft(DS\textquoteright, 240), a text about its own “textuality”:

The cipher of pirouettes is also the pirouette as a cipher, as the movement of the signifier that refers, through the fiction of this or that visible dancing routine, to another pirouetting signifier, another ‘pirouette’. In this way, the pirouette, like the dancer’s pointed toe, is always just about to pierce with a sign, with a sharp bit of nothing, the page of the book or the virginal intimacy of the vellum (DS\textquoteright, 240).

But it is with just this last sentence that Derrida distances himself from the idea that everything in Mallarmé tropes or turns around itself, that everything refers to its own imitation or textuality, as though it really existed, as though the sign really does refer to something, one thing, even if only to another sign, even if only to signification itself. For, as Derrida says, “the dancer’s pointed toe” never does actually "pierce the page of the book or the virginal intimacy of vellum"; it is always only "about to". Or, in another way, what allows the sign, the pirouette, to pierce the "virginal intimacy" of that vellum also means that it cannot. It is not that the sign does not refer to anything. Each sign refers to something, whether it be to itself or another pirouette. But this precisely because it refers to nothing or to something that cannot be named, that can be named only within quotation marks. If it is only because of a certain pirouetting of the sign around the pirouette, around itself, that the sign can speak of the pirouette or itself, if the pirouette is always different.

\textsuperscript{33} See, for instance, Derrida’s interview with Kearney, op. cit. pp. 123-4, where he clarifies what he meant by saying "There is nothing outside of the text", Of Grammatology, op. cit., p. 158.
from itself but this difference is the pirouette, in another way, the pirouette does not exist before this "pirouetting", this difference from itself; we cannot, or can only by a process of "pirouetting", say that the pirouette pirouettes around itself, that the pirouette is its own difference from itself. It is only after this "pirouette", a "pirouette" that in a way refers to nothing, that we can say the pirouette pirouettes around itself, that the pirouette pirouettes around the pirouette. And this is why, finally, Derrida puts that second "pirouette" in inverted commas here—it is these quotation marks that indicate the difference, the space upon which a pirouette turns, from those first and second readings we outlined above. Again, if the pirouette is able to name its own difference from itself, if the pirouette is always different from itself, but this difference is the pirouette, there is at the same time a certain "pirouette" excluded to allow this, this "pirouette" does not pre-exist this difference from itself—this against that first, idealist, reading that sees the pirouette as excluding itself, differing from itself. And, beyond this, we cannot even say that it is the pirouette that is excluded, that it is only after this pirouette, this pirouetting around itself, that the pirouette is possible: precisely because there is always a prior "pirouette", we cannot say what is excluded to allow the pirouette, that "pirouette" must remain in inverted commas—this against that second, materialist, reading that sees the exclusion of the pirouette as allowing the pirouette to exclude itself, to differ from itself. The same thing with the hymen: if, as Derrida says, it is the hymen that must be determined through the entre, not the hymen which spaces itself but spacing that leads to the hymen, this is not to be understood as simply that materialist inversion, privileging spacing over space, the entre over the hymen. Or, if it is, it is only because spacing and the entre undermine the very possibility of prioritising one over the other, because spacing and the entre are not themselves anything.

It is this which prevents the pirouette and hymen—imitation—from becoming themes, things that can properly speaking be named. They cannot be named because they are always being named, are always naming themselves; they cannot be named because they are themselves the name. It is not that Derrida is completely opposed to these "thematicist", productivist, readings, however. Rather, what he wants to make clear is their essential limit: that precisely what allows the theme, metaphor, spacing or difference (of the theme, metaphor, spacing or difference) to be
marked off, described, also means that it is "de-scribed", cannot be finally marked off. A long quotation from Derrida on this:

The fold, then, and the blank: these will forbid us to seek a theme or an overall meaning in an imaginary, intentional, or lived domain beyond all textual instances. Richard sees the 'blank' and the 'fold' as themes whose plurivalence is particularly rich or exuberant. What one tends not to see, because of the abundance of his sample, is that these textual instances are rich with a kind of poverty, I would even call it a very singular and very regular monotony. One does not see this because one thinks one is seeing themes in the very spot where the nontheme, that which cannot become a theme, the very thing that has no meaning, is ceaselessly re-marking itself—that is, disappearing...

The 'blank' appears first of all, to a phenomenological or thematic reading, as the inexhaustible totality of the semantic valences that have any tropic affinity with it (but what is 'it'?). But, through a reduplication that is always represented, the blank inserts (says, designates, marks, states—however one wishes to put it, and there is a need here for a different 'word') the blank as a blank between the valences, a hymn that unites and differentiates them in the series, the spacing of the 'blanks' which 'assume importance'. Hence the blank or the whiteness (is) the totality, however infinite, of the polysemic series, plus the carefully spaced-out splitting of the whole, the fanlike form of the text. This plus is not just one extra valence, a meaning that might enrich the polysemic series. And since it has no meaning, it is not The blank proper, the transcendental origin of the series. This is why, while it cannot constitute a meaning that is signified or represented, one would say in classical discourse that it always has a delegate or representative in the series: since the blank is the polysemic totality of everything white or blank plus the writing site (hymn, spacing, etc.) where such a totality is produced, this plus will, for example, find one of these representatives representing nothing in the blankness or margins of the page. But for the reasons just enumerated, it is out of the question that we should erect such a representative—for example the whiteness of the page of writing—into the fundamental signified or signifier in the series. Every signifier in the series is folded along the angle of this remark. The signifiers 'writing', 'hymn', 'fold', 'tissue', 'text', etc., do not escape this common law, and only a conceptual strategy of some sort can temporarily privilege them as determinate signifiers or even as signifiers at all, which strictly speaking they no longer are ('DS', 251, 252).

In this passage, everything in Mallarmé can be understood as troping this blank or fold, this metaphoricity or substitutability, as in that first reading or even as in that second. Everything speaks of that blank or fold which is imitation, the difference necessary for imitation. But, as Derrida says there, it is precisely because of this that we can never definitively name this "blank" or "fold". At the same time as this "blank" or "fold" allows everything to be named, it is itself caught up in this nomination-effect, it is itself named: there always has to be some prior "blank" or "fold" that allows the blank or fold to be named. But, this time, it is a "blank" or "fold" that, if it
allows you to call it a blank or fold, and thus participates in a metaphoric or sublime economy, also cannot be called a blank or fold, or can only be called a blank or fold because of another “blank” or “fold” that cannot be named, that participates in a general economy. And this is why Derrida says of Jean-Pierre Richard’s “thematicism”, his attempt to thematise the “blank” or “fold”, that it is “rich with a kind of poverty”. “Rich with a kind of poverty”, firstly, because if the “blank” or “fold” excludes itself only for another blank or fold to take its place, if this loss leads to a gain, there is also a real loss, an inability to say what is lost, what is excluded. There is always a missing “blank” or “fold” to allow the blank and fold—and even to allow this loss to be called that of the blank or fold. But “rich with a kind of poverty”, secondly, because if it is always something different that comes to stand in for the “blank” or “fold”, in another way, it is always the same “blank” or “fold”; all this is possible only if it always is the same “blank” or “fold”. If the “blank” or “fold” is always something, if everything stands in for it, this is only because it is nothing, because nothing can finally stand in for it. It is a “blank” or “fold”, then, that is at once everything and nothing, rich and poor. It is a “blank” or “fold” that can only ever be written in the plural, that is always different from itself (but we can only say this itself in the plural, we can no sooner say this than that “blank” or “fold” differs from it). It is never a question of a fold or blank, but always of “folds”, of “blanks”.

To leave Mallarmé here, we would want to just note that this “hymn”, this “in between”, this “blank” or “fold”, plays on both the linguistic and economic registers—this to return to ‘Economimesis’. Here too in Mallarmé the question of “value”, which both connects economics and

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34 We might relate all this to Derrida’s essay ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, *Writing and Difference*, op. cit., where he writes:

This field is in effect that of play, that is to say, a field of infinite substitution only because it is finite, that is to say, instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions (p. 289).

There is an essay by Maurice Blanchot that also takes up this “lack” or “absence” which makes language possible: ‘Wittgenstein’s Problem’, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. Lydia Davis, Station Hill Press, 1981, esp. pp. 129-30. For a general commentary on this section of ‘DS’, see *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*, op. cit., pp. 219-24. Gilles Deleuze also writes about this “fold” or “angle” (is it the same “fold” or “angle”?) in the chapter ‘Synthèse asymétrique du sensible’ of *Différence et répétition*, op. cit., and in *Le Pli: Leibniz et le Baroque*, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988, esp. pp. 43-4, 53, on Mallarmé. On the question of this space as a kind of figure, “preceding” or “allowing” discourse, see Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours, figure*, Klincksieck, 1971. Lyotard also speaks of Mallarmé in this connection there (pp. 62-72).
mimesis and makes economics and mimesis possible as such. We hinted at the way that in Kant it is either the mutual incomparability of economics and mimesis that allows us to compare them or the comparability of economimesis and mimesis that allows us to speak of their incomparability; that economics and mimesis either precede their comparison and allow it or are only possible because they can be compared with each other—economimesis as that "passage of the infinity between gift and debt". There is also a certain or in Mallarmé, but this time it is not the simple equivalence of or difference between economics and mimesis, their comparability or incomparability. It occurs at the intersection between them, but this time as their co-existence, what at the same time makes possible their equivalence and difference, their comparability and incomparability. This "or", which is both the French word for "gold" and for the conjunctions "but" and "or", both belongs to the economic and linguistic registers and is that articulation between them which precedes them. This "O" of "or"—almost nothing—is both the space of punctuation in linguistics and the O or zero of number: at once always signified, only in between, and that very absence of signification which makes all signification possible, which makes possible that "in between". "Or" is both gold, conjunction, sun and that "space" or "blank" which makes them possible. "O" is that mouth of Kantian economimesis, of the origin of analogy, that "embouchure" (E',13) or "fold" (E',10) that both opens up and closes Kantian economimesis. It is at once the circle and the absence of the circle, any circle:

According to the structure of supplementarity, what is added is thus always a blank or fold: the fact of addition gives way to a kind of multiple division or subtraction that enriches itself with zeroes as it races breathlessly toward the infinite. 'More' and 'less' are only separated/united by the infinitesimal consistency, the next-to-nothing of the hymen. This play of the integral unit excrent with zeroes, 'sums by the hundreds and beyond', is demonstrated by Mallarmé under the title Or (expert as he was in alloying—in the literal alchemy of such an ironic, precious, and overinflated signifier—the sensible,

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35 See 'WM' on this "in between" of economics and linguistics (pp. 216-9). On this question of "signifying nothing" common to both economics and linguistics, see Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero*, The Macmillan Press, 1987. If we could make one criticism of that book, however, it would be that we can make no such clear distinction between the sign and the meta-sign as Rotman proposes. Any such meta-sign we could name (zero, nothing, the vanishing-point, etc.) can only be itself a sign, possible only because of the exclusion of another meta-sign. Also, as Derrida makes clear in 'The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics', it is not a question of this "nothing" simply joining two already established fields: this copula also comes before what it copulates—or, better, at the same time as what it copulates. The copula would be at the same time as the two "fields" copulated (see 'The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics', op. cit., esp. pp. 196-203).
phonetic, graphic, economic, logical, and syntactical virtues of this stone in which the 'two ways, in all, in which our need is bifurcated: aesthetics on the one hand and also political economy' intersect) ('DS', 212).

Towards the end of 'Economimesis', then, Derrida asks himself what can lie outside that sublime economy Kant sets up in the Third Critique, in which something can break the economimetic circle only to return to it, can lie outside the system of taste only to be represented with all the more taste, in which the ugly is all the more beautiful the less like Beauty it is36. What can stand outside this system of taste in which distaste itself only stands in for—as the other of, the analogy of—taste? Derrida chooses vomit or the word vomit. But, as he warns:

'It is no longer a question here of one of those values, one of those ugly or harmful things that art can represent and thereby idealise. The absolute excluded does not allow itself to be granted the status of an object of negative pleasure or of ugliness redeemed by representation. It is unrepresentable. And at the same time it is unnameable in its singularity. If one could name it or represent it, it would begin to enter into the auto-affective circle of mastery or reappropriation. An economy would be possible. The disgusting x cannot even announce itself as a sensible object without immediately being caught up in a teleological hierarchy. It is therefore in-sensible and un-intelligible, unrepresentable and unnameable, the absolute other of the system[...]

The word vomit arrests the vicariousness of disgust; it puts the thing in the mouth; it substitutes, but only for example, oral for anal. It is determined by the system of the beautiful, 'the symbol of morality', as its other; it is then for philosophy, still, an elixir, even in the very quintessence of its bad taste37.

It is not, therefore, because of what it is that vomit is the other of economimesis. Insofar as it is at all, vomit can only be distaste, already belongs to the system of taste. As Derrida says, the word "vomit" "arrests"; it puts what it stands in for back in its place (and we might say that insofar as vomit stands in for anything, it is already back in its place). But if vomit is already named in this way, Derrida is also trying to think by means of it what is excluded to allow this very substitutability or standing in; "vomit" might be this very "substitutability" or "standing in" itself, what is excluded to allow all substitution or standing in, even its own. It is a matter of thinking not

36 "An old topos: furies, diseases, the ravages of war, etc. can all furnish beautiful descriptions and 'even be represented in paintings'[S49]' E', 22.
37 'E', 22, 25. See also 'Plato's Pharmacy', op. cit., on this question of something that would be at once poison and elixir.
so much vomit as the *vicariousness* of vomit, the disgust it arouses, which vomit already stands in for, puts in the mouth, excludes (so long as we can vomit something, we can objectivise our feelings of disgust towards it, speak of it, exclude it). What Derrida wants to think is not so much vomit itself, insofar as it already stands in for something or something already stands in for it, as that "single 'thing"—"unassimilable"(E', 22)—that is excluded to allow this very standing in, to allow vomit (or anything else) to stand in for it. To think "vomit" is to think what is excluded to allow this analogy or exchange between words and things, between words and words—a *generality* which, if it allows us to say what a thing or word is (it is only by exchanging a word for a thing or a word for another word that we can say what a thing or word is), also means that we *cannot* say what a thing or word is, for we can only say what it is by exchanging it for *something* else. And what is excluded is both the thing itself and the entire system of representation or exchange, at once a single thing, nothing, and all things, everything. What is excluded is at once a single thing and its equivalence to everything else, a *singularity* and a *universality*. Derrida is trying to think what is excluded to allow vomit, the analogy or analogousness of vomit; that disgust which, as it were, precedes vomit and causes us to vomit:

It will be objected that all that is tautological. It is quite normal that the other of the system of taste should be distaste. And if taste metaphorises exemplorality, then disgust should have the same form, but inverted: nothing has been learned. Certainly. Unless we learn to question this tautological necessity in another way; and to wonder whether the tautological structure is not itself the very form of what the exclusion [of dis-gust] serves to construct.

If it can be confirmed that everything can be said (assimilated, represented, interiorised, idealised) by this logocentric system except vomit, it is only because the oral relation taste/disgust constitutes, other than as a metaphor, this whole discourse on discourse, this whole tautology of the *logos* as self-same identity. And to confirm it, it must be ascertained that the word disgust [*Eckel*] does not designate the repugnant or negative in general. It refers precisely to what makes one desire to vomit (E', 23).

From this point of view, disgust is excluded not so much because it cannot be named (an exclusion which would determine it as merely the repugnant or negative in general) as because it *can* be or is. If vomit stands in for all words, or all words for vomit, disgust is the thought—impossible—of words and things before this exchange, incomparable, "like themselves alone". And all things, all words would be like this disgust; but not in being "like" it, representable by or
exchangeable for it, but in being singular themselves, non-exchangeable, vicarious. It is the thinking of things and words as at the same time identical to each other because they both resemble nothing and resembling nothing because they are both identical with each other. It is a simultaneity, a vicariousness, that comes "before" the possibility of substitution, that must be excluded to allow representation or exchange, the so-called "freedom" of Kantian economimesis, which can proceed only by excluding every other alternative except the one at hand, both the thing itself and its co-existence with every other thing, which is always, as it were, between exchanges.

In other words, if vomit is either represented and exchanged or the representation or representation and the medium of exchange, disgust is both represented and exchanged and the representation of representation and the medium of exchange. Disgust is like vomit, excluded, outside, but also what makes one desire to vomit, included, inside:

What then is the relation between disgust and vomit? It is indeed vomit that interests us here rather than the act or process of vomiting, which are less disgusting than vomit in so far as they imply an activity, some initiative whereby the subject can at least mimic mastery or dream it in auto-affection, believing that he makes himself vomit. Here, hetero-affection no longer even allows itself to be pre-digested in an act of making-oneself-vomit (E, 21).

It is in this passage, however, that Derrida perhaps qualifies what he said earlier about disgust being "what makes one desire to vomit", for in a sense the distinction he is making here is between vomit as the desire to vomit and disgust as that vomiting that leads to the possibility of desire. But even this is too simple. Certainly, it is true that desiring to vomit does not precede the act of vomiting because it is vomiting itself that leads to the possibility of taste, an inside, auto-affection, will. But this is not to be understood as merely reversing the priority between vomiting and desire: that phrase "leads to" in the sentence above needs to be bracketted. To say that vomiting leads to desire is only to make vomiting stand in for desire; it changes nothing. It is to make the desire to vomit, like representation or the medium of exchange, that which excludes itself in order to always return to itself. The problem needs to be rethought. At first sight, it does not appear to be a matter of desiring to vomit: we must vomit before tasting (to taste and then to vomit would only be to swallow in a different way). Vomit must, in a sense, be indistinguishable from the system of taste because it must be vomited before we can know what it is, before it is vomit. And this
is why there is no true other to the system of taste: because, insofar as it can be known, tasted, at all, it can only ever be taste or its simple other, good taste or vomit. But in a certain unimaginable fashion this tautological system of taste would only be possible after the exclusion of this other, or, to put it another way, it cannot really exclude vomit, the other—the absolute other—until it has tasted it. That is to say, before this tautology is constructed, there must be a moment when this absolute other is "known", is "excluded", in order to allow this system of taste in which the other is only the other of the system of taste. And it is a moment re-experienced (but in what sense could we re-experience it?) every time we feel like vomiting, before we know whether what we are tasting is good taste or distaste, before we decide either to swallow or expel: precisely that "desire to vomit". If vomit is indistinguishable from the system of taste because it must be vomited before we can know what it is, before it is vomit, this is only because "vomit" is different from the system of taste, because "vomit" has been expelled. It is not so much, therefore, a matter either of taste leading to vomit or of vomit leading to taste as of a certain "vomiting" and taste at the same time, at once the same as and different from each other. If vomit does cause itself to be vomited, if vomit (and even disgust) must play the role of representation or the medium of exchange, when everything that is excluded can be called vomit, ensuring finally that nothing is excluded, "vomit" is also simply excluded, before which it is nothing, not even vomit; it is that nothing which is excluded to ensure that nothing is excluded. If Derrida can say it is disgust that makes one "desire to vomit", therefore, it must be understood in this double sense: as both that disgust which makes one want to vomit (a desire that would only be possible, in turn, after this vomiting) and as that vomiting or exclusion of "disgust" which makes it possible to say that disgust leads to vomit.

We come here to something of the greatest complexity in 'Economimesis', for if it is the exclusion of disgust which serves to construct this "tautological structure" of mediation or analogy,

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It would be interesting to relate all this to Derrida's 'Force and Signification', *Writing and Difference*, op. cit. We might compare that "force" Derrida speaks of there to the "vomit" of 'E' ('force' not as simply opposed to signification, but as the very simultaneity of force and signification). Also to be read is 'Fore: the Anglish words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', trans. Barbara Johnson, *The Georgia Review* 31, No. 1, Spring, 1977, on the themes of the crypt (the mouth as a crypt) and incorporation (incorporation as a kind of "vomiting to the inside", p. 103). And all this might be compared to Baudrillard's 'La puissance du dégoût', *Traverses* 37. Weber also engages in questions like this in his essay 'It', *Glyph* 4, 1978—and, certainly, that laughter he speaks of there would be a form of vomiting in the sense Derrida is using that word here.
as Derrida suggests, in another way it is not. It is precisely the exclusion of disgust which means that nothing need explain economimesis, that economimesis is self-explanatory. The exclusion of disgust has no effect at all: it affects, replaces, changes nothing. If (Bataille’s and Derrida’s) general economy can be distinguished from Kant’s economimesis, and can even be said to make it possible, it also cannot be distinguished from it, has no relationship to it at all: to have any such relationship would only be to mediate it, analogise it yet again. This is what we might mean by saying that this “disgust” makes economimesis both necessary and impossible: necessary in that, after its exclusion, there is only economimesis, only economimesis can explain economimesis; impossible in that economimesis, which is possible only insofar as it has no outside, is possible only after the exclusion of this disgust, because of this outside. The paradox here is that it is the exclusion of disgust which causes economimesis, which has no external cause.

What can we say is excluded from this economimetic system of analogy in which everything is only insofar as it is named, in which everything comes from and returns to the mouth? What is excluded from economimesis, and “proceeding from this exclusion, gives it form, limits and contour” (E’, 21)? As we have been trying to make clear throughout this chapter, it is “metaphor” or “analogy”, the “logos” itself; it is because “metaphor”, “analogy” and the “logos” cannot be named that everything else can be. Or, to put it another way, it is precisely in being named that “metaphor”, “analogy” and the “logos”, and everything which stands in for them—which is everything—are excluded. In a sense, then, everything and nothing is excluded from economimesis; if this system of analogy or metaphor allows everything to be named insofar as it can always be compared to something else, nothing can be named, named as such, for it can only be compared to something else. What allows something to be named also means that it cannot be; what allows everything to be named means that nothing can be. We cannot say what is excluded to allow everything to be named, nothing is excluded, but insofar as everything takes the place of this nothing, everything is excluded.

And here, again, the question of vomit or disgust as at once the closest thing, always represented, and the most distant thing, unrepresentable; at once what forces us to represent it and the “absolutely heterogeneous” (E’, 22), what is excluded by any possible representation of it. In a
sense, it is this nothing, the exclusion of this nothing, that ensures that representation and the medium of exchange are always represented, always exchanged; and yet, precisely insofar as we can say this, we are already too late for representation and the medium of exchange. Representation and the medium of exchange have already been excluded to allow us to represent them or exchange something for them like this. This is our "absolutely unique relation" to representation and the medium of exchange: the only thing we can say about them is that they are excluded by whatever we say about them—so that even this may not be necessarily true. They are this paradox: a relationship and a non-relationship at the same time. And it is this paradox that constitutes general economy. If economimesis can only think non-relationship analogously as the exclusion of relationship by another relationship, as a relationship (of non-relationship), for general economy it is "non-relationship" (a term we can only use metaphorically or analogously) that comes first: it is the possibility that two things are not "related" that allow them to be related. It is not that "passage of the infinity" of the Kantian and Hegelian "relationship of non-relationship", but always a relationship and a non-relationship at the same time.

So that when Derrida speaks of a "unique relation" in the following passage while describing Bataille's general economy (a general economy which, we have tried to suggest, Derrida also tries to think), he can only be using the phrase analogically, metaphorically: this "unique relation" precedes the possibility of either relationship or non-relationship as such, which can only exist within that aporia or tautology of economimesis or restricted economy (analogy, mediation, aufhebung). Summarising Bataille's project towards the end of 'From Restricted to General Economy:

A Hegelianism Without Reserve', Derrida writes of:

An absolutely unique relation: of a language to a sovereign silence which tolerates no relations, tolerates no symmetry with that which tilts itself and slides in order to be related to it. A relation, however, which must rigorously, scientifically, place into a common syntax both the subordinated significations and the operation which is nonrelation, which has no signification and freely keeps itself outside syntax. Relations must scientifically be related to nonrelations, knowledge to unknowledge.  

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39 Jacques Derrida, 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegeliansim Without Reserve', op. cit., p. 264. Indeed, the last pages of 'E' would have to be related to the following passage from that essay, where Derrida speaks of the way that, within the sovereign operation, both mediacy and immediacy have to be transgressed simultaneously: Immediacy and mediacy, such as they are presented in the elements of philosophy, in Hegel's logic, or in phenomenology, are equally 'subordinated'. It is thus that they
can pass one into the other. The sovereign operation therefore also suspends subordination in the form of immediacy. In order to understand that it does not, at this point, enter into work and phenomenology, one must exit from the philosophical logos and think the unthinkable. How can mediacy and immediacy be transgressed simultaneously? ('From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve', p. 273).

There is a certain "double strategy" by Derrida here, for "suspends subordination in the form of immediacy" can be read in two ways: as both the suspension of subordination in the form of mediacy by immediacy, and as the suspension of subordination in the very form of immediacy itself. This would be like the question of "desiring to vomit" in 'E', when at once Derrida opposes the immediacy of disgust to the mediation of vomit and undoes the opposition between disgust and vomit, inside and outside, immediacy and mediacy. And Lyotard too in his writings on the Sublime speaks of a certain "suspended privation" or "privation in the second degree" ('The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', op. cit., p. 40), which would be at once a suspension or mediation and the suspension of that suspension, the forcing of consumption. On all this, see the bottom of 'E', 22.
CHAPTER THREE

His performance endears him to many leading French intellectuals, who see in him a symbol for everything

— Zelig

In our last two chapters, we have looked at two "different" attempts to represent representation, to say what representation is—although part of our argument, implicitly, has been that Baudrillard and Derrida are in fact saying exactly the "same" thing about representation, and even about the impossibility of representing representation. We tried to elaborate two "different" readings of Baudrillard and Derrida: the first in which representation operates as a transcendental signified, excluding itself only for everything else to take its place; the second in which representation is always a function of a prior "representation", in which we cannot say what is excluded to allow representation. If representation is excluded in the first reading, it can be known in being excluded; it is included by being excluded. In the second reading, by contrast, it is excluded precisely by being known; it is excluded by being included. This second reading might be understood as opening up and closing the aporia of the first, as what makes it both necessary and impossible. But it is not as though the two can simply be distinguished in this way: all solutions to the aporia can only fall into it again, can only repeat it in another form. If the second differs from the first, it is because it is the thinking of why this is always so, a thinking that in a way takes us outside of this aporia.

Insofar as Baudrillard and Derrida consider this question of representation, they can be judged in terms of both a generality and a singularity and universality. On the one hand, representation is a thing, a thing that can be represented; we can represent representation (and even the impossibility of representing representation) more or less well, more or less faithfully. But representation is also
not a thing, cannot be represented (even as the impossibility of representation). Representation is not so much in either Baudrillard or Derrida as between them, what is excluded to allow us to compare them. This is to grasp representation as at once singular and universal: that "representation" which Baudrillard and Derrida represent is both incomparable, excluded by every attempt to compare it, and, for just this reason, exactly the same in both of them. But always the two readings at once, for even when we say that the singularity and universality of representation marks the impossibility of or limit to judging according to it, this itself can be represented more or less well, more or less faithfully. If the limits to representation, and even the limit to these limits, cannot offer a final standard of judgement, in another way they also do. If the general is only possible because of a singularity and universality, the singular and universal in turn can also only be grasped as general, as a generality. If it is always a question of the limits to judging according to representation, the limits to representation, this is itself already a judgement. As always, it is a question of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of thinking the limits to representation, to judging according to representation.

It is never a question, then, of simply comparing Baudrillard and Derrida without at the same time asking what makes this comparison possible. But, inversely, it is never a question of not comparing them. If, according to this "representation", each is at once absolutely identical and completely different, it is also a matter of asking who better realises this (and realises even the limits to realising this). We might compare, for example, Baudrillard's hyperconformity with Derrida's différance as attempts to speak of, represent (the unrepresentability of) representation. We can say that one is better or worse than the other according to some order of generality, in terms of some representation or unrepresentable both are trying to represent. At the same time, however—but it is in this manner too that they can be compared, to the extent that each realises this —both are also what is excluded to allow us to speak of them thus, to compare them. To speak of hyperconformity and différance, then, in the work of Baudrillard and Derrida is at once to speak of something in it and to speak of everything and nothing in it. We are not simply comparing Baudrillard and Derrida, but comparing them over this question of something that is at once infinitely compared and incomparable, what allows their comparison and makes it impossible.
It is in this sense that we can understand them both to be speaking of Woody Allen’s film Zelig. They would speak of it not only on an order of generality (their work as a key to interpreting it, as having some affinity with it), but also on an order of singularity and universality (it is all their work speaks of, it is what no work can ever speak of). Zelig himself must be grasped as both general and singular and universal: he is like some things but not others; he is like everything else and absolutely unique. All of which is to say that our chapter here on Zelig is in no way subordinate to those on Baudrillard and Derrida. It is also—and this is the very strength of their work, the fact that they speak of something like this—a matter of reading Baudrillard and Derrida through Zelig. Zelig for us represents an analysis of representation every bit as complex, detailed and rigorous as Baudrillard’s and Derrida’s.

But, already, in saying this, formidable problems are posed. In one way, we are appealing to Zelig as somehow authorising the analysis which follows (as we appealed to Baudrillard and Derrida for theirs). In another way, however, Zelig is itself only an effect of this analysis. And yet, if we can say this, it is just this enigma which lies at the heart of Zelig. We have seen it before in Chapter One with the masses and hyperconformity and in Chapter Two with the two poets, when what is imitated does not exist before it is imitated, and yet this imitation must be imitating something. Or—it is the same thing—imitation must imitate something, but this something is affected by its very imitation. We are always either too soon or too late for imitation, imitation grasped as generality, imitation or criticism understood as simply coming from outside of its object. But, as we have seen in those other chapters, to grasp imitation as singular and universal is to think the simultaneity of the imitator and what he imitates, of imitation and what is imitated, as at once the solution to this aporia and what makes it possible. This is to understand Zelig—impossibly—as its own analysis, neither having to wait for those other two to explain it, nor simply preceding them. Rather, in our sequence of chapters here, this third or Zelig comes at the same time as them: at once before and after them, the same as and different from them. And it is just this simultaneity that we will see (though it can never be seen) in our analysis of Zelig as it unfolds here.
Zelig: Baudrillard

Of Baudrillard and Derrida, only Baudrillard, to our knowledge, has actually written on Zelig. For the reasons stated above, however, this is not conclusive. Let us see what he says of Zelig in his *The Evil Demon of Images*:

We can find a sociological, historical and political equivalent to this diabolical conformity, to this evil demon of conformity, in the modern behaviour of the masses who are also very good at complying with the models offered to them, who are very good at reflecting the objectives imposed on them, thereby absorbing and annihilating them. There is in this conformity a force of seduction in the literal sense of the word, a force of diversion, distortion, capture and ironic fascination. There is a kind of fatal strategy of conformity.

A recent example may be found in Woody Allen’s film Zelig: in trying to be oneself, to cultivate difference and originality, one ends up resembling everyone and no longer seducing anyone. This is the logic of present day psychological conformity. Zelig, on the other hand, is launched on an adventure of total seduction, in an involuntary strategy of global seduction: he begins to resemble everything which approaches him, everything which surrounds him. Nor is this the mimetic violence of defiance or parody, it is the mimetic non-violence of seduction. To begin to resemble the other, to take on their appearance, is to seduce them, since it is to make them enter into the realm of metamorphosis, despite themselves.

This seductive force, this fatal strategy, is a kind of animal genie or talent—not simply that of the chameleon, which is only its anecdotal form. It is not the conformism of animals which delights us; on the contrary, animals are never conformist, they are seductive, they always appear to result from a metamorphosis. Precisely because they are not individuals, they pose the enigma of their resemblance. If an animal knows how to conform, it is not to its own being, its own individuality (banal strategy), but to appearances in the world. This is what Zelig does too with his animal genie—he is polymorphous (but not perverse); he is incapable of functional adaptation to contexts, which is true conformism, our conformism, but able to seduce by the play of resemblance. Savages do no less when they put on the successive masks of their gods, when they 'become' their successive divinities—this is also to seduce them. It is of course against this strategy of seduction that psychiatry struggles, and it is what gives rise to the magical infatuation of the crowds for Zelig (in German, *Selig* means 'blessed').

The remarkable thing about this film is that it leads astray all possible interpretations. There is thus also a seduction of interpretation with the complicity of certain intellectuals, as well as a polymorphous montage technique which allows it to ironically adapt to all possibilities.

More generally, the image is interesting not only in its role as reflection, mirror, representation of, counterpart to, the real, but also when it begins to contaminate reality and to model it, when it only conforms to reality the better to distort it, or better still when it appropriates reality for its own ends, when it anticipates it to the point that the real no longer has time to be produced as such (ED, 14-6).
It is an argument about Zelig that is perhaps not so uncommon. When Baudrillard speaks of the way that Zelig "leads astray all interpretation", of a "seduction of interpretation with the complicity of certain intellectuals", he is referring to the fact that in the film many noted intellectuals offer their opinion as to the meaning of Zelig: Susan Sontag, Irving Howe, Saul Bellow, Dr Bruno Bettelheim, Professor John Morton Blum—but that each of them seems to see Zelig only through their own eyes, as reflecting their own personalities and obsessions. Zelig as the man who conforms to the physical features and characteristics of those he is around also conforms to the various interpretations of him. When we speak of him, we are really only speaking of ourselves. And others have noticed this too. Stanley Kaufman, in a piece entitled 'One Character in Search of an Author', notes that because Zelig is fictional "[t]his fact bends their comments back on themselves in good-natured self-parody"¹. It is an insight echoed by two other critics of the film, Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, in an article entitled 'Zelig and Contemporary Theory: Meditation on the Chameleon Text':

Howe, the author of The World of Our Fathers, a book about the Jewish immigrant experience at the turn-of-the-century, predictably interprets Zelig as a quintessential exemplum of the transformations involved in assimilation. Susan Sontag, again quite plausibly, emphasises Zelig's 'aesthetic instincts', as well as the assertive role of the woman psychoanalyst, seen as a rebel and maverick within psychoanalytic discourse much as Sontag herself once represented the rebel within art and literary criticism. (The author of Against Interpretation, ironically, is entirely willing to interpret.) Saul Bellow, with similar predictability, stresses two motifs common in his fiction: ambiguity (that Zelig's own cowardly chameleonicism made him a hero) and individuality-versus-conformism (that Zelig's flirtation with fascism had to do with a desire to merge into the mass)².

But, of course, these analyses must be applied first of all to themselves. Is there not the same "seduction of interpretation" for Baudrillard as for those interpreters he writes about? Are not Kaufman's own comments themselves inflected with the same "self-parody", "bent back upon themselves"? Are not Stam and Shohat and their "contemporary theory" as equally "predictable" as those theorists they condemn? In short, to what extent are each of those analysts of the film only

describing themselves when they describe those other analysts of the film only describing themselves?

This is the first limit to those analyses—a limit to which they do not perhaps pay adequate attention. And this should remind us of that enigma of the masses we looked at in Chapter One: the way that they too conform to any description of them, even Baudrillard's own. They are always excluded by any attempt to include them; when we speak of the masses, we are finally only speaking of ourselves. But, as we said there—and we might begin to think at this point the connection between this reading of Baudrillard and that Kantian economists we discussed in Chapter Two—if it is possible that Baudrillard is wrong, if this forms a limit to Baudrillard, this possibility is already taken into account by him, this is the very limit of which he speaks. If Baudrillard is right only insofar as he is wrong (insofar as the masses only conform to him), he is also wrong only insofar as he is right (insofar as the masses really do conform). In a certain way, there is nothing to say against Baudrillard: it cannot be said that Zelig is somehow different from what he says about it, that it only conforms to him, because his analysis is precisely about this difference, this conformity. If conformity can never be seen as such, this is only because of a prior conformity. If Baudrillard's analysis is undemonstrable, it is also irrefutable.

But there is another limit here, a limit that cannot so easily be accounted for. If seduction is not possible until a prior seduction, if conformity is not possible until a prior conformity, in another way we cannot say what precedes and allows seduction and conformity. When Baudrillard writes: "The remarkable thing about this film is that it leads astray all interpretation, there is also a seduction of interpretation", and the film seduces or conforms to this, this is the seduction or conformity of the film for Baudrillard; a seduction or conformity that, if it is always excluded by any attempt to describe it, nevertheless exists before this description. There is this seduction, this conformity, in the film. But is there not a kind of aporia here, for would not this seduction or conformity also only exist after something has been seduced by it or attempted to conform to it? There cannot be a "seduction of interpretation" until it has seduced. There cannot be a "conspiracy of intellectuals" until after the intellectuals have actually conspired. And if, again, this can be understood to be saying that there is always a prior seduction, a prior conformity, that is excluded
to allow seduction or conformity, it is also precisely this that cannot be said until after this seduction or conformity; we cannot say what seduces, what conforms—and in this sense we cannot even say it is a question of seduction or conformity. And yet, of course, if we cannot say what we are seduced by or conform to, if it is nothing until it has seduced or been conformed to, there must also be something that we are seduced by or conform to. There is both a conformity to nothing and a nothing that conforms here. There is always a certain "conformity" (at once a conformity of and a conformity to) that is excluded to allow us to speak of conformity, the circularity of conformity. There is a limit here that is at once excluded by all attempts to represent it, conform to it—it is nothing—and yet that must be represented, conformed to—it is nothing until it has been represented or conformed to. It is a limit that is at the same time necessary and impossible to represent.

At stake, then, are those two readings of Baudrillard we proposed in Chapter One, but here we can perhaps correlate them with those two different understandings of mimesis we saw in Chapter Two (we might compare the analysis above to that of the two "gifts" and the two poets there). That first reading we just outlined corresponds to Kantian economimesis: conformity (and all those other words which stand in for it in Baudrillard) is always excluded, unrepresentable, but this is conformity, this is only possible because of conformity. The limit to conformity is conformity itself. That second reading would correspond to Bataille's general economy, Derrida's différence: conformity is always different from itself, and in a sense can only be understood as this difference; but "conformity" is also the attempt to think what is excluded to ensure that this is so, to think that nothing that is excluded to allow this aporia. If the limit to conformity is conformity and can only ever be conformity, it is also a question of thinking that "limit" which is excluded to ensure this, to allow conformity to name its own limits. And Baudrillard's conformity can be read both ways. But this second way perhaps only as against him. As always, however, we must also remember the limits to saying this. How can we say that a concept like "conformity" in Baudrillard's work hints at a general economy while his own understanding of it reduces it to a sublime or restricted economy, when such a "reduction" seems precisely necessary? How can we use "conformity" as a standard of
measure by which to judge when it goes beyond all attempts to represent it, to use it as a standard of judgement?

In terms of this second limit, then, it is not simply a matter of Zelig conforming to its analyses. What must also be realised is that this can be true, they can speak of themselves only speaking of themselves when they describe Zelig, only insofar as they do describe Zelig, insofar as they are not speaking of themselves. Zelig is at the same time both exactly what its critics say it is, the reflection of all its interpretations, and what is excluded to allow this equivalence, the critics' equivalence to themselves. This is the double limit to all criticism, the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a limit, in a way beyond any limit or limit to the limit: it is not merely a question of saying Zelig is excluded by its inclusion (and if we have said this before, it is a simplification), because this would be only to include Zelig or Zelig would be excluded by this. Rather, it is a matter of thinking that Zelig is at once included and excluded, excluded by any representation of it, but also not existing before this representation. If it is a limit as in that first reading, it is also a limit to this limit.

It is for this reason, for example, that we cannot describe the reactions of those critics within the film as simply "predictable" and "plausible", as Stam and Shohat do, and why it would not be enough to describe Stam and Shohat's argument itself as "predictable" and "plausible". If, in one way, they are "predictable" and "plausible" because they say something obvious about Zelig, a Zelig that exists before them, a Zelig to which they can be compared, in another, they are precisely "unpredictable" and "implausible" because Zelig only comes into being after them and cannot be compared to them. Zelig is at once what is compared between the various interpretations, what allows Baudrillard, Kaufman, Stam and Shohat to say that their Zelig is better than those others they compare it to, and what is excluded to allow this comparison, what makes it impossible to say one Zelig is better than any other. And this goes for our position here too: at once we can only say all this in the name of a better, truer Zelig, and Zelig (our Zelig) would be what is excluded in saying

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3 Weber encounters a similar problem when speaking of the way Freud reduces the game of the fort-da to the Oedipal triangle, when such a reduction appears necessary: see 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions', op. cit., pp. 104-5. We will return to this in Chapter Four.
this. Zelig at once pre-exists this comparison, allows it, and only exists as compared, is the impossibility of or limit to all comparison. This is our "unique" (though already doubled) "relation" to it.

These two readings might be seen again in that passage from The Evil Demon of Images we have just given:

[In trying to be oneself, to cultivate difference and originality, one ends up resembling everyone and no longer seducing anyone. This is the logic of present day psychological conformity. Zelig, on the other hand, is launched on an adventure of total seduction, in an involuntary strategy of global seduction: he begins to resemble everything which approaches him, everything which surrounds him.

For, if on the one hand Baudrillard speaks of Zelig in terms of a certain "strategy", as though he attempts to be the same as everyone else as everyone else attempts to be different—a sameness that would only be possible because of a prior difference, that would only be another way of being different—on the other hand he does speak of it as an "involuntary strategy": it might be the very difference between sameness and difference, and the possibility of a "strategy" it allows, that he is attempting to suspend here. It is a "strategy", in other words, that does not simply express a "being", as though such a being pre-exists this conformity; it is this "strategy" itself that also produces a certain "being". As Baudrillard says earlier: "If an animal knows how to conform, it is not to its own being, its own individuality (banal strategy), but to appearances in the world". It is not as though this conformity simply expresses something, even "chameleonism", for this "animal genie or talent" is not just "that of the chameleon, which is only its anecdotal form"—and, by extension, we might say this for all expressions of this "conformity", even conformity itself: they are only its masks or anecdotal forms, one of the infinitely many guises it may take. Because conformity is always preceded by a prior "conformity", there is nothing that is simply conformity, there is nothing that simply conforms: everything and nothing can take the place of conformity, of what conforms. This is, perhaps, finally what Baudrillard means in that passage by saying that this "strategy" of conformity is "involuntary": if in one way it is a matter of choosing either the same as opposed to the different or the different as opposed to the same, where it is you who choose, in another it precedes the possibility of "you" as such; you are yourself chosen by sameness or difference. This "involuntary strategy" would be the simultaneity of a certain choice and fate.
We see all this in, all this has been prompted by, an extraordinary scene in the film. Dr Eudora Fletcher (played by Mia Farrow), the psychiatrist who has become interested in Zelig’s case, has finally persuaded the Board of the hospital in which Zelig is being held that the origin of his condition is psychological and not physiological\(^4\). Zelig has just been returned by the Italian authorities after escaping from his half-sister Ruth and her lover Martin Geist’s sideshow and ending up on the balcony with the Pope at St Peter’s during Easter celebrations. Dr Fletcher’s plan is to take Zelig to her country home where, in a neutral environment, she can begin to look for some new way to treat him. Aware of the significance of her work, she arranges to keep a filmed record of her sessions with him. To this end, she contacts her first cousin Paul Dehguee, an inventor and part-time photographer. She sets ups a small study for the purpose, with lights and hidden microphones. At first the sessions go badly. Zelig continues to insist, in the company of Dr Fletcher—though we have previously been told he does not imitate women—that he is a psychiatrist, despite her assertions that he is not. “I’ve got to get back to town”, he says. “Really. I’ve got an interesting case treating two sets of Siamese twins with split personalities. I’m getting paid by eight people”. Despite this, Dr Fletcher’s affection for Zelig grows.

As the weeks go by, however, Dr Fletcher grows more and more frustrated with the course of the treatment. Zelig continues to insist he is a doctor. She begins to grow moody and nervous. She takes a night off with her fiancé, the lawyer Charles Koslow—“the type of man my mother thought I should marry”, as she characterises him. They go to Broadway, then to a well-known nightclub where, despite a lively stage show, she is distracted and uneasy. She is unable to think of anything else except her patient. The atmosphere with her fiancé is awkward and strained. He is put off by her total obsession with Zelig. But, ironically, it is in the noisy and smoke-filled atmosphere of the nightclub that Dr Fletcher is struck by a brilliant and innovative plan which will create a major breakthrough in the case.

\(^4\) It is interesting to note that Dr Fletcher, as a psychiatrist, finds Zelig’s condition psychological in nature, while the Board of the Hospital, who are doctors, find it physiologically or neurologically based. It is another example of Zelig conforming to his analysts’ own preconceptions—and, indeed, one of the examining doctors, Dr Birsky, diagnoses Zelig as suffering from a brain tumour only to die himself a few weeks later from a brain tumour!
From the filmed record of the next day’s session:

—Dr Zelig.

—Yes.

—I wonder if you can help me with a problem.

—Well, I can certainly try. Of course, we can’t promise anything.

—You see, I was with a group of fairly erudite people, and we were discussing the novel *Moby Dick*. And I was afraid to admit I hadn’t read it so I lied.

—H-uh.

—You see, I want so badly to be liked, to be like other people so that I don’t stand out.

—That’s natural.

—Well, why go to such extreme lengths to blend in?

—You’re a doctor. You should know how to handle that.

—No. The truth of the matter is I’m not an actual doctor.

—you’re not?

—No, doctor, no. I’ve been pretending to be a doctor to fit in with my friends. You see, they’re doctors.

—that’s s-something.

—but you’re a doctor and you can help me. You have to help me.

—I don’t feel that well, actually.

—I my whole life’s been a lie. I’ve been posing as one thing after another.

—you need help, lady.

—Last night, I dreamt I was falling into fire. What does that mean?

—that’s terrible. I don’t know.

—Please, doctor. I know I’m a very complicated patient—
—Jesus, I don't feel that well.

—What am I suffering from?

—How should I know? I'm not a doctor.

—You're not?

—No. Am I?

—Who are you?

—What do you mean, who am I?

—Leonard Zelig?

—Yes, definitely. Who is he?

—You?

—No, I'm nobody, I'm nothing. Catch me, I'm falling.

Playing on his identity disorder, Dr Fletcher manipulates Zelig into momentary disorientation. With his guard lowered, she quickly puts him under hypnosis. Using post-hypnotic suggestion, she will now be able to induce a trance at will. In these trances, Zelig reveals details of his childhood. Dr Fletcher's therapy consists of a two-pronged attack: in the trance state, Zelig's unconscious is probed and restructured; in the conscious state, love and affection, unconditional positive regard. And, after some momentary setbacks, Dr Fletcher cures Zelig, fulfilling her pledge to the Board to make of him a "useful and self-possessed member of society". They end up getting married.

But, if Zelig is cured here, it is only by means of the disease itself; if Zelig no longer conforms, it is only because Dr Fletcher conforms to him, it is only because there is another Zelig. To invert what Saul Bellow says about Zelig in the film, if Zelig's chameleonism is the cure, it is also the disease (precisely what has been said of psychiatry itself\(^5\)). If we can speak of Zelig conforming, that is, it cannot be until he is conformed to; it is not until Dr Fletcher conforms to Zelig that Zelig

\(^5\) Karl Krauss, source unknown.
himself conforms. If we follow the dialogue above carefully, far from being cured there, far from not conforming, Zelig is actually conforming to Dr Fletcher's attempt to conform to him. It is following her suggestion that she is not a doctor but only a patient (like Zelig) that Zelig indicates that he cannot help her and that he too is only a patient: "Jesus, I don't feel too well". It is after Dr Fletcher tells Zelig that she had a dream about falling into fire that Zelig says: "Catch me, I'm falling". The enigma here is that if, on the one hand, Dr Fletcher imitates Zelig (imitates Zelig imitating), on the other, she necessarily imitates nothing because Zelig does not exist, the Zelig she thinks she is imitating is not Zelig, before she attempts to conform to him. And, in another way, if Zelig imitates Dr Fletcher as a psychiatrist, he too imitates nothing because Dr Fletcher is not a psychiatrist—this is what defines psychiatry in this sequence, this is its "breakthrough"—before she imitates Zelig. The most telling detail in this enigma is that Zelig's cure is precipitated here by Dr Fletcher revealing that she has only ever pretended to have read Moby Dick—a fact we in the audience already know to be true of Zelig, as revealed in a session under hypnosis earlier in the film. But, as is made clear in this scene, those sessions we saw earlier were themselves only a consequence of this very revelation by Dr Fletcher (they are, in fact, flash forwards using material subsequently filmed during these "White Room Sessions")! It is only after Dr Fletcher has told Zelig that she has pretended to have read Moby Dick to fit in with other people that Zelig reveals to her that he too has only pretended to have read Moby Dick to fit in with other people! At once, each only pretends to have read Moby Dick and is the "erudite people" who led them to pretend to have read it in the first place. Prompting the question, of course: has anyone actually read—or even not read—Moby Dick? And all of this, temptingly, can be understood to be the very theme of the book itself.

This is the enigma, raised throughout the film, of which comes first: the doctor or the patient? The lover or the loved one? The Jew or the anti-Semite? And what we see here is that, if one is only possible because of the other, if one can imitate or oppose the other only because he has already been imitated or opposed by the other, this aporia itself is possible only because of a

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6 See Rodolphe Gasché, 'The Scene of Writing: A Deferred Outset', Glyph 1, 1977, on this aspect of Moby Dick. To think of the book as at once already read and never read, would this not be true of all books?
certain imitation of and by nothing, the simultaneity of the imitator and the imitated. The doctor and patient, the lover and the loved one, the Jew and the anti-Semite, are only possible if, in a way, they are present at the same time in the same person. And, despite Baudrillard's assertions that it is "against this strategy of seduction that psychiatry struggles", it is this very paradox that psychiatry seems to take as its subject here, that of mimesis, for does not Dr Fletcher play the game of seduction, seducing her divinity (in both the obvious sense and in Baudrillard's special sense of the word) by wearing his mask? Does she not realise that to be imitated by Zelig is precisely to enter into the "realm of metamorphoses", to be changed oneself, that it is not so much a question of one or the other here but of some third both preceding them and coming after them? "For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself. Becomings are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation, but of a double capture, of non-parallel evolution, of nuptials between two reigns."

But, again, if Zelig is always conformed to before he conforms, if there is always a conformity before Zelig conforms, if Zelig is not Zelig until there is a previous Zelig, until Dr Fletcher plays Zelig, it is also for just this reason that what is excluded cannot simply be called conformity or

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7 Much could be said here about the "Jew" as at once Jew and anti-Semite, everybody and nobody, everywhere and nowhere. It is in this sense that we might begin to think the historical connection between the Jew and money, that we might begin to think Zelig as a film not just about values—that liberalism espoused by the "cured" Zelig—but about value as such. On this, there is to be read, at least, Jean-Paul Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew, trans. George J. Becker, Schocken Books, 1977; E.M.Cioran, 'A People of Solitaries', The Temptation to Exist, trans. Richard Howard, Seaver Books, 1986; Sander L. Gilman, Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; and Jean-François Lyotard, Heidegger et les 'juifs', Editions Galilée, 1988. Derrida also writes of the figure of the "Jew" in 'Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book', Writing and Difference, op. cit., esp. pp. 73-5, where he speaks of the coincidence between the Jew and the non-Jew. There is also the famous meditation upon the shared "origin" of the Greek and Jewish traditions of thought at the end of 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas', Writing and Difference, op. cit., p. 153. Christopher Norris writes of Derrida's concern with the "theme" of Jewishness (Derrida, Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 228-34), and Derrida himself speaks of this aspect of his thought in his interview with Kearney, op. cit., pp. 116-7. There is an article which takes up Zelig and this question of the "unity" of the Jew and the anti-Semite by Samuel Dresner, 'Woody Allen, Theologian?', Midstream, March 1985. Might we read Zelig as a parable about the "Christianising", via the WASP-y Dr Fletcher, of the Jew—the irony being here, of course, that it proceeds by means of the "Jewish science" of psychoanalysis? The same scenario is played out in reverse in Allen's later Oedipus Wrecks (1988).

Zelig. If it is always possible to say that it is Zelig who excludes himself so that everybody else can stand in for him, it is also "Zelig" who is excluded by this standing in, to allow us to say that it is Zelig who excludes himself to allow this standing in. This is why "Zelig", in that dialogue, is neither simply "Leonard Zelig" nor "nobody, no one", but both at the same time. "Zelig" is at once what everybody speaks in the name of, the only thing of which we can speak (it is interesting to note that Dr Fletcher is "unable to think of anything else but her patient", that her fiancé is put off by her "total obsession" with Zelig), and what is excluded in being spoken of, even as conformity, even as Zelig. There is always a "conformity" before—that of Dr Fletcher to Zelig—and a conformity after Zelig—for it is possible that after the so-called "cure" we see effected in that scene Zelig is only conforming to Dr Fletcher again in acting like a cured patient, as she does after apparently curing him. And we see this further on in the film where Zelig speaks of "Being Yourself!" and mixes with other celebrities, which would be of course the most conventional, stereotypical, things, to do after becoming famous as the cured "chameleon", and where he would become famous, finally, for being famous, for conforming to his own image, to fame itself, for mixing with other famous people, all of whom are themselves famous only for being famous.

At once, then, there is a conformity before and a conformity after—and these are the same thing. What makes any hypothesis about Zelig right, what allows the equivalence between Zelig and anything else, is also what makes it wrong, what makes the equivalence between Zelig and anything else impossible. If it is Zelig's conformity that allows him to be imitated, it is also excluded by any imitation of it, what is excluded to allow it to be imitated. It exists only after it is imitated, in other words, it only conforms to its imitation. And this is a limit that, if every hypothesis about Zelig must try to take into account, is also excluded by this taking-into-account, is excluded to allow this taking-into-account. It is both the conformity before (that of the hypothesis to Zelig) and the conformity after (that of Zelig to the hypothesis) that allows this equivalence or taking-into-account. Every hypothesis about Zelig, in this sense, can only reproduce his "anecdotal form", represents only another attempt to cash in on the "craze", another piece of merchandising, even Baudrillard's, even ours here... always another "anecdote", but never Zelig himself. It is not that Zelig simply exists outside the forms he takes, but he is also that representation or medium of
exchange they all stand in for, what lies beyond all anecdotes, representations or exchanges in making them possible. To say this, however, is only to tell another anecdote about him, to represent him as or exchange him for something. If Zelig only exists as an endless stream of stories and products, only after the attempt to represent him, he is also what precedes and allows this: one because of the other, or better, both at the same time. Zelig is at once both imitated and imitating, included and excluded, a being and a non-being, voluntary and involuntary, a follower of a strategy and a non-follower of a strategy, a follower of a non-strategy, conformed to and conforming, commercially exploited, worthless, and what allows all value, inexhaustible, priceless... an infinitely varied but monotonous series of oxymorons, "rich with a kind of poverty", having nothing in common, but always and only this nothing. Like mimesis itself, the essence of Zelig is that he has no essence. Always these two opposites at the same time.

Zelig: Derrida

There are always two opposites at the same time. Conforming and conformed to. Something and nothing. Unrepresentable and always represented. The lover and the loved one. The doctor and the patient. The Jew and the anti-Semite. An upper-class Republican and a lower-class Democrat. White and black. Feted and reviled. The most famous man in the world and forgotten. Singular and anonymous. Everyone and no-one. A unique case and yet, as Bruno Bettelheim explains, "no different from an ordinary person, only carried to an extreme extent". To the Marxist he was "one thing", to the Catholic Church "another". To America in the Depression he was a "symbol of possibility and self-improvement", to the trade-unionist a symbol of iniquity and capital. The Freudians could "interpret him any way they wanted". No two doctors "could agree upon a diagnosis". No two intellectuals "upon a meaning". Zelig is nothing else but this infinite series of opposites, but without being simply their equivalence or *coincidentia oppositorum*, for he is also what is excluded to allow this equivalence, this aporia between conforming and being conformed to, imitating and being

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9 Continuing on this theme, Baudrillard notes that Zelig in German means "blessed", while Stam and Shohat add that it means "silly": 'Zelig and Contemporary Theory: Meditation on the Chameleon Text', op. cit., p. 190.
imitated, being unrepresentable and always being represented. He is their *coincidentia* perhaps, but more in the sense of chance or necessity than in terms of some cancelling out and correction.10

And what else would Zelig be for Derrida than "writing", "representation", "imitation", "metaphor", "analogy", "differance", etc? Here, in his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy', he describes the God Thoth, that God precisely of writing:

The system of these traits brings into play an original kind of logic: the figure of Thoth is opposed to its other (father, sun, life, speech, origin or orient, etc.), but as that which at once supplements and supplants it. Thoth extends or opposes by repeating or replacing. By the same token, the figure of Thoth takes shape and takes its shape from the very thing it resists and substitutes for. But it thereby opposes itself, passes into its other, and this messenger-god is truly a god of the absolute passage between opposites. If he had any identity— but he is precisely the god of non-identity—he would be that *coincidentia oppositorum* to which we will soon have recourse again. In distinguishing himself from his opposite, Thoth also imitates it, becomes its sign and representative, obeys it and conforms to it, replaces it, by violence if need be. He is thus the father's other, the father, and the subversive movement of replacement. The god of writing is thus at once his father, his son, and himself. He cannot be assigned a fixed spot in the play of differences. Sly, slippery, and masked, an intriguer and a card, like Hermes, he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of joker, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play.11

And, later on in the same essay, Derrida will qualify this characterisation of Thoth as a simple *coincidentia oppositorum*:

This double participation, once again, does not mix together two previously separate elements; it refers back to a *same* that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation. Thus, writing is *given* as the sensible, visible, spatial surrogate of the *mnême*; it later turns

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10 This phrase "cancelling out and correction" might remind us of Borges' story 'The Immortal', which also takes up this theme of the *coincidentia*—representation as at once the possibility and impossibility of the *coincidentia*. We will merely cite here the passage in which this phrase occurs:

Indoctrinated by a practice of centuries, the republic of immortal men had attained the perfection of tolerance and almost that of indifference. They knew that in an infinite period of time, all things happen to all men. Because of his past or future virtues, every man is worthy of all goodness, but also of all perversity, because of his infamy in the past or future. Thus, just as in games of chance the odd and even numbers tend towards equilibrium, so also wit and stolidity cancel out and correct each other [...] No one is anyone, one single immortal man is all men ('The Immortal', *Labyrinths*, op. cit., pp. 144-5).

We must ask here whether Zelig is an immortal in Borges' sense of the word. But, of course, in a way no one can actually be this "immortal man".

11 Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', op. cit., pp. 92-3. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'PP', followed by a page number.
out to be harmful and benumbing to the invisible interior of the soul, memory and truth. Inversely, the hemlock is given as a poison that harms and benumbs the body. But it later turns out to be helpful to the soul, which it delivers from the body and awakens to the truth of the *eidos*. If the *pharmakon* is 'ambivalent', it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. It is the difference of difference. It holds in reserve, in its undecided shadow and vigil, the opposites and the differends that the process of discrimination will come to carve out. Contradictions and pairs of opposites are lifted from the bottom of this diacritical, differing, deferring, reserve. Already inhabited by difference, this reserve, even though it 'precedes' the opposition between different effects, even though it pre-exists differences as effects, does not have the punctual simplicity of a *coincidentia oppositorum*. It is from this fund that dialectics draws its philosophemes. The *pharmakon*, without being anything in itself, always exceeds them in constituting their bottomless fund. It keeps itself forever in reserve even though it has no fundamental profundity nor ultimate locality. We will watch it infinitely promise itself and endlessly vanish through concealed doorways that shine like mirrors and open onto a labyrinth. It is also this store of deep background that we are calling the *pharmacy* (PP, 127-8).

"Already inhabited by difference, this reserve, even though it 'precedes' the opposition between different effects, even though it pre-exists differences as effects, does not have the punctual simplicity of a *coincidentia oppositorum*". Again, we see here the idea that, if the pharmakon is unrepresentable which allows all representation, is what cannot be represented, this is only because it is already represented, this is only to represent it. One because of the other, or better, one and the other at the same time. There can be no naming of this unrepresentable without that system of representation its exclusion allows, no naming of this unrepresentable without excluding it. The unrepresentable, in short, does not exist before that system of representation its exclusion allows; and that is why it is at once included and excluded. So that, if it is always both it and its opposite, their cancelling out and correction, if it precedes the opposition between different effects, it is also what is excluded to allow this equivalence between it and its opposite to be made, itself opposite to another. This is why, if it is already spent, if it is always from this "fund that dialectics draws its philosophemes", in another way it is also held in reserve, what is excluded, deferred, to allow this very spending: *expenditure* itself, that whose essence is non-essence. It is that single thing, the most essential of the essential, which is always excluded: the inessential.
Which is to say, more simply, that if that pharmakon of which Derrida speaks of is at once good and evil, cure and poison—that "medium in which opposites are opposed"—it is also always either good or evil, cure or poison. If it is what precedes all representation and allows it, it is always itself represented. And this even for Derrida: he too is only ever able to determine the pharmakon as alternatively good or evil, cure or poison. This is what we said of of all those representations of representation, those mediums of exchange (and we will notice here how insistent the mixture is between those apparent opposites of economics and mimesis, how it is always a question of that medium or metaphor which "precedes" them and makes them possible): if they are unrepresentable, inexchangeable, uncontextualisable—that which precedes all representation, exchange, context—they are also always represented, exchanged, contextualised. There is always a particular, totally singular, representation of representation or medium of exchange which, if it is the coincidentia that precedes opposition, is also, precisely because it is represented, exchanged, contextualised, opposed to or different from another.  

We can see all this with Zelig—Zelig here as pharmakon, that which is at once good and evil, cure and poison. On the one hand, he is unrepresentable, that which is excluded to allow all representation, and on the other, he is always represented, that which is always being spoken in the name of, the only thing in whose name we can speak. He is always exploited, spent (by all the commentators in the film, by Dr Fletcher to advance her career, by the newspapermen, the sellers of gimmicks, the starters of crazes, by his half sister Ruth and showman boyfriend Martin Geist, by Woody Allen, by Baudrillard, by me here) and yet also what allows this accusation of exploitation or expenditure, always held in reserve, deferred, unspent. He is at once completely represented, totally exploited, only that mask or disguise, and an endless reserve that can never be finally represented or exploited, what ensures that there will always be one more turn, one more trick up his (our) sleeve, always one more mask, one more disguise: precisely what allows us to say that he is only that mask or disguise, the very mask or disguise we give him when we try to show the face behind that mask or disguise. All this is made clear (but could it ever finally be made clear?) in a

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12 Again, "it is part of the rules of this game that the game should seem to stop" (PP, 128). But Derrida's question is also: what is excluded to allow this closure, this context; what is it that cannot be stopped that ensures the game will always stop?

13 As Derrida asks of metaphor (and it is the question we must ask of Zelig):
beautiful joke the film makes. In Zelig, we are shown a putative fiction film called *The Changing Man*, produced by Warner Brothers in 1935 (it is Warner Brothers, in fact, who released Allen's version in 1983). It is a quickie exploitation B-movie, shot shoddily and melodramatically to cash in on the Zelig fad. But in one of the scenes from the film, dramatising that moment when Zelig is handed over to his step-sister Ruth and Geist, the actress playing Dr Fletcher in the film turns to the camera and says: "They don't care about him, they'll exploit him. All they see in him is a chance to make more money!" A denunciation that applies, of course, to *The Changing Man* itself, and to Zelig, and to any analysis that takes this up. And yet a denunciation that remains, for all that, true. Zelig is at once, then, that from which we can speak, the only standard by which we can judge, that unrepresentable that allows all representation, and always debased, represented, judged. Zelig himself is both of these—their coincidentia—and what is excluded to allow us to say this, to make this equivalence, to exploit this fact ourselves.

We see this ambiguity again and again in the reviews of Zelig: Zelig or Zelig is always seen to involve two opposites, only to be determined in the end as either one or the other. And, if this is necessary, if we can only choose one or the other, it is also a question of the limits to this: the fact that within this aporia we can choose one only to choose the other, that what allows us to choose between them also means that we cannot. That is, if the reviews of the film actually see this ambiguity as an issue raised by the film, they also do not see it; if they introduce it as a question, it is only to immediately forget it, to solve it or to pretend to solve it. To paraphrase Michel Serres, they say it and measure the problem, but do not resolve it; they dramatise the concept but do not explain it; they describe the question admirably without answering it. And perhaps one can never do anything but this if one confines oneself to the problem of the logos. But for Serres, and for us, there is therefore raised a problem of judgement: how is it that we can criticise these reviews for simply plumping for either one half or the other of the aporia when this is all we can ever do? How to make the simultaneity of these two halves a standard of judgement when it can never be entirely

Under what conditions would one always have one more trick, one more turn up one's sleeve, in one's sack? One more seed? And would the sun always be able to sow? and *physis* to sow itself? (*WM*, 245)

represented? How to say this is a theme of the film when we can never say exactly what it is—this inability itself being part of what we are trying to describe? We will come back to these issues again in the next chapter, but here let us just look at a handful of reviews to see how this undecidability is spoken of only to be dropped, "solved", without thinking the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of doing so.

For instance, in making an equivalence between the character and the form of the film, much as Baudrillard does in The Evil Demon of Images, critics will say that in the same way as Zelig the film itself "disappears" in conforming totally to something else. It is an argument put most strongly by the Monthly Film Bulletin’s reviewer Richard Combs:

Nothing is more fascinating or unique about the films of Woody Allen than their knack of advancing backwards. In part, this is the natural fate of the pasticheur: the more complete and sophisticated the take-off becomes, the more his art seems to be collapsing in on itself, steadily denying its own existence as it advances towards perfection.

And this will lead critics to make an equivalence between the "emptiness" of the character Zelig and that of this film about him. The New Yorker critic Pauline Kael writes:

There’s a reason Zelig seems small: there aren’t any characters in it, not even Zelig. It’s a fantasy about being famous for being nobody. Zelig is played humbly and gracefully; Woody Allen never disrupts the movie’s smooth, neutral surfaces—at times he’s as meek and abashed as Stan Laurel.

On the other hand, however, as Combs already suggests, we can understand this self-effacement of the film as precisely what is most unique about it, what makes it so characteristic of Allen’s oeuvre—that just like the character Zelig himself, the movie Zelig would be most characteristic in having no character, in making itself invisible before the various documentary styles it imitates. Michiko Kakutani speaks of Allen’s "typical disparity in style", of which Zelig is but one more example. John Coleman speaks of Allen building his style and career "under the transparent cover of fooling around with several genres". Richard Combs again speaks of Zelig as

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18 John Coleman, 'Here Comes Everybody', The New Statesman, October 7, 1983, p. 27.
the non-film Allen has always been working towards, the perfect expression of his non-hero"19. Perhaps most overtly, Stam and Shohat write: "The film's originality, paradoxically, lies in the audacity of its imitation, quotation and absorption of other texts"20. Finally, and most perceptively perhaps, it is in those moments "overlooked" by the documentary itself—the small, invisible gestures, the dead passages of time—that many critics find what is most typical of Woody Allen and of Zelig. For example, John Pym writes: "But it is the moments of quietness, the understated, in fact barely stated at all moments of romance that really mark the picture with its distinguishing lyrical whimsicality, reveal the signature of its author"21. And Pauline Kael, Mark Le Fanu, Stanley Kaufman and Andrew Sarris of The Village Voice also comment on this particular tonality of the film: a kind of sadness or melancholy, linked directly, says Le Fanu, to its "ambition and perfection"22.

And we would not like to decide ourselves which of the two attitudes to take: whether Allen's perfect imitation of the documentary form ultimately erases both the film and its maker—when the film is seen as a disappearing act like Zelig at the end of the movie—or whether it is precisely in this repetition that Allen is most characteristic, noticeable, achieves a kind of celebrity or fame. Whether the film is empty, generic, or profound, singular, moving; whether it is a good imitation or a bad one. Or, if we always have to decide, we would also want to think why this undecidability too is irreducible, itself one of the themes of the film. We would also want to think why it might be finally this ambiguity itself that is Allen's subject in Zelig, and not either one of these sides as such.

We can see the same dilemma in the film's attitude towards that history it documents. Again, on the one hand, Zelig can be seen as a simple parody of documentaries, exposing the way that they can be wrong, how history can be falsified. And, on the other hand, we can understand Zelig to be speaking of the way that history is itself no more than a documentary, that there is no way any

19 Combs, op. cit., p. 294.
20 Stam and Shohat, op. cit., p. 191.
longer to distinguish between documentary and the history it documents, that history today is no more than an effect of the documentary. That first reading is characterised perhaps by an optimistic tone of parody and exaggeration: we laugh at the difference between the real and illusion, the true and the false, the attempt to make them the same; that second by a pessimistic tone of irony and nihilism: we laugh at the sameness of reality and illusion, the true and the false, the attempt to tell them apart (this second reading, indeed, can be understood as one version of Baudrillard’s argument about simulation). But these two readings are aporetic, since, in the first, we are arguing that reality and illusion are different, that we can distinguish between true and false history, true and false documentary, but all this would be expressed by a documentary that precisely blurs those distinctions; and in the second, we are arguing that reality and illusion are the same, that we cannot distinguish between true and false history, true and false documentary, but this final truth itself—as opposed to any illusion or falsity—would have to be guaranteed by this documentary. Insofar as Zelig argues for the end of truth, that history is an illusion, it must still appeal to a truth, that which cannot be an illusion: that which cannot be doubted, finally, is that there is no truth; that which cannot be an illusion is that reality is an illusion.\footnote{Though we cannot entirely agree with him, the American political philosopher Allan Bloom is closer than most when he speaks of the “Nietzscheanism” of Zelig in this regard: that Nietzsche perhaps of ‘The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life’. Following a certain reading of that essay, we might understand Zelig to be speaking of history as an illusion, a conformity to one’s desires, a way of keeping safe. Zelig himself might be understood as the embodiment or psychologisation of this impulse towards history as illusion. Bloom would be right in seeing this as a bad Nietzscheanism, a Nietzsche misread. For it would be to read Nietzsche as simply nihilist, without understanding that his project was precisely the overcoming of this nihilism, the re-evaluation and not the simple destruction of all values. It would be the logical consequence of asserting the end of truth, the collapse of the distinction between the fictional and the real, without realising that this itself relies upon a certain truth, a certain ability to distinguish between the fictional and the real. The question would be, however, even agreeing with Bloom’s analysis: to what extent can Zelig be accused of this “nihilism without the abyss”? See Allan Bloom, \textit{The Closing of the American Mind}, Simon and Schuster, 1987, pp. 144-7.}
readings possible, what both opens up and closes this circle between them. There can be no evidence for this third tonality, except perhaps a feeling on the part of some of the film's critics of the inadequacy of describing Zelig as either the same as or different from the history or documentaries it takes as its subject. It is the feeling that with Zelig we cannot really say what is being imitated, what Zelig and the documentaries it imitates have in common, the difficulty in characterising that subtle "look" the film achieves that makes it like those documentaries it takes as its subject. It might be suggested only by the uneasy feeling that Zelig is somehow too perfect in its recreation of an era, where Zelig would be at once the the same as and different from what it imitates. As opposed to those first and second readings, then, this tonality is almost neutral, almost indifferent: only almost neutral, almost indifferent, because if it represents the equivalence of the first two, it is also what is excluded from them to allow this equivalence. It expresses the fact that we can represent the unrepresentable only to exclude it, leading to a kind of indifference—why bother?—but also that this indifference would only be possible because of this attempt, that this indifference already represents an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. It is this "almost indifference" that coresponds precisely to Derrida's disgust: at once something already represented, expelled, vomited, and a sense of obligation towards the unrepresentable, the vicarious, what forces us, compels us, to represent, expel, vomit it.

We find something of this third tonality perhaps in Andrew Sarris' review, 'Woody Allen at the Peak of Parody', in which he writes:

Zelig is, among other things, a marvellously witty media probe. Allen does not have to press the point home. The people we have been looking at in newsreels all these years are no more 'real' than the people we have been looking at in the most fanciful Hollywood movies. And yet once we have seen them in their newsreely incarnation, we can never think of reality itself apart from them. This is what makes Zelig so moving. There is in Allen a love for this ridiculously hammy and heart-rendingly self-conscious past, and he expresses this love through a scrupulous respect for the tone and quality of the illusion. Let us say this: compilations of old newsreels can never look the same after Zelig, and yet nothing in Zelig diminishes our loving regard for these fragments of dead time and space and matter.24

For what is it that Sarris is getting at in this undoubtedly oxymoronic formulation, arguing that Zelig is at once "ridiculously hammy" and "moving", "heart-rending" and "self-conscious"? Is

24 Sarris, op. cit., p. 39.
it not precisely the fact that _Zelig_ is at once the same as and different from those newsreels it
imitates, that it comes in a sense both before and after them, imitates them and is imitated by
them—the fact that, after _Zelig_, those "old newsreels can never look the same", and yet "nothing in
_Zelig_ diminishes our loving regard for these fragments of dead time and space and matter"? There is
the same ambiguity when he writes: "The people we have been looking at in newsreels all the time
are no more 'real' than the people we have been looking at in the most fanciful Hollywood movies",
for if they are no more real, this is not to say they are any less real. It is impossible to say whether
those documentaries or Hollywood fantasies are real or illusory. And yet, just when Sarris seems
about to say all this, to engage systematically with this enigma of imitation that _Zelig_ raises, he
stops. When he says that "Allen does not have to drive the point home", this is apparently to
excuse him from doing so too.

We see the same pursuit and avoidance of the paradoxes of imitation in Bill Krohn's review
of _Zelig_, 'Zelig Medium', in which he writes of the way that _Zelig_ exposes the simultaneous
"ingenuity" and "stupidity" of the documentary form in a shot of a photo of _Zelig_ being sent spinning
while the narrator speaks of _Zelig_ 's life being "turned upside down in an orgy of jealous violence" by
Geist's murder of _Zelig_ 's half-sister Ruth and subsequent suicide because actual footage of the event
is missing²⁵. Or, later in the same review, when he speaks of the way that _Zelig_ 's actual physical
transformations are never shown—something, he says, that is at once "naive" and "provocative"²⁶. But Krohn too seems unable or unwilling to thematise this duality as one of the concerns of _Zelig_, to
think that _Zelig_ might be about this very simultaneity: we can, indeed, speak of the same
"stupidity" and "ingenuity", "naivety" and "provocation", in Krohn's own review as in the _Zelig_ he
speaks of. With Krohn too the same improvisation before a lack of evidence, the same formal
troping of the content of his argument, the same representation only of end-results ("stupidity" and
"ingenuity", "naivety" and "provocation") and not of what is really at stake: that moment in
between, in transition, when _Zelig_ is neither one nor the other, neither simply itself nor the one it
imitates. In other words, Krohn, like Sarris, refuses to engage with what would allow him to
expose the "stupidity" and "ingenuity" of all imitation while ensuring that he can only repeat it.

His relationship to Zelig and the mysteries it presents is like that of all reviews or documentaries to what they record: at once "stupid" and "ingenious", "naive" and "provocative", the same and different.

We might summarise this tendency with an extraordinarily subtle reading of Zelig from a review of the film by Peter Hogue and Marion Bronson. We might cite two passages here. Firstly:

[A newsreel celebrating Eudora Fletcher's psychiatric success with Zelig's case concludes with a shot of her doing some sewing while the voice-over commentator observes that she has proven that women can do something besides sew. This piece of concocted newsreel, of course, slyly evokes the limited perspectives and casual contradictions in an era's assumptions. The remark is a bit of self-cancelling lipservice paid by the newsreel to the feminism of the 20's, but the benighted quaintness of the remark is only part of the effect that Allen gets here. There is also a certain disparity between the image and the remark—first in that the image seems to regress from the point that the voice-over commentator is trying to make and second in that the image is being used on behalf of a logic which is almost certainly separate from the logic behind the original shot (one can imagine Fletcher agreeing to demonstrate 'another' of her talents for the camera, but it seems unlikely that she would have posed for the purpose which is imposed by the voice-over). Such moments reflect the extraordinary ingenuity that has gone into this 'false documentary' and into images like this which are at once so innocent and so complex.]

And secondly:

Like its view of the twenties, this movie is both bitter and fond. For all its critical distancing, it is also a film which frequently dwells on and takes pleasure in the surface of things. Its loving pastiche (by Dick Hyman) of the period's music is one major sign of that lyrical impulse, but so is its attention to visual detail in the fabricated newsreels. A shot of Zelig with a group of bathing beauties, for example, might be viewed as a little meditation on the quirks of silent-era newsreel photography: it's a still camera pose for a moving picture camera, a 'durational' tableau with Zelig acting 'hot' serially via an 'aroused' shiver repeated several times; it is the non-actor acting 'arousal' repeatedly, with the result that its cliché is exposed (it's mechanical) and transformed (Zelig's self-consciousness makes him change each repetition in a way that freshens it with spontaneity and a movie-made authenticity). The pleasant, lyrical elements of such a shot over-ride the accompanying deconstructive tendencies, and Zelig seems in the process to arrive at a kind of sophisticated retreat to lost innocence which nevertheless insists on the irreversibility of the loss.

As such, Zelig is both nostalgic and analytical.

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28 Ibid, p. 31.
But here again, despite the brilliance of its insights, there is no attempt to systematically understand the way these oxymorons might arise. Why is it that we can understand Zelig as both "innocent" and "complex", "bitter" and "fond", "critically distanced" and "taking a loving pleasure in the surface of things", "non-acting" and "acting", "mechanical" and "fresh", "spontaneous" and "self-conscious", "a retreat to lost innocence" and an acknowledgement of the "irreversibility of the loss", "nostalgic" and "analytical"? Indeed, like Sarris and Krohn, at the very moment they come closest to speaking of this ambiguity as itself the issue, they back down from its implications, simply asserting, despite all they have said so far, that "the pleasant, lyrical elements" of that shot of Zelig on the beach with those bathing beauties "over-ride the accompanying deconstructive tendencies". (We say "back down" here as though they were somehow to blame, but is not this simultaneous approach towards and retreat from the "truth" of imitation always the case?) Indeed, that shot of Zelig on the beach is even more complicated that they suggest, embodies in a way the whole enigma of imitation, for what it shows is Zelig "mugging" for the camera, that is to say, what is being imitated would not exist before it is imitated. What does this mean for Hogue and Bronson's own imitation of it, and what might it mean to say that "Zelig's self-consciousness makes him change each repetition in such a way that freshens it with spontaneity"? Might not the meaning of Zelig's pose change with Hogue and Bronson's repetition of it too? What is it then that they are repeating? Is there any original meaning to Zelig's pose before its imitation? And, similarly, when they speak of that shot of Dr Fletcher sewing and complain about the "hijacking" of the original meaning of the footage, of the way they can "imagine Fletcher agreeing to demonstrate 'another' of her talents for the camera, but it seems unlikely that she would have posed for the purpose imposed by the voice-over", they fail to realize that this reading itself, *their* voice-over, also constitutes a "hijacking" of the original meaning of the image, that they too can only (mis)use the sequence for their own purposes; that any "original" meaning can only be the effect of a certain "hijacking" or catachresis, though each of these in turn is only possible because of some "original" meaning, can only be carried out in the name of some "original" meaning.29

29 On this "hijacking", see also Stam and Shohat, who similarly make the point about the way Zelig "hijacks material shot with another purpose in mind" and "frames it with another intention", giving it "a new ironic intention" (Stam and Shohat, op. cit., p. 178).
In both of these passages, therefore, what makes their analysis possible also makes it impossible: that Zelig they speak of would not exist before he is imitated and yet he must; the meaning of any shot is not given before its "montage" and yet it must be. Again, we can speak of these analyses overlooking this "limit", and yet they have to, they can never finally grasp it: it is what is excluded by any attempt to take it into account. All analysis is at once a knowing and an unknowing in this sense; and this takes place at every moment, at every attempt to speak of this limit. Hogue and Bronson's essay too is both "nostalgic" and "analytic", "innocent" and "complex", "mechanical" in seeing only what it wants to, and "fresh" in that this itself would be possible only insofar as it does see Zelig as though for the first time, in that Zelig does not exist before it, "pleasant, lyrical" and "deconstructive"—as is "deconstruction" itself. But it can never be a matter of one "over-riding" the other—or this would be possible only because of that other. How can we make this limit, the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of taking account of this limit, a standard of judgement, a way of speaking of these reviews, when it is always excluded by our attempts to speak of it or for it, however? This is the question our fourth and final chapter takes up.

without realising that their own analysis—their own exposé of this—could only repeat the same error, could only be itself part of the very process it is attempting to describe.
CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, we have spoken of the question of judgement in the work of Baudrillard and Derrida, of the way that it is not just a matter of a standard of judgement for them, but also of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a standard of judgement. We also pointed out that, if this simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a standard of judgement is a standard of judgement, it is necessarily also a "standard" by which we must judge Baudrillard and Derrida themselves. Insofar as their argument is essentially about the limits to the judgement of others, about whether they realise the limits to their judgement, it also a question of their ability to judge this. We might say that Derrida is "better" than Baudrillard in realising the limits to judgement, that Derrida operates as a standard of judgement against which to judge Baudrillard, but this is precisely because he knows the limits to his being used as a standard of judgement like this, to his acting as a standard of judgement for Baudrillard. Perhaps this is why, finally, we will never get round to actually comparing Baudrillard and Derrida: if this is possible and should be done (and, implicitly, we feel, we have done this), it is also necessary and impossible: Baudrillard and Derrida are both already compared and never can be. Instead, this chapter takes up a third (or a fourth, if we include Zelig) attempt to make representation or the unrepresentable a standard of judgement: the work of Jean-François Lyotard. Again, his work must be understood both in terms of a generality—he is like both Baudrillard and Derrida, adds some things to what they are saying and leaves out others—and in terms of a singularity and universality—he at once adds nothing that is not already to be found in them, is absolutely identical to them, and offers a completely new perspective upon all of this, is totally different from them. It is a chapter that speaks, like those on Baudrillard and Derrida, to a greater or lesser degree of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of comparing it with those others.

What will be emphasised in this chapter, therefore, is that issue of judgement we have hinted at throughout this thesis. But before we start, it might be valuable to look at this "theme"
as it arises in Baudrillard and Derrida, at the way their work takes up this problem of a standard of judgement that is at once represented and unrepresentable, a standard of judgement and the limit to all standards of judgement—and the way that, finally, it is the very simultaneity of the two that would be their standard of judgement. We might begin with Baudrillard’s essay ‘The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place’. In it, he speaks of a "certain precise moment" beyond which "history is no longer real". And one of the effects of being beyond this point is that we do not even realise that we are beyond it: there can be, therefore, no desire to go back to what it was like before; and even if there were, we could not know what it was like. The year 2000, in other words—that moment of decision, of the distinction between before and after—will not come because it has already come.

Baudrillard begins by taking up Elias Canetti's description of the problem, although he will end up disagreeing with his conclusions:

I will begin with the following proposition from Canetti’s *The Human Province*: ‘A painful thought: that beyond a certain precise moment in time, history is no longer real. Without realising it, the whole human race suddenly left reality behind. Nothing that has occurred since then has been true, but we are unable to realise it. Our task and our duty now is to discover this point or, so long as we fail to grasp it, we are condemned to continue on our present destructive course’.[…]

The crossing of this unidentifiable point is [however] irreversible (contrary to what Canetti implicitly hopes). The situation suddenly becomes entirely novel. We can no longer discover music as it was before stereo (unless by an effect of supplementary simulation), we can no longer discover history as it was before information and the media. The original essence (of music, of the social...), the original concept (of the unconscious, of history...) have disappeared because we can never again isolate them from their model of perfection, which at the same time is their model of simulation, of their forced assumption in an excessive truth, which at once is their point of inertia and their point of no-return. We will never know what was the social, or what was music before their present exacerbation in useless perfection.

But the paradox here is that if the year 2000 is that "certain precise point" beyond which history or judgement is no longer possible, it is itself necessarily a point at which history or

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1 Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place’, trans. Paul Foss and Paul Patton, *Futur*Fall: Excursions into Post-Modernity*, op. cit., pp. 18, 22. We saw another example of this logic—that the year 2000 will not come because it already has—in *ED* when Baudrillard argued that the real nuclear catastrophe lies in the fact that we cannot realise the catastrophe (*ED*, 25). But, as we outline below, for this to be said, the catastrophe must be realised, at least by Baudrillard himself. If the catastrophe marks a complete break, after which there is nothing, it also allows us to speak of this, joins the before and the after.
judgement is possible, about which history and judgement can and must speak. Insofar as
Baudrillard is able to say that beyond this point there is no return, that beyond this point we are no
longer able to distinguish between before and after, we are not beyond this point, this distinction can
still be made. If the fact that for us the year 2000 will not take place means that it already has,
insofar as we can say this, it has not. In other words, if the year 2000 is unrepresentable, excluded by
all attempts to represent it—this is why Baudrillard is able to insist, against Canetti, that this
"unidentifiable point" will never be found—it is also necessarily represented, the only point from
which criticism today can speak. It is, after all, this point that allows Baudrillard to make the
distinction between before and after, even if only to say it is now lost forever. It is, after all, this
point of which Baudrillard speaks, even if only to say it can never be regained. The paradox of
Baudrillard's position is that, if he argues against such thinkers as Canetti that this point is
unrepresentable, he necessarily has to represent it himself in saying this. If he speaks of the loss of
this point, of its loss even when we think we have found it again, of its loss that allows us to find it
again, nevertheless in this very gesture he attempts to recover it.

'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place' is, more than anything else, about this simultaneous
necessity and impossibility of judgement, about this point—the year 2000—which, if it allows us to
judge, forms a standard by which we can judge, is also the loss of this standard, the impossibility of
judgement. But the real question here is the extent to which Baudrillard realises the paradox of
speaking himself about this lost point: not only that it is excluded to allow us to reflect upon it (as
he says), but also that it is necessarily included to allow us to say this. It is to the degree to which
he realises this limit to judgement, its simultaneous necessity and impossibility, that we can say he
is better than Canetti—but also, of course, the limits to saying this. This is why it is a question of
judgement: something must be taken into account that cannot be taken into account, even in saying
this. We must try to take up the omniscient point of view of the year 2000 while realising that it
would be excluded by this very perspective, in allowing judgement to state the standard by which it
judges (it is to adopt the position of that "minimal cycle" or "minute difference" that both allows
and disallows the equivalence between judgement and what it judges). To judge by the year 2000 is to
try to realise that you are always at once inside and outside of history, before and after the year
2000, both judging from the end of history and that this would only be possible insofar as there were some moment after this, insofar as you were judged in turn. It is to take up the position of the year 2000, which is at once everywhere and nowhere, every moment of history, time itself, and the end of history, outside of time. From where can we best represent something that is at once everywhere and nowhere? This is the real question of judgement. And Baudrillard describes this position—already two—in the following terms in 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place':

A certain slowness (that is to say a certain speed, but not too much), a certain distance but not too much, a certain 'liberation' (of energy of rupture and change) but not too much, in order that this kind of significative condensation or crystallisation of the events that we call history be produced, this kind of coherent succession of causes and effects that we call the real ².

And for Derrida too, the same question of judgement. For him, it is the problem of how to judge on the basis of différencé, which, like Baudrillard's year 2000, is at once unrepresentable and already represented. There is the comparable difficulty of having to judge by différencé when it is a standard that would be excluded by every formulation of it. Why try to represent, to speak for, différencé when it is excluded by every representation of it, every attempt to speak for it? The problem for Derrida is that, if he speaks of différencé against others, as a standard by which to judge others, it is also excluded by him, a standard by which to judge him; it is a standard which Derrida himself can only fall short of. If différencé is used to argue for the limits to others, it is also the limit to Derrida, to Derrida arguing for those limits. Différencé is not only a standard by which to judge the truth or falsity, the good or evil, of others, but also the limit to all possible judgements of this kind. It is only in this way that Derrida could oppose his argument to those others: not simply by proposing another standard of judgement, which would be only to repeat them, but by speaking of the impossibility of, the limits to, any final standard of judgement. One of the consequences of this, however, is that there can be no ultimate justification for différencé as that

² 'The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place', ibid, p. 18. In these remarks of Baudrillard, we find an echo of §26 of The Critique of Judgement, where Kant speaks of the way that with the pyramids "we must avoid coming too close just as much as remaining too far away"—there too this enigmatic position of judgement, already two. This could be related to Serres' article 'Mathematics and Philosophy: What Thales Saw...', op. cit., where we see the "same" pyramids and that same ambivalent position necessary for judgement or measurement. This "position" would be that second order of simulation—both uniting and dividing the first and third orders—from which Benjamin and McLuhan both wrote ('The Orders of Simulacra', op. cit., p. 102), and from which Baudrillard would have to write too.
which makes all justification—all judgement—possible. As Derrida says in 'Typan' from his book

*Margins of Philosophy*:

Certainly one will never prove *philosophically* that *one has* to transform a given situation and proceed to an effective deconstruction in order to leave irreversible marks. In the name of what or of whom in effect? And why not permit the dictation of the norm and the rule of law *atergo*?[...] If the displacement of forces does not effectively transform the situation, why deprive oneself of the pleasure, and specifically of the laughter, which are never without a certain repetition? This hypothesis is not secondary. With what is one to *authorize oneself*, in the last analysis, if not once more with philosophy, in order to disqualify naivété, incompetence, or misconstrual, in order to be concerned with passivity or to limit pleasure? And if the value of authority remained fundamentally, like the value of critique itself, the most naive? One can analyse or transform the desire for im-pertinence, but one cannot, within discourse, make it understand pertinence, and that one must (know how to) destroy what one destroys

3. That is to say, there can be no reason finally why one deconstructs, tries to represent différance. As Derrida says, it deprives one of pleasure, is a form of pain and suffering (a pain and suffering we will see again in a moment when we come to Lyotard’s work on the Sublime)4. We cannot justify or argue for it except in terms of the philosophy it is opposed to, cannot justify or argue for it except to exclude it yet again. But, if différance is unrepresentable, what is excluded by being represented, it is also already represented, what *forces* you—like that disgust we spoke of in Chapter Two—to represent it. If différance can never begin, it is only because it has already begun, because différance is everywhere; if it can never end—if the analysis is interminable—it is because it has already ended. The very impossibility of circumventing philosophy in that passage above,

3 'Typan', *Margins of Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. xxii-xxiii. See also *Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time*:

And, without a rigorous critical and deconstructive acknowledgement of the system, the very necessary attention to differences, disruptions, mutations, leaps, restructurations, etc., becomes ensnared in slogans, in dogmatic stupidity, in empiricist precipitations—or in all of these at once; and in any event lets the very discourse it believes is putting into question be dictated to itself *atergo*. It is true that the pleasure one might have in doing so (in repetition) ultimately cannot be called to appear before the tribunal of any law. It is precisely the limit of such a tribunal—philosophy—that is in question here (*Margins of Philosophy*, ibid. p. 39).

And on the necessity and impossibility of judgement, of that self-revealing word that would make judgement possible, see the interview with Kearney, *Dialogues with Continental Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 119-22.

the fact that any objection to philosophy can only ever be philosophical, is only possible because of difféance. It is the very exclusion of difféance that ensures there is no outside to philosophy\textsuperscript{5}.

There is, nevertheless, still a question of judgement tied up with deconstruction. If difféance necessarily remains unrepresentable in being represented, there is still the problem of how to represent this, how to judge using this standard of judgement. To continue the argument of that passage above, that it is only philosophically that we can "disqualify naivété, incompetence or misconstrual", Derrida in all his analyses insists on a kind of rigour; there is an abiding concern in all of his work for the specificity, the context, of the arguments he deconstructs: a specificity he will show in the course of this deconstruction to be finally untenable. Or more precisely, that what makes it possible also makes it impossible. What then can dictate this desire for specificity, what will allow Derrida to judge it, to say that his analysis is specific enough? For finally it can be judged specific enough only according to the standard of difféance; it can be judged specific enough only when it reveals something that would be excluded by being made specific. But it is not as though this something simply exists outside any specificity. Rather, it is always represented and unrepresentable at the same time. Here, then, we encounter the problem of judgement, of method, for Derrida, its conflicting and simultaneous demands: to at once take the position of upmost philosophical scrupulousness, a concern for specificity, down to the uniqueness, the signature, of each single system analysed, and to realise that this is finally impossible, that we can only mime this philosophy and its criteria for specificity, that all philosophy is saying the same thing (which cannot be specified). As we saw with Baudrillard, Derrida too has to adopt this impossible position of not too fast and not too slow, not too close and not too far. It is the "position" of difféance itself. As Derrida says in his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy':

One must then, in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write. And that person would have understood nothing of the game who, at this, would feel himself authorised to merely add on; that is, to add any old thing. He would add nothing: the seam wouldn't hold. Reciprocally, he who through 'methodological prudence', 'norms of objectivity', or 'safeguards of knowledge' would refrain from

\textsuperscript{5} On difféance as an "Idea" in the Kantian sense (unrepresentable, regulative, an infinite task to be accomplished), see the Introduction to Irene Harvey's, The Economy of Difféance, Indiana University Press, 1986. But also, as she notes there, it is the very exclusion of "difféance" that would allow the Kantian Idea, the thought of difféance as a Kantian Idea.
committing anything of himself, would not read at all. The same foolishness, the same sterility, obtains in the 'not serious' as in the 'serious'. The reading or writing supplement must be rigorously prescribed, but by the necessities of a *game*, by the logic of *play*, signs to which the system of all textual powers must be accorded and attuned (PP, 64).

There is at once a certain necessity and a certain contingency here: a necessity because there is only one possible continuation to the text, which must be found: not just any addition will do; a contingency because we cannot say what this continuation will be in advance, there is no simple rule for determining it. There is a simultaneous singularity and universality here as opposed to (or at the same time as) a generality—that generality of either the "serious" or the "not serious". As we saw when Baudrillard spoke of seduction in Chapter One, and as we saw in Chapter Two, Derrida is implicitly opposing to the generality of the *law* here the singularity and universality of a *rule*, according to which we are *obliged* to find the best continuation and yet have no means for deciding what it is. Rather than having some *law* to follow—that would allow the exchange of some example for it or it for some example—here the *rules* are at once determined forever without us knowing what they are and made up from moment to moment during the game. But, as with Baudrillard both readings are possible: deconstruction is both a law, a pattern to be followed (let us call it, following Kant, a science) and a rule, something which can only be seen in practice, which is affected by our very attempt to imitate or copy it (let us call it, following Kant, an art). And, as in Kant, the two can never finally be separated: deconstruction is both a science and an art. Diférance is at once a generality, a standard by which to judge (even when we say it is at once included and excluded this forms a standard, something that can be represented), and singular and universal, both the necessity and impossibility of a standard by which to judge (when we say it is at once included and excluded it is at once included and excluded by this). Perhaps finally it is the very *simultaneity* of these that Derrida is trying to make a "standard of judgement": at once the possibility of judging *and* the fact that we can never not judge, but without ever finally knowing what the standard of judgement is. In short, what Derrida might be seeking to make a standard of judgement is this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness itself.
At the same time: the Sublime

For Lyotard too, it is this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness — "time" itself—that will come to constitute a standard of judgement. But this must be understood very carefully, for not only is this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness at once represented and unrepresentable, included and excluded, a standard of judgement and the impossibility of a standard of judgement, but to think something at once represented and unrepresentable, included and excluded, a standard of judgement and the impossibility of a standard of judgement, is to think simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness. In other words, not only is simultaneity a standard of judgement, it is also the impossibility of a standard of judgement—and it is precisely the simultaneity of these two that Lyotard is seeking to make a standard of judgement. There is a kind of asymptote here in which simultaneity is no sooner thought than it is excluded, but where this is simultaneity—and, in a way, like Baudrillard and Derrida, Lyotard is trying to make this asymptote itself his standard of judgement, or is trying to think, at least, what is excluded from it to make it possible. We have already seen how Baudrillard and Derrida want to make this simultaneity their standard of judgement. The masses, seduction, différence and the pharmakon are all attempts to present this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness. To follow the use of simultaneity and at-the-same-timeness throughout their arguments (and in our versions of them here) is to follow the enigma of something at once always represented, always stood in for, and unrepresentable, excluded. It is this simultaneity they are trying to represent as the limit to that aporetic logic they are analysing, what at once makes it possible and impossible; but it is this simultaneity that also forms the limit to their own arguments, what ensures that they can only repeat those aporiae they are trying to unravel. If this simultaneity forms a limit, it is also the limit to all attempts to state this limit, what is excluded to ensure that there is no limit, that those aporetic systems they attack are limitless. Baudrillard and Derrida (and Lyotard) differ from what they criticise, then, only in thinking this "limit", the necessity and impossibility of this limit, the necessity and impossibility of taking this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness into account. This simultaneity, in other words, is itself that "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" we have spoken of before as the (non) position of judgement: not too close and not too far, not too fast and not too slow (not too fast and not too slow because, if
simultaneity can be understood as a simple instantaneity, it is also what is excluded to make this instantaneity possible, that "time" in which instantaneity can take place, that is to say, if simultaneity makes instantaneity possible, it also makes it impossible\textsuperscript{6}.

What Lyotard wants to represent—or better still, \textit{present}—is simultaneity, that simultaneity that is representation, the paradox of representation. It is this simultaneity or representation that

\textsuperscript{6} Our analysis here, and throughout this thesis, owes a great deal to Derida's essay 'Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time', in which he speaks of a certain simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness which both allows and disallows the aporia of the "now" thought of as the present, on the basis of presence. Simultaneity would be both what allows one moment to pass over into another moment (one moment could become another moment only if they were somehow both present at the same time) and what means that one moment can never pass over into another moment (if it is this exchange of one moment for another that gives time, in what time could this exchange take place? if two moments were present at the same moment, would this not be the end of time?). Or, to put it another way, if the now is defined on the basis of the impossibility of it co-existing with another now, if two nows cannot by definition be simultaneous, there must also be a certain co-existence or simultaneity in which this can be said, within which we can see these two nows differentiate themselves. As Derrida says:

The now, presence in the act of the present, is constituted as the impossibility of co-existing with an other now, that is, with an other-the-same-as-itself. The now is (in the present indicative) the impossibility of co-existing with itself: with itself, that is, with an other self, an other now, an other same, a double.

But it has already been remarked that this impossibility, when barely formulated, contradicts itself, is experienced as the possibility of the impossible. This impossibility implies in its essence, in order to be what it is, that the other now, with which a now cannot co-exist, is also in a certain way the same, is also a now as such, and that it co-exists with that which cannot co-exist with it. The impossibility of coexistence can be posited as such only on the basis of a certain co-existence, of a certain \textit{simultaneity} of the non-simultaneous, in which the alterity and identity of the now are maintained together in the differentiated element of a certain same (Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time', op. cit., p. 55).

For Derrida, that is, simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness is a very ambiguous expression: it both allows the instantaneity, the equivalence, of those two nows, and is the impossibility of this, is their succession, the difference between them. It is this enigma, this \textit{différence}, that makes time—time in the form of presence, presence in the form of time—at once both possible and impossible. As Derrida writes of Aristotle's Physics, in which this "vulgar" conception of time is first set out:

That which goes without saying, making discourse play itself out in its articulation, that which henceforth will constitute the pivot \textit{[cheville]} of metaphysics, the small key that both opens and closes the history of metaphysics in terms of what it puts at stake, the clavicle on which the conceptual decision of Aristotle bears down and is articulated, is the small word \textit{hama}... In Greek \textit{hama} means 'together', 'all at once', 'both together', 'at the same time' (Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time', ibid., p. 56).

It is this "at the same time" that Derrida might be trying to make a standard of judgement here, a "position" at once within and outside metaphysics from which to judge it. It would not be simply instantaneity, but also what makes instantaneity—insofar as it is conceived of as the present, on the basis of presence—possible. And in the remainder of this chapter, we will attempt to show that it is precisely this "relationship" between instantaneity and simultaneity that is at stake in Lyotard too.
Lyotard calls the Sublime or the unpresentable. And it is this simultaneity or representation that he wants to make a standard of judgement, an ethics—or perhaps an aesthetics—with which to judge technology and capitalism today. What Lyotard wants to do in a way is oppose the "arrest" of this simultaneity to the "advance" of technological innovation; oppose the simultaneity of thought, of the Idea (the Idea of simultaneity), to what we might call, after Heidegger, the "vulgar" time of capitalism. Lyotard writes in his essay "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde":

"The enigma of Is it happening? nonetheless is not dissipated, nor is the task of painting the indeterminate out of date. The occurrence, the Ereignis, has nothing to do with the petit frisson, the rentable pathos, that accompanies innovation. Hidden in the cynicism of innovation is surely a despair that nothing further will happen. But to innovate means to behave as though any number of things could happen, and it means taking action to make them happen. In affirming itself, will affirms its hegemony over time. It also conforms to the metaphysics of capital, which is a technology of time. Innovation 'advances'. The question mark or the Is it happening? arrests. Will is defeated by occurrence. The avant-garde task is to undo spiritual assumptions regarding time. The sense of the sublime is the name of this dismantling."

With the question Is it happening? Lyotard is proposing a new model of time. It cannot be answered by waiting for another event; it is not something that "remains to be determined, something that hasn't been determined before" (S + AG, 37). Nor can it be answered by looking back to what precedes it; it does not proceed through the "dialectic of refutation and questioning". The meaning of Is it happening? is not to be attained by exchanging it for another, as the present can only be exchanged for the past or future. The "now" of Is it happening? does not simply lie between the past and future; it is not that "present instant', the one that tries so hard to claim territory between the future and the past, but manages only to be devoured by them"(S + AG, 37). As opposed to the generality of the representation of time—where the meaning of each moment can only be given insofar as it can be exchanged for another, when time is what it is not and is not what it is — with

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7 It is Heidegger who in Being and Time first coins the expression "vulgar time" to refer to the Aristotelian—the metaphysical—conception of time. We will speak of some of its characteristics as the chapter progresses.

8 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', op. cit., p. 43. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'S + AG', followed by a page number.

9 'Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime', op. cit., p. 68. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials 'P the Unp', followed by a page number.

10 This aporia of "vulgar" time is set out by Derrida in Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time', op. cit., pp. 39-40, 53-7.
Is it happening? Lyotard proposes a presentation of time in both its singularity and universality. It is not only the time given by the exchange of one moment for another, but also that "time" in which this exchange takes place, that "time" which gives this exchange. It is that "time" which is excluded for time to take (its) place. So that, if this simultaneity or Is it happening? is impossible, excluded by all attempts to grasp it, because it can only be grasped in time, this very time itself would only be possible because of this simultaneity or Is it happening? This simultaneity or Is it happening? is both time and the end of time, the "advance" and the "arrest" of time, at the same time. It is in this that its simultaneity and "arrest" consists.

As with Baudrillard and Derrida, then, there is a certain "double science" or "double strategy" in Lyotard. This Is it happening? is both opposed to time as the end of time (but a limit that, if it makes time possible, would also only be possible because of it) and that simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness that makes this aporia itself possible. And it is interesting that Lyotard is already taking all this up in terms of capital in that passage, for what he can also be seen to be saying there is that we can no sooner say that it is the "now" or "arrest" of Is it happening? that allows the "advance" or "innovation" of technology than this "now" or "advance" would become itself only a new "advance" or "innovation" within it. We can no sooner name a limit to capital than capital surpasses it. There is no simple limit to capital. But Is it happening? is also the question of what is excluded to ensure that this is so: not what is excluded before the "advance" or "innovation" of capital that allows it, but what is excluded at the same time as it and means that nothing need allow it. It is that "limit" to capital which ensures that capital has no limit.

We can see the same two readings at stake in the following passage from The Sublime and the Avant-Garde. Lyotard is speaking here of the painter Barnett Newman's now, a now precisely of the Is it happening?, a now that can only be grasped aesthetically (as an Idea) and not technologically (as a thing); a now of an aesthetic, indeed, and not of an ethic:

Newman's now is a stranger to consciousness and cannot be composed in terms of it. Rather, it is what dismantles consciousness, what dismisses consciousness; it is what consciousness cannot formulate, and even what consciousness forgets in order to compose itself ('S + AG', 37).
Lytotard appears to be speaking here of a time that simply precedes consciousness, that allows us to become conscious of it. The *Is it happening?* of Newman's *now* would simply give time. In this sense, Lyotard merely repeats the aporia of "vulgar" time. But he also goes on to add that this *now* is what "consciousness forgets in order to compose itself". That is, if it is this forgetting of time that allows consciousness, it is precisely also consciousness that does this forgetting; that time which allows its consciousness is not possible outside of a consciousness that has already forgotten it. If it is time or its forgetting that allows consciousness, it is also consciousness or its forgetting that allows time. More than either of these, however, what Lyotard is really trying to conjure up here is the *simultaneity* of time and its consciousness, time and its forgetting. This *Is it happening?* attests to the fact that at once time must be forgotten by consciousness to be time and that consciousness must forget this time to be conscious, to be conscious of itself.

And perhaps as a final example, here is a further passage from 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde', in which Lyotard speaks of the relationship between an *It happens* and *Is it happening?:* the first a kind of "occurrence", actual, the second one of its "instances" or predicates, only potential\textsuperscript{11}. He writes:

Before finding out about the what [of *What happens?*, *Is it happening?*] and its significance, before the *quid*, we need the *before* so that it 'may happen'—*quod*. The happening always 'precedes' the question of what happens. *It happens* comes *before* *Is it happening?*, *is it this?*, *is it possible?* 'Only then' can any point be determined through enquiry: is this or that happening, is it this or something else, is this or that possible? (5 + AG, 37)?

Here, in a way, it is *It happens* which comes before *Is it happening?*; it is *It happens* as the event or "arrest" which allows *Is it happening?* as one of its predicates or "advances". But, again, if *It happens* precedes and sets in motion the temporality of *Is it happening?*, it is also not possible outside of that temporality: to speak of it or even to think it we need to be able to use words like "before" and "precedes", even though bracketed. *It happens* as actual, necessary, the only choice that could have been made, is not possible before *Is it happening?*, virtual, subjunctive, the possibility that it might have been otherwise: "may happen", "only then". If there is an inversion in the actual terms used here, Lyotard's point remains the same: as opposed to the "vulgar"

\textsuperscript{11} This distinction between the "occurrence" and its "instances" is made by Lyotard in 'L'Instant Newman', *L'Inhumain: causeries sur le temps*, Éditions Galilée, 1988, pp. 93-4.
understanding of time in which something is either present or absent, actual or virtual, Lyotard wants us to think precisely the simultaneity of being and non-being, the actual and the virtual. The present cannot be otherwise, the experience of thought and the thought of experience can never take any other form than presence, the present, but this is possible only because of a certain otherwise, a potentiality excluded at the same time. Not that we can ever say what it is—it would be, rather, what is excluded by every actualisation of it—or, if it is always being made actual in the very form of time, it is also what is excluded to allow this actualisation.

It is "time", then, as the "arrest" of *Is it happening?* or *It happens* that at once forces us to and makes it impossible for us to think it. And is this not Lyotard's Sublime, which similarly forces us and makes it impossible for us to think it? From his 'Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime':

The sublime is not simple gratification, but the gratification of effort. It is impossible to represent the absolute, which is ungratifying; but one knows that one has to, that the faculty of feeling or of imagining is called upon to make the perceptible represent the ineffable—and even if this fails, and even if that causes suffering, a pure gratification will emerge from the tension ('P the Unp', 68).

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12 In other words, Lyotard's *Is it happening?* or *It happens* might be an attempt to think the simultaneity of the actual and the virtual, a thing being and not being. This would be to break with the Aristotelian conception of time, which is based on the distinction between them. As Derrida says: "The enigma of the now is dominated in the difference between act and potentiality, essence and accident, and the entire system of oppositions that follow from them", *'Ousia and Grammé: Note on a Note from Being and Time*', op. cit., p. 61. We will see other examples of Lyotard attempting to think this simultaneity as the chapter progresses.
makes it impossible—that capitalism cannot represent, cannot exchange. Not that, again, it is something that cannot be represented or exchanged, but rather that, if it is always represented or exchanged, it is also what is excluded to allow this, what is represented and unrepresentable, exchanged and inexchangeable, at the same time. It is this paradox that Lyotard wants to make his standard of judgement, but at the very same moment it would also not be a standard of judgement, this standard of judgement would be excluded; as soon as Lyotard represented it or exchanged it for something, it could only be a new "advance" or "innovation" within capitalism.

It is precisely for this reason that Lyotard breaks with Marx, or insists on a certain re-reading of him. This dissatisfaction with Marx is evident from his earliest books, notably Derive à partir de Marx et Freud\textsuperscript{13}, Des dispositifs pulsionnels \textsuperscript{14} and Économie libidinale\textsuperscript{15}. It is only with his later books, however, that the exact reasons for this grievance become clear; it is only in the light of these later books that we can see what is at stake in those earlier ones. (Lyotard announces several breaks in his theoretical trajectory, and suggests also several possible continuities. Our analysis here will try to trace a certain progression through Lyotard's work, perhaps unnoticed by Lyotard himself. What follows is a reconstruction of Lyotard's admittedly very heterogenous oeuvre along these lines\textsuperscript{16})

It is obvious that for Marx the possibility of his theory being critical lay in the fact that it suggested some standard outside capitalism by which to judge it: the real or surplus-value of the workers' labour. It is this value that, even if occulted or exploited by capital, would allow us some

\textsuperscript{13} Jean-François Lyotard, Derive à partir de Marx et Freud, 10/18, 1973. See especially the essays 'Un Marx non marxiste' and 'La place de l'aliénation dans le retournement marxiste'.

\textsuperscript{14} Jean-François Lyotard, Des dispositifs pulsionnels, Christian Bourgois Éditeur, 1980. See especially the essays 'Capitalisme énergumène', 'Adorno come diavolo' and 'Notes sur le retour et le capital'.

\textsuperscript{15} Jean-François Lyotard, Économie libidinale, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1974.

\textsuperscript{16} On Lyotard's shifting attitude toward Marx, see Les transformateurs Duchamp, Éditions Galilée, 1977, pp. 21-6, and an unpublished section of Au Juste, pp. 144-5. These are both cited in Geoffrey Bennington, Lyotard: Writing the Event, Manchester University Press, 1988, pp. 40-1. On the more general moves within Lyotard's work, see his interviews with Georges Van Den Abeele in Diacritics 14, No. 3, 1984, esp. p. 16, and with Willem van Reijen and Dick Veerman in Theory, Culture and Society, Vol 5, 1988, esp. pp. 300-1. Forthcoming from Colombia University Press is a collection of lectures Lyotard presented in America, entitled Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event, in which he contextualises his career as a whole (although, of course, Lyotard would be aware of the limits to doing this).
critical perspective onto it. It forms a true standard of measure by which to judge capitalism\textsuperscript{17}. But it is just this pretension that Lyotard takes exception to. First of all he objects to Marx's belief that he can simply name some unalienated outside to capital like this. If Lyotard can be accused of doing the same thing with such ideas as the figural, desire, and expenditure, even at the time there was some sense in his work of the dangers of doing so, of the way that any attempt to name a simple limit or other to capital can only be aporetic: that if capital is only possible because of this limit, this limit would only be possible because of capital\textsuperscript{18}. Secondly, and perhaps more profoundly, Lyotard is well aware that capitalism organises itself precisely by surpassing those barriers that are set for it in this manner, that we could no sooner name some limit to capital, something other or alien to capitalism, than capitalism would incorporate it\textsuperscript{19}. Marx, in other words, is not finally opposed to capitalism; the surplus-value of the workers enters today into the dialectic of capitalism, is negotiated over, becomes itself part of its equation. And there are intriguing analogies between Lyotard's argument at this point and Baudrillard's critique of Marxism in his \textit{The Mirror of Production} and \textit{For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign} and Deleuze and Guattari's in \textit{Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia}. In the same way, Baudrillard argues that those anthrological "a prioris" upon which Marx based his critique—need, use value, desire, etc—and the surplus-value their assumption leads to, are not given, but are only an effect of exchange; that that

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, the Chapter on Capital from his \textit{Grundisse}, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books, 1987, pp. 239-289.

\textsuperscript{18} See here the essay 'Dérives' from \textit{Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud}, op. cit., and the chapter 'Le négoce' from \textit{Économie libidinale}, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{19} See here the chapter 'Le capital' from \textit{Économie libidinale}, ibid, esp. pp. 266-86.
outside Marx names as excluded from capitalism is not excluded at all, but is instead part of its systematic 20.

And along the same lines, Deleuze and Guattari in their *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* also acknowledge that there is no simple outside to capitalism, that for capitalism it is always a question of overcoming those barriers set for it. It would no longer be for them (and for the Marx they re-invent) a matter of naming some limit outside of capital, therefore, but of thinking a limit inside it, a limit that ensures that capital has no limit; both a limit and no limit in the sense we have been trying to describe. The workers' labour is not outside the circuit of economic exchange, it does not form a limit to it, but neither is it simply the same as it; rather, in Deleuze and Guattari's formulation, it is at once included and excluded, that asymptote or paradox which capitalism is always trying to overcome or reterritorialise but never finally can:

There is no common measure between the value of the enterprises and that of the labour capacity of wage earners. That is why the falling tendency has no conclusion [...] Thus the difference is not cancelled in the relationship that constitutes it as a difference in nature; the 'tendency' has no end, it has no exterior limit that it could reach or even approximate. The tendency's only limit is internal, and it is continually going beyond it, but by displacing this limit—that is, by reconstituting it, by rediscovering it as an internal limit to be surpassed again by means of a displacement; thus the

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20 This like that argument concerning the remainder we briefly looked at in *SSM*—but the irony here, as there, is that, after denouncing that gesture of naming some outside to capital in Marx, Baudrillard repeats it himself, speaking of primitive societies and nature in *The Mirror of Production* and of the symbolic and waste in *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* as the excluded others to both capitalism and Marxism. But, in another way, as there, we can also understand Baudrillard to be not naming an outside to capital, or trying to think at least that "nothing" excluded to allow us to name its other. For Baudrillard criticising Marx for naming a limit to capital, see the chapters 'The Conception of Labour', *The Mirror of Production*, op. cit., and 'The Ideological Genesis of Needs', *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, op. cit. For Baudrillard naming a limit to capital, see *The Mirror of Production*, pp. 137-47, and the chapters 'Beyond Use Value' and 'Requiem for the Media', *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. For Baudrillard not naming a limit to capital, or thinking the limits to naming a limit, see *The Mirror of Production*, p. 134, where he speaks of the the social fraction he is identifying as "non-marked"; p. 137 where he speaks of the position from which he is speaking as a "non-place"; p. 139, where he speaks of a certain "double strategy" involved in the "deconstruction" of the code; pp. 163-7, where he speaks of his critical vantage-point as a "u-topia", at once "totally there" and nowhere, u-topic in the literal sense of the word; and *For A Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p. 202, where he speaks of the fact that "a total abstract communication and an immanent manipulation no longer leave any point exterior to the system".
continuity of the capitalist process engenders itself in this break of a break that is always displaced, in this unity of the schiz and the flow.\footnote{Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley et al., The Viking Press, 1977, p. 230.}

They then cite Marx:

> Capitalist production seeks continually to overcome these immanent barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way and on a more formidable scale. The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself.\footnote{Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, trans. Ernest Unterman, International Publishers, 1967, p. 250. Cited *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, ibid, p. 231.}

For Deleuze and Guattari, then, it is not a matter of naming some outside or limit to capitalism—some point outside of it from which to judge it. Capital forms its own standard of judgement; we have to judge capitalism in its own terms. This is precisely what they mean by speaking of its limit as "internal" or "immanent". And this will lead Deleuze and Guattari not too opposing capitalism, but pushing its processes as far as possible, hoping thereby to expose that immanent barrier that will not allow it to fully realise itself—or, better still, hoping to show that limit which is excluded to allow capitalism to actualise itself. What is excluded to allow capitalism to be limitless, or why, considering its general tendency, is it not in fact limitless? These are Deleuze and Guattari’s questions. They want to position themselves, that is, not against but beyond capitalism in order to speak of its limit. That "deterritorialisation" they argue for is not simply the opposite to reterritorialisation but rather the simultaneity of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, the fact that something is always excluded by the perpetual axiomatisation of capital.

For Lyotard too, in these earlier books, it is not so much a question of opposing capitalism as of exaggerating it, speeding it up, outbidding and parodying it, of trying to make manifest what is only implicit in it or asking why it must remain implicit. In a sense, it is a matter of trying to be more capitalist than capitalism itself. And in his *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*, indeed, Lyotard publishes a celebratory review of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, emphasising just this aspect of it (and of Marx):
cookery, speech, the levelling of all 'established' differences into the one and only difference: being worth ... exchangeable for ... Indifferent difference. Mors immortalis, in his words.

Deleuze and Guattari have brought this fascination to light, freed it from bad conscience, and help us to dislodge it, all the way into today's politics. Bad conscience for Marx himself, increasingly so for Marxists. And thus in proportion a piety meant to conceal and expiate this appetite for capitalist liquefaction: this piety—dialectics—amounts to maintaining the positive perversion of capitalism inside a network of negativity, contradiction and neurosis.23

Now, in his later work, Lyotard will condemn the tone of these earlier writings, seeing in them still an attempt to name some outside to capitalism, but already it can be read that it is not only a matter of naming an other to capital here (it is just this that he is objecting to in Marx); he is already hinting at the simultaneity or paradox of something at once included by and excluded from capital, at once a limit to capital and what ensures that capital has no limit. In this sense, there is already a certain suspicious towards those Grand Narratives that guided the project of the Enlightenment, and which Marx's critique both inherited and extended. Lyotard is already saying that those standards of Truth, Beauty, Progress, Reason and Humanity, which necessarily ground all critique, can no longer be opposed to capital but are worth something only insofar as they can be exchanged for money, that the only standard by which to judge capitalism is capital itself. Today, it is the economic genre that dominates and sets the standard for all the others; it is only the economic model of performativity that all those standards could conform to insofar as they still judge at all. Insofar as judgement is still understood as the matching up of an example with a rule or a rule with an example—Kant's determinant and reflective judgements respectively—only the economic genre can do this today. Or, to put it another way, Lyotard is arguing that judgement, the judgement of capitalism, can no longer proceed by those standards of Truth, Beauty, Progress, Reason and Humanity—what he sums up as the Beautiful—but only in terms of a sublime, unrepresentable standard, where "we can have an idea of the simple, of the 'undecomposable', but we cannot illustrate it with a perceptible object which would really be a specific example."24

24 'Reply To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?', op. cit., p. 15. It is this attempt to impose a unitary standard of judgement upon all of experience that Lyotard objects to in Jürgen Habermas in 'Reply To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?' Habermas wants to unify all the various genres (discourse and knowledge, ethics and politics) under the banner of an unfinished modernity. Lyotard does not simply object to this (indeed, in a certain way,
standard by which we can judge capitalism today is that which is excluded to ensure that capitalism is the only standard by which we can judge capitalism; the judgement or criticism of capitalism must operate in a way without criteria.

This is not, however, simply the end of the Aufklärung, of those standards of judgement the Enlightenment has bequeathed to us, as Lyotard has been taken to be saying in his debate with Habermas. Those Enlightenment values of judgement and critique, of critical philosophy as the patient, interminable, overcoming of the aporiae, the impasses, of previous thought, are still indispensable for Lyotard. Rather, he is speaking of the limits to this project, the way it must continue today in the absence of any teleological goal set for it in advance (even that teleological goal of the absence of goals, the way that the end of the Grand Narratives might become itself a Grand Narrative25). Judgement and criticism are thus bound by the same paradox we saw in Baudrillard and Derrida: they are the undermining of all standards of judgement, showing that there is no outside to capital, and yet they have to appeal to the very values they are contesting in order to do so (it is only in the name of Reason and Truth, after all, that we can attack Reason and Truth); they are the attempt to show that there is no otherwise to capital, but this only because of a certain otherwise. It is this paradox—that what makes it possible also makes it impossible—that criticism can "realise" but capitalism cannot.

If in his earlier books, then, there is still a sense of Lyotard speaking of a limit to capital (even as an immanent limit: capital as the limit to capital), without realising the limits to

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25 On this Grand Narrative of the end of the Grand Narratives, see _The Differend: Phrases in Dispute_, op. cit., §182. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials _TD_, followed by a section number. On the possibility of the end of the Grand Narratives becoming itself a Grand Narrative, and Lyotard's "escape" from it, see _Lyotard: Writing the Event_, op. cit., pp. 116-7.
speaking of this, in his later books it is just this problem he begins to consider. If in his earlier books, it is still a question of a standard of judgement (even simultaneity or paradox as a standard of judgement), in his later books this standard of judgement is understood as at once a standard of judgement and the impossibility of a standard of judgement. It is in this way that Lyotard might be understood to be finally going beyond (but also realising the impossibility of going beyond) the critical gesture of that Marxism he breaks with: it is not simply a question of a substituting one standard of judgement for another (even, as we say, simultaneity or paradox as a standard of judgement); it is also a matter of thinking the limit to this standard of judgement, to all standards of judgement, what is excluded to allow all standards of judgement (even that of capital for capital). It is not just a matter of a standard of judgement, but also of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a standard of judgement.

We see this shift perhaps with his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and his analysis of the notion of "performativity" there. Lyotard's argument in that book is often reduced to one concerning the collapse of the Grand Narratives in the wake of the technological innovations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but what is thereby ignored is the question of judgement this collapse forces us to think, or more pointedly, the question of how can we anymore think or judge technology in the absence of a standard of judgement. What Lyotard argues is that it is technology itself and its standard of performativity which appears to offer our last and only possible standard of judgement in the absence of these Grand Narratives. Technology is powerful today, in other words, not simply for material reasons, but also because it seems to offer us a standard of judgement (it is, indeed, the idea of performativity, Lyotard claims, that now determines the humanities and even so-called "pure research"26). The urgent question *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* wants to address is how to think a standard of judgement by which to judge this turn of events. Are we any longer able to think technology and the standard of performativity it imposes?

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26 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minnesota University Press, 1984, pp. 45-6. All further references to this text will be indicated by the initials PMC, followed by a page number.
But, firstly, to try to say something of this performativity itself. As we have just suggested, performativity is the most powerful model today because it requires no ulterior authority, it sets its own standard (it is what we meant earlier by saying that capital is the only limit to capital). Once the model of performativity is assumed, it can only be judged in its own terms. The only limits to performativity are those of performativity itself: in this sense, there are no limits to performativity (we see this in the Olympic Games, for example, where the times for certain events keep on getting better and better, not because of what is being measured—what is being measured does not exist outside of its measurement—but because of the increasing sophistication of its measurement, approaching instantaneity\textsuperscript{27}):

With modern science, two new features appear in the problematic of legitimation. To begin with, it leaves behind the metaphysical search for a first proof or transcendental authority as a response to the question: ‘How do you prove the proof?’ or, more generally, ‘Who decides the conditions of truth?’ It is recognised that the conditions of truth, in other words, the rules of the game of science, are immanent in that game, that they can only be established within the bonds of a debate that is already scientific in nature, and that there is no other proof that the rules are good than the consensus extended to them by the experts [...] 

This is where technology comes in. Technical devices originated as prosthetic aids for the human organs or as physiological systems whose function it is to receive data or condition the context. They follow a principle, and it is the principle of optimal performance: maximising output (the information or modifications obtained) and minimising input (the energy expended in the process). Technology is therefore a game pertaining not to the true, the just, or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical ‘move’ is ‘good’ when it does better and/or expends less energy than another [...] 

This is how legitimation by power takes shape. Power is not only good performativity, but an effective verification and good verdicts. It legitimates science and the law on the basis of that efficiency, and legitimates this efficiency on the basis of science and law. It is self-legitimating, in the same way a system organised around performance maximisation seems to be (PMC, 29, 44, 47).

In a sense, then, performativity is already the thinking of the difficulty of naming its limits: a limit can no sooner be proposed than it is surpassed, and today this is almost simultaneous. But the crucial thing here is that, if the actual limit is never given, it is always that of technology itself. In

\textsuperscript{27} The times for the 100-metres sprint, for instance, are getting better not because the athletes are running any faster—or precisely we cannot be sure of this—but because of the increasing "accuracy" of their timing. Of two "identical" performances today, one will always be faster. Soon—if not already—there will be no dead-heats in athletic events. If simultaneity allows us to approach instantaneity, it also forever defers it; any given instantaneity (the co-existence of two occurrences) can always be further divided.
an kind of sublime economy, if the limit to technology is excluded, if there is always something
greater than performativity, this can only be understood as technology, a superior performativity.
If we can never say what this limit is, if we cannot say what makes technology possible, it is
nevertheless understood as immanent to technology itself. It is not that technology does not think its
own limit, therefore—in the new post-modern sciences, technology realises that it is only ever
asymptotic to a perfect mapping of the world—but this limit is grasped as being finally only
technological. Performativity excludes the superlative power—the best, the fastest, the most
efficient—to produce an endless series of comparisons: as Lyotard says, "a technological 'move' is
'good' when it does better and/or expends less energy than another" (my italics). Simultaneity or
paradox forms the limit to technology—the limit to technology is, in a way, both included and
excluded at any one moment—but it is a simultaneity or paradox that is only possible because of
technology, that is technology itself.28

It is in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, however, that Lyotard begins to
think the limit to this, begins to think the way that, if simultaneity or paradox forms a limit, a
limit that can be named (even if it is always actually excluded), it also cannot form a limit, is the
limit to any naming of the limit. If the limit to technology can only be technology, can only be named
by technology, if the limit to performativity can only be another, "better", "more effective",
performativity, if technology is self-defining and self-legitimating, Lyotard is trying to think
what is excluded to allow this. Again, it is not a matter of simply naming what is excluded: only
technology can name the limit to technology; nothing is excluded from technology or we can only
think what is excluded from it as another, superior version of it. But, as we saw with St Anselm in

Chapter Two, Lyotard is precisely trying to think this "nothing" itself, that "nothing" excluded to

28 An intriguing question, though one we cannot take up in any detail here: to what extent
do Deleuze and Guattari do anything more, in those pages we have already cited, than say
with Marx that it is capital that is the limit to capital. This would be, as we have tried to
argue, precisely the performativity principle of capital and technology. Or do they also
ask: what is excluded to ensure that this limit to capital is only capital itself? In other
words, to what extent must Deleuze and Guattari's critique be guided by a certain judgement
without criteria, a certain unrepresentability, that "nothing" excluded to allow the
performativity of capital and technology. Important to consider in this regard is that
passage which takes up Jean-Joseph Goux's work and the question he raises of the
asymptote, capital as a "curve without a tangent" (Anti-Oedipus: Capital and
Schizophrenia, op. cit., p. 231). What is excluded to allow this tangent, what finally
separates capital from itself, why is it that capital can only be asymptotic—and to what?
ensure that nothing can be greater than technology. The limit to performativity, what is greater than performativity, can only be a greater performativity, but Lyotard is also trying to think why this is necessarily so. He is not just naming a limit to technology (technology itself), but also thinking the "limit" to this limit. It is not a limit that is any longer sensibly representable, or even able to be imagined (technology already far surpasses every human capacity to represent its limits; we are always dealing, as Paul Virilio emphasises, with an immaterial, imperceptible or subconscious limit
d), but is rather an Idea, a product of Reason, to use Kant's distinction. In a sense, it is a matter of thinking something at once included and excluded, but included and excluded not as in technology where, if the limit is excluded in being included, it is still the same limit, but included and excluded when we cannot say what is excluded, when what is included and what is excluded are not necessarily the same thing. It is this difficult argument that Lyotard presents in the closing pages of The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, where he draws a distinction between that paradox which performativity can include, which still legitimates, a limit to "measure" or matter considered as measure, and that paradox which performativity cannot include, or which is excluded in its very inclusion, which delegitimates or is the limit to any legitimation, a limit to "matter" itself, in a way "outside" of technology:

I made the point that the striking feature of postmodern scientific knowledge is that the discourse on the rules that validate it is (explicitly) immanent to it. What we considered at the end of the nineteenth century to be a loss of legitimacy and a fall into philosophical 'pragmatism' or logical positivism was only an episode, from which knowledge has recovered by including within scientific discourse the discourse on the validation of statements held to be laws. As we have seen, this inclusion is not a simple operation, but gives rise to 'paradoxes' that are taken extremely seriously and to 'limitations' on the scope of knowledge that are in fact changes in its nature [...] But this limitation only calls into question the practicability of exact knowledge and the power that would result from it. They remain possible in theory. Classical determinism continues to work within the framework of the unreachable—but conceivable—limit of the total knowledge of a system. Quantum theory and microphysics require a far more radical revision of the idea of a continuous and predictable path. The quest for precision is not limited by its cost, but by the very nature of matter.

29 See for example, his Pure War, where he speaks of the way that decisions regarding nuclear warface must now be left in the hands of machines because the reaction-times required are too rapid for humans: Paul Virilio/Sylvere Lotringer, Pure War, trans. Mark Polizotti, Semiotext(e) Inc., 1983, p. 58.
30 On this distinction between Imagination and Reason, to which we shall return, see The Critique of Judgement, §27.
It is not true that uncertainty (lack of control) decreases as accuracy goes up: it goes up as well (PMC, 54-5, 56).

That is to say, Lyotard is not just arguing that all science thinks this limit only as a shortcoming in measure, as what we might call a "conceivable" limit. For some sciences (here quantum theory and microphysics, elsewhere Mandelbrot's fractals and Thom's catastrophe theory\textsuperscript{31}), it is a question of a limit that is not finally conceivable, a simultaneity or paradox that does not form a simple limit, something that can be stated, but is also a limit to that limit (we know that the limits to accuracy in quantum theory, according to Heisenberg, are irreducible because they are caused by the observer's very attempt to account for them: the limits to quantum theory are not so much limits to measure as limits to establishing the very limits to measure). Above all, for Lyotard it is not a matter of rejecting science and technology wholesale, but rather of thinking what remains critical in them, of re-inventing them as dealing with this question of judgement. And we might return to that distinction we made earlier between instantaneity and simultaneity: it is a question of the limit to technology as instantaneity here insofar as all this is understood as a simple limit to measure, a matter of performativity, a limit that technology will one day surpass (technology has already far exceeded any definition we can give of instantaneity, and, indeed, our very definition of it today is only available to us because of technology); of simultaneity insofar as it is understood as a limit to matter itself, as what is excluded to allow this instantaneity and technology's definition of it. Simultaneity is not just a limit, but a limit to this limit, what is excluded to allow its inclusion, its manipulation, as instantaneity; a "limit" that technology can never finally surpass. These sciences are critical, then, provide models for critical thought, insofar as they think their limits not just as instantaneity but also as simultaneity, as not just a standard of measure but as the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a standard of measure, the necessity and impossibility of taking into account what cannot finally be taken into account—a limit that would be neither "continuous" nor "predictable".

In quantum theory and microphysics, in Mandelbrot's fractals and Thom's catastrophe theory, it is a question of trying to account for change, the qualitative difference between one state and

\textsuperscript{31} On Mandlebrot, see PMC, 58; on Thom, see PMC, 58-60.
another; in all of them the enigma of "time", of "nowness" or "newness" is posed, the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of two spaces or moments being present at the same time. And at the end of *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* Lyotard very briefly takes up the issue of simultaneity or at-the-same-tineness in terms of the increasingly rapid exchange of information necessary for capitalism, simultaneity as the absolute limit to capital: at once what is already represented, what capitalism is always approaching, and what is unrepresentable, what capitalism must finally exclude on pain of breaking down. This simultaneity—this is its simultaneity—is at once what makes the system possible and impossible, what both speeds up and slows down exchange and decision-making:

In this context, let us examine two important points in Luhmann’s argument. On the one hand, the system can only function by reducing complexity, and on the other, it must induce the adaptation of individual aspirations to its own ends. The reduction in complexity is required to maintain the system’s power capacity. [Even though this is what the system encourages,] if all messages could circulate freely among all individuals, the quantity of the information that would have to be taken into account before making the correct choice would delay decisions considerably, thereby lowering performativity (*PMC*, 61).

If this simultaneity is a limit to exchange and knowledge that is present at every moment, that makes possible every moment, it is also never completely exhausted, never comes to an end, because, as we saw with Baudrillard on the hostage, it is what is excluded—that representation or medium of exchange—to allow the exchange of something for this end: it is always that end that comes after the end, which allows the end to be represented. Every moment in exchange is the end, the representation of the end, the last exchange, but this would be possible only because the end is deferred, because this exchange also defers the end. This is why *The Postmodern Condition: A Report into Knowledge* ends with an alternative—but it is not really an alternative: the two choices are precisely simultaneous, simultaneity itself. It is the "alternative" between that simultaneity that is terrorist, that imposes exchange, and that simultaneity that is freedom, that is the limit to exchange (reminding us of the simultaneity in Deleuze and Guattari of reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation):

We are finally in a position to understand how the computerisation of society affects this problematic. It could become the 'dream' instrument for controlling and regulating the market system, extended to include knowledge itself and governed exclusively by the performativity principle. In that
case, it would inevitably involve the use of terror. But it could also aid groups discussing metaprescriptives by supplying them with the information they usually lack for making knowledgeable decisions. The line to follow for computerisation to take the second of these two paths is, in principle, quite simple: give the public free access to the memory and data banks. Language games would then be games of perfect information at any given moment. But they would also be non-zero-sum games, and by virtue of that fact discussion would never risk fixating in a position of minimax equilibrium because it had exhausted its stakes. For the stakes would be knowledge (or information, if you will), and the reserve of knowledge—language's reserve of possible utterances—is inexhaustible (PMC, 67).

This argument is continued in Lyotard's book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, in a chapter entitled 'The Sign of History'. In it, he sets out the following definition of capitalist exchange:

Phrase 1: (addressor) x cedes to (addressee) y referent a, this (ostensible) thing. Phrase 2: (addressor) y cedes to (addressee) x referent b, that (ostensible) thing[...] The linking of 2 onto 1 constitutes the exchange itself. Without 2, 1 does not take place. Thus, time \( t + 1 \) (the occurrence of 2) is the condition for time \( t \) (the occurrence of 1). A didactic phrase "expects" its acquiescence, namely, another phrase, but the latter phrase is not the condition for the former. A prescriptive expects its execution, but that execution is not the prescriptive's condition, etc. The economic phrase of cession does not expect the phrase of acquittal (counter-cession), it presupposes it.\(^{32}\)

In other words, there must be in capitalist exchange a certain simultaneity of buyer and seller; the buyer and seller must agree on a price. And hence the desire for capital to always speed up exchange, to exchange the most value in the least amount of time. But the paradox of this ambition of capitalism for everything to be in exchange at once, for all time to be exchanged, is that there would therefore be no time left to be exchanged. The ambition of capitalism to make exchange present, to make exchange the present, would lead to the consequence that there can be no present of exchange, no exchange of presents. And all this—this is precisely Lyotard's point here, the connection we can make between his analyses in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report into Knowledge* and *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* and his work on the Sublime—as we spoke of simultaneity making time at once both possible and impossible. Time can pass, one now can be exchanged for another now, only because these two nows are simultaneously present, but this would also be to make time impossible, this would be the end of time: two nows could be present at the same time only if time had stopped. For time to be possible—but this would also be to make time

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\(^{32}\) *TD*, §240. See also *TD*, §242. For a commentary on this chapter, see the section of *Lyotard: Writing The Event*, op. cit., entitled 'Temporal Economy' (pp. 169-74).
impossible, this would be to fall into Zeno's paradox—there must always be a certain time excluded, a moment between those two nows in which their exchange can take place. If simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness is necessary for time and exchange, it must also be excluded, for it is what makes time and exchange impossible. If \( x \) and \( t \) already imply \( y \) and \( t + 1 \), there must also be a certain interval between them for this very necessity to take place: it is only because of the chance that \( y \) and \( t + 1 \) will not arrive that it is certain that they will. Lyotard, that is to say, is trying to insinuate a "gap"—precisely that of at-the-same-time—no sooner given than reduced, between the two parties in exchange, is trying to think a certain necessary limit to the prediction or predication of the future by capital. Or we might put it this way: we said a moment ago that exchange is possible only insofar as \( x \) and \( y \) agree as to the price of the object, but \( x \) and \( y \) would also only exchange the object insofar as they disagreed over its price, insofar as \( x \) thought he was selling it for more than it was worth and \( y \) for less. As we saw with the art auction in Baudrillard, exchange is possible only insofar as we do not know entirely what is being exchanged, insofar as exchange is impossible—or, in short, only insofar as \( x \) and \( y \) are simultaneous. And it is this simultaneity, we would argue, that is Lyotard's differend.

We might speak of a kind of debt being involved in exchange, then, a responsibility or obligation to what allows exchange. It is a debt every exchange tries pay back—but it is a debt that increases at every turn because it is precisely what is excluded to allow this exchange, this repayment. It is a debt at once both infinite, unredeemable and, therefore, nugatory, worthless, already paid back. And, again, it is this debt—a certain feeling, a sign, a sentiment—that Lyotard calls the differend. It is a debt that is at once represented, paid back, and unrepresentable, unable to be paid back. It is time, representation or the medium of exchange itself. To go back to what we

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33 On this see TD, §250, where Lyotard speaks of the books Tristam Shandy and Passing Time, in which, if time allows self-reflection and auto-biography, it also makes them impossible: as in Tristam Shandy, the very moment in which this equivalence is made would always be excluded, or at least would always await its narration. The book can never catch up to the "life" it is narrating—or the enunciation can never be the same as its enunciated. On this simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of time, on this simultaneity, see TD, §§897, 98.

34 This would involve us in the whole question of interest in Lyotard's discussion: TD, §§248-9. By borrowing we can repay our debt, we can make two times the same, but there would always remain the interest owing on this debt, which can never be repaid or which has already grown again by the time we come to repay it. It would be interesting to relate these speculations to those of Weber in The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related...
were saying a moment ago about economic exchange: if in the economic genre, phrase 1 already implies phrase 2, \( t + 1 \) (just as, undoubtedly, phrase 2 presupposes phrase 1, \( t \)), Lyotard is trying to think what is excluded to allow this presumption, this aporia: he is trying to think the assumption or debt—the abduction—that allows exchange as such. It is not as though he is simply saying that there is no next phrase, no \( t + 1 \). As he will say in The Differend, there is always a next phrase, a next time: even silence or the end of time, insofar as it can be thought or represented, is a phrase, a time. It is not simply a matter of representing an other to this aporia: as soon as you did, it could only be once more be within it. Rather, through this very necessity itself, Lyotard wants to think what is excluded to ensure that it is not otherwise, that principle to which any next phrase or time is indebted in allowing it to come about. He wants to think, as it were, that virtuality that is excluded, that is always excluded, to ensure that there is only this single actual choice. It is, again, to think the simultaneity of the actual and the virtual, the necessary and the impossible.

We will come back to all this in a moment, but we return here to what we were saying earlier about the Sublime. In an article on the painter Barnett Newman, 'L'Instant Newman', Lyotard argues that what Newman is trying to present is precisely this non-Aristotelian form of time in which the actual and the virtual co-exist, in which something both is and is not at the same time. He opposes Duchamp's art, which is organised according to the temporal hinge (charnière) of "too

Assumptions', op. cit., where again it is a question of that interest or assumption that allows us to return to ourselves, to make two different times equivalent.

35 On the fact that there is no first or last phrase, that even silence itself is a phrase, see TD, pp. xi-xii, §§17-28.

36 TD, §§100, 254. We return here to Derrida's suggestion that a time in which the actual and the virtual, the necessary and the contingent, were at the same time would be a "non"-Aristotelian time (see footnote 12). Further work developing this reading of Lyotard would have to pay great attention to Lyotard's own use of 'Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time (TD, 'Aristotle Notice', pp. 72-5). Is Lyotard's use of 'Note on a Note' an accurate one? To what extent must we "correct" or re-read Lyotard's analysis to make it consistent with Derrida's—and to what end? We would also want to consult here Lyotard's interview with van Reijen and Veerman, op. cit., where he speaks of his differences from Derrida (pp. 286-8), and to ask to what degree they might rely upon a certain mis-reading of him. We would also want to have a look at Lyotard's essay 'Le temps, aujourd'hui', L'inhumain: causeries sur le temps, op. cit., which extends some of the themes of The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, around this question of time. It is important to note that Lyotard dedicates The Differend: Phrases in Dispute to "aAMa", which could be understood as 'à hamma'—to simultaneity, at-the-same-timeness. It is this possibility we have followed here.
soon" and "too late"37, which exists between recollection and anticipation, to Newman's art in which the event is at once present (it is no longer a question, as with Duchamp, of commentary or exegesis) and absent (for it is thereby stripped of all meaning). As Lyotard says of Newman:

Two instances: me, you, unsubstitutable, which take place only in the exigency of the here-now. The referent (that of which the painting "speaks"), the sender (its "author") have no pertinence, even negative, even as an allusion to an impossible presence. The message is presentation, but of nothing, that is to say, of presence38.

If Lyotard uses the word "presence" here, it is not as opposed to absence, it is not a presence given by the exchange of one presence or present for another. The "I" and "You" in Newman's paintings are unsubstitutable; its presence is also nothing: "I" and "You", presence and absence, are precisely simultaneous. Or, more simply, what Newman's paintings present is simultaneity at the-same-timeness itself. It is a simultaneity that we are at once forced to think, to which we are personally liable, and that we are unable to reply to, to finally realise.

Hence Lyotard's interest in Newman's famous question "Lemi sabachtani?", "Why have you abandoned me?"39, for Newman is speaking there of just that abandonment we feel when confronted by the Is it happening?, which is at once what is closest to and furthest away from us, what forces us to consume, assimilate, and yet what cannot be represented or mediated itself. And it is this "abandonment" that is the source of that "anxiety" we feel in connection with the Sublime—a word, like so many others Lyotard uses here, with a pronounced Heideggerian heritage40. It is an "abandonment" that arises not simply because you cannot answer the question Is

38 Ibid, p. 92 (my translation).
39 Ibid, p. 98.
40 In fact, Lyotard makes a distinction between a philosophy like Heidegger's, in which the thought that nothing might happen produces only a feeling of anxiety, and the Is it happening?, in which this suspension is also accompanied by pleasure ('S + AG', 37). We use the word "anxiety" here principally to raise the question of Lyotard's Heideggerian heritage and to ask to what extent is Lyotard's Sublime (against his apparent intentions) a version of Heidegger's project of rethinking Being. In his interview with van Reijen and Veerman, op. cit., Lyotard implicitly contrasts his thought with Heidegger's—see especially p. 285, where he speaks of the way that for him Being is always plural, that "above all it is a question of withdrawing from the very possibility of an ontology". But we must ask: to what extent is this simply different from Heidegger (on this, see Derrida's essay 'The Ends of Man', *Margins of Philosophy*, op. cit., esp. pp. 128-32), and to what extent does Lyotard 'realise' this intention? Here we attempt to interpret Lyotard's project as "analogous" to Derrida's, so it would be important to look at Derrida's essays
it happening?—that aporia of it is or it is not that constitutes "vulgar" time—but because of the possibility that the question is not addressed to you and that you cannot answer it. It is not a matter of not being able to answer the question Is it happening? because this question is itself already an event: as we tried to say earlier, Is it happening? is already a certain It happens. To ask the question Is it happening? is already to answer: yes, it happens. Nor is it ever in doubt that the question is meant for you, that you are meant to answer it. Insofar as you think the question at all, it has already found its addressee, you have already responded to it. And yet, at the same time Is it happening? is the thought of it not happening, of it not being addressed to you, of what is excluded to ensure that it is not otherwise. That is to say, Is it happening?, the sublime sensation, is for Lyotard, following Burke, kindled by the threat that nothing further will happen ('S + AG', 40), that the question will not find an addressee, that you cannot respond to the question. But it could only ever be a threat and not its execution because, insofar as you can think it at all, it has happened, the question has found its addressee; it is a threat in the sense that it is always excluded, always threatened with its exclusion, to allow this, to ensure that it is always included. It is what we might call the indeterminacy of anxiety, as theorised by Samuel Weber in terms of laughter (and laughter itself can be a sublime emotion), when something both is and is not at the

'Différence', op. cit., and 'The Retreat of Metaphor', op. cit., to see how he distinguishes (and to what extent he could distinguish) his notion of différencé from Heidegger's Being.
same time, when something both must and yet cannot precede its addressee⁴¹. It is to think the fact
that, in Newman’s painting, “there is this painting where there might have been nothing at all”
(S + AG’, 37). This is what Newman’s painting, impossibly, wants us to think: the fact that it
might not have been. An impossibility because, obviously, it is necessary for it to exist in order to
present this. To look at a Newman painting is to think something that is represented and
unrepresentable, something and nothing, at the same time. It is to think simultaneity or at-the-
same-timeness itself.

At the Same Time: Ethics and Politics

If Lyotard uses this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness as a standard of judgement in terms
of technology and capitalism, he also tries to introduce it into the field of ethics and politics. Or
this at least is what Samuel Weber argues is at stake in Lyotard’s treatment of ethics in Just
Gaming, which consists of a series of conversations between Lyotard and the French literary critic
Jean-Loup Thébaud. In Just Gaming, Lyotard argues for a certain law covering all language-games to
protect them in their singularity, to prevent any one law covering all language-games, what we
might call a justice of multiplicity to safeguard a multiplicity of justices. But Weber notes that this

⁴¹ See Weber, ‘It’, op. cit., esp. pp. 14-6. One of the points Weber makes there is that the
third (the joke or the butt of the joke) both must come before and can only come after the first
and the second (the addressee and addresser of the joke). The anxiety felt by the listener to
the joke stems from the fact that the joke is a joke only after he has laughed at it, and yet
he must be laughing at something. In a sense, however, it could only be a threat, a
possibility, that the joke is not a joke because, as soon as he became aware of it, the joke is
already a joke, he has already laughed at it. It is not as though it is a non-joke before it is a
joke, as though it simply does not arrive. As we see with the debate between Derrida and
Lacan, to say that the letter does not arrive would only be to make that non-arrival itself a
new arrival (as in the shaggy-dog story, where the “joke” is that it is not funny). Rather, it is
the possibility that it always might not arrive that is at stake here: a virtuality
excluded by every actual arrival (or even non-arrival); a virtuality that must be excluded
for the actual to come about. It is this simultaneity of the actual and the virtual, the not
otherwise and the otherwise, that must be thought, rather than either one of them as such.
On this question of laughter and the third, see also ‘Le facteur de la verité’, op. cit., where
there are three (or four) figures related by a kind of joke, and where it must be determined
who is telling the joke and who is its butt. We would one day like to relate all this to
like the butt of the joke, must be at once included and excluded for the two interlocutors to
converse, and where, as in ‘It’, it is a question of the “re-iterability” (and the impossibility of
“re-iterability”) required for the Ideal. Weber, of course, speaks of laughter in his
‘Afterword’ to Lyotard’s Just Gaming with many of the same issues in mind (see ‘Literature–
ambition is paradoxical, in that it does precisely what it says should not be done, formulating a
general law covering all the various language-games to prevent a general law covering all the
various language-games. It would be the paradox of a prescription forbidding all prescription, or a
command commanding its own disobedience: *Disobey! Outlining Lyotard’s argument in his
'Afterword' to *Just Gaming*, 'Literature—Just Making It', Weber writes:

It is a question, *first*, of a multiplicity of justices themselves, each one of which is 'defined in
relation to the rules specific to each [language] game'; and *then* of a justice 'of multiplicity... [which]
authorises the "violence" that accompanies the work of the imagination', while prohibiting the 'terror' by
which a game, a prescriptive system, attempts to impose itself upon the others, to set itself up as the
dominant game, thus reducing the multiplicity to silence. To counter this tendency, to counter this
danger that is almost endemic to the agonistic process—the danger of 'wanting to have too much of it',
the risk of a certain *excess*—it is necessary to assign a referee, put up a safety railing, erect a 'singular
justice' that sees to it that singularity itself is respected in its irreducible multiplicity⁴².

In other words, what Weber is arguing is that Lyotard does not realise the limits to arguing
for a single law prescribing singularity, that no one language-game should be allowed to dominate
all the others—that what would make it possible (this prescription) would also make it impossible
(for it is a law precisely forbidding prescription). Or, more subtly, if Lyotard does realise this
limit, does think the law as its own first exception, *he makes this itself the law*. If the law can only
be known through or as its own exception, there is nevertheless a certain law above this that
formulates it, untouched by this exceptionality. If the law always has a limit, it can finally know
this limit⁴³. As opposed to this, as opposed to a multiplicity of singular language-games that can
only be guaranteed by a law that comes from outside of them, that is not subject to its own law,
Weber speaks of a certain ambivalence *within* each language-game, of the way that that otherness
which guarantees their individuality is not only outside of them, but also within them: that they
*are from the very beginning* not singular (*JG*, 106-7). As opposed to that aporia in Lyotard between
the law and its exception, the singular and the universal, for Weber it is a matter of the law and its
exception, the singular and the universal, *at the same time*. If in Lyotard the standard of judgement

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⁴² 'Literature—Just Making It', ibid, p. 102. All further references to this text and to
Lyotard's dialogue with Thébaut will be indicated by the initials *JG*, followed by a page
number.

⁴³ Weber refers here to *JG*, 54 as an example of this—see *JG*, 109. We will come to this
passage again in a moment.
is a limit, in Weber the standard of judgement is the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a limit—or, better still, simply simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness itself.

Weber takes all this up in his 'Afterword' in terms of Nietzsche's discussion of Greek agonistics in his essay 'Homer's Contest', in which the winner is outside of the game, gives the law or rule, only because he is inside the game, is governed or ruled himself. If he can take the position of God as the ultimate authority, he realises that this is possibly only insofar as God is excluded (indeed, God Himself can only take God's place insofar as "God" is excluded). Greek agonistics is precisely a game with and within limits in this sense:

Agonistics is necessarily ambivalent, and the only question—the question animating Nietzsche's text—concerns the manner in which it tries to assume that ambivalence. The answer given in Nietzsche's text is to show how the Greeks succeeded in recognising their identity as players as the effect of an irreducible otherness. It is only this recognition that can prevent what the Greeks called hybris, which according to Nietzsche consists of the desire to withdraw from the game. Nietzsche describes this recognition as the divinisation of otherness: 'Because [the Greek] is envious, he feels equally at each excess of honor, wealth, glory, and good fortune the envious eye of a god descend upon him, and he fears this envy... But this conception in no way turns him away from his gods: its extent is on the contrary limited in such a way that human beings can never have the audacity to risk a joust with the gods'. In this relation to the other as god, agonistics recognises its own limit as irreducible otherness. By regarding himself as a coveted object, the victor avoids the hybris of wishing to stay the same, out of bounds to any game, incommensurable. In contrast, the desire to be without equal was the fall of Miltiades, the victor at Marathon (JG, 107).

And Weber concludes that, because there is no outside to the game, no point from which to define the singularity of each game that is not already caught up in its own definition, there is also no inside to the game either. There is no way we can ever entirely draw a limit around it or say what its rules are. There is no way we can simply follow a "strategy", taking all relevant factors into account, in order to achieve success within it—there is always something unexpected, improbable, that we have to take account of and yet cannot. As he says:

The resultant displacements mark the fitful rhythm of a game that can no longer be entirely localised or determined, since it is constantly dislocating itself. The field traversed by such a game no longer possesses the stability of an intact interior, nor the purity of an incommensurable singularity, such as the following quote from Just Gaming seems to attribute to it: 'And in each instance, one is in a
game, a game with rules, and I play with these rules in order to achieve some effects upon the one I am playing with' (JC, 109, citing JC, 54).

The same can be said of *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, and Lyotard's attempt there to guarantee the specificity of competing justices through the notion of the differend, which arises when the two parties to a dispute cannot agree over the means of its resolution—a dispute not within one particular language-game, but between two heterogenous language-games with nothing in common:

As distinguished from a litigation, a *differend* would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule). Damages [*un dommage*] result from an injury which is inflicted upon the rules of a genre of discourse but which is reparable according to those rules. A wrong [*un tort*] results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genres of discourse (*TD*, xi).

Here too Lyotard is bound by the paradox that, if the differend is meant to guarantee the difference between the two parties, a respect for their respective irreducible justices, we can no sooner speak of it as reflecting the *wrong* between them than we reduce it to a mere *damage*, able to be settled according to the genre of the differend: the two parties henceforth have something to argue about, precisely the justice of that differend between them. That nothing in common is from now on a something in common. And even if this can be disputed, it is again only a matter of the differend, this time a meta-differend, and so on. The differend excludes itself, is always in dispute, only to ensure that all dispute must take the form of the differend, can only be settled by means of the differend. If you do not agree with a differend, you can only appeal to another differend⁴⁴. Lyotard's differend simply repeats the logic of that double bind, of that undemonstrability and irrefutability, he opposes in those Revisionist historians like Faurisson⁴⁵.

As before, Weber would see Lyotard here as simply wanting to stand outside that agonistic process he describes, as though the differend were a final kind of decision that did justice to both

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⁴⁴ See *TD*, 'Plato Notice', p. 26, and §37.
⁴⁵ See *TD*, §§2-8, and 'Hegel Notice', p. 94.
parties, as though the differend itself could not be disputed. He would see Lyotard as believing that he could limit the field of justice, distinguish its inside from its outside, bring the game to a halt at the desired point. As opposed to this, Weber sees the position of the victor or judge as always being at once inside and outside of the game, the field of justice, he delineates. Something like the differend would be disputed not just by another differend, after its initial principle had been established, but from the very beginning by what we could not say, in terms of an injustice that cannot be put right by any process of negotiation. The judge is necessarily guided by a certain simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness in his deliberations, according to which a decision must be made as soon as possible, taking into account as many factors as possible, and yet cannot finally be made, for there is always something excluded by any judgement (something that is excluded, indeed, to allow this judgement). We are always at once too soon (not every material fact has been taken into account, there is always something missing) and too late (there is always some exigency forcing us to choose, with the injustice increasing every moment we delay) when we judge. The game must be stopped, arrested, at an instant, and one decision made, but there is always at the same time something excluded, another possible decision that might have been made: there are always (at least) two possible decisions, and this is what judgement must try to take into account\(^{46}\). There are always both two possible decisions and only one decision possible at the same time, just as for Weber.

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\(^{46}\) We note that Derrida, for example, often speaks of a certain exigency, a certain necessity for economy, in his work—in that passage we gave from 'Tympan' he speaks of an "effective deconstruction" as though there were some standard by which to judge it, as though some particular result or justice could be expected from it. If deconstruction is interminable, it is also necessarily terminated, aimed towards a goal, a telos. If it is always too soon to judge deconstruction, it is also too late: it has already judged itself, it has already been judged. And it is just this aspect of Lyotard's work that Derrida emphasises in his essay on him, 'Préjugés, devant la loi', *La faculté de juger*, Jacques Derrida et al., Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985, esp. p. 92, where he speaks of a pre-judgement at once before and after the law, the fact that a certain presumption or presupposition has already been made but we can never entirely say what it is (see also pp. 93, 109-110, on this). Later in this chapter, we will speak of the *as if* in Lyotard's work in these terms.
there are both two gods and only one god in the Homeric joust. And it is this which accounts for
the irregular movement of the game, a kind of "vibration" or "oscillation" between instantaneity
and succession, the game stopping and starting up again—what Weber describes as both a
simultaneity and an approximation, both contained in the French expression de justesse, which is
also to conjure up the French word for justice, justice. That is to say, Weber is speaking in his
'Afterword' of a certain simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness as a standard of judgement, which as
he realises perfectly well is also to speak of only an approximation to a standard of justice, or as we
say of a kind of "rough justice". It is just this simultaneity that Weber is arguing Lyotard fails to
consider. Here is Weber speaking of the Freudian unconscious, in which there is a "similar"
necessity and impossibility of narration, of judgement, a "comparable" simultaneity or at-the-
same-timeness at stake:

But if we can never succeed in this impossible effort [to externalise/internalise, judge], neither
can we renounce it, and it is precisely this double impossibility that makes the game of the unconscious
both imprecise (because it is never completely determinable) and ambivalent (because it is always in
the process of arresting itself, of revolving around a 'fixation').

This shows why the game of the unconscious does not proceed by 'moves' [coupes], but by post-
factos [après-coupes], or again, by fits and starts [à-coups]. The fits and starts of the conscious always
come too early or too late, or both at the same time. Which is to say that they... just make it [arrêtent...
de justesse][...]

How can we judge if we are already, still, always, caught in a game in which the moves [coupes]
come only in fits and starts, post-facto [à-coup, après-coup], hurried yet late at the same time? How can
we judge if space and time, if the place of judgement, is wracked by ambivalence, if every attempt to cut
to the heart of the matter [trancher: cut; contrast; conclude] necessarily involves an attempt to retreat
[retrancher], and also to be entrenched [se retrancher] in, behind, and around the slices [tranches] thus
cut [coupées]. How can we judge, if not by... cutting it close [... de justesse].

47 JG, 106. We might think here of our insistence that there are always only one and
already two representations of representation and mediums of exchange. Bennington makes
the same point in his review of JG, arguing that there are always (at least) two justices to be
done, that the command "Be Fair!", for example, is already split into the prescriptive and
the descriptive, at once refers to another and only to itself. He writes:
This split in prescription already suggests that the justice to be done cannot be simple:
and the complexity of this sentence which positions me as its addressee before I begin
to describe, object to, or evaluate Au juste is already the problem of Au juste. There are
at least two justices to be done ('August: Double Justice', Diacritics, Fall 1984, p. 63).
Weber will also take up this question of an analysis that is already implied in what it
analyses, of a prescriptive that is also (self)descriptive, in The Depts of Deconstruction
and Other, Related Assumptions', op. cit.
Just making it is not necessarily the same as making it just [de justesse vs justice]. Obviously, it all depends on the multiplicity in play, on the singularity of the utterers, of the addressees, and perhaps also on where it all takes place.\footnote{JC, 111, 113-4. We would want to look again at that not too fast, not too slow of the art auction, of 'Please Follow Me', and of the year 2000 in Baudrillard. This "fitful rhythm" also reminds us, in more ways than one, of the stumbling gait of Derrida's "To Speculate - on "Freud"", particularly the section 'Freud's Legacy', \textit{The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond}, op. cit., pp. 292-337. There is also Derrida's essay on Maurice Blanchot, 'Pas', \textit{Parages}, Éditions Galilée, 1986, which takes up this simultaneity of stopping and going, judgement and the impossibility of judgement. The last piece from \textit{The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, 'Du Tout'}, also takes up this question of the slice (tranche) and judgement—and we should not forget that the title of Kant's \textit{Third Critique} in German also refers to the word for slice (urteill/erteilen). See \textit{JC}, 115, on this.}.

It is obviously not a matter of "defending" Lyotard against Weber here. Firstly, because Weber is not accusing him of anything. The "mistake" he makes (that of stating a standard of judgement, a limit, without considering how he is himself judged by it, the limit to this limit) is unavoidable; it is a necessary effect of all discourse that it generalises whatever it speaks of; it necessarily excludes as soon as it begins both a justice of multiplicity and a multiplicity of justices. Secondly, because Lyotard does not need our defence. As we hope to show (and as we have perhaps already shown), Lyotard is already speaking of, or responding to, much of what Weber is saying here. It is a question of opening Lyotard up to that kind of "double" reading we have attempted before: to show both that Lyotard does make that mistake Weber accuses him of (but even Weber himself would have to make this) and that Lyotard is aware of the inevitability of this mistake, in a way does not make it.

But it is also not a question of accusing Weber: on the one hand, we absolutely agree with his reading of Lyotard; and, on the other, this second reading of Lyotard here is perhaps no more than a reading of him through Weber, a continuation of Weber's critique. We see here the limits to all judgement, all critique: the fact that we can no sooner enunciate it, state our differences from what we criticise, than we see the object already saying what we think it should be saying, than we see a response by the object to its criticism. As in all imitation—for judgement, criticism, is also a form of imitation—both the imitator is affected by what he imitates and what he imitates by being.
imitated. We can no longer tell whether this second Lyotard comes before or after Weber, whether Weber's analysis of Lyotard is only possible because of what Lyotard himself puts into play, or whether this Lyotard we are about to describe is only possible because of Weber. In any case, what is really at stake here is their respective attitudes towards this possibility, the necessity and impossibility of taking this into account. And Weber would perhaps not disagree with this. He has written a very important essay about the way that all criticism sees itself prefigured in its object, when we precisely can no longer tell whether it was already there or is only an effect of its reading: 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions'\(^49\).

Let us go back, then, to the question of prescription in Lyotard. Weber's point, we recall, is that Lyotard's prescription assumes that there is a kind of outside to the game, that it is finally the one exception to the rule that there be no prescription, that no one game dominate all the others—and that, even if every attempt to state this rule becomes its own exception, this would itself only be possible because of a certain rule that was not. That is to say, prescription comes before description, its own self-description. As opposed to this, Weber argues that otherness—prescription—is not simply to be found outside each of the games it delimits (the game of narration or description, for example), but also within them. The specificity of each game—including that of prescription—is only possible because of its relationship to another, to description, which it excludes\(^50\). Not only in fact (even Lyotard would agree with Weber on this) but also in principle, prescription is indistinguishable from those other language-games.

But we might ask: is not Lyotard already saying this? Is Lyotard's prescription simply a transcendental signified, which excludes itself so that everything takes its place, or is it also the

\(^{49}\) 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions', op. cit. 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions' is an essay, in part, about the chapter 'To Speculate—on "Freud"' from The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond. Derrida speaks there of the way that Freud seems to play out the child's game of fort/da in his very description of it. Part of the enigma, then, would be whether Freud's writing is an effect of what it describes or whether what is described is an effect of Freud's writing. The same enigma arises in terms of Freud's indebtedness to Nietzsche, which Derrida also raises: does it really exist (Freud never acknowledged it) or is it only an effect of Derrida's own reading (in which case Derrida himself would repay it). And all this, of course, would apply \textit{a fortiori} to the text which speculates on this: Weber's 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related assumptions'. It is this ambiguity that Derrida and Weber must—impossibly—try to take into account.

\(^{50}\) JG, 104. See also JG, 120, footnote 5, referring to JG, 54.
impossibility of a transcendental signified, the thinking of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of a transcendental signified: the fact that something—nothing—is always excluded to allow the possibility of a transcendental signified, to ensure that there is a transcendental signified? "Prescription" might be merely another word, written as part of a "double strategy", to signify the impossibility of any final prescription, to stand in for that nothing which prescription necessarily excludes. Does not Lyotard's prescription itself exemplify those Nietzschean agonistics Weber opposes to it, in which the position of the prescriber is at once inside and outside the field he prescribes?

If perhaps Weber's complaint vis-a-vis *Just Gaming* is true (this has yet to be determined), if in *Just Gaming* there still remains a sense in which prescription comes before its (self)description, in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* Lyotard proposes a more complex, rigorous, relationship between the prescriptive and the descriptive, between prescription which is understood to be outside of the game and description which means that nothing is outside of the game. It is one precisely of simultaneity. Here is a very important passage from that book in which Lyotard explains, in the form of a dialogue, that if there is no single genre that contains all the others, this is not to say that there is simply no genre at all—or, to put it another way, he is qualifying his earlier belief in a singular justice of multiplicities for a multiplicity of justices. Here Lyotard is agreeing with Weber that such a singularity would already be caught up in the multiplicity it prescribes, can only be itself one of a multiplicity of possible justices:

—You say that a genre of discourse imprints a unique finality onto a multiplicity of heterogeneous phrases by linkings that aim to procure the success proper to that genre. If this is the case, it follows that the heterogeneity of phrase regimens is not of such a kind that it would prohibit their common subordination to a single end. The abyss that separates them would then be, if not filled in, at least covered over or spanned by the teleology of genres of discourse. Let's go further. This would only be the case if the concatenation of phrases had nothing to do with any finality tied to a genre, and took place without genres, if their heterogeneity completely disjoined them and left their linkage unforeseeable and inexplicable, as it pleases you to describe them. Now, this is not possible. By your

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51 We might look, for example, at *JG*, 59:
Now, this 'ought' does not signal that a field of prescriptions is opening up; it marks a transit point from a descriptive game whose goal is knowledge of the given, to a descriptive game (by ideas) of the exploration of the possible. The transit point is marked by the prescriptive.
own avowal, the phrases that happen are ' Awaited', not by conscious or unconscious 'subjects' who would anticipate them, but because, to speak as linguists do, they carry their own 'set of directions' along with them [Paolo Fabbri in conversation], that is, they carry instructions as to the end pursued through them. And to insist, as you do, on the indetermination of the linkings is still to function in terms of certain stakes, those of persuading your reader of the heterogeneity of regimens and of the pre-eminence of the occurrence. This is done, therefore, in accordance with the finality prescribed by a genre or at least by a style (TD, §180).

But it is very important how this is understood: if Lyotard is saying that the prescriptive and the descriptive are not simply different, neither is he saying that they are the same. If the judge is never entirely outside of what he judges, he is never entirely inside it either. In a kind of "double strategy", that is, Lyotard must argue both for the equivalence of the prescriptive and the descriptive and for a certain priority of—or difference between—the "prescriptive" over the descriptive. This is what must be meant by their simultaneity. In a crucial gesture in The Differend: Phrases in Dispute—it is the differend itself—Lyotard wants to show how the prescriptive cannot be deduced from the descriptive, how justice can be derived neither from a description of the existing state of affairs nor from a state of affairs to be brought about (just as, inversely, there is no clear rule to follow in passing from the prescriptive to the descriptive, for putting the prescriptive into effect). For Lyotard the "transcendental illusion" of politics—it constitutes politics as such—is to try to put the addressee of descriptive statements in the place of the addressor of prescriptive ones (to make a people whom we can describe the senders of an obligation). This is for Lyotard the "normative", the political genre as such. For Lyotard, following Lévinas, it is the prescriptive that must be grasped first: a prescription that establishes an asymmetrical relationship between the addressor and the addressee, a prescription whose obligation cannot be derived. It is only this prescription—as opposed to any possible description—that can finally guarantee justice. But also for

52 See, for example, TD, §203:

Authority is not deduced. Attempts at legitimating authority lead to vicious circles (I have authority over you because you authorise me to have it), to question begging (the authorisation authorises authority), to infinite regression (x is authorised by y, who is authorised by z), and to the paradox of idiots (God, Life, etc., designate me to exert authority, and I am the only witness of this revelation). The aporia of a deduction of authority, or the aporia of sovereignty, is the sign that the phrase of authorisation cannot result from a phrase stemming from a different regimen. It is the sign of an incommensurability between the normative phrase and all the others.

See also Lyotard: Writing the Event, op. cit., pp. 137-9, on the "mistake" of deriving the prescriptive from the descriptive; pp. 144-62 on the normative and the political.
Lyotard, as opposed to Lévinas—though this is a very difficult point—prescription is never possible outside of a certain description; a final meta-language is impossible\textsuperscript{53}.

It is for this reason that Lyotard can accept the fact that "everything is political" and yet refuse the apparent corollary that "the political is everything". "Everything is political" because there are only phrases, sentences, which can only be descriptive—and there is no first or last phrase\textsuperscript{54}. As soon as we speak, we are in the world of description, of the political. Weber is right in that the prescriptive must be descriptive, must describe itself. And yet "the political is not everything" because there is here the thought of that nothing—the "prescriptive"—excluded by the phrase, the descriptive, the political. There is for Lyotard also something outside of the political, which cannot be derived from it and which it cannot deduce. But it is not as though he can simply say what it is, justify his approach on the basis of it—to do so would be merely to repeat that "transcendental illusion" he condemns in the political. Rather, it is the limit to all politics, all attempts to speak in its name. Or, if we must always speak for it, if it is always represented—if there is no first or last phrase—it is also the thought of what is excluded to allow this, that nothing excluded to ensure that there is only the descriptive, the political\textsuperscript{55}. Though there is no first or last phrase, it is the thought—the threat we might say, following Burke—of a first or last phrase: a phrase which cannot be deduced (a first phrase), or from which nothing necessarily follows (a last phrase), creating an immediate obligation, unauthorised by any descriptive or normative legitimation. A little like Derrida's disgust, it must be understood as what forces us to link phrases, the thought of that not otherwise to linking phrases, to being in the descriptive or political, but what cannot be linked itself. It is to think that at the very moment a phrase is linked, an actual succession made, there is also a virtual phrase excluded, unlinked, which does not enter...

\textsuperscript{53} This seems to be the meaning of the conclusion to Lyotard's 'Levinas' Logic', \textit{Face to Face with Levinas}, ed. Richard A. Cohen, State University of New York Press, 1986, esp. pp. 149-53.

\textsuperscript{54} On this question of "everything is political" but "the political is not everything", see \textit{TD}, §§189-93. See also Lyotard: Writing the Event, op. cit., pp. 158-9. On the fact that there is no first or last sentence, that even silence is a sentence, see footnote 36. All this might be compared to Derrida, for whom there is nothing outside the text and yet the text is not everything.

\textsuperscript{55} One of the names for this "nothing" in \textit{The Differend: Phrases in Dispute} would be "Auschwitz". We might say that for Lyotard: everything is the phrase and yet the phrase is not everything.
the descriptive or political regimes. "Prescription" in this sense would be both a first and last phrase and the impossibility of a first or last phrase.

It is this Lyotard calls the differend: not so much anything that can be described (or even described as unable to be described) but the feeling, the sentiment, that at the very moment something is described it is also excluded—or perhaps, more accurately, the feeling or sentiment of something at once included and excluded, feeling or sentiment as this simultaneity itself\(^\text{56}\). And all this might be understood as that "vibration" or oscillation Kant spoke of in terms of the mathematical sublime\(^\text{57}\), in which we move between an attraction towards and a repulsion from, the representation and the unrepresentability of, a thing—this thing we have spoken of as representation or time itself. (And it is important to realise that Kant speaks of a simultaneous "progression" and "co-existence" in relation to the sublime here: it is not a simple instantaneity but a true simultaneity that is implied, that simultaneous succession and simultaneity Weber speaks of as the "fitful rhythm" of judgement\(^\text{58}\).) Kant is speaking of nothing less here than that simultaneous necessity and impossibility of representing representation or time itself: it is this simultaneity which Lyotard is trying to make into an ethics, a standard of judgement for politics, in The Differend: Phrases in Dispute:

The feeling of the sublime is, therefore, at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation by reason, and a simultaneously awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with ideas of reason, so far as the effort to attain to these is for us a law [...]

\(^{56}\) On this "feeling" or "sentiment", see the section 'The Sign of History' in The Differend: Phrases in Dispute. "Feeling" or "sentiment" can be understood as expressing what cannot be expressed (Lyotard himself even comes close to this at times), but this would only be to make "feeling" or "sentiment" another form of speech. For us, "feeling" or "sentiment" would be the intimation that something is excluded even in saying this, that what "feeling" and "sentiment" stand in for can never entirely be expressed, would be excluded by every representation of it. Lyotard develops the argument of 'The Sign of History' in his L'Enthousiasme, la critique kantienne de l'histoire, Éditions Galilée, 1986. David Carroll offers a useful summary of the connected "themes" of the "sign" of history, enthusiasm and the Kantian as-if in his Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida, Methuen, 1987, pp. 169-84.

\(^{57}\) The Critique of Judgement, §27.

\(^{58}\) Ibid, §27. We might compare all this to that "shock" or "suspended privation" of which Lyotard speaks (S + AG, 40), for is that not too a kind of simultaneity?
The point of excess for the imagination (towards which it is driven in the apprehension of the intuition) is like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself; yet again for the rational ideal of the supersensible it is not excessive, but conformable to law, and directed to drawing out such an effort on the part of the imagination: and so in turn as much a source of attraction as it was repellent to mere sensibility.

To judge, then, for Lyotard is somehow to think this simultaneity of prescription and description, to take up that position at which the prescriptive and descriptive are neither too close to, nor too far from, each other. Or, in another way, if it is prescription that he is trying to think, if it is prescription that must be grasped first, it is precisely "prescription" as the simultaneity of prescription and description. It is to think, as if this were possible, as if a first phrase or a first cause could be thought, what is excluded to ensure that there is no first or last phrase; to think, as if representation were not already assumed, the very assumption of representation itself; to think what is excluded to ensure that we can only represent representation, say what makes representation possible, because of representation, because representation is already assumed. Lyotard’s project, that is, takes us back to what we saw in Baudrillard and Derrida, their attempts to disentangle that aporetic logic in which what is to be defined is already caught up in its definition, that irrefutability and undemonstrability in which we cannot say what representation or metaphor is because a prior representation or metaphor is always required, but where this would be possible only because we can say what representation or metaphor is, because we can say that it is a previous representation or metaphor that is necessary. It is just this double bind that Lyotard attacks in the arguments of those Revisionist historians of the Holocaust in *The Differend: Phrases*

59 Ibid, §27. But it is not as though Reason finally estimates the magnitude of the object to be measured. It is rather that it realises the limits to doing so. It states its own limits—and thus reveals itself to be limitless. But this would again only be Reason as Imagination. Reason would also be the thinking of what is excluded to allow all limits to be named: it thinks not only the limits to the object and its own limits but also the limits to the naming of its own limits. It is in this regard that we might draw a distinction between Kantian Reason and that Cartesian gesture of hyperbolic doubt we discussed in Chapter One. Lyotard writes on this section of *The Critique of Judgement*, emphasising just this "vibration" or "oscillation" (we would say between the limited and the unlimited) in 'Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant After Marx', trans. Cecile Lindsay, *The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History*, ed. Murray Krieger, Colombia University Press, 1987. This is a version of the paper Lyotard gave at the Cérisy Colloquium devoted to his work, 'Judicieus dans le différé', *La faculté de juger*, op. cit. John Sallis also writes on this section of *The Critique of Judgement* and the "relationship" between the Imagination and Reason we see there in *Spacings—of Reason and Imagination in Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel*, University of Chicago Press, 1987, esp. pp. 103-5, 111-3, 126-7.
in Dispute: the argument that, if the Jews did not see the gas chambers, they cannot be proved to exist; and if they did see the gas chambers, they would be dead—anybody who says he saw the gas chambers is lying (TD, §2). If the Revisionists cannot prove their argument (there can be no proof that the gas chambers did not exist, obviously), they also cannot be disproved. It is, again, precisely that logic that Baudrillard and Derrida attack in terms of representation and metaphor: if we cannot say what representation is, this is only because of representation; representation is the impossibility of saying what representation is. If we cannot say what metaphor is, this is only because of metaphor; metaphor is the impossibility of saying what metaphor is. But what we have seen Baudrillard and Derrida trying to think is that “representation”, that “metaphor”, that “nothing”—that differend—excluded to allow this a poria. If the arguments they oppose also use this power of “nothing” to make their case, they also fail to use it because they always make this “nothing” a something (just as St Anselm failed by finally calling that “nothing” God). They must be subjected themselves to an argument using the power of “nothing” against them, showing that there is always a previous “nothing”—here in The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, but this is only to stand in for it, to exclude it, the injustice done to the Jews—excluded to allow them to put forward their something. This is the argument Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard are fundamentally making: they are all speaking on behalf of nothing against all attempts to make it a something. And if this objection must be first of all applied to their own arguments, at least they think their own limits in this sense, limits that are at once a standard of judgement and the limits to any possible standard of judgement. It is in this way that they differ from what they criticise. And it is this “nothing” we have called representation, time, simultaneity.

It might be possible, then, to re-read today those Grand Narratives—Truth, Beauty, Progress, Reason and Humanity. They are perhaps not simply standards of judgement, but also attempts to think those a priori assumptions of thought, that “nothing”, excluded to allow thought to reflect upon itself, to allow representation to represent itself; they are also the limits to any possible standard of judgement. To think those Grand Narratives might be to think what allows representation and thought in a way that does not simply close the circle again by answering representation or thought; it might be, instead, to think the very assumption that allows this
closure. Those Grand Narratives are not only themselves standards of judgement, always represented, but also stand in for that "unrepresentable" that we want to make our standard of judgement. Reason, for example, is not only a Grand Narrative that is now discredited in the light of Auschwitz, but also stands in for that thing — unknown — in whose name we can say this. It not only belongs to that aporia, in which it is only Reason that can exclude Reason, in which it is only in the name of Reason that we can denounce Reason as a standard of judgement, but it is also what is excluded to allow this aporia, to allow us to state the limits implicit in this circularity. It is only because of "Reason", that is, that we can reflect upon our limits in this way. "Reason" realises that it can never entirely think what makes it possible, can never entirely think its own a priori, its own assumption, that there is only this aporia, this not otherwise — but in this very thinking itself it triumphs, does in a way think its own a priori, its own founding assumption, does in a way think outside this aporia. And "Reason" is perhaps — like all those other Grand Narratives — the simultaneity of the two: at once a standard of judgement, always within an aporia, and the thought that this is only possible because something (nothing) is excluded from this aporia. To think those Grand Narratives, then, would be at once to think the assumptions of thought (it is Truth, Beauty, Progress, Reason and Humanity that make thought possible) and what is excluded to allow us to think these assumptions of thought (it is "Truth", "Beauty", "Progress", "Reason" and "Humanity" that allow us to think what makes thought possible). It is perhaps the simultaneity implied in these Grand Narratives as both a standard of judgement and the limit to all standards of judgement that Lyotard is trying to unearth in his recent work on Kant's Third Critique and those historical and political essays Kant wrote after it, the so-called "Fourth" Critique. It is not simply a question of the end of the Grand Narratives, but of their simultaneous necessity and impossibility—

60 Today we can read 'Reply To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?' as not simply opposed to those Grand Narratives of the Enlightenment, but rather as speaking of what is excluded to make them possible, of their limits:

The systems of reason, in the name of which, or with which this task has been able to sustain and justify itself all merit great attention, but they can only really be formulated on the basis of a dedication to the Sublime in order to legitimise such a dedication. That's to say, really, they are formulated in order to mask that very dedication ('Reply To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?', op. cit., p. 16).

61 See, for instance, a number of the essays from L'Inhumain: causeries sur le temps, op. cit., L'enthousiasme, la critique kantienne de l'histoire, op. cit., and Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants, Editions Galilée, 1986
the Grand Narratives as themselves a reflection upon their own simultaneous necessity and impossibility.

Hence Lyotard’s interest in Kant’s as if (als ob), which for Kant is at once the fact that whatever it is is already assumed, that we can only think because of it, and the attempt to think this very assumption, as if it were not assumed, as if it could be otherwise. For example, within the language-game of description we must think as if there is no first or last sentence, as if every sentence is immediately linked; but precisely in doing this, in this not otherwise, there is necessarily opened up the possibility of a first and last sentence, the possibility that it is otherwise. That is to say, Lyotard sees in Kant an attempt to think the "gulf" between the different language-games, which is at once to cross it and to show that it cannot be crossed. Or this at least is what Lyotard thinks is implicit in Kant’s project, even if Kant foresees the possibility of a final consensus between the various faculties, a reconciliation between the warring parties—and Lyotard makes a neat distinction in this regard between the Kantian “transcendental illusion” of thinking as if we were referring to actual phenomena, when the bridge separating the different faculties or language-games is traversed, and the fact that we are referring only to as if phenomena, when that abyss separating them can never be finally crossed.

Again, it is a question of the proper distance to be maintained between them (and we might take the prescriptive and the descriptive to be exemplary here): not too far (as Weber warns Lyotard) and not too close (as Kant perhaps strays, according to Lyotard). To the Kantian as if—a certain suspension—we might say that Lyotard opposes his as if as if: at once the crossing of that bridge (for this as if is only as if, that suspension Kant imposes is merely hypothetical, unconfirmed) and the impossibility of crossing that bridge (for this as if, which is a certain passage, is only hypothetical, surmised, is always actually deferred). And we return here to that “suspended suspension” or “privation in the second degree” we mentioned briefly in Chapter Two: the way that, as opposed to the aporia of deriving authority from norms, the circularity of cause and effect, these prescriptives, these as ifs, at once oblige

62 For Lyotard’s distinction between "as if we were referring to phenomena" and "referring to as if phenomena", see TD, 'Kant Notice 3', p. 133. See also Lyotard: Writing The Event, op. cit., p. 163 on this distinction. On the way that "as if" can be neither too close nor too far, see TD, 'Kant Notice 2', p. 122. All this should be related to those questions of analogy or metaphor we looked at in Chapter Two, for this "as if" is, of course, a kind of analogy or metaphor.
ininitely and are a sign of freedom, are at the same time not otherwise, completely determinative, and, in the very thinking of this, the sign of a certain freedom.

Perhaps, then, as opposed to those Kantian Grand Narratives or prescriptives of Truth, Beauty, Progress, Reason and Humanity, which still project a final community or consensus, Lyotard is putting forward multiplicity or dissensus as his Grand Narrative or prescription—or, at least, reads those Kantian Grand Narratives or prescriptives as implying this. As he says in *Just Gaming*:

And the idea that I think we need today in order to make decisions in political matters cannot be the idea of the totality, or the unity, of a body. It can only be the idea of a multiplicity or of a diversity. Then the question arises: How can a regulatory use of this idea of the political take place? How can it be pragmatically efficacious (to the point where, for example, it would make one decision just and another unjust)? Is a politics regulated by such an idea of multiplicity possible? Is it possible to decide in a just way in, and according to, this multiplicity? And here I must say that I don't know.

For Kant, the idea of justice is associated with that of finality. But 'finality' means a kind of convergence, of organisation, of a general congruence, on the part of a given multiplicity moving towards its unity; even if it is in an asymptotic and infinite fashion, without ever being able to tell: Here we are, the body is constituted and the unity accomplished. Nonetheless, there is this congruence, and it is presupposed in the statement of the moral law as the principle of universal legislation. The universality that appears here is actually the return of the idea of totality within the moral law. If we abandon this idea of congruence and we put in its stead the idea of 'discrepancy', the question then is whether one can have a moral law and a political law with it. 'Always act in such a way that the maxim of your will may' I won't say 'not be erected', but it is almost that, 'into a principle of universal legislation'. Into a principle of multiplicity... 63

It is interesting that Lyotard speaks of humanity moving towards the Idea in an "asymptotic and infinite fashion" here because it implies that, in our very progression towards it, it is excluded. And in changing that earlier imperative of unity or finality for multiplicity or dissensus, Lyotard is not simply substituting ends, but trying to think this asymptote itself: the fact that the end, any end, even that of multiplicity or dissensus, is excluded by its representation, our approach towards it. It is this asymptote itself that Lyotard means by multiplicity or dissensus: the way that, if the goal is always included, approached, it is at the same time excluded, always further away than you imagined; if the criteria for judgement (even as multiplicity or dissensus) can be taken into account, they also cannot be; judgement and ethics have to take into account what cannot be taken

63 *JG*, 94. See also *JG*, 88.
into account, something that is excluded, even in being thought of as excluded. There is always one more turn, one more representation, one more twist around nothing, possible in this asymptotic progression towards the Idea. If we are able to take account of representation, to say what makes representation possible, if we are able to speak of our assumptions, to pay back our debts, in this itself there would be something that cannot be taken account of, we would be unable to say what makes this representation possible, there is a new assumption, our debt has increased, in saying this.

And here we touch upon some of Weber's own most interesting speculations. In 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions', he takes up Derrida's book The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond, in which Derrida speaks of the way Freud borrows or assumes certain concepts in Nietzsche that allow him to begin his own speculations—speculations that give Freud a certain distinctiveness or originality, that allow him to deny his ever having owed anything to Nietzsche. Or, to put it another way, Freud borrows something from Nietzsche that allows him to travel back in time in order to repay the debt incurred in sending him there (a kind of circle much favoured by science fiction time-travel stories, which much of Derrida's recent work hints at).

64 On being asymptotic to the Idea, or the Idea being an asymptote, see JG, 86. Lyotard's article 'On the Strength of the weak', trans. Roger McKeon, *Semiotext(e)*, Vol III, No. 2, 1978 (taken up again in TD, 'Plato Notice', p. 20), contains a wonderful parable concerning the unrepresentability of the Idea, the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of judging according to the Idea. The rhetorician Corax is defending a client who is physically strong, and who is accused of having beaten a weaker person. The victim's lawyer says: "He is very strong; it is obviously he who has beaten my client". Corax in defence offers the following refutation: "Of course not! My client know very well that he would be accused because of his great strength and it is for this reason that he did not do it". To which the victim's lawyer replies: "But he knew this defence was possible, and this is precisely why did it". And so on. Here, the Idea, which is used to judge each time, also always allows an extra turn, an extra trope: it is impossible to judge, or there is always a judgement, a justice, excluded. Here the true Idea to be grasped is this asymptote itself. We must ask: what is excluded to produce this endless series of approximations to the Idea? Baudrillard is also trying to present the same Idea in 'Please Follow Me': Sophie is aware of the man, the man is aware of Sophie, Sophie is aware that the man is aware of her, the man is aware that Sophie is aware that the man is aware of her, etc. There too it is a question of judgement, the "fitful rhythm", the stopping-and-starting, the simultaneity, of judgement.

65 See, for example, Jacques Derrida, 'Telepathy', trans. Nicholas Royle, *The Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 10, 1988. It is also one of the possibilities suggested by Weber's 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions', op. cit. We might think there of Heidegger coming back from the dead to make his telephone call to Derrida, people sending letters to themselves from the future, the whole question of returning to oneself via autobiography, of credit as a borrowing from the future, the possibility that Freud comes before Nietzsche, etc. All further references to 'The Debts of Deconstruction and Other, Related Assumptions' will be indicated by the initials 'DoD', followed by a page number.
And Weber's question in 'The Debts of Deconstruction' is: what allows this circle, this sending or sending back? He fastens onto the word *assumption* there ('DofD', 108, 124-5, 130): there is always a certain assumption excluded to allow this equivalence between Freud and himself, between Freud and anybody else who comes to write on him. There is always an assumption repressed or excluded in Freud's writing, precisely that debt he denies to Nietzsche, which allows him to begin his speculations. But, as Weber is well aware, there is a trap here into which he can only fall in that, as soon as this assumption is named (even as assumption itself), it can be seen to be spoken of everywhere by Freud, to be paid back by him (or, more likely, Weber himself becomes the one who assumes Freud's debt to Nietzsche; he becomes indebted to Freud just as Freud was indebted to Nietzsche) ('DofD', 112-3, 121-2). Assumption is no longer what is assumed, excluded: it itself forms part of the resemblance between Freud and Nietzsche, Freud and Weber. But at the same time, there is now something excluded to allow this very resemblance, this equivalence between Weber and what he writes about, to allow Weber's own speculations. That is to say, it is not so much assumption, an actual assumption, that is excluded here as "assumption" that stands in for precisely what cannot be named—what we have called throughout the "minute difference" or "minimal cycle" that allows the identity between things, that allows this reparation or paying back, or even the establishment of this debt itself. Assumption in this sense precedes the very possibility of debt (debt as this system of equivalents). Assumption in this sense is all that we have meant by "representation" and the "medium of exchange". It is at once always paid back, represented, even as assumption itself, and unable to be paid back, unrepresentable, "assumed". To speak of "assumption" is to think the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of its naming, of naming—representation—itself. Speaking of the way that Freud's text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* begins to perform in its own description that game of *fort-da* it is describing, when the imitator would be affected by what he imitates, and, presumably, what he imitates by its imitation—all that we have been trying to describe in this thesis—Weber writes:

Hence, the repetition does not produce a 'gain in self-reflexive transparency' but rather something very different. The measure of that difference, however, can only begin to be gauged when one remarks that the process just described—by which descriptions participate in what they describe—also applies, *a fortiori*, to the text that announces this as a general problem. To Speculate—on "Freud"
can in no way be exempted from the 'graphics of repetition' it 'describes' at work in the descriptions of 'Freud'.

We begin to fathom the significance of the quotation marks that set off the proper name 'Freud' in the text that speculates on it. If the temptation to form a trait out of only one of the threads (sons) of an irrepressible 'matrix'—if this temptation is 'not a contingent limitation', and if one cannot, therefore, be dispensed from giving an account of that non-contingency, then presumably the account will have to deal with the manner in which an irresistible process of repetition assumes the aspect and allure of a proper name ('DoD, 107-8).

This is finally Lyotard's project too: to think that assumption of representation, of the name, of naming. It is to think the indebtedness of every system to what exceeds it, comes before it, and can never be entirely spoken of, to what is always represented and yet never can be. There is always a certain "double strategy" necessary here: you must at once realise that you are representing what you say cannot be represented, and that this itself is only possible because of something unrepresentable. Prescription (and even description) is always its own first exception, but it does not simply come before it, allow it; it is also only an effect of it, can only be grasped from the very beginning as its own exception. It is at the same time both the rule and its exception. It is this simultaneity or at-the-same-timeness itself. This is the irony or humour of Lyotard's avant-garde, forced to represent the unrepresentable only to show that it is finally unrepresentable, forced to represent the unrepresentable in order to defend it against all other attempts to represent it. It is the paradox of Lyotard's conclusion to his 'Response To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?':

Beneath the general call for an easing and abatement of pressure, we hear murmurs of the desire to recommence terror, of the fantasim of grasping reality. The reply is: war on everything, let's be witnesses to the unrepresentable, let's activate those differences [différends], let's save the honour of the name. The dilemma here is that to "save the honour of the name" is precisely not to name the name, to properly name the name, to name the proper name, not to speak in the name of the name, to use the

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66 'Reply To The Question: What Is The Post-Modern?', op. cit., p. 18. Finally perhaps, on this question of a "project" undertaken in the name of the name, which would at once have a telos, an aim, and be the impossibility of any telos, any aim, see Lyotard's 'Re-Writing Modernity', trans. eds., Sub-stance 54:

Unlike remembering, the working through could be defined as a work without purpose and, therefore, without will: without purpose in the sense that it works without being guided by the concept of its aim, but not without purposiveness' (p. 7).
name as the basis of the prescription "let's save the honour of the name". And yet, in order to save the name, we must.

It is always, finally, a question of opposing that "war" in the name of the name, where at least this irony or humour is realised, to the "terror" of the "fantasm of grasping reality", where it is not. As Weber says, there is always an economy of violence, a struggle between the Vernichtungskampf and the Wettkampf, between the prescriptive struggle to the death with only one victor and the fact that there can be no victor outside the game, which involves at least two players, the realisation that the game itself is more powerful than any one of its players\textsuperscript{67}. This is our "unique relationship"— already two—to representation.

\textsuperscript{67} JG,106-7. This would be to gesture towards the necessity of one day reading Lyotard's work with Derrida's 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas', op. cit., esp. pp. 107-8 on that "economy" between the world and God, God and violence, one and two, the same and the other. On the "victory" of agôn over any attempt to formulate its rule, to master it, see TD, 'Plato Notice', p. 26, §160. See also JG, 40-1, 43, on this "divinisation of otherness". Bennington too speaks of the necessity of one day reading Lyotard with this essay by Derrida: \textit{Lyotard: Writing the Event}, op. cit., p. 178.
CONCLUSION

Since Hegel, a certain logic has overtaken the world. It is that logic of the double bind, of the aporia, of what we have called the irrefutable and undemonstrable. With the collapse of the distinctions between the various fields of knowledge, every theory (every theory worth the name) must take it upon itself to explain all of experience, to account for everything. But, precisely because it does so, it explains, accounts for, nothing—because everything can be understood only in terms of it, there is nothing to prove it, no test for it that is not already possible only because of it. It is not simply that these theories do not take into account the possibility of their refutation, of some outside to them—they do—it is just that, insofar as they do, it would not be their refutation, their outside. It would be that pure doubling of the world by Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*: it is a book that explains everything, that contains the secret of the meaning of the world, after which the world can never be the same. Nobody has refuted or ever will refute Hegel; to argue against Hegel is only to be more Hegelian than Hegel himself, to prove him all the more. And yet nothing has changed: the world is exactly the same as it was before Hegel; if his book has changed and must change our lives, we are also completely unaffected by it, there is nothing we can do to follow it or put its precepts into action. And we see this again in psychoanalysis. There can be no outside to psychoanalysis because psychoanalysis is already its own outside; to deny psychoanalysis, to say that it does not exist, is already a *psychoanalytically* motivated gesture, it can only be psychoanalytically explained. If psychoanalysis is outside itself, and indeed is always outside itself (all psychoanalysis thinks in a sense is its own denial), there is also nothing outside of psychoanalysis insofar as this outside can only be explained by psychoanalysis itself.

Perhaps one last example. Surveying the latest developments in cosmology and astrophysics in his book *Superforce*, the science writer Paul Davies is able to foresee the imminent unification of all the fundamental forces of nature in one single "superforce". For the first time, he claims, we would have a complete picture of the world, be able to explain how something arose from nothing, how the world began. At that moment, all the existing problems within quantum mechanics, particle physics, cosmology, etc., would be solved. All the "regional" sciences would be joined in one
superscience. As Davies says: "One could believe that the theory attained would be not merely another approximation on the endless road to truth, but the truth itself"\(^1\). But here again, if this superforce is the realisation of the ultimate ambition of science, its apotheosis, it is also its end. First of all, because there would be nothing left to explain or discover. But secondly, and more profoundly, because at the same time as science explains everything, there would be no longer any proof for what it says, it would explain nothing. There would be no independent fact that could either verify or falsify the theory precisely because it now accounts for everything, because it is no longer distinguishable from the world it describes. There would be nothing outside the theory to test the theory. Or, to put it another way, there is perhaps one possible experiment left to either verify or falsify the theory, but it would be the world itself.

It is just this logic that Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard attack. They want to speak of the limit to these systems that have no limit, of what is excluded from them to ensure that they have no limit. In each of the three examples we spoke of, the system is always outside itself, its own exception, but this outside is the system, this exception is the rule. If the system is unable to be proved, this would be itself the very proof of the system. In short, if the same is only possible because of the other, this other in turn is only possible because of the same. And, as we have seen, the first gesture of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard is to reverse this, to show how if the other is only possible because of the same, the same is only possible because of the other; how if the limit is only possible because of the system, the system is only possible because of its limit. But, as we have also seen, this would be only to repeat the same logic in another form, to make the limit to the system the new system. The second gesture of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, therefore, is to show not just the limit to choosing the same over the same, but the limit to any choice, the limit to the limit to that first choice; to show that, if an other precedes that first choice and allows it to be named, a certain "other" (the other to the other) also precedes that second choice and allows it to be named.

It is at once to think the necessity of naming this limit to the system (the fact that there is always a prior limit that comes before it that forces us to name it) and the impossibility of naming

this limit to the system (the fact that this limit itself could not be named). But here it is no longer a question of one because of the other as in that first choice, or even as in that first reading of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, but of one and the other, the system and its limit, at the same time. It is to think that, if we are always caught in that circularity or aporia between the system and its limit in which we can no sooner name some limit to the system than it is discovered it is only possible because of it, this circularity itself would only be possible because of a certain "limit" that is excluded, that there is always a "limit" excluded to allow the limit to be named.

But it is not as though they are simply unaware of this. They would acknowledge that the masses, différance and the différend only play the role of the limit to these systems, are merely the aporetic alternative to that choice made by these systems. And they would say, furthermore, that it is always like this. In another way, however, the masses, différance and the différend are also precisely that nothing excluded to ensure that this is so; they stand in for what is excluded to ensure that these systems have no limit, that their limit is always named (and is, therefore, not really a limit at all). If they play the role of limits, they are also the limit to those limits, the necessity and impossibility of naming those limits. If the attempt to solve the aporiae of previous systems can only ever repeat them, Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard also try to think why this is so, what is excluded to ensure that we can only ever end up repeating them. This is the interminability of "critical philosophy", the fact that it can never conclude, never finally state its limit, its hypothesis. And, in a sense, it is this interminability itself, the fact that there is never just one limit but an endless series of limits, this asymptote itself, that it makes its "limit". If it necessarily proposes a standard of measure by which to judge or live our lives, it is also the very "limit" to this; this "limit" is both a standard of judgement and the limit to any possible standard of judgement.

There is raised, therefore, the question of how we are to think these concepts Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard propose, if they are what would be excluded by any representation or thinking of them. Indeed, it is not simply a matter of thinking them, as though this were voluntary, but also of our destiny, our fatedness towards them (to speak of Baudrillard), our assumption of or our obligation towards them (to speak of Derrida and Lyotard). It is not simply a matter of representing or thinking them because they are already represented or thought. But they are also themselves
the thinking of this not otherwise and hence, in a way, of the possibility that it could be otherwise, that they might not be represented or thought. If we are always destined or fated towards them, if we have already assumed them, are obliged to them, they are also the thinking of this, as though we were not destined or fated, as though we had not assumed or were not obliged to them. To think the masses, différence and the différend, to think representation, is at once to think their necessity (we can only think because of them) and to think the possibility of it being otherwise (because we can think this necessity). If representation makes it possible and even necessary for us to think it, it also makes it impossible, because it is precisely only by representation that representation can be thought. Or better, the fact that representation can only be represented does not make it impossible to think it, but it does impose an absolute limit upon our thinking it, upon our ability to say that it is representation that is necessary. In their work, that is, Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard take up the question of how we might think their concepts, how they might affect us, but it would also be for them a question of the limits to us thinking them, the limits to them affecting us or us being aware of them. Not only can we not finally say whether we are obliged, we cannot even be sure that it is a relationship of obligation. We cannot really say what our relationship is to them: this would be our "unique relation" to them.

We have proposed two readings of Baudrillard, Lyotard and Derrida: the first in which, if the rule they state is always its own exception, this itself is the rule, is only possible because of the rule, in which if their system is always outside itself, this outside is their system, is only possible because of their system; the second in which there is always a certain exception to any statement of the rule, in which there is a certain outside to the system at the same time as it, in which their rule and their system are opened up to something that exceeds them from the very beginning. If in the first reading, any declaration of non-mastery is only a form of mastery, in the second mastery is no longer proved by non-mastery, there is something there that exceeds all attempts to master it, at once necessary and impossible to take account of. But what if this second reading was really no different from the first? What if this second reading is today the very system itself? We spoke of the way that the masses, différence and the différend are not simply limits but also limits to those limits, the impossibility and necessity of limits. But what if this itself—which forms the limit to
any system—has become our system today? Again, it is not just the idea that any solution to the aporiae of previous systems can only repeat them—Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard all think this, the limits to this. Rather, it is the possibility that the thinking of the not otherwise to this, which is meant to produce a kind of otherwise, might be itself now part of the system, returns us only to a not otherwise. To think the not otherwise, or even the simultaneity of the not otherwise and the otherwise, that "nothing" excluded to ensure that nothing is excluded, might be today—in its most complex, sophisticated, non-aporetic sense—only a simple naming of a limit, a limit that would finally only be possible because of the system it is said to limit. We contrasted the first reading with the second by saying that, whereas in the first Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard speak of non-mastery only to return to mastery, in the second they are themselves aware of a certain limit which precedes them and that cannot finally be mastered, that would be excluded by any attempted mastery of it. But insofar as they speak of this limit, it is mastered by them; and if again this can only be because of another limit, this very progression itself, the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of naming this limit, is finally taken into account by them. In this second reading, after all, we are only following Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard themselves—we are perhaps offering nothing outside of the systems they construct. This absolute limit to all systems, and the impossibility of every finally mastering it, is itself finally only part of their systems, attests to the very perfection of their systems. To say it for the last time: this limit to their systems, absolutely non-dialectisable, other, other to the other, is today finally only that limit their systems name, a limit only possible because of them. It is not simply that they repeat Hegel: they are even more effective than Hegel in reducing the non-dialectical to the dialectic; the very infinity of dialectics, the fact that there is always something excluded, becomes itself a finality, a simple other to their systems in its very lack of finality, the impossibility of it ever being a simple other to their systems. There is, even more surely than in the first reading, nothing outside Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard. Our second reading here only repeats them.

Has thought come to an end today with these great thinkers, who finally reduce all otherness—the most heterogeneous, unassimilable otherness—to the status of the same? Is there anything left to think after Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard? In pushing the project of critical
philosophy to its limit, seeing it as infinite, interminable, endless, have they in fact brought it to an end? Is this system we have attempted to set out here in its most abstract terms the final model of models, again in and precisely because of its absolute resistance to being modelled? Is that "nothing" always something now, precisely in being seen as nothing, as a nothing that is always excluded? These are the questions we have attempted to ask here vis-a-vis the work of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard—concerns shared perhaps by all those other names we mentioned in our 'Introduction'. Although they insist on the "new" in thought, on thought's task as the dismantling of old oppositions—even their own—have they in this brought thought to an end; if this project is endless, infinite, can anything come after it?

But it is this question—is thought any more possible? is there anything left to think?—that philosophy has always thought. It is perhaps this question that defines philosophy, thought, as such. Philosophy might be always the end of philosophy in this sense. Thought survives only under the shadow of this last thought, the possibility that it is the last thought. It is this question Lyotard, for example, sees as crucial to Kant's sublime, to that project of critical philosophy inaugurated by Kant: Is it happening? Which for us is: is the new happening? is thought happening? And if today we can only answer in that "old" language of Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, if today even the question itself, the thought that philosophy is always the end of philosophy, can only be put in that "old" language, there is nevertheless still a feeling we have, a sentiment, that the new is happening, that thought is happening, that this is not all there is, that not everything has been said. Although all the "linkages", as Lyotard says, are implicit, they have not all been made in fact. And we feel a certain obligation to the unphrased or unphraseable, to this "not everything has been said"; an obligation that is itself a sign that something new is happening, that something does remain to be thought. We cannot say what it is, but we have a feeling, attainable only through the most rigorous thinking of what is at stake in Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, of the very magnitude of our task, of certain "inadequacies" in them, of something that remains to be said. If our Imagination cannot actually present it to us, our Reason is aware of this failure, and this, in itself, is a sign that there is something new to be thought outside of them. There is a "sign" today in that Reason that wants to think the failure of the Imagination,
whose tonality might best be described, following Kant, as a "vigorous melancholy". Thought cannot end with these thinkers for whom we have the greatest respect. If we can only say it in their words, we have a responsibility, an obligation, to this nothing (nothing that we can describe or even think) that is excluded by them to allow them to represent it. If we can only say it in their words, our thought must be spurred on by the possibility that nothing further will happen. Nothing will happen: we must get ready to think it. We are already both too soon and too late (the exigency of any thesis, any judgement). It has already been represented and it never can be.

\[2 \text{ The Critique of Judgement, op. cit., § 29.}\]
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