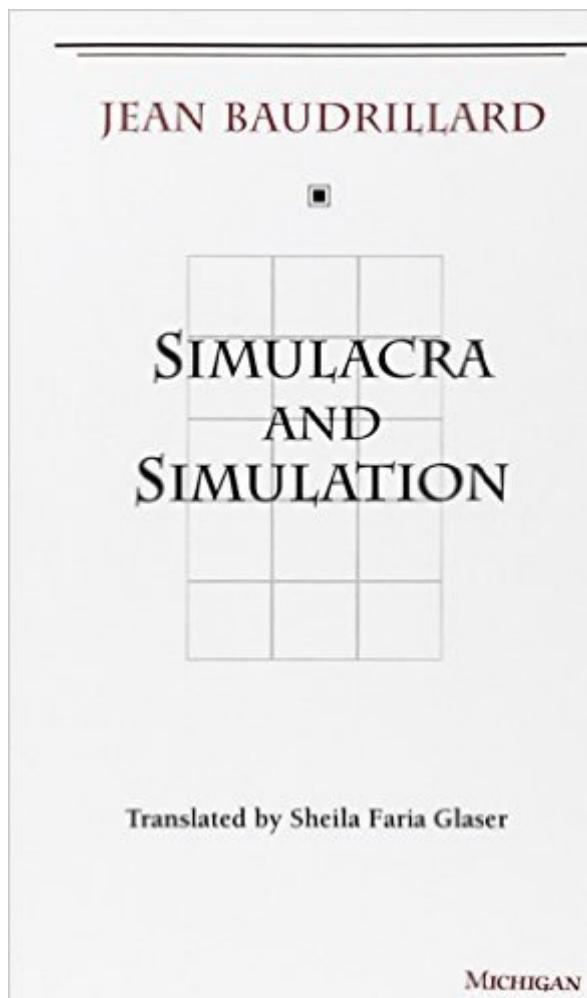


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Simulacra And Simulation (The Body, In Theory: Histories Of Cultural Materialism)



Synopsis

The first full-length translation in English of an essential work of postmodernist thought

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is by no means an easy text to read. For those unfamiliar with postmodern tropes-and especially those who have never read Baudrillard before-this text may seem especially daunting. I recommend that these people start with the essay entitled 'Simulacra and Science Fiction'. In this essay, Baudrillard details the three orders of simulacra: the first, natural simulacra, are operatic, founded on images, and aim at the restoration of "the ideal institution of nature made in God's image"; the second order are both productive and operative, based on energy, and work toward "a continuous globalization and expansion [and] an indefinite liberation of energy"; the third order, the simulacra of simulation, are "founded on information [and] total operationality, hyperreality, [and the] aim of total control" (121). The differences between the various simulacra exist in the distance between the real and the imaginary exhibited by each order. This illuminating interstice provides the locus for projecting critical activity and idealism. The first order maximizes the projection, allowing the utopia to stand in direct opposition to the real. The second order reduces this projection. Baudrillard describes it as a hyper-productive universe in which "science fiction adds the multiplication of its own possibilities" (122). As all previous models implode, the third order of simulacra witnesses the complete disappearance of the projection between reality and the imaginary as it becomes reabsorbed in simulation. To Baudrillard, this is the world in which we live:

no more real, no more imaginary, no more fiction, just an endless regression of lost meaning with no foundation, or rather an endless precession of simulacra.

I read this little book years ago as part of my grad studies. It is amazing to me how accurate many of Baudrillard's observations have proven to be. It's as if he were some kind of Prophet (LOL!). But, seriously, the loss of Reality is embodied in many different ways. Our use of the Internet is the number one example. Many forms of Virtual reality such as Reality TV, Chatrooms, Avatars, Online dating, even the Fashion industry qualify. As for Desert of the Real, let me give you this example: Just 2 weeks ago I arranged a flight and never had to make any contact with anyone. I ordered my ticket online, printed it out, took it to a self-check-in machine, punched in my numbers, got a boarding pass, and walked on the plane. I have to admit I missed the human contact. But such is the post-Modern condition. Of course, there were people on the plane, but no individual attention, only contact as a group. Another example: Video games, email, Demographics, credit cards and direct deposit, Hollywood (originator of the Virtual), Celebrity culture (ex: Why is it that when they use certain people in a commercial they include the phrase "Real people, not actors"? Aren't actors real?), Paparazzi, the Digital revolution. I could go on listing the many Virtual worlds we inhabit, but suffice it to say they are self-generating! If you plan on reading this book, do yourself a favor and forget the Matrix (great movie, though). This is very real, Hyper-Real. Read Marxist ideology and some Existentialist "Being and Nothingness" Sartre, after reading Plato and Kant, and you won't be so put off by the big ideas. Baudrillard describes a world based on economic relationships only, and as such it is a system of objects, based on nothing but Material gains.

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