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Tactical Media and DIY Anarchy

Fake Love vs. the Fake Empire

Despite coming from relatively different backgrounds, Jean Baudrillard and Chuck Klosterman both cover similar topics in their respective essays, "Simulacra and Simulations" and "This is Emo." Both essays expound on the idea of the modern cultural transition from reality to a kind of "hyper-realism," or "hyper-simulation" primarily caused by a fixation on the media. Baudrillard's analysis of this phenomenon is more general than Klosterman's. Klosterman focuses on the effect of this universal mentality on the state of human romantic relationships, while Baudrillard offers a more discursive commentary on the development of "hyper-simulation." However, the two separate essays are fundamentally similar and understanding "Simulacra and Simulations" makes comprehension of "This is Emo" much more fluid and extensive. ✓

Baudrillard begins his essay with an interpretation about a Borges short story. He poses the analogy of an Empire that builds a map designed to cover its territory with absolute precision, a rigidly accurate reproduction of every miniscule aspect of the terrain and architecture. In doing so, however, the Empire inadvertently depletes its own existence of meaning and validity. When the Empire crumbles, the map will still exist, a testament to "the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction." (Baudrillard) This distinction that Baudrillard makes- the transformation of the reality of the Empire to a stylized abstraction- is important to note. Does the terrain in question define the features

of the map, or does the map impose structure on the terrain? Did the Empire ever really exist, or was it the map that was a material reality, inflexible and transcendent?

This example of dissociation and simulation relates directly to Klosterman's critique in that it speaks about the detachment most people feel from reality. Movies, commercials, TV shows, and other medias provide an endlessly more glamorous and interesting vista of possibility and reality. Klosterman maintains that humans will never be satisfied with their immediate surroundings so long as they have been exposed to the ideologies present in the mass media, just as that just as the map defined what the Empire should look like. Humans will never give "reality," so to speak, a fighting chance. Klosterman argues that instead humans are constantly engaged in "defining" and "structuring" their realities based on the simulations they see, and therefore never sincerely experience reality at all.

→ Different than B.
More like Deleuze

Baudrillard's entire essay aims to explain the true automation that takes place through the process of simulation. One example he gives in an attempt to portray the intertwined mechanism of reality versus simulation is that of a "simulated" robbery. If an individual goes through all the "motions" of a robbery without having the intent to steal money or without even having bullets in your weapon, his "simulated" motions will result in real, physical consequences. Citizens at the bank will be just as terrified as if you had a loaded gun- a cop will shoot at you- someone might even die from a heart attack because of their fear. So even if the robbery is "simulated," and the "robber" is simply going through a system of meaningless actions, the end result is significant, measurable, and "real." The "robber" isolates each individual action so that it stands detached from the whole, devoid of meaning and context, and yet, even though the means are simulated



and an illusion, the end illusion is no longer distinguishable as a simulation. (Baudrillard)

The significance of this distinction is that simulation becomes the prototype and simulation becomes the reality. The reality ceases to have any original truth to it, because it is based on the simulation, on a premeditated, linear structure of how things are supposed to go rather than a "natural" progression of events. Klosterman's analysis of relationships is parallel to Baudrillard's ideas about simulation. Relationships do not progress naturally; in fact, there is no "natural" anymore. Natural could have been anything, any given progression of events. However, what is "natural" has been defined by a series of movie plots and love songs. "Natural" is now based on a simulation.

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A bulk of Klosterman's essay is comprised of him complaining about his typical dating procedures. Klosterman maintains that most adults try to embody the archetypical traits and characteristics they see in the media rather than presenting who they actually are to a potential partner. Conversely, an individual is prone to judge and react to the person they are involved with based on the pre-conceived idea of how they should be (based on media ideologies) rather than who they actually are. Since both people are simultaneously acting out individual scripts, a "real" relationship is impossible- the resulting relationship is a simulation. The two individuals are two well-oiled components of a streamlined machine. As Klosterman puts it, both individuals will constantly "measure [their] relationship against the prospect of fake love" (Klosterman 3).

A specific example of this that Klosterman notes is a woman he dated who was obsessed with Coldplay. Coldplay, Klosterman claims, is an embodiment of the concept of fake love. The lyrics and music are manufactured for the purpose of entertainment and financial gain, and so the very emotion that is constructed by the music is manufactured

and “fake.” However, similar to Baudrillard’s example of a “simulated” bank robbery, the end result of the manufactured components is an emotion, feeling or image that looks and feels like “real” love, or rather, dictates what “real love” should look and feel like. Like Baudrillard’s robbery, the typical relationship consists of a series of “genetic miniaturizations.” Klosterman doesn’t understand why girls aren’t interested in him, as his relationships are full of things like “ ‘talking on the phone,’ and ‘nuzzling under umbrellas’ and ‘eating pancakes.’” Klosterman’s choice of diction and grammar here is so important because he literally puts quotation marks around the actions themselves. The actions have very little meaning, substance or reality to them. Rather, it is the idea the actions aim to express, the idea of “making pancakes,” that is definite and monolithic. When Klosterman analyzes his relationships, he acknowledges that they are chock full of these motions. However, just as with social networking (or Baudrillard’s map), the event itself is not real. Only the representation- the idea- is real. The simulation provides an aesthetically perfect framework for all endeavors to be based upon.

Baudrillard says people go to Disney world to gain a false sense of “leaving” reality, when in fact there is no reality to be left. Disney world is the counter-simulation, the vacuum that distracts humans from the void. Klosterman says the same about people. “Real people are trying to act like fake people, so real people are no less fake. Every comparison has become impractical” (Klosterman 4). Baudrillard too states that there is no “real” to go back to. There is no comparison, because there is no difference- the simulation and “reality” have become one seamless entity.

The simulation serves as a reference point where there is none. Klosterman discusses the complexities and contradictions about silence and communication in

relationships. Klosterman says that all intellectual dialogue is contrived, derived from a “vault” of trite, flippant phrases. By the fourth date, he has nothing more to say to the woman. Unfortunately, “real” relationships are not tied up into a concise ninety-three minute segment. Klosterman laments that the relationship will go on for months or years, eventually leading to silent mornings eating cereal. Silence, Klosterman says, is “only supposed to happen as a manifestation of supreme actualization, where both parties are so at peace with their emotional connection that it cannot be expressed through the rudimentary tools of the lexicon.” However, humans are trained to think of silence as a bad thing, an avoidable negative. Silence means the magic is gone. In art, Klosterman states, silence is “never an extension having nothing to say; not talking always means something.” In life, silence is terrifying- because of movies and television, humans feel something is inherently wrong with silence in a relationship. This relates to the simulation model in that our construction of reality is distorted by the influence of a false ideal. (Klosterman 9)

Despite using different rhetoric’s and language to get their separate points across, Klosterman and Baudrillard are similar in their overall cynicism and dismissal of a “real” even existing. Both seek to deconstruct the everyday mechanisms of life and explain why reality has become eerily stylized. Ultimately, both are resigned to the reality of simulation- Klosterman acknowledges he is resigned to the depressing reality of fake love, even ironically stating that fifteen years from the publication of his book he will be married and expected to withdraw his statements about fake love, and that at that time he will take it all back. He’ll be lying, though. “It’s the truth now, and it will be in the future. And while [he’s] not exactly happy about that truth, it doesn’t make [him] sad either”

(Klosterman 1). This resignation closely mirrors Baudrillard's sentiment. Additionally, Klosterman talks about how the best relationship he ever had was one that came the closest to adhering to false standards. People compared his girlfriend and him to Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen, and they would watch the movie, giggling and exclaiming, "That's us!" (Klosterman 5) Klosterman was most satisfied with a relationship mirroring and representing a fictional one. This is the final similarity between Klosterman and Baudrillard. Not only do both acknowledge the hopelessness of the simulation model, both consciously thrive in it. Overall, Klosterman and Baudrillard both seem to miserably bask in the reality where emotions and sincerity are obsolete.

*This is much more clear/concise
Much improved.
Well-applied, specifically so.
Very well written.
I now understand and am convinced
by the connection you
are making*

A/A/A+

Works Cited

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