

Faking It: The Orgasmic Moment of New(s)

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New(s). A stress on the new-ness of the news. Or perhaps this is the only factor in the consideration of what enters the specific realm that is news – which is impossible if we even consider taking Umberto Eco slightly seriously in his claim of “what is new is old.” But then in this realm, the one of news, Eco would have been completely missing the point: his statement presupposes there is a difference, perhaps in the form of transience, between new and old.¹ In fact, a consideration of news in terms of the new-ness is always already completely missing the point: news by definition is always completely new. It is a pure impossibility for news to be old; in this sense, the phrase ‘old news’ is purely

¹ Then again, Eco could have been right on the mark: when we consider that ‘what is new is old’, what is old is also new. This suggests that there is absolutely no difference between the old and the new in the first place. Another possibility is that new and old are irreducibly different and have nothing to do with each other at all and hence are always already completely separated.

ironic: without original, the copy is infinitely re-producible.² The aura is not lost, for this would presuppose that it could be found somewhere (Benjamin would claim in the original)³ but is always already found in the re-production: the perfect re-production, the simulacra, is the perfect tension point between the (n)either lost (n)or found of this irreducible aura.

The original⁴ that we all cling onto with desperation – the event that the news claims to make a link to – is based on a pre-supposition that there is a link, no matter how faint, between the event and the news; which is the link between the representation and the Real. In fact, the greater one is suspicious of the link between the event and the news, the greater the myth of the link itself is re-enforced: the more one attempts to examine the inaccuracies of news (it can only be inaccurate if there is an original to match it against), even if the aim is to debunk news – perhaps especially if it aims to debunk for that would require an

² Although in its irony there lies a certain truth as well: once the representation is reported (in the form of printed and read, announced or as an image on the screen), it is always already old as well. In this sense, the concepts of new and old collapse: new(s) as being (n)either new (n)or old; suspended somewhere between time whilst always also being in time.

³ Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Hannah Arendt. (Ed.). *Illuminations*, 1968. The Benjaminian aura that surrounds the original work is hinged on the existence of an original (even as a concept). Since news has no original referent – the event is always already completely separate from its representation that is news – the aura can never be found (unless you want to posit that it resides in the event but that has nothing to do with the news).

Perhaps a more interesting consideration would be that since there is no referent, news is always already original. In that case, an aura always surrounds all news; a simulated original, or an original simulacrum.

⁴ For without 'original' – or at least the concept of it even if we no longer believe in such a thing – the concept of surplus value cannot exist. For what surplus can you be generating from perfect copies? The only generation that is taking place is multiplications of the same thing. This then problematises the very legitimization of production itself (Lyotard), and the very nature of capitalism.

even greater belief that there lies a truth beneath the surface – the more it serves to strengthen the pre-supposition that the news and the event have a connection:

Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference.⁵

An event: an occurrence that happens within a time and space: it is precisely the material reality of the occurrence that confers on it the status of an event. Hence the effects of an event are felt only by the participants that have a material existence at the point in time.⁶ News: a representation of the event; through language. Or more precisely, through language as a structure – not so much one where there is a distinction between images and words, not so much language as signification, but instead language as significance, effects, form.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1990: 6.

⁶ Only if one was in New York at 0900 on 11 September, 2001, would one have an actual idea of why the two towers of the World Trade Centre are no longer standing. For the rest of us, it is mere faith – which is by definition blind – that there were two planes in the sky that crashed into them. Not that it really matters for even if it were actually a humming bird, who would believe you anymore? And in a perverse way, they would not be wrong to call you a liar: truth lies in the realm of the news and in its networks – the world merely reconfirms what happens in the news. Reality television is an oxymoron – TV is real.

Any attempt to think news through language as representation – through meaning – would be futile, for that would once again fall into the trap of comparison and verification; the lure of representation itself – the seduction of the reader. It is the very act of re-presentation that permanently and totally divorces news from the event: now we are treading into the realm of mediation.⁷

The Composition of the Sign

The question here is what is being composed? For the deferment and difference that is always already of the Sign, suggests that perhaps the composition is one that lies not within but without, a creation that lies on the outside but which then determines – perhaps through the reader more than anything else, for after all the meaning of a particular sign, be it a word or anything else, requires a form of impregnation by the receiver – a particular meaning.

Is there any choice but to assume a meaning in a sign? Only through the simulation, or 'belief' if you prefer (there is really no difference in the two

⁷ An interesting consideration would be whether mediation is the complete break from material reality, in the sense of re-presentation (news in this case) having nothing to do with the event (so then news is a form of reality and the event is the Real as Lacan posits), or perhaps more radically, if the re-presentation is another material reality in itself (news is Real; who cares about the event).

Or perhaps, as Lucretius posits, the simulacra is the skin in which communication takes place, where each act of communication is new and unique, unknowable in advance, and without any repeatability. In this sense, all questions of whether the representation is accurate or even matters is moot – it all takes place in and within the simulacra – every representation is a unique act of communication, accurate in and to itself only. Lucretius' concept of the simulacra was brought to my attention by both Siegfried Zielenski and Pierre Alferi at summer seminars of the European Graduate School, August 2005 and June 2006 respectively.

concepts), of an inherent meaning in the sign can any transference continue. For even if we acknowledge that all communication is merely the circulation of empty signifiers, the impregnation of the signified (no matter how unconnected it may be to the other person's signified) still ensures that the sign carries with it a meaning. Only through this simulation of a meaning is circulation possible – even if one posits that the sign circulates itself, this would not be possible if it were completely empty.

Since it is from without (even if meaning is from the reader, (s)he is external to the signification), this suggests that the meaning is a result, a consequence of forces – its signification is a result of the significance of various forces (convention, context, etc) which then means that inherently, the sign remains empty; a pure signifier leading to yet another signifier.

The interesting element though lies in the fact that the empty signifier then sucks the Other (in the form of the signified, which takes the form of the Absolute Other here) into it, in order to define an existence, but essentially remains an empty signifier, awaiting impregnation with meaning from the reader. A void: always full and empty or perhaps (n)either full (n)or empty.⁸

⁸ For true potentiality must always already contain the possibility of non-potentiality. Otherwise there would be absolutely no difference between potentiality and actualization – they would merely be different ends of the same spectrum. For a meditation on the concept of 'potentiality' please read Giorgio Agamben. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, 1990.

Welcome to the Desert of the Real

So now we are left with the carcass of the sign.

Consider this. Think of the sign as an image, always mediated through the mind. Already absent, unless we continue to hark back to the fabled horse⁹ – which resides somewhere – a locus of meaning, which we tap into: a fatality of logocentrism if nothing else.

Let us try reversing the equation for a moment. Instead of privileging the signified, which is never mediated – a pure concept attached to a signifier – let us focus on the signifier for a while. Considering that we are born into the game of signification – signifiers precede us – there is an endless flow of signifiers around us (or at least an endless number of potential combinations). All that we seek to do is to play with the possible combinations, and from them seek a form of understanding. But the attached signified does not come from nowhere; we are taught these possible combinations. Perhaps 'cat' is only known to the mind due to the existing signifier to which we are disciplined into accepting the mental concept. The inescapable disciplinary mechanisms that abound into molding a

⁹ Plato. "The Allegory of the Cave" in *The Republic*, Book VII, 1991.

'good subject':¹⁰ the game of forming corresponding signified to the signifier is the site where the game is played.

Perhaps we should stop looking at the signifier and the signified as separate entities. Either that, or completely separate entities, with nothing to do with each other (accept for the fact that they affect each other) and which one reacts to.¹¹ But the moment we attach any form of signified to the signifier, we have just created another signifier; perhaps within but also without, for the next encounter with the same signifier is no longer the same. Hence the difference between the signifier and signified has imploded already: always the same but never coming together; a strange possible impossibility.

Consider this now. If we enter into the realm of the signifier with our own signified, are we even looking at the same signifiers as anyone else? Are they instead always already personalized signifiers at play? Or more like resurrected signifiers, for the signifier that we all speak of is already long dead. No one is actually referring to it anymore; its time has passed. But through the cremation of the signifier, it has been transfigured by the homage of the user, who breathes

¹⁰ Louis Althusser. "Ideology and the State" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 1977.

¹¹ Perhaps 'with' is more appropriate. It depends on whether there is a corresponding reaction from the signifier. In some way the signifier does not change – the conventions remain – 'cat' remains spelt 'cat' regardless of how we react to the letters. But on the other hand, the moment our conceptualization of a cat changes, the signifier 'cat' no longer is the same from the moment we look at the letters again – is that not in effect a change in the signifier as the signified has already preceded it.

life into it. It is no longer the same signifier but always already her own. This is the necromancy of language.¹²

But that brings about the same question of how the sign then works in a community. For if we were all working on our own sign systems, then communication itself would be impossible. That is only true if we assume that communication is the mere exchange of information, and that we are all working on the same plane. But one must always consider that the sign is always already simulated.

In the Kahlil Gibran tale, 'God's fool', a man mistakes all the signs in a foreign land for a princely welcome when they are actually attempting to incarcerate him. He then meets a man from his own country and when he cried to the man,

"Friend! Friend! Where are we? What city of the heart's desire is this? What race of lavish hosts? – who feast the chance guest in their palaces, whose princes companion him, whose king hangs a token upon his breast and opens to him the hospitality of a city

¹² It is a process of necromancy because whenever reading takes place – impregnation of a signifier with the signified – the sign rises from the ashes of an empty signifier. Each time, an entirely new sign is born; the phoenix never regenerates the same way twice.

descended from heaven.” To which, “he who was also from the desert replied not. He only smiled and slightly shook his head.”¹³

The other man from the desert replied not, not because he did not want to shatter an illusion, but rather because he understood that communication itself is always an illusion. The simulation of an exchange, in order that the system of surplus value¹⁴ can remain in place – undoubtedly a surplus of nothingness, but nonetheless allowing the concept to remain – for surplus value is the validation of communication: it falls in the realm of performativity,¹⁵ where every idea and resulting action is justified and legitimized through its ability to generate surplus.

In the same manner, the sender-receiver relationship is always simulated: brought – perhaps ‘thought’ is the word here – into existence by the hyperreality of the sign. In order to validate its own existence, the sign has to maintain its exchangeability. And because the sign is infinitely exchangeable, the difference between the Real and reality no longer exist. The Real is reality and reality is now Real. And information is the conduit in which this game is played out.¹⁶

¹³ Kahlil Gibran. “God’s Fool” in *A Treasury of Wisdom*, 2003: 7-9.

¹⁴ ‘Surplus value’ in this article borrows heavily from Karl Marx’s conception of a value that is not only added through the process of production but more precisely circulated back into that very process itself. In other words, it is a self-reproducing circle where the process produces its own surplus which allows for further production.

¹⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984.

¹⁶ This would be the true radicality of Stanley Fish’s “imagined communities.” It is not that one has to imagine that one is in a community (in the sense of having some form of similarity to the next person, or more precisely to the Other), but

Net-work Games

It is precisely this divorce with the Real (or perfect merging if you prefer) that allows news to enter the reality of the viewer. In this sense, it is not so much the desert of the real, but the fact is that the desert is real. It is precisely the vastness and the emptiness of the sign that allows the news to suture us into the reality of news itself.

In theatre, one creates the bare essentials of a fantasy and the audience suspends their disbelief for that fantasy to work Whereas in TV, the illusion is meticulously created ... more of a window than a fourth wall ... and you are sutured into that reality.¹⁷

rather that the idea of community itself is imagined.

¹⁷ Kenny Png. Personal Communication. (September 24, 2003).

Perhaps there is a game of expectations being played out here. When one attends a play, there is no expectation of a link to the Real. On the other hand, certain programs on television make that claim –news programs for instance. In order to uphold the claim, the viewer has to partake in the very suspension of reality that theatre speaks so freely of – that is disguised by news – in order to mask the fact that the reality that is created here has naught to do with the Real.

Perhaps this is the very fantasy that is created, not so much to due to our inability to cope with the Real, but rather the fact that since the Real is circulated by reality – which is as real as the Real itself – the untenable Real might as well not exist.

Perhaps the media works as they are “simulators of proximity”:¹⁸ TV, The Web, even newspapers and the like, simulate the event into the consciousness of the reader such that the reader feels that (s)he is part of the event itself. In this manner, the medium is no longer separate from the participants in the exchange – the medium is very much a part of this exchange: this is the radicality of McLuhan’s claim that “the medium is the message.”¹⁹ This brings us back to the idea of presence – the idea of the center and of the logos – and the need to establish an absolute through a meta-narrative. Through this simulated closeness, the reader can then decide on the credibility of the journalist, the accuracy of the text; in some sense the closer the reader feels to the event, or the Object if you prefer, the more accurate the representation seems to be. The game of finding and keeping the centre – the source of power – is on. It is almost a physical centre this time: the centering of the reader within the text, a merging of sorts, or at least the blurring of boundaries, taking place. Perhaps even a case of the reader reading herself; a perceived interpretation into which reality is spun. We might go as far as to say that the reader becomes the journalist that has written the paper: an extreme game of collapsing the binaries, the implosion of

¹⁸ Paul Virilio. *Ground Zero*, 2002: 41.

¹⁹ The only problem with McLuhan was that he was not radical enough in his claim. Technology is not the extension of the human but rather the exact opposite: the human is now the extension of technology. We are no longer natural beings (whether we ever have been is a separate question completely). We are artificial beings that have been transformed by technology.

This idea was brought to my attention by Wolfgang Schirmacher in his seminar on the Homo Generator at a summer seminar of the European Graduate School, August 2005.

the author-reader dichotomy here. We already see the poles of fact and fiction collapse: in some way, fiction precedes fact sometimes: how else do we explain Bill Nighly's rendition of *Christmas is All Around Us* being in the running for Christmas song of the year 2003?²⁰

Is proximity the very reason that 'live' broadcasts are so popular? We might go as far as saying that if a news broadcast is 'live' then suddenly there is an element of increased credibility and even popularity. In that sense the 1987 European cup match between Real Madrid and Napoli,²¹ which took place in an empty stadium, retains the very presence of a match. The 'live' transmission allows us to catch the purity of the image; we did not have to be there to be there. Perhaps this pure image allows us to be more a part of the match than being at the stadium itself; the eye of the camera – the 'live' feed – brings you closer to the match than your own eye could ever have.²²

²⁰ Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, & Duncan Kenworthy. (Producers). & Richard Curtis. (Director.). *Love Actually*, 2003.

In *Love Actually*, Bill Nighly's character, Billy Mack's *Christmas is All Around Us* was in the running for Christmas song of the year. In the weeks after the movie was released, the same song had a run in the UK charts and was in contention for the very same award. This would not be quite so unusual if not for the fact that in the movie itself, Billy Mack admits that the song is merely a hack job – a re-hash of an old hit that was done for the sole purpose of reviving a dead career. In this instance, it has transposed a fictional music career into the realm of reality. Billy Mack, meet Bill Nighly. Who ever said we could tell them apart to begin with?

²¹ Real Madrid vs Napoli (16.09.1987). The match was played in an empty stadium as part of a UEFA punishment on Real Madrid for crowd trouble. It was televised 'live'.

²² In many ways, this is the true sense of tele-vision itself: the medium that brings your eye to the vision itself – a true distance vision. This is in contrast to cinema, in which it is the kino of the camera that is seeing for you. In television, it is your own eye that is still seeing: this is the simulacra where the communication between the viewer and the 'event' takes place.

A meditation on tele-vision and cinema can be found at Siegfried Zielenski. *Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Entr'actes in History*, 1999.

But would not one be able to verify news by going back to an event itself? For one, the most common way in which we verify news is by checking with another news source – for instance, if doubting news coverage by CNN, one might check BBC or FOX. However, this merely amounts to verifying representation via representation. More interestingly, verification would be an impossibility for the event is always already past, occurring within a specific time and space; once past it is irretrievable.

News exists in and through itself. The truth of news is that news establishes truths and verifies truths in and through news; a pure Latourian Actant-Network²³ at play – a truth is established by its position with reference to other established ‘truths’ within the structure of a discourse. In many ways, this is an extension of Gödel’s theorem which “showed that in a logical system as abundant as arithmetic, there must be at least one proposition whose truth or falsity is undecidable. No proof can possibly exist determining the truth or falsity of the undecidable statement in the language of the system within which the statement was formulated.”²⁴ Truths are hence determined only by the other

²³ In Bruno Latour’s Actant-Network, networks are not so much mere structures for the transmission of information but rather one that engages in the very nature of the exchange itself. Hence the network, for instance a network of humans that are exchanging some form of information, is itself affected and altered by the exchange – the network itself is live and dynamic.

²⁴ This succinct description of Godel’s theorem was taken from Avital Ronell. *The Test Drive*, 2005: 57.

In the set that is news, the event (or more precisely the link between the news and the event) is the assumption that holds the set up; in other words, this assumed link is the null-set.

accepted – assumed – truths within the network, within the structure, within the discourse in which it operates, circulates: in this way the truth of news functions within its own tautological structure of ‘news verifies its own news.’

The motto for the *New York Times* – “All the news that’s fit to print” – reveals precisely the secret of the news: that it is only news because the newspapers deem it fit to be so. By extension, it is only true because the news deems it to be true: there is a perfect echo of this in the words of Pope John Paul II when he uttered, “If it doesn’t happen on television, it doesn’t happen.”²⁵

The event is no longer necessary: news is completely independent of the event. If this were not the case, public relations would be a completely non-existent entity: bomb hoaxes (which are essentially the same as PR acts – the creation of news out of a pseudo-event, in the absence of an event) would not be possible, even as a concept. In fact, an event merely hampers news; sans event, news is completely limitless – an actual bomb can be defused; a hoax on the other hand has no beginning and hence no end.

²⁵ Pope John Paul II famously uttered this phrase in response to a question by an American Cardinal who asked whether a television channel from his city could record the event. “John Paul II’s Relation with TV in Focus” in *Zenit: The World Seen from Rome*. <http://www.zenit.org/article-15731?l=english>.

It is in this light that the truth of news comes to the fore – news operates in the realm of the symbolic, using its own currency of exchange; a pure system of exchange.

(In) The Realm of the Senses²⁶

Journalism: the paradox of truth where the impossibility of representation is precisely the very condition for the seduction of the reader, into the game of meaning – the lure of the signified proving irresistible.

In the realm of the symbolic, there is a permanent and never-ending exchange of signs, a constant ecstasy of communication where the entire point of communication is communication itself. This is an exchange is hinged on the complete lack of depth of the sign, an exchange that revolves around the empty signifier. This is the secret of journalism, its perverse core that must never be revealed.

²⁶ Is the name *Empire of the Senses* (*L'Empire des Sens*) more appropriate in some way? For is one ever in control of one's senses, in the sense of a Being-in-itself experiencing stimulus? Or perhaps the senses are precisely what shape the Being: the senses lord over the Being; the senses are precisely the empire that the Being responds to. Not that either option is mutually exclusive: after all we can also be in control over what lords over us; otherwise masochism as such would be impossible.

We are horrified not when there are abnormalities to our way of life as the reaction is always to either oppose and destroy it, which is found in the old logic of the state of Singapore with regard to homosexuality (out-law it), or to subsume it under the dominant logic, which is the current strategy of the state towards homosexuality (allow it under particular circumstances because of the 'pink dollar' that is generated). Capitalism is never concerned with morals and values but operates under the logic of reproduction and surplus value (who cares who you sleep with, as long as you generate surplus value). Surplus value is no longer limited to merely (re)producing another person; we have long ago already commodified persons, which by definition mean that they are exchangeable: can't produce another person, replace her/ him with something else. As long as there is (re)production everything is fine. This is why 'human resource' management is the new buzz word in all organizations: we have come to realize that humans are resources (just manage their desires, and everything else falls into place). This is the exact logic which is found in the saying, "The happiest slave is one who thinks he is free."²⁷

The horror instead is generated when the very logic in which we operate on is revealed. This is why the real hero of *The Matrix* is not Neo, but Agent Smith: Smith reveals that the system operates on (re)production, and by taking it

²⁷Constantly uttered by Kenny Png in response to Trent Reznor's *Happiness in Slavery*.

to an extreme (reproducing infinitely), it was him and not Neo who over-loaded the system: it is upon this over-loading of any system (by taking it to its own logical extremes), that the Real jumps out at us. In the same vein, the September 11th incident had such a profound effect on us, not because it could actually happen (we've always known it to be possible), but because we were horrified when our fantasies – and we have played out the fantasy of planes crashing into buildings hundreds of times in Hollywood movies – came true: when the gap is bridged, when fantasy is fulfilled, there is no jouissance but instead a nightmare situation (literally of the Real jumping out at us).

This reminds one of an old Soviet-Communist joke. When Stalin was speaking at a party conference, a cadre spoke up against him. A second cadre then said, "How can you oppose Comrade Stalin; no one is ever allowed to do so." Whilst it is clear that the first cadre will be shot, it is even more certain that the second one will be shot first. This is simply due to the fact that the second cadre performed an even greater sin, which was the revelation of the very logic of the Stalinist system: this is the secret that must never be uttered.

The empty signifier is the guarantee that the news is never devoid of an audience. This is because there will never be a lack of a signified – in fact, the very opposite will always occur – there is always an excess of the signified at

play. The empty signifier ensures that the perfect sign – a master-signifier onto which everything can be attached – is in place such that news will always remain completely and utterly meaningless.

This is precisely the seduction of the reader that is at play: the reader will always already be part of the news itself, constantly giving it meaning which ensures that the concept of news not having an audience is an impossibility. In fact, the greater the reader searches for depth in news (that is the search for a 'correct' meaning or interpretation), the greater the seductive power of news. In this sense, all traditional forms of resistance to the mass media – media literacy, mass media studies, visual literacy, and the like – are all doomed from the beginning to failure. In fact, what they are doing is propagating the seduction to an even greater extent (once again, searching for inaccuracies and paradoxes only strengthens the myth that there is a meaning, a depth, to this entire game in the first place).

This is the secret of the news: it is founded on nothing, but it is this nothingness that allows the readers to suck themselves into the news, by giving it some form of meaning. And every attempt to bridge that gap, by attempting to search for the meaning within the news, is always already the production of meaning not of the news, but for news – the effect of which is simply, more news.

After all, one must never forget that “the great stars or seductresses never dazzle because of their talent or intelligence, but because of their absence.”²⁸

Resistance is Futile – You Will be Assimilated²⁹

A game of surfaces requires resistance on the surface. This is the only hope that is left for the Real. In essence, the Real can only be saved by taking reality itself to its extremes.

The game of surfaces is a game of appearances.

In this sense, an approach of naivety has to be taken when encountered by the seductive power of news, as any attempt at sophistication – that is to delve into depth – is an approach into the realm of meaning, which is the triumph of seduction. This is a game of pure exchange of signs – empty signs – completely devoid of any meaning whatsoever. Any approach that attempts at verification or attribution of meaning pre-supposes a link to a Real event already:

²⁸ Jean Baudrillard. *Seduction*, 1990: 96.

²⁹ This is an ironic statement, for it is not resistance that is futile but rather that futility lies in resistance itself. It is precisely through resistance that one is assimilated: this was always the strategy of the Borg and precisely why the Borg is the eternal enemy of the Enterprise – it recognizes the very nature of humans (resistance) and uses it to its advantage.

The first use of this phrase in the Star Trek context was in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1990) episode “The Best of Both Worlds” [Michael Piller, Writer]. It was made more popular as the tagline of the film *Star Trek: First Contact*. (1996).

this is the triumph of reality and the seduction by news already. News should be treated as completely and utterly true – what one reads (or sees in the form of visuals) is precisely what is all there is. This is a strategy of complete non-verification (in fact, the concept of verification is a non-concept).

Only in the complete and total willingness to be seduced by news can seduction be resisted. For seduction requires a resistance, a momentary struggle, of thought, of doubt, of consideration: this ensures that there is the continual exchange of signs that takes place as there is no escaping the necessity of this exchange for seduction to occur. In fact, it is precisely this continual exchange – by way of an attempt to search for some measure of meaning – that allows it to be meaningless. The nightmare for the Foucaultian dispositif is not the resistance of the subject – this is precisely what is expected – but rather the complete surrender of the subject. In that manner, all attempts at the ‘disciplinary mechanism’ become absolutely futile. The nightmare of the Law is not resistance – in fact that is always already assumed and taken into account for – but complete compliance. After all, what good are punishments aimed at restricting subjectivity if that subjectivity were already long give up? This is why politicians always decry apathy: instead of giving them full reign to do whatever they wished (which one might assume was the fantasy of every politician, every person in power), it would take away all their legitimacy. Following this logic, the

receiver must be willing to engage in as many signifieds as possible with each signifier that is sent her/ his way – a true and utter bowing to the master-signifier. In this way, instead of playing off accounts of the Iraq War from CNN, BBC, Fox and Al-Jazeera, against each other, we should willingly and completely believe all accounts that are fed to us. It is only in this way that both the US and Iraq (Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf's³⁰ version of the war should be treated with the same gravity) have won the war: the total amount of dead in the war is both 17 billion and none at all.

It is in this light that we see both Jayson Blair and Stephen Glass as the most important figures to the establishments of news and journalism. They are manifestations of attempts at the creation of an Other – here taking the form of 'unethical journalism' (or more precisely a 'what-not-to-do') – in order to strengthen the premise that there is a proper ethical form of journalism: this is precisely the tactic of paralogy; dissension for performativity.³¹ As though the re-presentation of events between pages was never a practice in creative writing itself: newspapers, a place where fiction and fact merge; as if the two were ever

³⁰ Mohamed Saeed al-Sahhaf was the Iraqi Information Minister from 2001 till the colonization of Iraq in 2003. Previously he held the post of Foreign Minister.

³¹ Disensus is the tactic that forces the system to continually adjust and re-adjust in order that it is always producing at maximum performativity. In this manner, both Blair and Glass function as simulated critique in order to strengthen the underlying premise of the industry.

Jean-Francois Lyotard. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

distinguishable. This is where Walter Lippmann is spot on when he says, “that we take as fact, is not what is, but what it supposes to be the fact.”³²

The crucifixions of Blair and Glass are merely a distraction, a detraction, from the actual issue itself: it is not the person who immorally perverts images; the images themselves are profoundly immoral.³³

If you consider this from the point of view of productivity, this does absolutely no good at all. But it is precisely productivity and efficiency that we must avoid for that still operates under a logic of surplus – the acceptance of a meaning so that surplus value can be generated (productive thinking merely to produce more). But only in this absolute belief in all news – this playing off of truths with truths (within the realm of news) – is there the potentiality for a True Event to emerge: one that is completely un-calculable, totally unknowable a priori.³⁴

³² Walter Lippmann. “The Picture in Our Heads” in *Public Opinion*, 1922: 7.

³³ “We believe that they immorally pervert images. Not so. They alone are conscious of the profound immorality of images ...” – Baudrillard on Saddam Hussein and Bush Sr.

This can be found in Jean Baudrillard. *The Gulf War did not take place*, 1995:47.

³⁴ The concept of a completely new event occurring comes from Alain Badiou. The Badiouian event is one that is completely new, and hence it is impossible to even begin discussing consequences and usage. The wonderful element of it lies in it being completely unknowable (until its occurrence). However it is not that the event comes from a transcendental source, one that is completely external to the current situation: Badiou’s event is a ‘new world’ within the ‘existing world’. Hence the event is the moment in which a new possibility is opened within all the existing possibilities: always already there but only known the moment in which it occurs.

For a more comprehensive discussion of his thesis, see Alain Badiou. *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return of Philosophy*, 2003.

A strategy of over-loading the signifier with every signified possible; overloading news with the very meaning that it propagates, the lack of meaning itself. The only approach to a lack of meaning is to take the very (lack of) meaning itself seriously – true subversion through hyper-conformity.

The revenge of the receiver against the domination of the master-signifier. The only fear of the master-signifier: that you actually take it seriously.³⁵

A wonderful over-whelming of reality by reality itself. A saving of the Real precisely by abandoning it.

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³⁵ It is precisely the gap which is maintained by a skepticism – which is precisely the search for accuracy and truth, in the sense of matching the ‘correct’ signified to the signifier (although this is expressed as a utopian situation, this is the goal and hence a conceptual possibility) – that allows the dominion by the master-signifier. If the fantasy of the master-signifier (that of full and complete possibility) is taken to the extreme, that is its fantasy is fulfilled – brought to its logical conclusion – there is a nightmare situation for the master-signifier; overloading precisely by taking its potentiality to its extreme by completely abandoning the concept of a ‘correct’ signified, to one where every signified is a possibility and hence always already (potentially) correct.

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