

Power and Resistance  
in the Age of Informationalization

by

Margaret Ellen Farrar

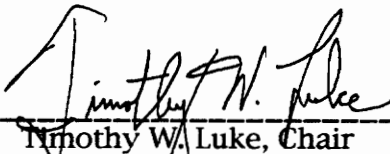
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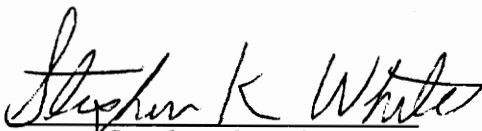
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# Power and Resistance in the Age of Informationalization

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(ABSTRACT)

In this paper I will examine the ways that power operates and resistance might be possible under political, social, and cultural conditions which are increasingly manufactured and mediated by information technologies. More specifically, I will focus on how the work of Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard might be used to better understand the political problems and potentialities of informationalization. Some of the questions I address here are: What exactly are we speaking of when we call this the "information age?" Has it replaced or merely subsumed the older, industrialized era? What are some of the effects of informationalization on the subject, knowledge, and "reality?" Can Foucault's analytics of power (which describes the birth of the modern era) be extended to the problematic of informational society? Can Baudrillard's acidic descriptions of informationalized consumerism be used for progressive political projects? Finally, I will discuss what the role of the intellectual might be in informationalization. By examining the conditions of informationalization, I hope that we can better understand the theoretical and political implications of Foucault's and Baudrillard's work.

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## Introduction

In this paper I will examine the ways that power operates and resistance is possible under political, social, and cultural conditions which are increasingly manufactured and mediated by information technologies. More specifically, I will focus on how the work of Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard might be used to better understand the political problems and potentialities of informationalization.

"Power" and "resistance" are crucial concerns for the field of political theory, and they are also what William Connolly has elaborated as "essentially contested concepts." An essentially contested concept, first defined by W.B. Gallie, is one where

...the concept involved is *appraisive* in that the state of affairs it describes is a valued achievement, where the practice described is *internally complex* in that its characterization involves reference to several dimensions, and when the agreed and contested rules of application are relatively *open*, enabling parties to interpret even those shared rules differently as new and unforeseen situations arise. (Connolly, 1983: 10)

Such concepts, Connolly argues, are not a hindrance but a vital part of social science discourse. That is, the struggles over what constitutes "power" and what counts as "resistance" will never be definitively settled, nor should they be, for they capture the complexity and ambiguity which is an inherent part of social and political life.

Stephen Lukes has provided us with an outline of three dimensions by which power and resistances to power can be analyzed.<sup>1</sup> These dimensions

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<sup>1</sup> John Gaventa utilizes Lukes' three dimensions of power in his study Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian

demonstrate some of the ways that the "who, what, and how" of power are contestable. The first dimension of power is defined as whether or not A is able to exert influence on B and get B to do something s/he ordinarily would not do. We can study this by looking at how often A prevails over B in decision-making arenas with regard to "key issues" (Lukes, 1986: 9), and by showing how A is able to accomplish this by means of higher personal political efficacy, political experience, and/or organizational strength (Gaventa, 1980: 14).

Clearly, while we can certainly point to instances where the first dimension of power operates, we cannot use this as the *only* means of studying power. The first dimension of power is based on a problematic liberal, pluralist notion of politics and the political system. First, it assumes that bona fide political action can only take place in formal decision-making structures, and that these structures are representative (B will be able to air his or her grievances through a system of either direct participation or genuinely representative representation). Second, it assumes that B will be able to recognize his or her grievances, and that s/he will be able to identify A as the source of the problem. As a result of these previous assumptions, an analysis based on the first dimension of power would conclude that political quiescence would be the result of apathy or consensus; if B is able to identify his or her grievances, and has adequate means of making these grievances heard, then if s/he does not act to rectify these grievances this is a conscious choice (Ibid.: 6-7). For example, if people do not agree with the actions of the party in office, they will vote against that party in the next election. Or, if people are upset over the toxic waste dump being sited for their district, they will

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Valley. I will be citing his account of Lukes, as well as Lukes' own introduction to the volume of essays he edited entitled Power.

write their representative or organize a coalition to stop the dump, and either or both of these complaints will be heard and taken into consideration in the decision-making arena.

The second dimension of power incorporates this first dimension, but also argues that "power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision-making process but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues altogether" (Ibid.: 9). Power is recognized as the ability to set the agenda for decision-making by deciding which issues are indeed "key issues" and thus allowing certain groups of people to be heard in the process and silencing others. This dimension of power better accounts for the consistent sidelining of certain concerns and groups of people in the political process. However, as Lukes points out, this second dimension of power also makes a problematic assumption: that B is still able to recognize his or her grievances which are being kept out of the political arena. Thus the situation results in B's political grievances and efforts towards change being frustrated by A's ability to control the "rules of the game," and B's political resistances attempt to alter these rules (Lukes, 1986: 9-10).

Lukes does not argue that these first two types of power do not exist, or that they are not important to the study of power. Rather, they simply do not cover the entire range of power relations, and many of their assumptions are very limited in the actual, everyday workings of power. Lukes asserts that we need a reformulation of power based on a three-dimensional approach: A affects B not only by getting B to act against his or her interests, but also A has the ability and resources to shape or determine what those very interests are (Gaventa, 1980: 12). This three-dimensional approach includes the first two dimensions, but concludes that a lack of resistance against the interests of the powerful might not,



in fact, reflect apathy, consensus, or structural inability to enact significant political change. Rather, Lukes argues, political quiescence might result from the ability of power "to shape and modify desires and beliefs contrary to people's interests [so that] neither revealed preferences nor grievances and inchoate demands will always express them" (Lukes, 1986: 10). The continual marginalization of B's concerns and the persistent valorization of A's interests and values will not lead to increasing *resentiment* and then political action on the part of B, but instead increasing quiescence based on the internalization of the values and norms propagated by A. In order to study this dimension of power, we need to focus less on the institutional mechanisms of power and more on "social myths, language, and symbols" and how they are deployed in the processes and interests of power (Gaventa, 1980: 15).

This third dimension of power is similar, Gaventa tells us, to Gramsci's conception of hegemony, where "the ruling group equates its own interests with the interests of society at large, and this world view is disseminated throughout society" (Eagleton, 1991: 116). The values and norms of the dominant group in society pervade society as a whole, and a social order is constructed

'...in which the individual can govern himself without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society-- but rather, becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement.'  
(Gramsci in Eagleton, 1991: 116)

Hegemony, for Gramsci, is never a static structure or a crystallized set of relations. Using this model, the study of power cannot only focus on formal political structures or other decision-making arenas but must encompass the actions and

ideas present in everyday life: the school, the workplace, the home... everywhere that the "common sense" of the social order is lived out.

Clearly, the kinds of questions raised by Lukes' third dimension of power and Gramsci's definition of hegemonic power are similar in kind to those raised by "power" as theorized by Foucault and Baudrillard. Namely, all of these writers are concerned with the ways in which this kind of power operates (how does it become the common sense of society?), and also how --and if-- one can subvert such power, when it has so entrenched itself in/as reality. There are, however, significant (though debatable) differences between the "power" described by Connolly (as an essentially contested concept), Lukes, and Gramsci, and "power" as it is used by Foucault and Baudrillard. I will briefly outline these differences here, and their implications will be elaborated throughout the thesis.

The issues that divide Foucault and Baudrillard from the first three theorists center on the issues of subjectivity, agency, responsibility, and ultimately the normative claims one can make using the term power. In all of the conceptions of power offered above --from the first dimension of power to hegemony-- there is a causal relationship present, where A (in some way) affects B, and the result is a limiting of B's freedom (or the range of choices available to B) to the advantage of A. In the first dimension of power, it is easy to identify this relationship. Using the concept of hegemony, it is much harder --but there is still present a rather clear idea of a "top down," two-tiered model of power, a noticeable and hierarchical division between the dominators (whose values are inculcated in the rest of society) and the dominated (who internalize the dominator's values). This division is the result of conscious actions of A to further its own interests. By analyzing this division, theorists of power can assign

responsibility to dominant groups who tout their specific (and oppressive) interests as universal values, or to social actors who mis- or abuse their power. As Connolly states, "...the attribution of power to a segment of society functions more as an accusation than as a normatively neutral description of the political process;" for Connolly, power is identified with manipulation, and can be thus differentiated from persuasion, influence, or other actions which carry a more positive normative valuation (Connolly, 1983: 126).

For Foucault and Baudrillard, however, power is much more encompassing; power shapes our subjectivities and rationalities --the conservative and the revolutionary-- through history. With increasing modernization and informationalization, power has found increasingly insidious ways to further entrench itself in our lives, manifesting itself as every configuration of power/knowledge or marketing ploy available. For Foucault and Baudrillard (and to a lesser extent for Gramsci and Gaventa as well), the persons that the above theorists would identify as "dominant groups" are just as caught up in the web of power relations as those who are "dominated." In Foucault's language, those who utilize normalizing or disciplinary techniques have been normalized or disciplined as well. For Baudrillard, those who employ the code have also been programmed by it. It is difficult, then, using this analysis of power to pinpoint "misuse" of power, and therefore to locate responsibility for action. Obviously, the normative "punch" of the word power as articulated by Connolly loses its force when it is considered to be the means by which the whole of modern society is constituted.

However, there are good reasons for employing such a broad notion of power. By whitewashing every aspect of society as a field of power relations or a

field for the operation of the code, Foucault and Baudrillard (in different ways) are able to expose many liberal reformist ideas of universally applicable politics as themselves specific, power-laden, and ultimately dangerous. Foucault and Baudrillard view the rational analyses which taxonomize and assign normative judgments to different kinds of power as quixotic quests in the face of power where no clear taxonomies (of persuasion, manipulation, and influence, etc.) exist, especially with the ever-increasing importance in our lives of the (virtual?) realities of information technologies. Rather than eliminating the model of "dominant interests," one might argue, Foucault and Baudrillard show that there are far more "interests" which ensnare much more of society than we originally supposed.

The differences between these two ways of thinking about power have implications for how we will conceptualize political resistance. In the first and second dimensions of power, resistance is a fairly straightforward term; it is action which seeks to alter either who prevails in decision-making processes, or how those processes are structured. We can include here all conscious action which is directed against the (real or perceived) dominant group. This action can include either collective action (such as strikes, protests, marches, sit-ins), or individual action (such as tax evasion or draft-dodging); individual action may have an aggregate effect which is not consciously pursued by a group.

Once we begin to analyze the third dimension of power, however, political resistance becomes a more complicated issue. Using this model of power, it is not only the decisions which are made or the structures of that process that need to be altered, but the consciousness of the dominated group; the power that is being resisted is that which not only shapes policy or institutions, but people's very

reality. Clearly this idea takes on even greater significance when we turn to Foucault and Baudrillard, where it becomes more difficult to target those "responsible" for various discursive regimes, or mutations of the code. In both the third dimension of power, and in the work of Foucault and Baudrillard, therefore, resistance also includes the analyses and alteration of the ways which communication of social values and norms is shaped and how it is received, contesting taken-for-granted social meanings, and challenging established identities.

The similarities outlined here between Foucault and Baudrillard in opposition to other theorists of power and resistance might be misleading, however; Foucault and Baudrillard differ significantly on many fronts. Therefore, we must address two more significant questions before delving into the rest of this thesis: first, why link Foucault and Baudrillard to each other given their differences; and second, why address them both in the context of informationalization?

The first question is particularly difficult; Foucault and Baudrillard, at first (or even second or third) glance seem to have very little in common, either personally, politically, or theoretically. Foucault, for example, grew up in a comfortably bourgeois environment, where the pursuit of higher education was expected, and luxuries such as servants were the norm (Miller, 1993: 39). Baudrillard's family, on the other hand, were "not even petit bourgeois, or perhaps very lowly petit bourgeois" and he was the first member of his family to attend the university (Baudrillard, 1993: 19). While Foucault was awarded a number of important positions which placed him at the center of the French intellectual scene, Baudrillard was by comparison an outsider, finding his way into

the academy by "an indirect route" and even then achieving only marginal success in academia (Ibid.).

These differences in their family backgrounds and in their careers in French university system are, to some extent, reflected in both men's work. Foucault's work in The History of Sexuality engages and draws upon the realm of the aesthetic to form a politics. Baudrillard, though, has throughout his career maintained a highly suspicious attitude towards the concept of "the aesthetic" and towards "high culture" in general; as he states, "I am conscious of always having had ...an allergy to culture with a big C" (Baudrillard, 1993: 24). Thus while Foucault explores the beginnings of this culture in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, Baudrillard turns his attention to the "transaesthetic" domain of advertising, where the aura that surrounds art and aesthetics is reduced to equally pleasing and equally empty images designed to sell products.

Their work in the political sphere has also been divergent. Both consider themselves to be coming from some sort of leftist perspective, but Foucault has been more politically active than Baudrillard, forming the GIP (Prison Information Group) in order to help prisoners speak out about their experiences in the "justice" system, and frequently lobbying publicly for gay rights. Foucault was dubious about various forms of identity politics because he saw stable identities as potentially precluding creativity and difference, but he consistently rallied for the vocalization of local and partial knowledges and politics from groups of people who had been marginalized by "valid" or "true" discourses. Baudrillard has kept his distance from association with specific political activist groups, and has earned the ire of those on the left by questioning the ultimate premises and purposes of socialism, feminism, environmental groups, and the peace movement;

(Gane, 1991: 143) for Baudrillard, these "are part of the same publicity game" of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1993: 152). However, Baudrillard also states that "[o]ne doesn't have to believe in something to do it" (Ibid.).

Finally, Foucault and Baudrillard are two very different theorists. Throughout his work, Foucault is above all an historian, meticulously poring through dusty tomes to construct alternate narratives of rationality and modernity. The key word here is "construct;" part of Foucault's historical project is to expose the will to knowledge that is present in all such projects, placing him a good distance away from mainstream social scientists. Furthermore, Foucault, very much unlike Baudrillard, was never really interested in semiology as a means of social analysis. He states,

...I believe one's point of reference should not be the great model of language (*langue*) and signs, but that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. (Foucault, 1980b: 114)

For Foucault, all social relations are power relations, because power is the means by which identities, desires, knowledges, and institutions are produced.

In contrast, if we follow the trajectory of Baudrillard's work, we find that his analyses from System of Objects until the present time are very influenced by semiology. As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, Baudrillard critiques Foucault's notion of a constantly "productive" power, and presents his own "model" of power in informationalized society: seductive power, which is now embedded in the hyper-capitalist (ir)rationality of the code. We also see that after 1972, Baudrillard leads us further and further astray from the straight and narrow path of traditional scholarship (and if we are placing Foucault along this path, then it is

a fairly wide trail) and into a theoretical stew consisting of equal parts of poetry, eulogy, and travelogue. In some sense it is almost not fair to either one of them to compare and contrast their work because they are operating in two different registers of social theory.

However, despite these many differences, Foucault and Baudrillard share some important commonalities which allow for dynamic comparisons between them. Both theorists come out of the Marxist tradition, but both also had increasingly ambivalent relationships to Marxism during the courses of their careers. Foucault claims at one point that he "quotes Marx without saying so" as a physicist might quote Einstein or Newton. He states, "It is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx's thought" (Foucault, 1980: 52-3). At the same time, however, Foucault clearly (and intentionally) circumvents --or straightforwardly attacks-- some of the most obvious questions that Marxist historians pose; Foucault's analysis calls into question the concepts of "class," "alienation," and most obvious of all "power" as they have been explored within the Marxist tradition (Lentricchia, 1988: 30).

In his early work, Baudrillard saw his writing as decidedly within the Marxist tradition; his analysis of consumption was a logical twentieth-century extension of Marx's analysis of production. With the publication of Mirror of Production, Baudrillard broke with Marxism and continued his analysis of consumption and power, but this time from the perspective of what he calls "fatal theory." Like Foucault, Baudrillard's analyses of power purposefully ignore Marxist terms and focus instead on power as a relation which does not necessarily imply domination. Thus both Foucault and Baudrillard theorize about power



from a perspective that separates "power" from "capital." Economic relations are implicated in but not necessarily the primary components of power; power is not exercised entirely or even predominantly by those who hold the purse strings. Power relations are present, for both theorists, in every way that our subjectivities are created, through disciplines or through hyperreality.

Following from this, Foucault's and Baudrillard's work problematizes the ambitions of theory and the role of the intellectual, for both men occupy the nebulous position of social critique from a perspective that does not allow handy distinctions between "good" and "bad" or "communicative" versus "instrumental" rationality; according to Foucault and Baudrillard, there are no longer any solid, identifiable criteria by which we can separate one from the other. Although they each present an ominous view of a society that has been increasingly infused with normalizing practices or the code, neither offers a definitive (or even tentative) political solution to stopping the advances of these processes.

From this brief overview, it is easy to see why using Foucault and Baudrillard to address the same problem is an interesting project, but also why it is a difficult one. But why use Baudrillard and Foucault to address informationalization?

To some extent, the answer to this is purely personal: it is a chance for me to reflect on my own formation as a political subject (or object?). I do not remember the whole of my first "political experience" but my mother has helped to fill in the blanks: I was three, the story goes, sitting in front of the television and playing with blocks. The news was on, and my parents watched it, and me, from the sofa. Nixon flashed on the screen, then the newscaster, then Nixon again. I looked up at my mother and asked earnestly, "Where do watergate bugs live?"

The part I remember most clearly is a mental image of some kind of hairy-legged, battery-operated fly. My mother then tried to explain the difference between a "bug," the insect, and a "bug," the listening device, but I had lost interest by then.

This is not merely an exercise in self-exploration, however. To me this story is indicative of the political- cultural conditions in which I was raised, and the political-cultural conditions in which I have acted and will act. First, I have always known the television as the conduit for all political activity for my family and most of the people around us; the television was a one-family town meeting, with my mother and father talking back to those talking at them from the television, or talking to other people about what was on the television. It is an amazingly circular discourse, this television talk, in that it never gets anywhere beyond the living room and it never needs to; all its reality is contained within that 25" screen. There is no need to go out and find or make political reality when you own a TV, because that reality is brought to you every night via the network news in vivid color: Nixon's "silent majority."

Second (and related to this), there has always been some sense of "unreality" that has pervaded my political consciousness; my next (and this time fully formed) political memories are those of Reagan's election and speeches on television; Reagan, who has been referred to by Diane Rubenstein as "the most perfect exemplar of Baudrillard's third-order simulation" (Stearns and Chaloupka, ed., 1992: 65) --that is, a situation where the image hides the absence of a basic reality. The violence that has been done in the name of this image has been, for me, just as unreal: military actions where the conflicts were over before they began, a heroic Ollie North touring the country to speak on patriotism, and Mutually Assured Destruction as a taken-for-granted political strategy.

Finally, being a card-carrying member of the so-called Generation X (post-60s, post-Vietnam, post-Watergate, post-politics), "I" have been the subject of countless studies, soundbites, and speculations regarding the "cynicism" and "apathy" of today's youth (and tomorrow's leaders). Usually this cynicism is analyzed in close correlation with the onslaught of information technologies and the intensified consumer culture which breeds/is bred by them. I see parallels between this cynicism which is present in (or projected onto) my generation and the kind of cynical social theory written by Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard (again, whether that "cynicism" is "actually there" in the text or read into it by others is a matter open to debate). The spiraling simulation, normalization, and hyper-everything that has been characteristic of the 1970s through the 1990s seems to generate no other possible outcome --especially not from those (in the middle class, in a "first-world" country) with the luxury to be cynical.

William Chaloupka uses Peter Sloterdijk's conception of cynicism to analyze power in the nuclear age. Cynicism, Sloterdijk asserts,

'...is enlightened false consciousness. It is that modernized, unhappy unconsciousness, on which enlightenment has labored both successfully and in vain. It has learned its lessons of enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice.' (Sloterdijk in Chaloupka, 1992: 116)

Cynicism in this context also means irony, an acknowledgment of the tenuousness of "reality," political or otherwise. However, I would argue (as do Chaloupka and Sloterdijk) that "cynicism" does not necessarily mean either opportunism or quietism. Perhaps it merely recognizes and attempts to respond to power in its current formation: power which transforms people into objects of study; power which operates on the surface of things; power which defies traditional

interpretations of agency and responsibility; and power which manages to subvert and re-code every kind of political meaning and action. Under such circumstances, the most effective forms of resistance may not be to combat such re-codifications with the Truth, but rather re-codification with re-codification; and not to challenge image with meaning, but rather image with image.

Informationalization has been a crucial component of these new aspects of power. In Chapter One of this thesis, I will explore what is meant by "informationalization" and how it alters the dimensions of our political reality, from economic to cultural (re)production and all spaces (if there are such spaces) in between. In Chapter Two, I will discuss how Foucault's analyses of power might be extended to various aspects of informationalization utilizing his idea of "governmentality": informationalizing procedures of disciplinary power, the increasing production of codes of power-knowledge, the role of the mass media as a new (and perhaps inverted) panopticon, and the ways that we are "subjected" by these phenomena.

In Chapter Three, I will trace Baudrillard's theoretical trajectory as it has paralleled the processes of informationalization, from the system of objects to seduction and simulation. How does informationalization (re)produce the code? Is our present situation of informationalization "transpolitical" as Baudrillard claims? I hope to address some of the possibilities for (and consequences of) utilizing Baudrillard's "fatal theory." Finally, in Chapter Four I want to argue that if we take Foucault's and Baudrillard's work seriously, we must question what position intellectuals (and theory generally) have (if any) in this "new world order." Furthermore, we must ask what this "informationalized" intellectual might resemble, and what forms s/he might take (or is taking). My hope is that by

utilizing the problematic of informationalization, we can better understand the theoretical and political implications of Foucault's and Baudrillard's work; and also that in using Foucault's and Baudrillard's analyses, we can illuminate important impacts of informationalization.

## Chapter One

### Informationalization

Bruce Springsteen sang about "57 Channels And Nothin' On," but we all know that 57 channels will soon look like child's play. In fact, soon we won't be talking about channels at all. Advances in information technologies will enable us to deliver to consumers not hundreds, or even thousands of channels, but something entirely different and endlessly flexible... and do it all in such a way that's so intuitive, and so precise...that the technology behind it will go virtually unnoticed.

--Raymond W. Smith  
Chairman and CEO of Bell Atlantic  
"The Global, Interactive, Human Network"

In surveying much of the literature on informationalization, even the most casual of researchers will be quick to pick up on the two seemingly necessary ingredients of nearly every book written on the subject. The first of these is the important-sounding introduction in which the author solemnly proclaims the dawning of a new era, dubbing it "The Information Age," the "postindustrial society," the "mode of information," or the "mode of communication" (to name only a few). "Something has changed radically," the story goes, "in the way we produce/reproduce/consume/create/recreate/manage/transport/communicate."

The something being discussed is the exponentially increasing importance of "information" in our lives. The second part of the story which is common to the literature is an important-sounding conclusion which provides a normative judgment on whether this "information" is good or bad, whether it enhances or inhibits democratic practices and aspirations.

But what precisely *is* informationalization? What exactly constitutes "information?" Does information refer to new technologies, or specific kinds of new technologies? Can we talk about one sector of the economy as the "information sector," or does informationalization infuse the economy as a whole? Is there a difference between "knowledge-based" fields (such as Malchup proposed in 1962: the fields of education, media, communication, and research libraries and institutes) and informationalization? Will too narrow a definition of informationalization (i.e. informationalization is the material effects of new technologies) exclude important social and political dimensions of the phenomenon? Will too broad a definition (i.e. informationalization is an all-encompassing historical epoch) rob our analysis of any degree of precision and power?

Certainly there is no one correct answer to these questions; however, the way we delineate the parameters of informationalization will determine the course of our study. To begin with, "informationalization" will refer to the emergence of and increasing access to new technologies (especially computer and telecommunication technologies) from the late 1950s to the present, and the corresponding new forms of social, political, and economic organization which have taken place in congruence with but not simply as a result of these technologies. As Timothy Luke writes, informationalization occurs in the means of

...production, consumption, administration, and destruction...when the global impact of mass communications, electronic computerization, cybernetic automation, and rapid transportation beg[ins] to be experienced broadly around the world. (Luke, 1993a: 230)

By not reducing informationalization to any one of these subsets of society -- economic, social, or political-- we acknowledge that one area cannot be severed from the others in order to undertake a neat, causal analysis. Similarly, a multidimensional definition of informationalization can better avoid the traps of technological determinism so often found in history textbooks --or books on the information society ["With the invention of the cotton gin (or in this case, the computer chip)..."] . Rather, we can argue that technology emerges *out of* specific social, cultural, and economic conditions *as well as* creating new conditions.

A first attempt at defining informationalization might look towards the material trends noted in this literature which indicate the growing importance of information. First, there have been large shifts in the nature of employment in the United States workforce from industrial or manufacturing jobs to information-related activities. In the early 1950s, approximately 60% of American workers were employed in traditional manufacturing jobs (car and ship building; the production of steel, rubber, consumer electrical products; and construction). In the 1980s, however, the number of Americans employed in traditional industry jobs was only 15%, and 90% of the new jobs that had been created during that period of time were in information and service sectors of the economy. (Naisbitt, 1990: 65-6) The industrial Midwest became known as the Rust Belt, and the high-tech Sun Belt became the center for economic growth. Although these particular figures are for the United States, other Western, industrialized countries have seen similar changes over the past thirty years.

In addition to a difference in the kinds of jobs people hold is the important difference of what these jobs accomplish. Specifically, the information age is



characterized as such because, as Manuel Castells writes, the "*raw material* [for technological change] *is information, and so is the outcome.*"

What an integrated circuit does is to speed up the processing of information while increasing the complexity and the accuracy of the process. What computers do is to organize the sets of instructions required for the handling of information, and, increasingly, for the generation of new information... What telecommunications does is to transmit information, making possible flows of information exchange and treatment of information... What genetic engineering does is to decipher and, eventually, program the code of living matter... (Castells, 1989: 13)

The third aspect of informationalization is the proliferation of transnational corporations, which have come to dominate the global landscape as entities which supersede national politics, economics, and identity. Through transnational corporations, with their circulation of capital, people, goods, labor, and information, "space" and "time" are meaningless for profits-'round-the-clock and the days of city- or nation-bound industries are long past. "The Sun Never Sets on the Multinational Corporation!" reads an ad for Irving Trust Company (Fuentes and Ehrenreich, 1988: 8), exalting the opportunities that are now at hand for investment in "newly industrialized" countries and invoking the days of the British colonial empire. Transnationals not only depend on the swift circulation of capital and information, however, but they also structure the international division of labor which is vital to the production of information technologies.

Equally important to informationalization is the emphasis on accelerated consumption, especially consumption of information technologies. During the 1980s, individuals, families, schools, and businesses alike were urged to modernize and streamline their operations through the use of personal computers. In Ohio,

for example, the revenues from the state lotteries which were earmarked for inner-city and rural schools were not used to provide much-needed extracurricular programs, childcare facilities, hot lunch programs, or books; rather, they were used to get the schools "on-line" by setting up computer classrooms so that the children would "be prepared the challenges of the 21st century" (that is, assuming they live through this one). Similarly, it became extremely important for young, upwardly-mobile persons in the 1980s to be in "constant contact" through the use of answering machines, cellular phones, and paging systems, so one could be reached "any time, anywhere." (For those who could not afford the real thing, enterprising companies began to produce fake car phones and pagers--plastic boxes that light up, buzz, and ring-- so that people can give the illusion of being "connected.")

Some might object that a study of informationalization seems inherently ethnocentric (specifically Western-centric) and class-centric; after all, the virtual reality created through computers, televisions, and other high-tech gadgetry is a fairly privileged domain. However, what the above description of informationalization should make clear that while informationalization has certainly brought significant changes to the upper echelons of Western cultures and economies, it has altered the lives of those not in the informationalized "cores" as well. In the United States or other Western countries, for example, there are clearly divisions between areas of the country that are "logged on" or "plugged in" (mainly urban centers and middle-class suburban enclaves) and areas which are not. However, the processes and effects of informationalization are not confined to the first. Workers who are still in traditional manufacturing jobs, for example, are just as much a part of the phenomenon of

informationalization as those who create software programs. On the local and personal level, people in every stratum of Western society have probably been affected by instant credit checks or they have been monitored by electronic surveillance systems in stores and in the workplace. At the national level, they may have watched with interest as the latest political elections found their way on to "Larry King Live" and as "their" views have been sampled, coded, computed and presented as public opinion polls in magazines, newspapers, and the nightly news. At the global level, workers from virtually every nation and in all types of employment have been affected by the emergence of transnational corporations, the instant, integrated market which connects New York, London, and Tokyo and which is made possible through information technologies, and the predominance of the American media.

Finally, it should be noted that informationalized society has subsumed the older, industrialized system rather than simply replaced it. What this translates to is that many of the same national and global stratifications present under industrialized capitalism have not somehow been overcome by informationalized cultures and economies; rather, informationalization has in many ways succeeded in further entrenching these divisions, and creating new ones between the information rich and the information poor. Therefore, the access to and effects of informationalization are distributed equally amongst people; for example, Manhattan has more telephones than all of black Africa, and 10 percent of the world's population controls ninety percent of the media channels (Tehrani, 1988: 7). Questions of access --who has the ability to be plugged in and logged on and whose messages they are plugged into or logged onto-- are significant issues. Furthermore, the proliferation of new technologies has not produced an

electronically mediated potential utopia, although the most extreme optimists -- usually spokespersons for informational industries-- will make this claim. In books like Megatrends 2000, for example, informationalization means "an extraordinary number of well-paying, challenging jobs...and the real potential for everyone to do well" (Naisbitt, 1990: 48). One has only to look at the differences in pay, job stability, and benefits between a computer programmer and a data entry clerk, let alone the global divisions of labor made possible in part through information technologies, to debunk this notion.

How do people frequently evaluate the political and economic potentialities of this information age? When tabulating the "goods" of this new era, writers frequently identify increased productivity, the potential for direct democracy, and possibilities for communicating with a diversity of people and cultures. Conversely, some argue that the new technologies may also cause massive unemployment, constant and thorough state or corporate surveillance, and global homogenization through cultural imperialism. Will teledemocracy bring power back to the people? Will computerized data banks conjure up Orwell's nightmare vision of an omniscient, omnipresent state? The answer (inevitably) is that these new modes of production (reproduction, consumption, creation, recreation, management, transportation, or communication) always have the potential to do both.

Informationalization, then, according to most accounts, can be either liberating or controlling, democratic or totalitarian, depending on either what is contained in or who controls the new technologies. Furthermore, these authors conclude, there is no simple way to ensure the potentially desirable outcomes of these processes, or prevent the potentially disastrous results. *Who* controls the

new technologies, and *what* is communicated through them, are the central issues of most analyses. However, taxonomizing technologies and then assessing their normative value --ascribing to either a technophilic or technophobic understanding of the phenomena-- is only one method of analyzing (what we will call for sake of convenience) informationalization, and perhaps a very limited method at that. Castells writes,

Historical optimism and moralistic pessimism are both equally simplistic messages of technological determinism, be it the liberation of the individual from the constraints of the locale, or the alienation of social life disintegrating in the anonymity of the suburban sprawl. (Castells, 1989: 1)

If we do not wish to subscribe to technological determinism, we must formulate a definition of the phenomenon which includes but is not limited to the indices of informationalization noted above. Several authors, including Manuel Castells (The Informational City) and David Harvey (The Condition of Postmodernity), have attempted to map out these new conditions developing in information-based societies in the late twentieth century. Castells argues that the city (and by extension, the nation, the world) is no longer primarily organized around "places" (demarcated territories with geographical boundaries), but rather around "flows," or

...the interrelationship by means of communication flows... [where] the linkages of the intraorganizational network are the defining linkages of the new spatial logic. (Castells, 1989: 169)

In many respects, the flows made possible through informationalization have created more pronounced stratifications --not only among the "information rich"

and the "information poor," but between intellectual and manual labor, where "the core centers of corporate organizations are the only truly indispensable components of the system, with most other workers ...being potential candidates for automation" (Ibid.: 30). In addition to being replaced by automatons, workers face other precarious employment conditions as companies seek to down-size the number of truly indispensable workers in favor of part-time, temporary, and sub-contracted labor.

With the dissolving of the space of places and the preeminence of flows, Castells argues, comes the simultaneous dissipation of local histories and indigenous communities. Transnational corporations can and want to avoid these things in order to bypass traditional structures of social, economic, and political control (Ibid.: 349). In their place (by being no place at all), transnationals establish "asymmetrical networks of exchanges which do not depend on the characteristics of any specific locale for the fulfillment of their fundamental goals" (Ibid.: 348).

Castells claims that the economic process of the restructuring of capitalism and technological and organizational transformations that constitute the informational society are not one and the same, though they did occur around the same time period and intersect in many different ways. The socio-economic system of capitalism has significantly affected which kinds of technologies were advanced and how they have been employed. At the same time, however, the emergent technologies have helped to shape production, exchange, and consumption. For all intensive purposes, then, these processes are

...distinguishable only analytically, because while informationalism has now been decisively shaped by the restructuring process, restructuring could have never been accomplished ...without the

unleashing of the technological and organizational potential of information. (Ibid.: 29)

In other words, technology is never separate from the power relations it is born out of and into; because it is largely developed and deployed in a capitalist system, it is bound up in the hierarchical and oppressive tenets of that system. Informationalization is the matrix where the social, political, and economic aspects of these new technologies intersect.

Like Manuel Castells, David Harvey associates these transformations in labor organization and management to transformations in the capitalist system. It should be noted that Harvey disagrees with using "informationalization" or "informationalism" as a category of analysis, at least in its version which claims that political conditions have changed "...because the technical and social conditions of communication have changed" (Harvey, 1989: 49). Harvey claims that "informationalization" used in this way obscures the more fundamental transformations in the circulation of capital. However, as I have argued above, informationalization in this thesis is resultant from and contributes to these changes in the functioning of capital. Many aspects of Harvey's theses of "flexible accumulation" (just-in-time production, labor processes, and consumption) and time and space compression would not be possible without informational technologies.

Harvey argues that while the basic tenets of capitalism have remained intact (i.e., profit maximization as its *raison d'être*), the means by which capitalism has sought to achieve its ends have changed dramatically. Contrasting it to the period he calls "Fordism," Harvey charts out a regime of "flexible accumulation" that he claims characterizes the period from approximately 1973 to the present.

For Harvey, flexible accumulation (or any other "regime of accumulation") is not merely an economic system but a complex of "...habits, political practices, and cultural forms that allow a ...capitalist system to function coherently" (Harvey, 1989: 122). It is an entire mode of "living and thinking and feeling life" which allows capitalism to continuously convert labor power into profitability (Gramsci in Harvey, 1989: 126).

According to Harvey, Fordism was characterized by big capital, big government, and big labor, and a fairly stable understanding of the relationships between the three: all sought to advance the project of standardization of both production and consumption, the standardization of both the subject and the object (Ibid.: 141). However, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the rigidity of Fordism was challenged by a number of factors, among them increasing competition from the Western European and Japanese markets; burgeoning entitlement costs; and new members of the workforce (women and African-Americans) who contested the exclusionary structure of the unions (Ibid.: 141-73).

Capitalism's response to the resulting decreases in productivity and profitability brought on by these different elements was to adopt the capacity for managing the increasingly dynamic conditions of the global economy: *flexibility*, "with regards to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption" (Ibid.: 147). The proliferation of both temporary agencies, "homework," and garment industry sweatshops in the U.S. (and other Western nations) in the 1980's are only one example of this new found "flexibility."

Both Castells and Harvey attempt to link these new mutations of capitalism with new cultural and political formations; specifically, they argue that



through either flexibility or flows the nation-state can no longer be identified as the center of "power." Capital, and/or power, have extended beyond the borders of the city and nation. As Harvey asserts, the increasing coordination of the world financial system "has emerged to some degree at the expense of the power of the nation-state" (Ibid.: 164). Castells argues that the nebulous "flows" that steer production and consumption make it much more difficult for the sources and abuses of power to be identified, because while "[p]eople live in places, power rules through flows." He writes,

There is no tangible oppression, no identifiable enemy, no center of power that can be held responsible for specific social issues. Even the issues themselves become unclear... (Castells, 1989: 349)

One of the results of this contradiction between places and flows (and/or the withering away of the nation-state) has been increasing tribalization, Castells states, where groups try to reassert their sense of identity, history, and place in reaction to the flows which seek to efface them. These identities are not asserted as citizens of a nation-state, or as members of a certain class, but rather are based on common language, ethnicity, or religion. Unfortunately, Castells notes, local tribalization often occurs at the expense of broader-scale political action (Ibid.: 350).

Harvey and Castells both offer ambitious (and consequently vague and potentially totalizing) political resistances to power that operates either through flexibility or flows. In the last pages of his book, Castells calls for the construction of an "alternative space of flows," where groups could both reclaim their histories and spaces, while utilizing information technologies to establish "networks" and "strategic alliances" (Ibid.: 352-3). Presumably, this would mean

utilizing informational technologies such as local cable stations, citizen-band radio, and personal computers to challenge the dominant flows of power and information, though Castells does not attempt to outline how this might happen.

Harvey argues that the flexibility, decenteredness, and immateriality of capitalism in the 1970s through the 1980s has produced theory and politics which are, in Harvey's eyes, equally fragmented and ephemeral. For Harvey, the only solution is a reclamation of historical materialism and the Enlightenment project, which would seek to "launch a counter-attack of ethics against aesthetics, of a project of Becoming rather than Being, and to search for unity within difference" (Harvey, 1989: 359).

Although Harvey and Castells successfully outline some of the ways that the economic and technological transformations in the last part of the twentieth century call for and have produced new forms of political action, their arguments produce as many questions as they answer (which is not necessarily a bad thing). In the case of Castells, it is unclear how "flows" have affected what Lukes referred to as the third face of power, the constitution of people's very realities, and how this might help or inhibit the construction of an "alternative space of flows." Examining Harvey's argument, it is unclear how the Enlightenment project can be jump-started if it (like what he names "postmodernity") was just as bounded in historical circumstances (such as the entity of the nation-state) now past.

In order to address some of these issues and further define what we have called informationalization, we need to expand our conception of power beyond the capitalist mode of production described by Castells and Harvey. As Mark Poster states, informationalization "...impose[s] a new relation between science

and technology, between the state and the individual, between the individual and the community, between *authority* and the law, between family members, between the consumer and the retailer" (Poster, 1990: 14). These relations are partially but by no means completely structured by capitalism alone. Somehow, power (with the technology mentioned in Raymond Smith's speech) is different in the age of information: we are no longer talking about "channels at all" but something that has the potential to be endlessly flexible, more precise, and less conspicuous than previous configurations of power.

To be sure, some of the changes brought on by informationalization are directly related to a capitalist system; the "information rich," after all, are frequently the financially well-off and the politically influential. For example, the proliferation of multinational corporations and the hyper-commodity fetishism made more possible through television, radio, and electronic billboards. Informationalization is not confined to a market *for* information technologies as noted earlier (though the quantum leaps that are made in computer technology make it easy for companies to market their up-to-the-minute models); new markets are established *using* information technologies as well. The most obvious of these is the television ad --fifty-seven or more channels that have air time to sell. The trend has not just been a multiplication of advertisements, though, but a multiplication of specialized consumptive identities and realities-- a multiplication of Lukes' third face of power. Through the informational networks of banks, stores, and credit card companies, marketing experts use technologies to either map or predict consumer profiles. As Timothy Luke writes,

...with the emergence of informational society, the logic of the market increasingly pervades the total reproduction of society,

establishing the technical basis for creating a highly developed 'market culture.' (Luke, 1989: 12)

Raymond Smith, our friendly Bell Atlantic CEO, confirms this with pride:

Information systems enable a company to continuously monitor customer behavior, process the information, and deliver the right products and prices right about the time customers themselves realize that's just what they're looking for! (Smith, 1993: 694)

Thus grocery stores now issue "preferred customer cards" that enable analysts to create data banks which measure the types of products individual consumers purchase, and the frequency of their trips to the store. The stores (under the guise of better and more personal customer service) will send their customers friendly letters encouraging them to purchase certain items: "Our records show that you may be running low on product X about now, so here is a handy coupon so that you can stock up!"

What is at stake here is not simply the "right to privacy" issues that often get raised when confronted with these technologies (Raymond Smith is also quick to point out that these systems must be "used responsibly"), but the very constitutions of our selves as market-monitored, market-driven subjects. It is not only the technologies which have changed over the last forty years; rather, our entire system of signification and the very constitution of our being have been radically altered as well.

Therefore "power," like informationalization, begs a multidimensional definition. For as information is itself transformed into a flexible, intuitive, precise and (for these reasons) highly valued commodity, informationalization also exemplifies what Foucault has put forward as the power/knowledge problematic,

where "man" is both a subject and an object of knowledge. Information is, in part, knowledge which is codified and digitized --from knowledge that is already codified into contestable binaries of true and false, male and female, nature and culture, etc. The ambiguities that are disciplined but still present in language are erased through digitization, and it becomes ever easier to collect information on, group together, and rank individuals. The demand for and production of information as power further inscribes scientific and economic values on these discursive fields. In this nexus of relations, "[t]here can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 93).

Marshall McLuhan anticipated some of these effects of informationalization in his book Understanding Media. McLuhan's catch-phrase, "the medium is the message" was an attempt to chart some of the transformations in the sense perception of subjects in an informationalized society. He states,

...[T]he personal and social consequences of any medium --that is, of any extension of ourselves-- result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology... [T]he 'message' of any medium or technology is the change in scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs. (McLuhan, 1964: 23-4)

McLuhan contends that regardless of the content or the controllers of the new technology, the technology affects us by changing our capacities and categories for gauging the world. New technologies extend and alter our perceptive abilities --a far more subtle and insidious effect than the "content" of any one message. Thus McLuhan can poke fun at the person who will say with complete conviction: "I don't pay any attention to advertisements!" The effects of the ad, McLuhan argues, "do not occur at the level of opinions and concepts,

but instead alter sense ratios or patterns of perception, steadily and without resistance" (Ibid.: 33).

McLuhan addressed some of the most pressing concerns for those studying the effects of informationalization, including its effects on theory. Celeste Olalquiaga commends McLuhan for "not trying to impose a cohesive, linear narrative" (Olalquiaga, 1992: xv) --a la Harvey-- on a period that has been increasingly characterized by the disjointed pastiche of digital sampling and television ads, and whose structure is no longer compatible with modernist conceptions of time and space. Through electronic media, "...we have extended our central nervous system in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (McLuhan, 1964: 45).

To some extent, Poster followed in McLuhan's analysis of "the medium" with his book The Mode of Information. For Poster, like McLuhan, the "*configurations* of information exchange alter significantly the network of social relations, they restructure those relations and the subjects they constitute" (Poster, 1990: 8). However, Poster contests, McLuhan is only a starting point for our analysis of informationalization. New technologies do not only transform the sensory apparatus of the subject; rather, they contribute to the subject's complete destabilization where "...the body is no longer an effective limit of the subject's position" (Ibid.: 15). Although we are still embodied creatures, our "bodies" also include the corpus of knowledge that is produced in conjunction with each individual (as consumer, employee, student, criminal...), which is circulated and dispensed through information technologies.

The extension of bodies and the collapsing of time and space occurs at the level of the individual subject and on a global level as well. A recent ad for MCI

illustrates this: A woman appears at different places along a stretch of beach, apparently without moving, "I can be here, there... I can be two, three places at once!" Of course her body cannot, but with fiberoptic cables carrying pictures and messages to a variety of virtualized "locations," there is virtually no delay in transmitting information and no limit to the number of places she can "be." Her screen image is projected into (at least) a million different spaces.

In an informationalized society, then, space becomes (as Paul Virilio argues) speed. Through airwaves, cables, and satellite dishes, location is superseded by motion; "[t]erritory has lost its significance in favor of the projectile" (Virilio, 1986: 133). The political consequences of this are that the world becomes simultaneity rather than materiality, and there is literally no space, no distance left for hesitation. Power in this context becomes not an ability to claim territory, but an ability to master time: "...to govern would be *no more than* to foresee, simulate, memorize the simulations" (Ibid.: 141).

Just as informationalization has recast the ways in which we conceptualize space and time, it has also problematized the boundaries between "man" and machine. Donna Haraway attempts to chart this transformation with her image of the cyborg, the hybrid creature which illustrates how, in the late twentieth century, we have "...made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed" (Haraway, 1991: 152). The factory which is increasingly populated by automatons is part of, but only one part of, this transmogrification; we can include as well (and especially) genetic engineering, "artificial" insemination and surrogate motherhood, virtual reality programs and the increasing number of portable technologies that are nearly appendages (bionic parts?) for the affluent (the

Walkman, the Discman, the Newton, the pager...). "Other" kinds of cyborgs are those people (many times women in "third world" countries) who work to produce these objects. In all of these, subjects not only use the technologies but are created out of them, either literally or in the demarcation of their identities. The cyborg illustrates another consequence of informationalization: the confusion between (re)production and consumption. As Poster notes, new technologies such as photocopying, audio and videotapes, and computer disks, "make every consumer a producer" (Poster, 1990: 73). With informationalization, the concepts of the "original" and the "authentic" lose their meaning. The cyborg has political consequences for subjects (objects?) in the age of information. For the cyborg, there is no recourse to the natural, to an "essential" identity or conviction by which power can be subverted, because there is no "essential" identity by which power operates. The "nature" of power, like the "natural" body, is an impossibility. The cyborg must utilize means other than nature myths to piece together a politics.

With our changing conceptions of space and time and "men" and machines, politics which rely on the "space of places" or "nature and origins" become extremely problematic. In order to further examine the ways in which politics can be realized given these transformations, we will concentrate on two theorists who may be able to address the effects of power in what we have named the informational society: Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard.



## Chapter Two

### Foucault and Informationalization: Power in the Post-Panopticon?

Maybe the most certain of philosophical problems is the problem of the present time, and of what we are, in this very moment.  
(Foucault, 1983b: 216)

Although Foucault never explicitly made reference to informationalization, the central questions of his theoretical project may be directly applicable to (and arguably crucial to) our understanding of power in the information age. In his work on the institutions of clinical medicine, psychiatry, prisons, and sexuality, Foucault repeatedly addressed two separate but overlapping problems: first, the different processes through which human beings are made into subjects via informationalizing technologies; and second, how specific types of power relations have operated in the West and how these relations have expanded, diminished, or transformed from the pre-Enlightenment era to the twentieth century. For Foucault, neither "power" nor "the subject" exist in any transcendental, pure form; each exists only in specific, historical contexts. As we have seen in the first chapter, both "subjectivity(ies)" and "power" have mutated yet again through the conditions of informationalization, a complex web of new technologies, economic, and cultural formations. Can Foucault's explorations into the formation of the modern subject in industrializing society be extended to the study of the subject in an informationalized society? Or (as Baudrillard claims), is Foucault himself a fossil of modernity? In this chapter, I want to explore the possibilities for using Foucault's framework in the study of informationalization.

Some of Foucault's contributions to the project of studying power in the information age can be found in Discipline and Punish, where he uses the model of the panopticon to illustrate the manifestations of power in a disciplinary society. Prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Foucault argues, power relations were exercised through the violence and spectacle that were part of sovereignty. To be on the "wrong side" of power was to somehow be seen as a threat to the sovereign, to the body of the king, and the result of such an offense was public torture or death. At this time, the power of the sovereign could be regarded as the power of deduction: the ability of the state to extract goods, service, money, and even life from its subjects (Foucault, 1984: 259). However, with the advent of the Enlightenment (where knowledge for man and about man were advanced as the means of breaking the chains of religion and tradition), and of capitalism (where "docile bodies" were needed to constitute a population of workers), the old forms of sovereign power were less effective, or further from the realm of what could be thought. New discursive regimes, specifically liberal humanism, took the place of "the divine right of kings." New institutions which could accommodate the burgeoning population were created in order to better organize, administer, and moderate sectors of society such as education, health, government, and work. Thus power became a function not of deduction, but of production, of knowledge, goods, and identities. Disciplines --the categories of thought established for accumulating knowledge about man, and the specific means of training the body for productivity and efficiency-- were born.

Discipline operates through surveillance, record-keeping, and normalization; it categorizes and hierarchizes individuals according to their deviance from an accepted standard of (for example) intelligence, health, sanity,

or productivity. In other words, disciplinary power operates through the creation of various categories of knowledge, and the subsequent coding, storing, and retrieval of this information. Through these procedures, power-knowledge codes of "rational" and "true" thought and behavior are created. The creation and use of information marks the normal and the deviant; in schools, factories, doctor's offices, etc., it

...applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. (Foucault, 1983b: 212)

The threat that the individual poses to the social order is no longer a threat to the sovereign, but rather is a threat to *society*, which is itself defined as a population that accepts and enforces certain norms.

The ultimate metaphor for this form of power is the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's prison design which Foucault appropriates as the conceptual mechanism by which disciplines exercise power. The objective of the panopticon, and of disciplinary society in general, is to exercise the greatest amount of control at the least cost; it is an economy and a code of power. Through constant surveillance (or the appearance of constant surveillance), the observer "defines the norm, disciplines the negative term, and observes the changes from negative to positive performance" (Poster, 1990: 90). It is unimportant whether or not the observer is actually watching; the insidious, pervasive power of the panopticon is that eventually the one who is being watched will take to watching him or herself when he or she has been properly "disciplined."

Foucault makes clear that disciplinary society is not based on a monolithic and comprehensive logic that originates at the peak of some single pyramidal hierarchy of powerful groups or individuals; there is not a single structure of information which normalizes individuals. Rather, disciplinary society was and/or is a set of fragmented, diversified practices that fulfill specific needs in specific places. Discursive regimes are not produced and communicated through a single conduit of information; instead these regimes are multi-media affairs: many different informations and informationalizings. Power in this situation is

...a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another... and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method. (Foucault, 1977a: 138)

However, Foucault's ideas about power and the subject shifted somewhat after his work in Discipline and Punish. "Power is not discipline," he states. "Discipline is a possible procedure of power" (Foucault, 1984: 380). In the essay "Governmentality," Foucault attempts to extend the framework he developed in the 1970s to show how discipline, sovereignty, security, and the law can be combined to form various configurations of government (Gordon, 1991: 20). For Foucault, "governmentality" is not a specific function of the state; in fact, he contends that the state might be the least useful way of addressing the issue, a "mythicized abstraction" that distorts our perception of how power operates (Foucault, 1983a: 103).<sup>1</sup> Governmentality is instead an "ensemble" of tactics

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault is not, however, simply oblivious to the state as a coercive institution. For example, he criticizes Marxists for giving central importance to the State because then they "...must possess equivalent politico-military forces and hence must constitute themselves as a party, organized internally in the same way as a State apparatus..." The consequence of this is that the revolutionary movement seeks the

employed so that "the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed" (Foucault, 1983b: 221). What power entails, then, is not the ability to (en)force particular methods or patterns of behavior onto people as "discipline" implies. It is not a question of *imposing* but of *disposing*, *deposing*, or *composing* things, "that is, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using the laws themselves as tactics" (Foucault, 1983a: 95).

Finally, Foucault argues that rather than a strictly disciplinary society, we now live in a time characterized by security, or "the 'holding out' of the state over an indefinite span of time" (Gordon, 1991: 19). Much like the power described by Paul Virilio in the previous chapter, security

...deals in a series of possible and probable events; it evaluates through calculations of comparable cost; it prescribes not by absolute binary demarcation between the permitted and the forbidden, but by the specification of an optimal mean with a tolerable breadth of variation. (Ibid.: 20)

Security utilizes all the tactics of power previously outlined by Foucault: there is not a "'replacement' of one form of government with another, but rather a triangle, sovereignty--discipline--government" (Foucault, 1983a: 102). While sovereign power is concerned with territory, and disciplinary power works on the body of the individual, security now operates on the ensemble of the population (Gordon, 1991: 35).

In some ways, the society of security so vividly painted by Foucault --one of constant and precise surveillance; exponentially-increasing tables of data that track and modify our characters from birth; presided over not by Big Brother, but

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same centralization of power as those presently in control. (Foucault, 1980: 59-60)

by many "little brothers," dispersed and decentered powers that cannot always be traced to a single source-- might also be an accurate description of power in the information age. Mark Poster, for example, uses Foucault's analysis to this end in The Mode of Information. Foucault's account of the the classifying and ordering of subjects through the use of disciplinary administrative methods, Poster argues, is only further entrenched by the development of new technologies that can accomplish this with a greatly expanded scope and in far less time. With the development of databases that record, reduce, and rank all sorts of information about individuals, Poster reports, "[t]oday's 'circuits of communication' ...constitute a Superpanopticon, a system of surveillance without walls, windows, towers, or guards" (Poster, 1990: 93).

For Poster, the possibilities for surveillance and normalization offered through advanced information technologies are infinite and therefore extremely dangerous. Poster's analysis is accurate to the extent that one can look at the instant, electronic communications that are possible (and probable) between banks, credit card companies, schools, and the state, communications which can track and direct people's lives, and at a deeper level, create subjects through the prevailing configurations of power/knowledge: the debtor, the defaulter, the failure, the criminal. Through informationalization, it is even more likely that each individual (especially those who deviate in some way from the established norm) will become a "case" which "...at one in the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power" (Foucault, 1977a: 191). The informational society, according to Poster, is one in which Foucault's account of a more thorough and vigilant scrutiny becomes "more and more

rational and economic between productive activities, resources of communication, and the play of power relations" (Foucault, 1983b: 219).

Another way that we can see disciplinary power operating in the information age is through the normalizing power of mass media which, despite much ado about cable channel proliferation, broadcasts largely homogeneous pictures of the norms to which individuals should aspire. Unsurprisingly (as most of the television and movies seen globally are coming out of New York and Hollywood), the kinds of actions and identities scripted by these media are products (and producers) of subjectivities disciplined through the codes of Western knowledge, health, sexuality, and economy. The media serve as extensions of various panoptic institutions, which "...frame and reframe, define and redefine, articulate and rearticulate the demands of subjectivity in the prevailing order of power" (Luke, 1990: 221).

However, this reading of Foucault's concept of power as completely congruent with informationalization ignores certain elements which are crucial to the functioning of discipline; elements which have been significantly altered in the processes of informationalization: geographic space and linear time. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault explicitly recognizes the conditions and effects of geographic space and linear time in the operation of discipline. His entire narrative of (time)tables, grids, schedules, examinations, and record-keeping is one of "the spatialization of men" (Foucault, 1977a: 148). These spaces are controlled through the compiling, categorizing, and certification of varied informations; they constitute a three-dimensional set of practices which act upon the body of the individual to increase docility and efficiency. Through discipline,

A sort of anatomo-chronological schema of behavior is defined [and] time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power...Disciplinary control does not consist simply in teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures; it imposes the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body, which is its condition of efficiency and speed. (Foucault, 1977a: 152)

In a society based on the structures of discipline, actions (of bodies) are conferred upon other actions (of bodies) in a manner that is sequential, integrated, and directed towards a terminal, stable endpoint; power is exercised through time which is viewed as "evolutive" (Foucault, 1977a: 160). In this way, disciplinary power is both individualizing and totalizing; it corrects the deviances of the single subject to match the standards of the population which are articulated through narratives of progress, from the individual story of a psychiatrist's patient "getting well" to nation-wide tales of ever-increasing prosperity and democracy. These narratives depend on linear and causal histories, both personal and social.

In an informational society, though, all of these necessary ingredients of discipline are problematized. First, many of the dimensional spaces watched over by either a central or multiple panoptic eye(s) where disciplinary procedures are enacted have been reorganized into flatness, without the traditional dimensions of depth, volume, or a fixed axis. For example, the "workplace" --in Foucault's schema an ordered, segmented and hierarchical architecture which is apart from (but not unrelated to) the other disciplinary architecture of the "home"-- is giving way in part to the much-touted information superhighway, where workers (sometimes called "computer commuters") move from "home" to "work" and back again by logging on in the morning and off at night without actually getting up out of their desk chairs. These "spaces" now exist without any territory in between them; the conceptions of travel and distance that are present in the terms



"commuter" and "infohighway" operate only as dated metaphors which fail to capture how the previously panoptic spaces of home and work have collapsed into each other with advances in telecommunications.

It is unclear, then, that Jeremy Bentham's prison design is the appropriate model of power for informationalized society. Television and movie screens, for example, as well as computer monitors, are not (or not only) outposts of the panopticon but their own "windows on the world." Despite the normalizing codes present in mass media, there is not a unilinear history or reality that one views through these windows, but a multiplicity of histories, realities, identities. As Gianni Vattimo argues, the entropy created (discovered?) through mass communications has shown that

[t]here is no single history, only images of the past projected from different points of view. It is illusory to think that there exists a supreme or comprehensive viewpoint capable of unifying all others (such as 'History,' encompassing the histories of art, of literature, of wars, of sexuality, etc.) (Vattimo, 1992: 3)

Of course, we should not overstate (as I believe Vattimo does) the diversity and "entropy" present in mass media; as Douglas Kellner has shown, television (despite fifty-seven or more cable channels) certainly did not provide us with a critical viewpoint on the Gulf War. However, to assume a monolithic structure replete with disciplinary controls is also erroneous. "Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of transformation,'" states Foucault (Foucault, 1988: 99). Or, if power was total, there would not be a need for power.

Altered experiences of time and space have other effects for the possibility of disciplinary power. In the electronic places of databanks, the subject is no

longer (only) a material body which can be inscribed with docility or sexuality; rather, databases serve to multiply the subject, to scatter its location, leaving only digital traces of credit card transactions, library books borrowed, or computer network participation. These traces are not even permanent structures of subjectivity; they are only sketches that can be and are easily erased when memory banks are purged periodically. The subject is no longer limited to a single flesh-and-blood form; it can lose its boundaries to become multiple, partial, and evanescent. Using Donna Haraway's language, "docile bodies" are now "cybersubjects." Since, for Foucault, the body is the smallest and most fundamental unit of analysis of power (because it is the matter which is inflicted with discipline, punishment, or training), the destabilization or dispersion of the body is crucial; the "means of correct training" documented by Foucault lose their potency when the individual is no longer "one."

The collapse of these dimensions of pre-informational society also weakens the "relatively clear relational-spatial distinctions of social status, cultural preeminence, and political authority" described by Foucault, and promote more transitory, fluid senses of geographical and social place, and even of identities themselves. People are no longer confined to their immediate geographical surroundings; either by actual or virtual movement, they can experience the world in a way that was formerly confined to a very few (Luke, 1989: 47-8).

This is not to argue, however, that we have been liberated from disciplinary power through advances in information technologies. First of all, disciplinary power has not been "replaced" by a new sort of power in the information age, and disciplinary procedures are still alive and well in all sorts of panoptic spaces. To use our example of the information superhighway, one of the

most common questions asked about the system is, "Why has the technology advanced so much more rapidly than the actual use of new telecommunications systems?" The answer to this lies beyond economic cost. Perhaps, as one television journalist observed, the lag stems from the "fear of leaving the traditional workplace behind" (CNN, 2/6/94). This fear might be of leaving behind the easily recognizable and very effective panoptic methods of control.

Second, if we take Foucault's later analysis of disciplinary power and security into account, we can certainly identify characteristics of power's transformations in the age of information. For example, in academia, think tanks, and many public institutions "policy analysis" has become largely synonymous with cost-benefit analysis, where information is accumulated, re-coded into numerical or monetary value, and run through computer programs to determine the "best" course of action. "Social science" has taken a similar course (or, as Foucault might argue, was on this course from its inception); in the discipline of political science, problems such as voting behavior are often pursued because of their ability to be analyzed by quantitative and computer modeling, rather than because of their importance (or lack thereof) in the larger scheme of political problems. The consequences of this are that these complexes of "power-knowledge" are increasingly legitimated through better data collection and manipulation --the subject is able to be made more and more into the object of study-- as these techniques become synonymous with the welfare and government of the population.

Furthermore, the rhetoric and/or reality of "freedom" in the information age (of social or geographic mobility, of increased consumer choice, of multiplying means of communicating) is a necessary precondition and a structural support for

the operation of power. For Foucault, "liberty is a condition of security ...disrespect of liberty is not simply an illegitimate violation of rights, but an ignorance of how to govern" (Gordon, 1991: 19-20). By increasing people's freedom, in one sense, one may indeed be removing some of the (social, geographical, communicational) restrictions of a pre-informational society, but Foucault would argue that you are simply altering the "playing field" of power: providing new (or simply expanded) possibilities for domination and submission, and articulating the conditions for action within these realms.

For example, one of the expanded freedoms in an informational society is the ability for (self) production through consumption. With product advertisements beamed in on television, radio, electronic billboards, movie screens, etc., one is confronted with a seemingly infinite array of "choices" for self-fashioning: people can create for themselves any one of a number of pre-packaged identities from certain kinds of food, music, art, or automobiles. Those whose deviances were disciplined in industrial society are "liberated" through the media to be free, consumptive subjects who can indulge in commodity communities of their own creation. This freedom is a controlled disposition (as opposed to imposition) of things, identities, practices, and is congruent with Foucault's argument that the function of power is not (only) exclusion, repression, or domination. On the contrary,

...power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1977a: 194)

In this view, Foucault emphasizes that power is not only the menacing, corrective nature of discipline which depicts people as "potential rebels, ready to

cast off coercive controls" (Luke, 1989: 46). Instead, Foucault argues, in an analysis of power

...one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized. (Foucault, 1983b: 221)

This does not imply consensus (i.e., a conscious understanding and consent to submission) on the part of those "under" power, but neither does it indicate a relation of violence (i.e., a slave in chains). Consensus and violence "are the instruments or the results; they do not constitute the principle or the basic nature of power" (Foucault, 1983b: 220).

Then what does constitute this "basic nature" of power? Foucault argues that to assert power is to structure the possible fields of action of others; to delineate the things that are possible to be thought. This is not an imposition of "false consciousness;" the knowledge which is articulated within the system is "true;" truths are disposed through the mechanisms and tactics of governmentality. Power requires that

the 'other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. (Foucault, 1983b: 220)

Foucault's argument is not only an account of the "ever-expanding disease of the capitalist culture industry." Governmentality also includes the discourses in and about informationalization; it subsumes the "rage against the machine" rhetoric

into the power arena. For each technophobic, Luddite reaction of smashing the conduits of informationalism, there is a technophilic to open the databanks and give power back to the people. Power here is not the force that lets either side act, but the "permanent provocation" which defines the terms of the discourse; it is the interplay between freedom and submission outside of which there is no room to speak (Foucault, 1983b: 221-2). Perhaps a new metaphor for power --instead of the panopticon -- would be a "cyborg-opticon," based not on a prison but on a flight-simulator, where the subject (part human, part machine) is given a degree of freedom and control, but within a relatively closed system of images.

It is difficult to imagine how resistance might be possible given this view of power. If power is productive, after all, then it is also producing the revolutionary identities (and revolutionary wills-to-knowledge) which exist in opposition to the status quo; they are part of the discursive system: "...the State consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible, and ...Revolution is a different type of codification of these same relations" (Foucault, 1980: 122). Because of this, it is also difficult to identify which formations of power-knowledge count as "domination," (or abuses of power), and which are simply the "normal," productive processes of power.

Foucault attempted to address these questions in an essay entitled "The Subject and Power." Foucault states that in order to analyze power, we need to examine three types of struggles: domination (ethnic, social, and religious struggles); exploitation (economic struggles); and subjection (struggles against that which ties individuals to themselves). Although these struggles constantly overlap, they cannot be reduced to each other (i.e. struggles over identity cannot be reduced to economic concerns). Furthermore, although domination and

exploitation have by no means disappeared, it is primarily struggles of subjection that are of central concern today (Foucault, 1983b: 212-13). (Of course, Foucault's focus on the struggles of subjectivity are partially a result of his privileged background; the Muslims in Bosnia would certainly take issue with Foucault's ranking of these issues!)

If struggles over subjectivity are the most important today, it is disciplinary procedures in a society of security which constitute power through surveillance and normalization at the levels of the individual subject and the population: power is both individualizing and totalizing. The best way to study the mechanics/informatics of power is to study it not (as the Frankfurt school did) at the general level of "culture" (analyzed by means of the two, broad categories of instrumental/technical and communicative rationality); instead we should look towards *specific* rationalities (of medicine, psychiatry, education) and discursive regimes in operation. However, even at these disparate points of disciplinary procedures, Foucault's analysis of power strongly suggests a form of control that is directed by the observer onto the observed: the teacher to pupil, doctor to patient, bureaucrat to welfare applicant. There may be multiple sites of power relations in Foucault's model, but one can map these different points on a grid and see where and how they coalesce into relations of domination and subordination. The new social movements which have fought various forms of subjection, Foucault argues, "...are opposition[s] to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification: struggles against the privileges of knowledge" (Foucault, 1983b: 212) --and struggles against the informationalizing of subjects.

In any of these struggles, Foucault argues, there is no absolute or authentic "freedom" that is being won. Rather, resistance is a matter of "leveling the

playing field" of power. Foucault juxtaposes "agonism" ("a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle") (Ibid.: 222) with "domination" (this time used in a more general sense --"a strategic situation more or less taken for granted and consolidated by means of a long-term confrontation between adversaries") (Ibid.: 226) Domination is agonism which has congealed into a seemingly stable relationship, putting adversaries on unequal ground. For Foucault, there is never a relationship that exists outside of power relationships; some struggles are just more fair than others.

The consequences of this are what seems to be an almost Hobbesian "war of all against all," where struggles over truth and subjectivity never cease. Yet this is precisely why Foucault's analyses is important to the study of power. Using the vocabulary of power and subjectivity provided by Foucault, we can constantly problematize relationships that seem to have "congealed" into taken-for-granted realities. As I have suggested in this chapter, some of these insights can be extended from Foucault's analysis to the social, cultural, and political conditions of informationalization. First, we can critique the dominant configurations of power-knowledge which have been validated and valorized through increasingly sophisticated techniques made possible through information technologies. Second, although the spatial, modernist metaphor of the panopticon is perhaps outdated, we can use Foucault's analysis to examine the ways in which the mass media circulate and not impose, but dispose, certain norms, identities, and moralities. Finally, we can regard with suspicion any claims to a society or a subjectivity that is "more free" because of information technologies. Foucault's project, then, does not help us to "unearth the truth about" informationalization. However, using his insights we can "...not discover what we are, but... *refuse* what



we are..." (Foucault, 1983b: 216) and challenge the dominant forms of subjectivity that are disposed under informationalization.

## Chapter Three

### Baudrillard and Power in Hyperreality

...[I]t is a question here of a completely new species of uncertainty, which results not from the *lack* of information but from information itself and even from an *excess* of information. It is information itself which produces uncertainty, and so this uncertainty... is irreparable. (Baudrillard, 1988: 210)

Unlike Foucault, Baudrillard specifically discusses informationalization and its effects concerning power. While Foucault spins a tale of guard towers (and ivory towers), army barracks, and institutionalized everything, Baudrillard's contemporary theoretical landscape is littered with televisions, computer terminals and cyborgs. Baudrillard's philosophical trajectory itself might be read as a genealogy of informationalization. When Baudrillard began examining social and cultural relations in the late 1960s and early 1970s, his style of analysis was similar in many ways to Foucault's: even though he was self-conscious about the relationships of power and culture in which he was embedded, he wrote as if he was to some extent on the outside looking in --as Foucault once called himself, "a happy positivist"-- simply tracing out historical patterns and developments as any good social scientist would do. Following McLuhan's maxim about media, we might say that Baudrillard's early work (and message) was grounded in the medium of the scholarly treatise, in what might be accomplished using traditional intellectual resources of (panoptic?) scrutiny and criticism; it was *textual*: "fall[ing] under the influence of meaning and referentiality" (Baudrillard, 1990: 132). We might even say that Baudrillard's early work was "productive" in that it followed

the disciplinary guidelines of academic analysis, and in turn reified the terms and truths of the discipline.

However, as time went on (or time continued to collapse), Baudrillard's writing style shifted. Instead of producing academic texts, theory for Baudrillard became (perhaps) "screenal," an effect (rather than a representation) of the very collapse of perspective in visualization he was documenting. For Baudrillard, there is no space left for representation; we are not separate from the screen any longer. In this way, Baudrillard attempts to move beyond being the subject or object of any disciplinary, panoptic gaze but rather undertakes theory where

...there is an inversion of terms of some sort, where what was a means of communication gains a kind of finality... and then the strategies which revolve around the medium, the communication medium, become more essential than the strategies which concern the contents. ...[W]e ourselves, the listeners, the TV spectators, [the theorists], become the terminals of all this communications network. We ourselves are screens. (Baudrillard, 1993: 145-6)

This is not to argue that the form of Baudrillard's theory should be privileged over its content; rather, it is to suggest that the shift in Baudrillard's writing style is just as important as any shift in theoretical position. Baudrillard is conscious of and uses generously the cross-fertilization (cross-mechanization?) between content and medium (or theorist and machine?) which occurs in an informationalized culture. In this regard, Baudrillard might be the theorist of informationalization *par excellence*, because he speaks as and from within the thing he is "describing."

This shift in style, however, *does* represent a significant theoretical shift in Baudrillard's work, and illustrates the major differences that he perceives exist between Foucault and himself. From the mid-1970s, Baudrillard engages in what

he calls "fatal theory." "Fatal" plays on the double meaning of the word; this theory is deadly as well as pre-destined, the inevitable outcome of our present circumstance. Fatal theory is hyper-theory, theoretical terrorism, where every concept is pushed to its limit until it implodes in on itself. Baudrillard employs fatal theory to assault some of the left's theoretical and/or political mainstays – Marxism, Foucault, feminism-- and argues them to be merely extensions of the existing order.

Fatal theory results in the opposition that Baudrillard posits between power as production and power as seduction, or the difference between Foucault's and Baudrillard's theories of power. The former, Baudrillard asserts, is a theory of power rooted in an era that has now passed, and anyone using "production" as their guiding axiom is only trying in vain to resuscitate a dead monster. Rather than the ever-expanding and fundamentally structuralist mechanisms of productive power, Baudrillard offers seductive power: power which plays on surfaces, not structures, and is "fundamentally" nothing except reversible.

Informationalization is in some senses both the cause and the carrier of Baudrillard's model of power, seduction: "that the medium itself is no longer identifiable as such... is the first great formula of this new age" (Baudrillard, 1983: 54). In this chapter, I will attempt to sketch out Baudrillard's differentiation of production and seduction, as well as the latter's implication in informationalization. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to engage in a partial reconstruction of Baudrillard's earlier writings. This is not because there is a single, linear purpose which links his ideas together, but because certain themes have been present throughout the course of Baudrillard's career: the dynamics of consumption in advanced capitalist societies; the problem of the

"object" and its explanation through semiology; and the attempt to theorize outside rationalism and capitalism by utilizing the realm of the symbolic. These themes are crucial to his later understanding of power in hyperreality.

Many of the images Baudrillard weaves throughout his texts are posited as oppositions: the symbol and the sign; seduction versus production; death as opposed to political economy; and fatality against banality. These are never posited as simple dualisms, however; rather, they are always described using another of Baudrillard's favorite metaphors: the DNA double-helix. Baudrillard's invocation of the DNA configuration serves several purposes. First, Baudrillard uses the image of the spiral to assert that there is no fixed opposition for any of the terms he employs in his analysis; instead the two strands constantly "slide into each other, melt into each other... the polarization is in movement" (Baudrillard, 1993: 202). Mike Gane has argued that Baudrillard's work constitutes its own double spiral of sorts: the one strand consists of Baudrillard's constant questioning of the constitution of consumption in an era of simulation; and the other is Baudrillard's increasing interest in the concepts of reversibility and exchange in symbolic cultures (Gane, 1991: 194). Gauging from McLuhan's influence on Baudrillard, the spiral is a metaphor which implies the intertextuality which exists in the information age; when writing "spirals," Baudrillard may be utilizing the

...redundant form inevitable to the electric age, in which the concentric pattern is imposed by the instant quality and overlay in depth, of electric speed... [I]t is the technique of insight, and as such is necessary for media study, since no medium has its meaning alone, but only in constant interplay with other media. (McLuhan, 1964: 39)

The DNA double-helix reinscribes Baudrillard's idea of multiple recombinations, but combinations that are in some sense pre-determined. Finally, this image of DNA (also the Moebius strip, and fractalization) serve as some kind of hyper-positivist implosion for Baudrillard; they are used in a context where the hypotheses of the work can never be "verified" or the results "replicated." Baudrillard challenges the reader by using this scientific vocabulary to efface all channels of response: the real, the social, the subject. The DNA double-helix is the primary metaphor Baudrillard will utilize in his later work to depict the code.

As many have observed, Baudrillard's work can be divided into several phases, each of which moves him "progressively," from leftism, or critical theory, to fatalism. In the first period of his work (The System of Objects, Consumer Society, and For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign), Baudrillard sought to supplement Marxist readings of capitalist culture by shifting the focus of analysis from a theory of production to a theory of consumption, and consequently from economic terms to linguistic terms. Consumption, Baudrillard holds, is now the most significant set of relations defining the social order and the stratifications within it. Through the precarious freedoms of purchasing, he argues, "individuals no longer compete for the possession of goods, they actualize themselves in consumption, each on his own" (Baudrillard, 1988: 12). Thus consumption is the process by which people define themselves and their world. Rather than viewing production as an active and consumption as a passive process, then, we must understand that "...consumption is an active mode of relations... a systematic mode of activity and a global response on which our whole cultural system is founded" (Baudrillard, 1988: 21).

Although people are "active" in their consumption, Baudrillard does not view this activity as the endeavor of the rational *homo economicus* touted by classical economics or liberal political theory. In this, anyway, he and Foucault have something in common; they are both reacting against the model of the reasoning, choosing social and political actor which has dominated Western thought. Nor does Baudrillard simply argue that production (of specific commodities) produces needs (for those specific commodities), or vice versa. Instead, people are incited to purchase through a veritable language –no, a *code*– in which "*categories of objects ...quite tyrannically induce categories of persons*" (Baudrillard, 1988: 16-7). People are ensnared in a veritable "calculus of objects," where the consumer must proceed from one object to another in a logical and interminable path (Baudrillard, 1988: 31).

Baudrillard's analysis of this code during this time is heavily influenced by structuralism, especially by the structuralist anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, where social structures are understood primarily as systems of communication. Advertising's system of objects, Baudrillard notes, is analogous to the arbitrary assignment of value of primitive totemic sign systems, indicating a culture which suffers a "poverty of sign codes and archaic systems" (Baudrillard, 1988: 25). He states that

[i]n order to become an object of consumption, the object must become sign; that is, in some way it must become external to a relation that it now only signifies, a-signed arbitrarily and non-coherently to this concrete relation, yet obtaining its coherence, and consequently its meaning, from an abstract and systematic relation to all other object-signs. (Baudrillard, 1988: 22)

An object, then, only has meaning when it is in relation to other objects; it has no intrinsic meaning. Thus when we purchase items, we are not buying the individual product so much as we are buying its relation to other products, its difference from or equivalence to other products as articulated by the code. For Baudrillard, advertising and consumption constitute a coherent discourse which is "formalized in a universal system of recognition of social statuses: it is a code of 'social standing'." This code constructs and controls the field of social meaning (Baudrillard, 1988: 17).

Even though Baudrillard's analysis is more semiological than Foucault's, we can (at this early stage of Baudrillard's work) identify certain similarities in how they view power. Foucault's account of "normalization" through the definition of rationality and reality is not such a far leap from Baudrillard's assertion that the "code" creates categories of consumptive individuals. In both cases, power is a force which produces subjects through classification and division: it disposes, deposes, and composes subjectivity and reality.

However, in these two early books (written in 1968 and 1972), Baudrillard is still working very much within the Marxist tradition. Even though the code he writes of here is "universal" and "pervasive", it is something that has the possibility of being subverted, or better yet, peeled away to reveal the "real" underneath. The code is something that is imposed from above; it is

*the equivalent and the extension, in the twentieth century, of the great indoctrination of rural populations into industrial labor, which occurred throughout the nineteenth century. (Baudrillard, 1988: 50)*



The code, he writes, gives us the illusion that we can accurately read social relations by watching their plays of signs; however, "[a] society would be so transparent only if knowledge of the order of signification was also knowledge of the organization of its social structures and social facts" (Baudrillard, 1988: 21). Instead the code remains "complicit and opaque" (Ibid.), covering the reality of exploitation and degradation that exists for the sake of production and consumption.

Baudrillard's semiological analysis of consumption is best articulated in For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign. In this essay, Baudrillard argues that semiological and Marxist analyses mistakenly rely on their respective "bases" of the signified and use value as "natural" and unproblematic components of their structural and rhetorical systems (the structure of the commodity, and the structure of the sign). Rather than being equal terms in the configurations of sign and commodity, however, both the signified and use value are denigrated, while the signifier and exchange value are privileged as the terms which set the respective systems in motion: exchange value allows the commodity to circulate as the signifier allows language to circulate (Baudrillard, 1981: 137). Thus, use value and the signified function merely as "alibis" for these other terms. The result is domination which is already built into systems of economic and linguistic exchange:

All of the repressive and reductive strategies of power systems are already present in the internal logic of the sign, as well as those of exchange value and political economy. (Baudrillard, 1981: 163)

Baudrillard's exposition of these terms as "alibis" resonates in the domain of consumption. No longer can we speak of concrete or objective use value, or a

singular and pure signified; the domination of the economic and linguistic systems are built into the domination of one term over the other. Thus "...the separation of the sign and the world [and the commodity and the world] is a fiction" (Baudrillard, 1981: 152). We now have a situation of consumption where *"the commodity is immediately produced as a sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities"* (Baudrillard, 1981: 147).

Understood in this way, consumption is no longer simply a process for fulfilling "needs," either real or constructed, for particular objects. "Need" is only part of the ideology which links the consuming subject to its object, and through this one can speak of "manipulation of needs" or "actual needs," etc. Instead of "needs", Baudrillard states, consumption is based on "a 'need' for difference (the *desire for social meaning*)" (Baudrillard, 1988: 45) which is defined and emitted by the code. The consumer in advanced capitalist society is an amorphous organism, unable to demarcate the limits of its own being or its world without assimilating the logic of the code. Because of this, the consumer can never be satiated and consumption will never be anything but momentarily fulfilling. The code for Baudrillard is no longer something that one might label as "inauthentic," for

...nothing produced or exchanged today (objects, bodies, sex, culture, knowledge, etc) can be decoded exclusively as a sign, nor solely measured as a commodity... [it is] indissolubly both. (Baudrillard, 1981: 147-8)

In 1973, Baudrillard published Mirror of Production, the work which is considered to be his "break" with the Marxist tradition. As the title indicates, the thrust of Baudrillard's argument is that Marxist theory at best merely reflects the

logic of capitalist domination, and at worst serves as capitalism's ultimate justification. Both Marxism and capitalism rely on the myth of a rational and productive man, man who is in both cases reduced to his labor. Marxism, Baudrillard contends, is hopelessly caught within the law of the very discourse it aims to overthrow. Only by breaking out of the rationalism inscribed within productivist theory and counter-theory can we hope to escape the logic of the code.

With Mirror of Production, Baudrillard shifts registers, from that of the "social scientist" to that of the "fatal theorist." He states about his later work, "There is no longer that sort of distancing, critical and analytical at the same time, that allows you to 'explain' things" (Baudrillard, 1993: 40). So instead of writing *about* symbols, objects, masses, and the code, one might argue that Baudrillard writes as these things. From this point forward he is increasingly a radio tower, sending out the signals of the cultural condition-- or better yet, a satellite dish, an object receiving or concentrating the waves from various transmitters. Some (such as Christopher Norris) might argue that this shift marks Baudrillard's departure from "serious" critique to frivolity (Baudrillard is henceforth "lost in the funhouse" of "postmodern" theory), but considering Baudrillard's insistence that the symbolic is the only means of undermining the code, his move towards more poetic and image-laden theory seems (ir)rational enough.

Norris' critique is thus lost on Baudrillard because "fatal" theory not only involves pronouncing the deaths of traditional concepts in theorizing such as politics and aesthetics; fatal theory is a kamikaze mission which necessitates the death of theorizing itself. For Baudrillard, fatal theory is the only way to address the new cultural/social/political situation; we have moved out of the era of

production and into an era of simulation and fractalization; fatal theory --"raising things to their Nth power" (Baudrillard, 1993: 82)-- is the only possible response to a society that is also raising things to their Nth power. For Baudrillard, the ante is being upped all the time, so to speak, and

...the only strategy is *catastrophic*, and not in the least bit dialectical. Things have to be pushed to the limit, where everything is naturally inverted and collapses. (Baudrillard, 1990: 123)

Baudrillard historicizes simulation by showing how changes in the orders of appearance parallel changes in the law of value from pre-industrial times until the present. The first law of value (what Baudrillard refers to as the natural law of value) was in place from approximately the Renaissance until the the industrial revolution. This phase was characterized by a limited number of signs which were crafted by artisans and then counterfeited. The relationship here was between the "authentic" and the "counterfeit" sign; the "real" and the "artificial," and mirrored the hierarchical society in which these signs were produced.

With the industrial revolution, the law of value and the relationship between signs mutated. The commercial law of value no longer concerned itself with "origin" or "authenticity;" what mattered in this phase was the ability to produce identical items on a mass scale. The relation between signs is one of "equivalence and indifference" where "the original reference is obliterated" (Baudrillard, 1983: 97).

Our present condition, however, is characterized by neither the natural nor the commercial law of value; these have been subsumed into pure simulation, where "*referential value is nullified, giving the advantage to the structural play of*

*value*" (Baudrillard, 1988: 125). In other words, any kind of relation between signs and objective reality is gone:

At this level the question of signs, of their rational destination, their real or imaginary, their repression, their deviation, the illusion they create or that which they conceal... all of that is erased. (Baudrillard, 1983: 104)

Without these distinctions between sign and "reality," we are left in the condition of hyperreality, or "concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle" (Baudrillard, 1983: 25). Signs are now completely self-referential; each sign exists only as a justification for the next, with no tie to the "objective truth." There is no longer a way of judging between true and false, beautiful and ugly, transcendental and particular. The utilitarian, administered mode of production of signs and meaning has given way to spontaneous generation and indeterminacy of simulation and the code.

The code now has "evolved" from the deceptive, manipulative blanket of signs that Baudrillard saw covering consumer society in his early work. "I believed [in 1968 and 1970]," Baudrillard states, "in a possible subversion of the code of the media and in the possibility of an alternate speech and a radical reciprocity of symbolic exchange. Today all that has changed" (Baudrillard, 1988: 208). The code, operating through simulation, is now intrinsic to our existence, "buried like programmatic matrices light-years away in the depths of the 'biological' body --black boxes where all the commandments, all the answers, ferment" (Baudrillard, 1983: 103). The code is digital, and genetic, a closed system but one that allows for multiple combinatory responses. Media,

advertising, and politics operate using the code; they send out signals which trigger pre-programmed reactions.

Clearly, informationalization is heavily implicated in this order of simulation and in the production of hyperreality(ies). As Mark Poster has noted, television advertisements are the epitome of the pervasiveness of floating signifiers and the ubiquitousness of the code. Ads use concepts such as love, friendship, social status, etc. and attach them randomly on products that one would not normally (logically) equate with these ideas: cars, beer, floor wax. But the code goes beyond the simple "manipulation equation" of "By drinking this beer, you will have fun and friends." Images are cut out of the social fabric and recontextualized in ads so that the Beatles' song "Revolution" can be used to sell sneakers, McDonald's can launch a "green" ad campaign, and a luxury automobile is advertised with a picture of a rock or a waterfall. The coded signal is "in a sense, unreadable, without possible interpretation" (Baudrillard, 1988: 140) because it defi(l)es logic, rationality, reason.

Television programming (ads, sitcoms, game shows, and news) compose another level of hyperreality where consumption, entertainment, and politics converge and constantly look only intertextually for signification, constituting an indiscriminate assemblage of signs. We were treated to some particularly lucid illustrations of this during the last election. For example, Dan Quayle, while decrying the demise of "family values" in a televised speech, pointed to the television character Murphy Brown (on the show a single woman expecting a child) as a case in point of the country's downfall. "Murphy Brown" countered this slander with an episode geared entirely towards redefining "family." Not to be outdone, Dan Quayle's campaign team responded to the show by sending

Murphy's fictional baby a stuffed elephant. George Bush had similar interactions with the TV cartoon characters "The Simpsons"-- and all these exchanges were characterized by terms rendered equally weightless through simulation: "family values," "unwed mothers," political parties (and their mascots), cartoon characters and electoral politics. Television as hyperreality, where "the systems of images and the systems of discourse... have got the upper hand over meaning" (Baudrillard, 1993: 145).

Baudrillard's analysis does not stop at the edge of the screen, however, and its implications are far from the curmudgeonly complaint that television is making a mockery out of serious political issues. Television is part of the manufacturing of politics, and of power, in hyperreality. Baudrillard argues that television does not accomplish this by way of a panoptic gaze, or by any kind of "surveillance" techniques that we saw in Foucault in the previous chapter. The code, for Baudrillard, no longer holds out "norms" for people to conform to. Rather, TV (and all of the media) utilize a system of *deterrence*, where power and responsibility, cause and effect, are circulated and re-circulated through spirals of displacement. The media amass quantities of demographics, a statistical morass that is labeled "the public;" when the media acts, it is henceforth responding to the needs, whims, and desires of "the public." As Baudrillard states, the media no longer provides a "model" to imitate; instead it declares: "'YOU are the model'" (Baudrillard, 1983: 53). The "real" of the social and the political is effaced by being transformed into data manipulated within the closed system of the computer; political "subjects" become the malleable objects of study and media management. As Baudrillard paraphrases McLuhan, "the medium is the

mass(age)." Thus the split between active and passive, subject and object, breaks down (Baudrillard, 1983: 55).

Political events, according to Baudrillard, are now confined to being simulations of the political: commemorations of past events (usually revolutions which are pronounced "dead" by their observance); or elections (simulations of representation and active participation designed to contribute to the media fiction of "the public" --as Ed Rollins recently commented, "Everyone knows the only reason they hold elections in this country any more is to see if the pollsters were right."). Politics are aestheticized to the point where "everything... becomes a museum piece" (Baudrillard, 1992b: 12); everything becomes and is received as surface, image. The television ad, the political event, the artistic work, and/or the analysis of voting behavior are one in the same in hyperreality. What we are left with, Baudrillard concludes, is the *transaesthetic* and the *transpolitical*, "the extreme or anomalistic phenomena such as viruses or the chain reactions which propagate themselves all over the world" (Baudrillard, 1992a: 233). AIDS, terrorism, the world-wide triumph of capitalism --all these are chain reactions for Baudrillard, "a *social genetic code*... leav[ing] no room for planned reversal" (Baudrillard, 1983: 112).

If Baudrillard claims that we can no longer distinguish between true and false, or between communication and manipulation, or even between activity and passivity, then by what mechanisms does power operate in this informationalized age? What is the politics of the transpolitical? Baudrillard's answer lies in the principle of seduction.

Seduction, Baudrillard argues, is power that concerns itself only with surfaces, appearances, and play. Seduction is the strategy that operates in this



transpolitical era. Unlike production (Baudrillard's account of Foucault's model of power), seduction recognizes that there are no longer any "deep structures" present in society, or in subjectivities (whether "real" or "imposed"). What difference does it make, Baudrillard asks, if the condition of mental illness is the result of analysis by "objective science" or "social control"? In the end, the patient acts and the symptoms are treated in the same way. Foucault, Baudrillard declares, is the "last great dinosaur" of this period which produces more power by identifying it; "producing" power by rendering it visible.

Seduction, on the other hand, does not seek to ferret out power from its hidden nooks and crannies; it is power which has no regard for "inside/outside," "nature/culture," or other such distinctions. With informationalization, these binaries lose their force, and traditional political analyses do not address these changes. William Chaloupka uses Baudrillard's principle of seduction to explain the political events of 1989-90, which were "viral and fractal," especially in the former Soviet Union: "Gorbachev's trajectory ...was challenge and seduction; offering the West what it asked for but could not bear to have" (Chaloupka, 1992: 107). Baudrillard might analyze the events that escalated to the Gulf War also in these terms: providing Iraq with weapons; Saddam Hussein reversing the game by using these arms for his own purposes and against "our" interests; Bush turning the tables again and using a show of military machismo to increase his own power and reassert the superiority of the West; Saddam Hussein defying this move by remaining in power and building up his armed forces to even greater strengths than before the war. In each stage of this scenario, what was crucial was not the "reality principle" of power, but the effect of the image: puppet of the West--ruthless dictator--popular leader; puppet-master--patient diplomat--defender of

democracy. "Real" power and simulated power become indistinguishable. For Baudrillard, this is the reason that traditional leftist critiques might not be effective in the information age; their "truth" always comes after the image has already been crafted, deployed, and received.

In this sense, seduction is perfectly commensurable with the hyperreality realized through informationalization: hyperreality has erased the lines between "true" and "false;" the only thing that is important now is the that which is on the surface, the visage of the event. However, this is not the "hot" seduction of the ritual or the duel which Baudrillard argues was present in earlier cultures. Because of the predominance of the code, the "challenge" of seduction no longer has any stakes; the game is played "at the level of the television game show, a world of playful combinatories, of infinite intersubstitutions" (Gane, 1991: 144). The Gulf War, for us in the United States whose "interests" were being protected, was fought out on the television screen. Seduction is now "cool" and inconsequential.

Unlike Foucault's "power as production," which infuses power into every relationship as a series of continuously circulating effects, seduction is power that is reversible and terminable. Foucault, Baudrillard argues, does not account for this; his is a model of continuous accumulation where reality and power are tirelessly generated (Baudrillard, 1987: 40). Baudrillard asserts that Foucault has in effect produced the kind of power he is describing in his writings. However, the "essence" of seduction is that it is above all a challenge-- not a decree, a violent act, or an imposition-- and if the other party in the seductive process refuses to take up the challenge, then the power relationship has ended. Then power simply evaporates: game over.

The final point about seduction that Baudrillard insists upon is that seduction in a society of informationalization is never a conscious strategy. In fact, for Baudrillard the best way to reverse power is to defy subject-centered, active resistances (protests, demonstrations, boycotts); these, he argues, are simply sucked up and reappropriated by the code. Only when a system is oppressive or repressive are strategies of the subject --demands for rights and liberty-- effective. Today, however, when the system operates through the proliferation of speech, the generation of participation, and the production of meaning, the system generates its own artificial negativity. The strategy of the masses, then, should be the opposite; we should adopt the unconscious strategy of the object: "the refusal of meaning, the refusal of speech" (Baudrillard, 1988: 219).

Baudrillard might use voting behavior and its analysis as a possible example of the strategy of the object. The system requires public participation for its legitimation, but increasingly the public refuse to participate. In the United States, virtually every time voting enfranchisement has increased, public participation percentages have decreased. For Baudrillard, this should not be interpreted (from the right) as the "apathy" present in those not well-educated enough to understand and participate in politics, or (from the left) as an unfortunate "lack of political efficacy" resulting from lower socio-economic status; rather, non-voting should be seen as a "strategy of the object;" an unconscious but potentially effective move which reduces the credibility of the entire simulation of participatory government.

Obviously we can critique Baudrillard's concept of seduction in several ways. First, Foucault's genealogy (contrary to Baudrillard's accusations) is a

practice of reading the surfaces of things; "it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know or who we are, but the exteriority of accidents" (Foucault, 1984: 81). Through genealogy, Foucault moves away from the "deep meanings" imposed through structural or teleological ways of studying history. In all eyes but Baudrillard's, Foucault's later work is a far leap from "structuralism." The difference between them, then, might be a matter of degree rather than an absolute split as Baudrillard pushes us to think; Foucault's analyses (especially his focus on power manifesting itself in and through the body) are less superficial --and in Baudrillard's terms less fatal-- than Baudrillard's account of power. Second, it is unclear how Baudrillard's description of the code exempts itself from the mode of production discourse that Baudrillard so loathes. The code generates signals and ultimately meanings (though not essential or deep meanings), and it produces categories of persons and their lifestyles.

But more important to us is what implications Baudrillard's work has for critique and resistance. First, we must return to the point made above that Baudrillard's "seduction" of the reader lies in part in his own issue of a challenge --a challenge that cannot be answered according to his own logic of the "death of the social." If we see any value at all in Baudrillard's account of simulation, we can immediately see the problem with politics (or theory) as usual. For instance, Baudrillard would view Douglas Kellner's long-winded account of media "distortion" during the Gulf War as a fruitless attempt of another leftist intellectual to cling to the representational order of the image, when in fact the "reality" of the event was its simulation. "All marginal alternative endeavors to resuscitate meaning are secondary," he states (Baudrillard, 1990: 217). For Baudrillard, "there is no relationship between a system of meaning and a system

of simulation" (Baudrillard, 1992: 209). Baudrillard is not arguing here that people were not killed and extraordinary amounts of damage were not done; he is arguing that the war in the Gulf was not "real" in the sense that the outcome had already been decided; it was completely choreographed from the very beginning as image, spectacle, computer graphics, public opinion.

We can find countless examples on the accuracy of Baudrillard's reading of the Gulf War (including the Gulf War movie that started filming before war was actually declared!). Here is the "cynicism" of power's operation and the "cynicism" of the response of the masses which Baudrillard so acutely reflects/imposes on society. Rather than theorizing (as Gaventa, Gramsci, and "even" Foucault would) why subjects consent to their own slavery, their own "subjection," Baudrillard holds that

...we might argue that there exists another philosophy of lack of will, a sort of radical antimetaphysics whose secret is that the masses are deeply aware that they do not have to make a decision about themselves and the world; that they do not have to wish; that they do not have to know; that they do not have to desire. (Baudrillard, 1990: 215)

In this view, even if people had known the "truth" of the Gulf War (as reported by Douglas Kellner), it would not have mattered. "Deep meanings," the "will of the people," and "reality" are no longer the impetus for change. The only change can come from mutations of the code itself.

Because of this, there are many aspects of Baudrillard's analysis which are at best dubious and at worst completely unjustifiable. The first criticism we can launch recalls our initial discussion of what "power" entails: a normative judgment or assigning responsibility to action. While Foucault paints "power" over

everything (everything is normative, everyone is responsible), Baudrillard erases power through asserting the primacy of the image; if anyone has more responsibility than anyone else, it is merely an effect of that particular "image" being invested with a different set of meanings at that particular moment.

Second, we can critique Baudrillard's assumption that we have made the move completely from a system based on repression and oppression to a system in which power is exercised through the proliferation of speech and meaning. Kellner and other Gulf War activists might argue that oppression and repression occurred on a grand scale during the Gulf War in terms of the kinds of coverage that were mandated and who was permitted to speak. In this case, when power is exercised both through the production of meaning and through the repression of speech, in which strategy of resistance should one engage? Does "artificial negativity" in these circumstances necessarily mean impotent and unimportant critique? Baudrillard does not provide an answer.

In addition, the principle of seduction and its ever-present quality of reversibility (ironically, to an even greater extent than Foucault's model of power) does not provide any account of where the power originated from, or why it might flow in one direction and not another. To say that power is at any point reversible is to assume that all people involved in the power relation have equal capacities to exercise power, or to turn it around. There is no clear differentiation here between the slave and the master or the exploiter and the exploited, all are equally entangled in power relations and all have the ability to stop the cycle of seduction.

Finally, even if all people did have the ability to "just say no" to power, Baudrillard does not provide a reason why such a resistance would be desirable,

or what precisely this resistance should accomplish. For Foucault, the "goal" of political resistance unclog the arteries of power so that relations could be in constant flux: a free play of agonism. For Baudrillard, however, the code still dictates every action and reaction; seduction is still "cool" and without consequences. Baudrillard does not discuss how even an unconscious strategy of the object can ultimately subvert the logic of the code, or how we might reinstate the "high stakes" of earlier cultures into our own political (hyper)realities. Read in this way, Baudrillard's "transpolitical" might also be seen as transnormative or transmoral.

Clearly, from the standpoint of traditional theorizing about power and resistance, Baudrillard's analysis is extremely impoverished. On the other hand, it does provide a useful perspective on some of the changes that have transformed power in the age of information. First, by stressing the medium and the image (as opposed to the content and the meaning) of society and in his own work, Baudrillard unapologetically directs theory and practice towards anti-narrative, anti-structural approaches; like Foucault he problematizes "deep meanings" in an age when most Westerners get their political information from the nightly television news. Second, in his analysis of the "transpolitical" and "transaesthetic" Baudrillard recognizes that the state is no longer the effective limit of the exercise of power, and that politics (no matter how "real") are deployed and received as image and spectacle, and any subsequent theory must recognize these elements. However, Baudrillard's account of power relations given these conditions does not leave much, if any, room for political resistances or critical analysis. Baudrillard's plunge into the commodity and the object might be

seen as a capitulation into hyperconformity, where the black hole of the masses leaves only a political and theoretical void.



## Chapter Four

### Informationalization and Intellectuals

Despite their differences, both Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard suggest to us that power and resistance in the age of informationalization will have to be conceived of without recourse to traditional philosophical and political conceptions of the subject, meaning, knowledge, and truth. If this is the case, then we must ask ourselves: from what vantage point are Foucault and Baudrillard then speaking? That is, as "theorists" or "writers" or "intellectuals," these men are at the intersection of many of these traditional conceptions: they are thinking, acting subjects whose work conveys some meaning; whose position has traditionally been (though this distinction is nebulous) either as the conservative caretaker of established knowledge or as the scientist endeavoring to create new knowledge; and whose queries, ultimately, involve the problem or pursuit of truth of one kind or another. If these basic foundations --the subject, meaning, knowledge and truth-- through which the intellectual is constructed are being undermined, then it follows that the position of the intellectual is also more tenuous than ever. What political role could the intellectual possibly have, situated as s/he is at the center of the collapse of all of these prerequisites for theory and practice?

In order to answer this question, we need to first examine the model of the "traditional" critical intellectual that Foucault and Baudrillard are responding from and against in their political (in?)action and writing, a model embodied by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's essay "A Plea for Intellectuals" is a discussion of the political formation and responsibility of intellectuals, especially writers.

In "A Plea for Intellectuals," Sartre asserts that the modern-day intellectual is the deformed (he says "monstrous") descendent of the *philosophes*. The *philosophes*, who were born into and whose writing reflected their position in the bourgeoisie, advanced the norms and values of this dominant group through their practical knowledge as lawyers, doctors, teachers, and scientists by presuming that the bourgeoisie was the *universal* class: "every man is a bourgeois, and every bourgeois is a man" (Sartre, 1965: 236). The result was the ideology of liberal humanism, which determined and structured political institutions and participation, exploitation and colonization.

However, according to Sartre, a technician of practical knowledge (medicine, law, history, etc.) is not yet an intellectual if s/he is merely propping up existing ideological and political structures. Intellectuals are "monstrous" because they suffer from a fundamental contradiction in themselves and in society: they realize that despite the fact that they have been taught that "all men are equal" and that their knowledge (in whichever discipline) is structured around this ideal of universality, in reality their knowledge is constrained by the particular ideology of the dominant class (Ibid.: 242-3). (For example, although medicine is designed to cure all people, because of the need for profits it cures only a small proportion.) The intellectual, then, is "*someone who attends to what concerns him*" (Ibid.: 244); that is, this fundamental contradiction which is at once outside of and also an important component of his or her technical expertise.

As soon as technical experts become aware of this first contradiction, they are faced immediately with another: no one mandates their critique. They are at odds with their present positions of (relative) power and affluence because they are criticizing the ideology that has allowed for their success; and yet they can

never be integrated into the exploited masses, whose plight they wish to rectify (Ibid.: 255). Sartre argues that the structure of the educational system virtually assures that no (or very few) intellectuals will be produced from the ranks of the working class; higher education is almost exclusively dominated by "sons of the petty bourgeois." Furthermore, if a person from a poor family does manage to succeed in the system, "they are immediately integrated into the middle classes through their work, their salary and their standard of living" (Sartre, 1965: 257). Thus, there can be no "organic intellectuals" of the proletariat.

However, this contradiction should not result in paralysis; if it did, the intellectual would become a "false intellectual," content to accept this contradiction in his or her work and proceed with business as usual (Ibid.: 258). Sartre argues that the next step for the intellectual in society is to "adopt the view of its most underprivileged members... placing himself alongside those whose very existence contradicts [the dominant ideology]" (Ibid.: 255-6). Intellectuals should draw on their experiences of contradiction (universal knowledge being put towards particular, bourgeois ends) to illuminate the contradictions inherent in the lives of the proletariat (situated as a particular class but at the same time striving towards the universalization of liberty, equality, etc.). At the same time, intellectuals should learn from the "objective intelligence" of popular consciousness (Ibid.: 256), not by directing specific political actions but by joining such actions once they have begun, placing themselves inside the action, "...and only then, to the extent that [they judge] it necessary, to decipher its nature and illuminate its meanings and possibilities" (Ibid.: 261).

This does not mean, however, that intellectuals are simply passive recorders and/or occasional interpreters of events; intellectuals for Sartre are

constantly required to keep the dialectic between particular and universal in motion in both themselves and the proletariat by fighting the reemergence of dominant ideology; helping the proletariat to create its own technicians of knowledge; and by "demonstrating the ultimate objectives beyond immediate aims" of political actions undertaken by the proletariat (or their "real interests") (Ibid.: 263). Thus, according to Sartre, intellectuals are those who continuously maneuver between the particular (their historical situatedness) and the universal (the universality of "knowledge, freedom, thought, and truth") (Ibid.: 262). Finally, while the "technicians of knowledge," in the service of particular disciplines or professions, become intellectuals only "by accident" of their contradictions, it is the *writer* who embodies the intellectual *par excellence* by "maintaining the tension between the whole and the part, totality and totalization, the world and being-in-the-world, as the *significance* of his work... In this sense, the writer is not an intellectual *accidentally*, like others, but *essentially*" (Ibid.: 284).

Clearly, from a Foucauldian or Baudrillardian perspective, Sartre's conception of the intellectual is extremely problematic. First, there is the simple fact that both Foucault and Baudrillard avoid a Marxist class reading of social stratifications; they are much more concerned with other sorts of cultural divisions where economic class may or may not play a role. Indeed, many of the political struggles in informationalized countries that have been fought since the time of Sartre's essay have been struggles over identity, not (or not only) economic concerns: the civil rights movement, the women's movement, gay rights, and environmentalism, for example. The problems that are faced by these groups are related to but not equal to those of the economically disenfranchised.

Equally important and more troubling from Foucault's and Baudrillard's perspectives, though, is the fact that Sartre appeals to distinctions between "false" (status quo supporting) and "true" intellectuals; between "ideology" and "knowledge" (either the scientific knowledge learned by the intellectual, or the "objective" knowledge of the masses' consciousness); and the ability of the intellectual to recognize and police the boundaries of these terms. As Foucault states (and Baudrillard enacts to the 10th power), "I dream of the intellectual who destroys evidence and generalities" (Miller, 1993: 189).

Ironically, Baudrillard --with his working-class background and his obsession with "low culture"-- might be considered to be the embodiment of the impossibility described by Sartre: the organic intellectual of the proletariat. Of course, Baudrillard's "objective knowledge" has not been the kind of knowledge that either Sartre or Gramsci would have hoped for: for Baudrillard, there is no "outside" of the television and the commodity; there is no place to go but further in. Like my parents and the living room filled with the TV's monological discourse, Baudrillard's theory cannot be answered or challenged using conventional political tactics.

Although he never specifically addresses Sartre's essay, Baudrillard does discuss the ways in which the role of the intellectual has changed since the time of its writing. To some extent, Baudrillard views the untenability of Sartre's argument as an historical matter. In the 1960s, up until the events of May '68, intellectuals

...had a favourable critical position, 'favourable' in that its radicalism drew on the energy of revolt that was taking place in one fraction of society. All this slowly came to an end during the seventies. The energy used itself up...the tissue which held

together everything underneath is no longer there. (Baudrillard, 1993: 72-3)

Sartre's position --that of the public intellectual, who simultaneously learned from and educated the masses-- might have been possible under the circumstances in which he was writing. However, because what the intellectual can say "can only be a transcription of his objective situation," (Ibid.: 79) theory grew disassociated from the larger discussions of Marxism and political commitment, it "went into different directions and became radicalized in its own sphere, and sometimes just in its own discipline" (Ibid.: 74).

But where did these groups who had provided the impetus for theoretical debate and discussion disappear to? Is it merely a case of the political energy generated by these struggles "using itself up" like some sort of chemical reaction? Baudrillard argues that many of these struggles that began largely as struggles of identity ended up as fodder for the code, which regurgitated them as consumptive identities, or perhaps as floating signifiers juxtaposed in various ways to indicate "the sixties," "revolution," or "recent history" (this one is particularly dangerous from Baudrillard's perspective, because it seals these events off in a time capsule, as something signifying an era which has ended). "Essentially," Baudrillard writes,

everywhere, the revolution took place; but it did not turn out at all as expected. Everywhere what has been liberated has been liberated in order to gain better access to a state of pure circulation, to be sent into orbit. (Baudrillard, 1992b: 22)

Baudrillard (not surprisingly) has a contradictory position regarding where the intellectual might go from here given present circumstances. On the one

hand, in this scenario there is nothing for the intellectual to draw from in the culture except pervasive commodification and a society that is now transpolitical. In this case, Baudrillard argues, it makes no sense for the theorist to try and salvage the remnants of the traditional critical intellectual and place that reconstructed figure on this new social stage, or to mourn what has been lost. Rather, the present-day intellectual, like the present-day artist, has no other choice but to "go further into the commodity. You [have] to go some way towards the absolute object, the absolute commodity" (Baudrillard, 1993: 148). For Baudrillard, leftist "fact finders" such as Noam Chomsky, Douglas Kellner, or the Women's Action Coalition are anachronistic in a time when "facts" are simulated and assimilated. There is no hope here of articulating new alternatives to the political order: "There are no more alternatives" (Ibid.: 78).

On the other hand, though, Baudrillard remains the essence of the negativity which characterizes the critical intellectual. Intellectuals, he claims, by definition must be in opposition, on the margins of the dominant culture; "opposition is the most comfortable position for an intellectual" (Ibid.: 75). The tools of the intellectual do not exist outside the code, but they are not merely or always subservient to it, either: the symbolic, the discursive, the critical, the ironic-- "*These* exist," he writes. "*These* are fundamental" (Ibid.: 77). By going further into the commodity --as an artist, as a theorist-- one might be exposing the art world or academia for what they are: markets. For this reason, Baudrillard is greatly enamored of Andy Warhol's work, which he sees as "play[ing] the commodity, but at the power of two or the power of ten;" it is a "cool strategy" for the new order (Ibid.: 149). Once one accepts "fatal theory" as a political strategy, there can be no more pretense of genuinely "political" theory.

Baudrillard admits, however, that the relationship he posits between theory, political conditions, and political practice is contradictory, but he does not see this as a necessarily bad thing. "My position...is also paradoxical... but you have to work within the paradox, this paradox of communication" (Ibid.: 149-50). Intellectuals are obligated to accept their fates in a society of simulation and commodification, and adjust their political strategies from "message" to "medium." Perhaps for Baudrillard, we should no longer even look towards a group of "intellectuals" at all (he refers to them at one point as a "caste" of which he is not sure he is a member), but rather those individuals who are born from and into media: Rush Limbaugh, Oprah Winfrey, Howard Stern. These people offer world views, political commentary, and assessments of current cultural conditions without the pretext of deep meaning. Ultimately, Baudrillard remains ambivalent about any political power or potential that the intellectual might have in this, or any, cultural situation. He states, "Intellectuals can either be immensely important or not important at all... both things were said of Sartre. There is no one who could give an objective assessment of this" (Ibid.: 76).

Foucault, however, offers some ways that we might be able to assess the role of the intellectual in society without resorting to the kind of "universal" intellectual embodied by Sartre. Although he agrees that historical circumstances have perhaps rendered parts of Sartre's model intellectual unsustainable, Foucault remains much more optimistic than Baudrillard that an intellectual of some sort has a role in and an obligation to political practice. This optimism stems not from a satisfaction with current conditions, but rather

...saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are,  
bound up more with circumstances than necessities, more arbitrary



than self-evident, more a matter of complex, historical circumstances than with anthropological constants... (Foucault, 1988: 156)

Foucault responds directly to Sartre's conception of the intellectual in the interview "Truth and Power," where he juxtaposes the figure of the "universal intellectual" described and embodied by Sartre, and the "specific intellectual," whose aims, he argues, are both more possible and more desirable.

Foucault and Sartre do agree on some basic points, however. First, they would agree that someone who is merely "knowledgeable" is not an intellectual; being an intellectual *requires* political thought and/or action. As Foucault states,

I mean the intellectual in the political, not the sociological sense of the word, in other words the person who utilises his knowledge, his competence, and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles. (Foucault, 1980b: 128)

Second, both Sartre and Foucault recognize that the intellectual is historically situated both by (in Sartre's words) "bourgeois ideology" and (in Foucault's words) "the dominant discourses of truth," and by his or her specific field of research. The role of the intellectual is to call into question these officially sanctioned truths. Finally, Foucault and Sartre believe that the best way to challenge dominant modes of thought is with counter-hegemonic discourses that arise out of those who are oppressed in the power relationship. For Sartre, "counter-hegemonic discourses" refers to the proletariat; for Foucault, these are any discourses that challenge power where it is thought of as a seemingly stable configuration of relations.

Although these similarities are important, the differences between the two thinkers better address our question of the intellectual in the age of information.

Unlike Sartre, Foucault asserts that the *philosophe* and the technical expert are really two very different historical and political creatures. The *philosophe* --the man of letters, born from and into the ideals of the bourgeoisie, and above all else a writer-- was a product of the eighteenth through the early twentieth century. The technical expert, on the other hand, is a rather recent development; s/he is a result of the pervasive "scientization" of the twentieth century, where what were previously regarded as areas that should be guided by "wisdom" are now thought to be better addressed by scientific method. In other words, the technical expert is a product of academic disciplines, and who might be thought of as an origin and now an agent of informationalization. While the universal intellectual (and the writer) is derived from the *philosophe*, the specific intellectual (and the theorist) is the result of the technical expert (Ibid.: 128). Sartre and his generation, Foucault would argue, were the transitional period where both of these figures overlapped.

This split lineage puts the universal and the specific intellectual somewhat at cross purposes. The universal intellectual intervened in political struggles by comparing his or her universalist ideals (of democracy, freedom, equality) with the particularism of bourgeois ideology and his or her own historical situatedness. Specific intellectuals, on the other hand, intervene with their particular expertise. Because informational society increasingly depends on the talents of technical experts (or specific intellectuals), the position once occupied by the "great writer" (or the universal intellectual) becomes more superfluous. The implications of this are that instead of the universal intellectuals' two-tiered fluctuation between the whole and its parts, we have instead a proliferation of parts, of discourses, of truths. The multiplication and increasing specialization of "experts" or

"technicians of knowledge" and the fields they are employed in, Foucault argues, has not led to a larger group of people to fight the same battle. Rather, it has illuminated how many battles there are to be fought, and how different many of these struggles are. The proliferation of disciplines, we might add, has also opened up numerous little battles *within* specific fields of expertise.

Furthermore, Foucault argues, these struggles are not about something that we as intellectuals can easily define as "ideology" (and then proceed to strip away, from ourselves and from "the masses.") Recalling the situation of "agonism", Foucault states that "[i]t is not to 'awaken consciousness' that we struggle... but to sap power" (Foucault, 1977b: 208). This illusion of "awakening consciousness" was done away with during the events of May 1968, when "the intellectual discovered that the masses no longer needed him to gain knowledge; they *know* perfectly well ...and are certainly capable of expressing themselves" (Ibid.: 207).

The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather, it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse.' (Ibid.: 207-8)

The problem, Foucault claims, is that of truth(s). Since, for Foucault, power *produces* truth(s) (as well as knowledges, discourses, desires), "...theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice" (Ibid.: 208). The role of the intellectual becomes an examination of by what rules and practices that truth(s) are created and maintained. As Foucault states,

The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of... Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other

category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. (Foucault, 1980: 118)

For Foucault, the problem with intellectuals like Chomsky and Kellner is not that they are "outdated" but rather that the principles that they appeal to in order to speak --human nature, justice, democracy, truth-- are much more historically situated than they acknowledge. They constitute a "will to knowledge" which, in our culture, "...is simultaneously part of the danger and a tool to combat that danger" (Foucault, 1984: 7). In other words, we cannot depend on any of these universals to be necessarily good or liberating.

Thus the role of the intellectual is not to provide advice or guidance in the political struggles of any oppressed group and assume that this struggle will necessarily plug into a larger whole by virtue of the "universal values" which exists as rhetoric in bourgeois discourse, aspirations of bourgeois science, and unrealized (and perhaps unconscious) goals of the proletariat. Intellectuals should provide only their technical instruments of analysis to construct "a topological and geological survey of the battlefield" (Ibid.: 62). For Foucault, this means studying the discursive regimes that can produce criminology, sexuality, psychology, and (as one of Virginia Tech's new Sociology subfields is titled) "Deviance and Social Control" as fields of study and social regulation, by seeking out places of alternative "rationalities" where the discursive regime has breaks, fissures, or discontinuities: "...[T]o find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by legality in the field of illegality" (Foucault, 1983b: 211).

Since the intellectual's own domain is that of thought, he or she has a particular obligation "to see how far the liberation of thought can make those

transformations urgent enough for people to want to carry them out and difficult enough to carry out for them to be profoundly rooted in reality" (Foucault, 1988: 155). Intellectuals' jobs, then, consist of problematizing and pushing back the boundaries of what is enforced as true and rational in their particular field of expertise; of making room for the circulation of incommensurable discourses; and of becoming extremely nervous whenever any kind of "universal" is put forth. By doing so, Foucault hopes that we can keep the lines of power open and constantly problematize our own wills to knowledge.

Foucault does acknowledge that these various struggles for liberation (either from economic oppression or the shackles of subjectivity) are not simply isolated points on a map. Often, these multiple and diversified struggles have been fought (by different groups, in different ways) against similar adversaries, "namely, the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators..." (Foucault, 1980: 126) and the university itself, institutions which unfairly weight the balance of power relations, which stifle agonism. Although Foucault does not see the intellectual's position as one that should remind the masses of the "ultimate objectives of immediate aims," he does suggest that the local struggle can be made more general and

...have effects that are not simply professional or sectoral. The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that regime of truth which is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society. (Ibid.: 132)

The result is not a relationship between the whole and its parts, or the universal and its particulars, but a network of individual struggles which connect at various points on the grid of power relations. As Donna Haraway writes, this image of a

"grid" rather than "the universal" proposes politics based not on "identity" but rather on "affinity: related not by blood but by choice... avidity" (Haraway, 1991: 155).

Foucault's work, like Baudrillard's, foregrounds but refuses to resolve certain crucial tensions regarding the position of the intellectual. Baudrillard argues that by delving further into the realm of commodification, one can combat it; by becoming object (commodity, image, medium), one can combat power as it is exercised on subjects. Instead of acting (as a member of the university) as the bearer of truths (universal or otherwise), one should write in order to dismantle the pretense of truth altogether. Baudrillard is a "medium" also in the metaphysical sense, channeling messages from beyond (the political, the aesthetic, the university). Foucault's writing reflects this tension as well; how does one combat power/knowledge regimes from inside the walls of one of the biggest purveyors of power/knowledge? "...[A] fact that continues to embarrass me," he writes, "namely: that the university structure remains intact and that we must continue to fight in this arena" (Foucault, 1977b: 223).

This problem is seemingly not resolved but augmented by informationalization. As the "great writer" loses ground to the technical specialist, universities become less places to come to terms with the contradictions described by Sartre (between "universal" values and capitalist society), and more places to continually generate information. This does not merely include the social science number-crunchers and the folks over at the Turf Grass Research Center, but also "specific intellectuals" whose specificity is based in low-circulation sub-subfield journals, academic conferences, and disciplinary disputes. Despite the potentials for greater interconnectedness (within the university system and

with the rest of society) provided by information technologies, it seems that there has been instead greater withdrawal and seclusion into disciplinary specialities. Political struggle is transformed into disciplinary struggle. Foucault's move to the "specific intellectual" is an attempt to deconstruct the identity of the traditional critical intellectual and attempt to work from within the university to interrogate its very functions.

## Conclusion

In the previous chapters, we have examined the ways in which power and resistance have been transformed in the age of informationalization. Drawing on Foucault's analysis, we can argue that in part because of new information technologies, "governmentality" can be extended to more and more sectors of society. In a society which is increasingly based on information technologies and sciences, the "power/knowledge" complex is multiplied exponentially in the exercise of power. As computer science, genetic engineering, immunology, criminology, etc., become increasingly specialized, precise, and intertwined, the categorizing and hierarchizing of groups of people becomes further entrenched in and through informationalizing codes. Furthermore, knowledge is able to be collected, analyzed, and transmitted at unprecedented speed and volume, in institutions ranging from the innocuous (the local library) to the insidious (the state). Thus the potential for (or reality of?) a decentered network of surveillance and control of the population has increased at the same rate as advances in and reliance on information technology. And finally, informationalization (in this case, the mass media) has been crucial in creating, multiplying, and circulating the norms by which the deviants of society are judged, creating a "reverse Panopticon" of sorts, where those who do the watching are normalized by the subjects and objects of their gaze. Foucault contends that political resistance should focus on reinstating a situation of agonism in taken-for-granted power relations by historicizing and critiquing the "reality" on which such relations are founded.



Using Baudrillard, we can make the claim that the speed and volume of the knowledge which is collected and transmitted via computer networks is a result of its new *form*. The form of this knowledge is significant for its political implications: knowledge is now digitized, reduced to operative binaries which absorb and refigure ambiguity into a monolithic yes/no (or 0/1) format. Informationalization helps to constitute a society of simulation and the code, where the image no longer mirrors but replaces reality and becomes what is "true;" the public opinion poll is taken as the mood of the nation. Power now operates, and resistance cannot be realized, in a situation where an omnivorous code devours every kind of subject-centered political action and incorporates that action into itself. Baudrillard argues that we need a trans-subjective "politics" to be effective in this era of the transpolitical.

Drawing on insights from both theorists, what might resistance look like in the age of informationalization? And what role does the intellectual play here? One example might be found in AIDS activist groups. AIDS and the politics of AIDS ties together many of the themes explored in this thesis. First, we can examine the "nature" of the disease itself. AIDS is embedded in the scientific discourses of virology and immunology which focus on the immune system as an "'...information' generating and processing system... embedded in a theory of internally differentiated signifiers and remote from doctrines of representation and mimesis" (Haraway, 1991: 207). Immunology and virology focus on the body's ability to read and respond to coded systems of recognition; the conditions that are lumped together under the rubric of "AIDS" result from the breakdown of our internal command-control-intelligence systems.

AIDS is also a problem explicitly referenced by Baudrillard as symptomatic of our general political condition, which itself is "viral" and "fractal," like the spreading of a disease. AIDS, he argues, is in the domain of the transpolitical, where an insidious code replicates with a fatal and illogical logic. Furthermore, the AIDS battle has been and is thoroughly *mediated*: through informationalization, struggles were and are often waged against the dominant images perpetuated by the mass media; these struggles are reported and examined by the mass media; and alternatives to dominant images are presented through the media. Baudrillard might see this as part of the spectacle and aestheticization of politics: AIDS activism almost from its inception utilized spectacle, art, advertising, and communications technologies (and helped to efface the boundaries between these categories, as in the work of Keith Haring) to advance its political agenda.

However, AIDS helps us to see that while Baudrillard might be useful to describing the situation of informationalization, his conclusions for AIDS and other "transpolitical" problems are far off the mark. Although AIDS activism was certainly aestheticized by the mass media, and although Baudrillard would perhaps see the media coverage and commodified aspects of the movement (i.e. records sold with profits going towards ACT-UP) as artificial negativity which is simply another face/phase of the code, policies *have* been enacted and action *has* been taken for better treatment and acceptance of AIDS patients, and there have been a multitude of programs (government-sponsored or otherwise) promoting education for AIDS prevention. One cannot simply ignore the impact that these factors have had. Contrary to Baudrillard's analysis that AIDS is a marker of the "transpolitical," then, we can see that even in an informationalized setting,

traditional, subject-centered resistances have made an impact on political discourse and policy.

Furthermore, AIDS activism can demonstrate how Foucault's anti-essentialist agonism might produce a politics. Scientific discourses at first insisted that the virus specifically targeted the homosexual population (and in fact dubbed the condition "Gay Related Immune Deficiency"), and later expanded their explanation to taxonomize (and demonize) AIDS patients as the four H group: homosexuals, Haitians, heroin addicts, and hemophiliacs. Of these, only the "hemophiliacs" were not entrenched in power relationships which posited them as the dangerous "others" of society; gays, foreigners, and drug users were seen by many as the logical targets of such a terrifying disease because of their "deviance." Contesting the subjectivity(ies) imposed on them as "AIDS victims" disparate groups of people came together to challenge the state's and the general public's understanding of AIDS. To use Foucault's phrase, they were able to "refuse what they are" --or what they had been made-- and forge political action on the basis of anti-identity.

Finally, AIDS activism is important because while intellectuals were certainly a part of this movement, they were by no means a "vanguard." Some of the first and most important sources of information and organization for AIDS awareness were found in the alternative newspapers of the San Francisco gay community, certainly not in academic journals. Nor were intellectuals anywhere to be found when AIDS activism became mainstream nightly news (and made-for-television movie) fare; perhaps the most widely read (and now watched) book written about AIDS, And the Band Played On, was written by a journalist. However, academics who double as activists (for example, Cindy Patton and Paula

Treichler) have been important in describing some of the implications of scientific discourses which have shaped public perceptions of the disease and in contesting these constructions. As Stanley Aronowitz has argued, AIDS activism has "...virtually invented a new form of radical democracy --scientific citizenship." That is, activists were able to challenge the privileged (and informational) domains of scientific and technical knowledge (Aronowitz, 1994: 49).

In this thesis, I have sought to explore the ways in which power and resistance might need to be conceptualized differently in this period of informationalization. We have been able to see how "power" --once largely equated with the state-- has shown itself to survive the demise of the nation-state and (in Baudrillard's words) emerge in the realm of the transpolitical, or (in Foucault's terminology) become even more a part of other institutions through the proliferation of disciplines, which collect, evaluate, and categorize different sets of information. With the dissipation of traditional modes of thinking about political reality that has come with informationalization, we can no longer rely only on narratives of political resistance that depends on the subject, geographic space/territory, the author/writer, and "truth."

That does not mean that political resistance is no longer possible. As I have argued using the example of AIDS, traditional, subject-centered politics have been transformed with informationalization but they have not been rendered useless or ineffective. Furthermore, as many have pointed out, the ability for the easy transfer and alteration of information based on new technologies does not have to serve the powers that be, get sucked back into the code, or immediately inscribe another power/knowledge regime. The recycling and pastiche of images,

reappropriation and (mis)quotation of dominant discourses, and the potentiality and reality of many authors of a single text are not the passive, object-ive silences that Baudrillard attributes to the masses, but are active political strategies made increasingly possible through information technologies. All of these informationalized strategies were used in AIDS activism: from the albums which re-worked pop and dance tracks into AIDS anthems to raise funds and promote awareness to the computer networks for accessing AIDS information and electronically mediated support groups.

Of course, as I argued in Chapter One, informationalization has brought with it many (if not all) of the stratifications present in the industrialized system of power relations. AIDS activists are exceptional in that they generally are wealthier and better educated than the average citizen; this gives them the resources for and access to many informational technologies unavailable to those of lower socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the dizzying processes of commodification that have been made possible through information technologies have allowed many different kinds of identities and resistances to devolve into fashion trends or consumer lifestyles, including activists and intellectuals. As both Foucault and Baudrillard have argued, no one can be a "free agent" in academia or political activism; we are always creators and interpreters of the codes of power-knowledge. Their critiques should be constant checks on the solidification of any stable "radical" or "critical" identity, including the identity of the intellectual.

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## Vita

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