

The Matrix: From Representation to Simulation and Beyond

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Abstract

The issue of representation remains a key area of exploration for critical theory and philosophy during the 20th century. Broadly speaking, the project, in part, of post-structural and Postmodern theorists has been to explore representation and the way in which our altered stance towards it has reconfigured the scope of our understanding of the social, political, economic and artistic worlds. Specifically, Jean Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze most radically investigate what exactly such a challenge to our understanding of the world means through their concepts of simulation, which depart from its source in Plato's theory of forms. This thesis employs the Wachowskis's blockbuster films *The Matrix* trilogy as examples through which to apply Baudrillard's and Deleuze's concepts of simulation so as to probe the limits of the meaning of representation as it applies to contemporary film and critical theory.

This thesis looks at both the genealogy as well as the contemporary uses of simulation in the works of Baudrillard and Deleuze, while also expanding this analysis to include other relevant concepts in both theorists' vocabulary such as symbolic exchange, territoriality, and becoming. The works of Baudrillard and Deleuze are contrasted at various points throughout the thesis in their application to *The Matrix* trilogy so as to show not only the particularly relevant nuances of the concepts of both theorists, but also in order to expand the analysis of the Wachowskis's films so as to interrogate the value of each theory when put into practice in a contemporary, cultural film. The character analysis of *The Matrix* trilogy specifically focuses on Neo and Agent Smith, both of whom stand in a problematic relationship to the mechanics of representation; the former's identity is unstable as it operates within and from without the matrix program, while the latter's identity is, at best, indeterminate as it is self-propelled and chaotically multiplies

through viral replication. Neo is analyzed with regards to the key references made by *The Matrix* trilogy to Baudrillard's work in such scenes as the one in which *Simulacra and Simulation* appears as a prop in Neo's apartment, as well as his discussion with Morpheus that makes direct reference to the Borges fable. Baudrillard's own dismissal of the film as accurately responding to his theories is also considered. This analysis is developed further by contrasting Baudrillard's and Deleuze's versions of simulation through Brian Massumi's characterization of the latter's privileged space of resistance. Here, Baudrillard's orders of simulation and symbolic exchange are juxtaposed with Deleuze's simulation and becoming in an exploration of the figure of Agent Smith and the extent to which either theory can provide resistance to hegemonic systems in post-representational contexts.

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Introduction: *Entering the Matrix*

With its stunning box office success, recent cult-like following and the production of two subsequent sequels, the Wachowski brothers' *The Matrix* trilogy has been the subject of growing academic attention in terms of its philosophical, cultural, and religious characteristics. Discussion of simulation and virtual reality is one of the more prominent topics critiqued in the film, which has translated into a variety of publications that address the influence of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation in framing the conceptual framework of the trilogy. Such application of Baudrillard's theories to the films is to be expected given that his work on simulation is one of the more developed as well as, perhaps, one of the most familiar forms of such theorization in Western thought. The trilogy also textually supports such a connection, at least in part, in terms of making apparent that the Wachowskis were influenced by Baudrillard's work and, subsequently, intended to present their vision of simulation in the context of a futuristic, dystopian world. Evidence of the Wachowskis intention to present some form of a Baudrillardian world comes by way of, but is not limited to, the famous example of their inclusion of Baudrillard's text on simulation as a prop in Neo's apartment.

The attention placed on Baudrillard is, thus, understandable in that the chief issue presented by the trilogy is that of simulation, and the questioning of what has become for many critics the postmodern problem of the blurring of the line between the real and the illusory. Despite the numerous publications that apply a Baudrillardian version of simulation to the film in identifying the important aspects of hyperreality, implosion, and the distinction between appearance/reality, this area of criticism is still without a sustained and substantial analysis of the trilogy through Baudrillard's work. The main

problem with regards to existing scholarship, as I will discuss in chapter one, is that it relies upon misinformed readings of Baudrillard's concept of simulation in that it is, for the most part, incorrectly conflated with the postmodern so as to be in some way emblematic of the postmodern condition of contemporary society. I use Paul Hegarty's insightful analysis of how Baudrillard is all too often read in a superficial way so as to analyze science-fiction writer Joe Haldeman's rather bold and provocative but entirely unsubstantiated dismissal of graduate students working on *The Matrix* trilogy through Baudrillard's philosophy of simulation. This analysis is extended to include the articles written by Dino Felluga and Andrew Gordon, who, although they do not dismiss the relevancy of Baudrillard, nevertheless similarly conflate the problem of simulation with that of a postmodern condition. In showing how the above mentioned readings are flawed in their initial understanding of Baudrillard as well as their application of Baudrillard's concepts to the films, I explicate the concept of simulation and its manifestation in the three orders of simulacra through Gary Genosko's writings on the subject as well as, already mentioned, the work of Hegarty, both of whom provide nuanced analyses of the concept while also showing the importance of not reducing the problem of simulation to some type of larger effect of postmodernism. In chapter one, I also investigate the rather interesting, perhaps not surprising, position that Baudrillard himself takes in an interview in response to questions about the film trilogy. Although discussing the way in which the Wachowskis contacted and privately screened the sequels for him, Baudrillard distances himself from *The Matrix* trilogy by claiming that it confuses the problematic of simulation with its older treatment in Platonic discourse in maintaining a lucid distinction between the real and illusory.

Overall, chapter one is intended to be an explication of Baudrillard's concept of simulation and the key aspects that contribute to the understanding of it, such as implosion, repetition, representation, and the semiotic attributes of the precession of simulacra. I use this explication in order to interrogate the viability of the concept's applicability to the film trilogy, firstly, in the work already published in the area and, secondly, through my own analysis of particular scenes that, I believe, have a great relative importance within the trilogy. Two such scenes that I discuss are the ones involving the simulated nature of Neo's dual role of programmer/hacker in the matrix, which points in the direction of what William Bogart calls 'simveillance', as well as his encounter with the architect figure where Neo chooses his actions and decisions thereby providing a strong counter-example to reading the trilogy as exemplary of Baudrillard's simulation. While chapter one does not reach a totalizing standpoint with regards to whether or not Baudrillard's concept of simulation applies to the trilogy, it is intended to show a balanced one that both considers the strong and nuanced arguments as well as the counter-arguments. Chapter one can then be read as a mapping out of the possibilities and limitations of engaging a contemporary cultural text through Baudrillard's concept of simulation.

Chapter two departs from the standpoint that *The Matrix* trilogy operates within the scope of contemporary theorizations of the concept of simulation, but in so doing it does not lend itself to a single consolidated version of the simulacrum, such as Baudrillard's. Instead, as I intend to show in chapter two, the films engage the different theoretical stances of both Baudrillard and Gilles Deleuze. Consequently, I present an explication of Deleuze's form of simulation in the second chapter through a distinction to

Baudrillard's in the way in which both re-work the Platonic model of Idea and copy. In this distinction the importance is underlined of how both theorists move away from the Platonic model of representation and diverge along immanent and transcendent conceptions of the simulacra. This preliminary distinction will in a large part inform my application of Deleuze's simulacrum to *The Matrix* trilogy so as to show the relevance of how repetition works through maximal difference. The basis of repetition working through maximal difference can be seen in stark contrast to Baudrillard for whom the reign of the code in third order simulation predetermines signification in advance of actual events. Thus, the Deleuzian simulacrum that is continuously undergoing a process of becoming-other in self-differentiation can be effectively distinguished from the Baudrillardian simulacrum that is based on minimal differentiation – such minimal difference occurring in the form of combinatorial modulation at the level of the code. In this way, then, simulacra in Deleuze are dislodged from a framework of representation by virtue of their self-sufficient capacity in the production of new meaning in form as well as content, whereas simulacra in Baudrillard already find the possibility of representation imploded in that productions of new meaning are impossible due to the collapse of any meaningful distinction, such as the virtual and actual, or the copy and original.

Chapter two, thus, seeks to contribute to scholarship on simulation by way of applying the Deleuzian form of it to *The Matrix* trilogy, which has not yet been done. Before applying Deleuze's simulacrum to the trilogy, I explore Brian Massumi's claim that Deleuze's form of simulation, unlike the Baudrillardian one, offers the possibility of a veritable space of resistance. I am at odds with this particular reading not because of the space of resistance it offers to the Deleuzian simulacrum, but because in order to do

so Massumi positions the latter in contra-distinction to Baudrillard. Such a distinction, I believe, is relatively unnecessary in that the Deleuzian simulacrum operates on a principle of an immanent production of meaning, which, moreover, is self-sufficient in its becoming-for-itself. Having said this, Massumi's position presents a limited perspective of the Baudrillardian simulacrum by way of omitting the role of symbolic exchange. Here I refer to Genosko's and Hegarty's explications of symbolic exchange as it serves, importantly, the role of counter-point to simulation in having the capacity to re-introduce distinction into societies of simulation and, thus, reverse and interrupt the workings of the implosion of meaning. Also, important to a consideration of symbolic exchange and how it applies to cultural texts is an examination of its origins in the work of Marcel Mauss and George Bataille.

After a consideration of symbolic exchange, I explore the importance of the ideas of repetition, difference production, (non-) identity construction, Nietzschean eternal recurrence, and the concept of becoming. I present an analysis of how the image proliferation of Neo in the architect scene, which I initially discuss in chapter one, seems to present a form Deleuzian simulation but, in the end, differs from it by presenting the possible and not the virtual. It is here that I explore the relevant distinctions made by Constantine V. Boundas between the virtual and the potential and the possible and how these aspects influence the architect scene. It is in light of such distinctions that I refer back to Baudrillard by considering his criticism of immanent philosophies in which he argues that they are complicit in what he sees as a referential tautology. Immanent concepts, for Baudrillard, cannot by any means produce a self-sufficiency of productions of meaning and are, instead, continuously trapped, as it were, within the imploded space

of simulation that precludes a critical space of distance required to make such claims. Here I consider the Deleuzian response to Baudrillard through Boundas's analysis of the virtual as well as Claire Colebrook's analysis of the way in which the virtual and actual distinction differs in Deleuze's and Baudrillard's accounting of the concept of simulation.

In the conclusion to chapter two I specifically take note of how the Deleuzian simulacrum applies to the viral replication of the Agent Smith figure. The manifold Smith copies, I argue, are the most lucid example of Deleuzian simulation in *The Matrix* trilogy by virtue of their capacity to stand on their own as distinct and self-differentiating simulacra. The difference production of each Smith is clearly shown in the battle scenes where hundreds of Smiths swarm Neo from different angles, using a variety of tactics, showing different responses, etc. It is here that I see Baudrillard's third order simulation, perhaps, impossibly attempting to account for the manifold Smiths. Thus, in conclusion to chapter two I refer back to Baudrillard by briefly looking at the fractal order of simulation and symbolic exchange as proposing alternative ways of reading the Smith figure and *The Matrix* trilogy in general.

Chapter One: *Closed Circuit of the Simulacrum*

One throwaway reference that will probably be fueling easy masters' theses for a decade or so is the fact that Neo has his stash of illicit programs hidden in a hollowed-out book that is a basic postmodern text, *Simulacra and Simulation*, by Jean Baudrillard. Like the movie itself, postmodernism is a stimulating grab-bag of notions, not necessarily related to one another in any outside context. From the momentary flash of the book title, any half-awake graduate student can ride the white rabbit of postmodernism across the junkyard of the film's references to whatever conclusion seems most acceptable to his or her thesis committee.

That may be the best and final joke in a movie that is, in its deadpan seriousness, a funny sci-fi romp from beginning to end. (Haldeman 179)

The above quoted text is the conclusion of Joe Haldeman's article "The Matrix as Sci-fi".

I decided to use Haldeman's conclusion as the epigraph to the first chapter of my thesis since it is by far the most provocative statement made about Baudrillard and *The Matrix* that I have found during my research on the topic. What makes it provocative for me is the fact that he speaks directly to the context in which I am writing my thesis: I am a master's student writing my thesis on the topic of the influence of Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum on *The Matrix* trilogy. I have to admit that I was disappointed after reading Haldeman's article since his bold claims regarding Baudrillard and the postmodern are only ever discussed during the quoted conclusion. The rest of the article is devoted to the separation and definition of what Haldeman interprets as the binary terms Sci-Fi and Science Fiction. He has this to say about the distinction: unlike Sci-fi that stresses "action, thrills, a strong plot" and in the case of films "visual novelty, particularly mind-blowing special effects", Science Fiction, somewhat vaguely, focuses on "good ideas and good writing" (174-5).¹ *The Matrix* is positioned in the Sci-fi genre

¹ Haldeman further supports this distinction by claiming the following contrast: "The difference between science fiction and sci-fi is as basic as the difference between poetry and greeting verse. Both are similar in

by Haldeman, who sees it as representative of the overly-commercialized genre that focuses on entertainment value and not intellectualism (good ideas and good writing). And thus in his conclusion Haldeman will lump *The Matrix* together with postmodernism and the work of Baudrillard for which he has an evident distaste. Again, I find it disappointing that Haldeman does not substantiate his dismissal of graduate students who pursue the relationship between *The Matrix* and Baudrillard's work because even if such an analysis did not translate into a worthwhile academic project, it would, I believe, at least prove quite an engaging read for students in my position. I have to go on the assumption that Haldeman does not substantiate his claims as a result of one or a combination of the following points: 1) Haldeman has insufficient knowledge in the areas of postmodernism and Baudrillard for him to provide a critical analysis of their relation to *The Matrix* and graduate theses; 2) Haldeman believes that his dismissal of the postmodern and Baudrillard is so accurate and evident that it does not require further explanation; 3) his prejudice against such areas of inquiry is so strong that he would prefer not talking about them at any great length. Whatever (non) reasons exist behind Haldeman's decision to present his critique in such a superficial way, it is worthwhile discussing, I believe, since associations between Baudrillard and the postmodern are commonplace in cultural studies scholarship, as will become clear throughout the chapter as I review various critics who engage *The Matrix* through a Baudrillardian perspective. Having said this, I believe there is not much of a case to be made for Baudrillard being a postmodernist, or that he in some way trumpets the cause of postmodernity in his analysis of societies of simulation (hyperreality). A relevant question about Baudrillard, I believe,

appearance but different in function; in both comparisons, the commercial manifestation trumps its intellectual brother" (172-3).

is one that examines his (dis)connection with/to postmodernism and although I do not intend to engage, for example, in Haldeman's quick dismissal of postmodernism, I will clarify what I see as a misinformed reading of the direct connection between Baudrillard and postmodernism. After examining this (dis)connection, I plan to look at the appearance of the text *Simulacra and Simulation* in *The Matrix*. Is it just another element among the film's junkyard of references as Haldeman would like to maintain? I intend to show that although the text's appearance in the film does not constitute a pivotal point of analysis on its own, it is among a number of other references made to Baudrillard that illustrates some sort of connection between *The Matrix* and Baudrillard's work. What exactly is this connection between *The Matrix* and Baudrillard? I intend to investigate this question, in part, by analyzing the appearance of Baudrillard's text in the film since it marks a point from which critics launch their analyses of *The Matrix* and Baudrillard. Lastly, I will let this chapter stand on its own in response to whether or not it is worthwhile for graduate students to pursue postmodernism's white rabbit "across the junkyard of the film's references to whatever conclusion seems most acceptable to his or her thesis committee" (179).

The issue regarding Baudrillard's connection to the postmodern is a complex one, but one that already has been the focus of considerable debate since his reception in North America. Mike Gane aptly summarizes the critical interest in Baudrillard's work: "The interest in postmodernism has certainly served Baudrillard for there is enormous curiosity in establishing just what Baudrillard's position is if it is not postmodern" (Gane iix). Gane also explains that leading critics such as Douglas Kellner and Fredric Jameson, among others, were in various ways associating Baudrillard with

postmodernism during the 1980's. Before I return to a discussion of Kellner and Jameson, I will quote Paul Hegarty who, I believe, addresses quite well the relationship between Baudrillard and postmodernism in his book *Jean Baudrillard: Live Theory*. In addition to making clear that Baudrillard himself refuses any association of his work to that of the postmodern, he lists a series of points clarifying the misconception of Baudrillard as the herald of postmodernism:

Why, then, is he almost universally held to be the leader of postmodernism? The answer lies in superficiality: first, in the rise of the superficial, the apparent, in recent history; second, Baudrillard's interest in simulation, the virtual and the fractal suggests he is somehow an apologist for this condition; third, superficial readings have highlighted some ideas in isolation, and have created a presumption that what he writes, because it is free of recognizable ideological critique, is uncritical of what it sees. (Hegarty 4)

Hegarty here argues that superficial readings of Baudrillard's work are largely responsible for the presumptions of critics that Baudrillard is a postmodernist.² Hegarty's argument applies well to Haldeman's above quoted conclusion. Haldeman dismisses the relevance and applicability of Baudrillard's theory of simulation to *The Matrix* based on his presumption that, firstly, postmodernism only ever leads to ambivalent and/or irrelevant conclusions since "any half-awake graduate student can ride the white rabbit of postmodernism across the junkyard of the film's references to whatever conclusion seems

² Hegarty expands his analysis of Baudrillard and postmodernism in importantly outlining how Baudrillard's disinterest in postmodernism is the result of the concept itself being empty and, thus, devoid of a place of critique and critical distance (4). Hegarty continues the analysis with the following points: "Very occasionally, he seems to bring his own theory within postmodernism, writing for example, on the postmodern as 'surface', as simulation. This can be seen countered when he claims that the postmodern itself is simulation, and therefore falls within or beneath his own theory, rather than his theory being a manifestation of it (except insofar as everything in a simulated world is simulated...)" (5).

most acceptable[...]" (Haldeman 179). Secondly, Haldeman will automatically align Baudrillard with the superficiality of postmodernism: "a basic postmodern text, *Simulacra and Simulation*, by Jean Baudrillard" (179). It is here that the third way of reading Baudrillard superficially in Hegarty's argument applies to Haldeman's dismissal of Baudrillard and *The Matrix*, which identifies critics that presume Baudrillard's work is uncritical of what it analyses as a result of being devoid of a recognizable form of ideological critique. Baudrillard is anything but uncritical of societies of simulation. His concept of symbolic exchange, which I will explicate in chapter two, is directly connected as well as oppositional to simulation. Symbolic exchange, in short, is an essentially historic and economic dimension, derived from anthro-sociological sources, that is eminently antagonistic to simulated practices. Unlike Haldeman's unreferenced and unsupported dismissal of Baudrillard, Hegarty's argument regarding superficial readings of Baudrillard will become more evident in my discussion of Dino Felluga's and Andrew Gordon's description of *The Matrix* and its connection to Baudrillard. Their readings involve an isolation of the term simulation from the context of Baudrillard's work in the pursuit of either proving or disproving its relevance to the film.

Kellner's reception of Baudrillard, at points, also falls into Hegarty's third category of types of misunderstandings with regards to Baudrillard's position. The simulation thesis, for Kellner, fails in approaching any sort of radicalism due to what he terms as "*semiological idealism*" (Kellner 62) that not only excludes a theorization of subjectivity (human agency) and that of mediation (intervention to politics, economics, etc.), but also reflects the status quo as an apolitical theory both complicit with the hegemony of the Right and, secretly, with "aristocratic conservatism" (215).

Nevertheless, Kellner's repositioned stance on Baudrillard is, perhaps, most revealing as Gane points out that he "later altered the thesis, admitting that in reality Baudrillard's writings were generally extremely hostile to postmodernism" even though he originally claimed in *Baudrillard* (1989) that he was "a dangerous writer whose position needs to be entirely rejected" (Gane ix).

Unlike Kellner's oppositional critique of Baudrillard, Jameson, instead, borrows aspects of Baudrillard's theory in developing his own vision of the postmodern condition. One of the primary ways in which the overlap in both theories plays out is in the function that reification plays in developing perspectives on everyday cultural practices. Gary Genosko points out the importance of reification and its Marxist lineage in the work of Jameson and Baudrillard: "Both Jameson and Baudrillard agree that reification, the concept developed by Hungarian Marxist theorist Georg Lukacs in his important book *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) on the basis of Marx's analysis of commodity relations, specifically commodity fetishism, is indispensable for an understanding of the postmodern condition (Genosko, *Masters of Implosion* 113). The problematic posed by post-industrial culture, for Baudrillard and Jameson, is that of a new form of cultural space in which information practices as well as representational methods no longer serve as objective points of view from which to analyze culture, economics and politics, but rather serve alongside consumer practices as commodities themselves. As Genosko explains, it is a historical mutation of value in successive phases through which Jameson arrives at his analysis that cultural practices themselves become "direct expressions of economic activity" in "the hyperspace of multinational capital in a late form" (111), which is to say that economic and political activity becomes indistinguishable from

consumer practices. These successive phases, the orders of simulacra, also mark an overlap between the two theorists: “Jameson’s debts to Baudrillard will be obvious to anyone who recalls my overview of the orders of simulacra. The mutations of the law of value from the natural, through the market, to the structural, is paralleled by the transition from the dominant forms of the counterfeit, production and simulation” (112). In general then, an increasing degree of reification becomes apparent with each successive stage of simulacra as signification (meaning/value) becomes progressively more absorbed by simulation until the third order of simulacra, that of simulation, when they become utterly inseparable from the reign of the code. I will return to Baudrillard’s orders of simulacra later in the chapter in order to provide an explication of his theory before applying it to examples from *The Matrix*. Both Kellner’s and Jameson’s perspectives on Baudrillard confirm, as Gane pointed out, that there is substantial curiosity in determining the way in which (if at all) Baudrillard is associated with postmodernism, and, furthermore, clarify that such a connection is multi-faceted and complex, unlike Haldeman’s superficial claim that *Simulacra and Simulation* constitutes a seminal postmodern text that in turn would unfairly aim to make Baudrillard a high priest of the postmodern. Still, a simple and usually uncritical association between Baudrillard and the postmodern persists in current scholarship as will become evident in authors who take a stance on *The Matrix*.

Baudrillard’s text, *Simulacra and Simulation*, appears in an early scene in *The Matrix*. A number of critics have identified its inclusion in *The Matrix* in order to further discuss the implications of Baudrillard’s thoughts on simulation in the film, or, vice versa, in that by identifying Baudrillard’s text in the film they aim to criticize the role of postmodernity within the film, contemporary culture, and/or its application to virtual

reality. Although none of the critics use this example as dismissively – simply a “throwaway reference”³ – as Haldeman, it is, nevertheless, always used similarly as a spring board to discussing something other than Baudrillard, again, for example postmodernity. In a pre-written discussion on the film entitled “*The Matrix*: Paradigm of Postmodernism or Intellectual Poseur?”, Dino Felluga and Andrew Gordon take contrasting stances on *The Matrix*, much as the title suggests, about its intellectual (in)validity. Both authors begin their essays with the example of the hollowed-out copy of Baudrillard’s text.⁴ Felluga’s deployment of this example leads to a discussion of the postmodern condition of contemporary society as well as an inaccurate explication of Baudrillard’s theories. The connection between Baudrillard and postmodernism becomes an implicit association in his essay since Baudrillard’s thought contributes to an understanding of our current society, and since current society, according to him, “has, for better or worse, been given the name ‘postmodern’” (Felluga 71). From this implicit connection follows a brief description of postmodernism, according to Felluga, that is defined through the conditions of language, media culture, exchange value, industrialization and urbanization. However, with the exception of leaning on Marx’s theory of exchange value, only the vague term “postmodernists” is used to contextualize the above conditions in the work of, presumably, postmodern critics. This leads Felluga

³ Even though Haldeman would dismiss its appearance as a “throwaway reference” the text does have an important function in terms of plot and character development. It foreshadows and builds upon Neo’s suspicions that, as Morpheus will later explain in a conversation, “You’ve felt it your whole life, felt that something is wrong with the world” (Wachowski 300). The problem with the world as Morpheus poses it will become central to the plot of *The Matrix* as Neo pursues the truth of the matrix program, distinguishing between the appearance and reality of the world in which he lives. Secondly, the computer disk that Neo takes out of the hollowed-out version of *Simulacra and Simulation* that he sells to Choi, presumably one of his regular clients, develops Neo’s character into that of a hacker and distributor of contraband software. This will become a significant aspect of his character during the scene in which he is interrogated by Agent Smith, which I will return to later in an analysis of the scene’s simulated properties.

⁴ Andrew Gordon points out that Keanu Reeves was given the homework assignment of reading *Simulacra and Simulation*, as well as Kevin Kelly’s *Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines, Social Systems and the Economic World* (Gordon 86).

to making the following claim: “Because of these postmodern ‘conditions’, Baudrillard posits that we have lost *all* sense of ‘reality’. ‘Simulacra’ precede our every access to the ‘real’ and thus define our real for us, hence Baudrillard’s phrase, the “*precession of simulacra*” (75). Here Hegarty’s critique of the superficial connection between Baudrillard and postmodernism applies. It is through Felluga’s highlighting of the term of simulation in isolation from the rest of Baudrillard’s work, especially from the concept of symbolic exchange, that lends itself to the implicitly direct connection Felluga claims exists between Baudrillard’s version of simulation and that of postmodernism.

The key example Felluga will draw on to illustrate the connection between Baudrillard and the film is the Borges tale, taken from the text *Simulacra and Simulation*. Felluga points out that the line, “*The desert of the real itself*”, from Baudrillard’s description of the tale is quoted by Morpheus during his explanation to Neo of the distinction between the cyber-matrix and the real world. This indicates for Felluga the Wachowskis’ intentional use of Baudrillard’s concept of simulation in *The Matrix*.⁵ It is however inconsistent with third order simulacra as a form of simulation that precedes all meaning. The scene is set in what Morpheus’s crew refers to as the construct, which is a program that copies the software of the matrix and allows the crew to perform a variety of operations; the construct is shown: in the jiu-jitsu scene that teaches Neo that he can break some of the rules of the matrix; the woman in the red dress scene that teaches Neo that agents can assume the bodies of any un-plugged person in the matrix; and also in the scene where Neo and Trinity pick out weapons for the rescue of Morpheus. In the

⁵ Interestingly, Gordon expands on Felluga’s description of the inclusion of Borges’ tale in the film, “In a line from the screenplay draft, which was cut from the film, Morpheus even tells Neo, ‘You have been living inside Baudrillard’s vision, inside the map, not the territory’ [*Matrix Unfolded*, www.suspensionofdisbelief.com/matrix/faq.html]” (Gordon 86).

particular scene that Felluga refers to, the construct is used by Morpheus to represent the dystopian world of 2199 that is scorched following the human-machine nuclear war, which in turn is used to show Neo the distinction between this real world and that of the illusory one within the cybernetic matrix that closely approximates our current world – set, however, in 1999, the year in which the film was produced. This example leads to Felluga’s following conclusion about simulation, based on Borges’ tale: “According to Baudrillard, what happened in postmodern culture is, to some extent, the reverse: our society has become so reliant on models and maps that we have lost all contact with the real world that preceded the map. Reality itself has begun merely to imitate the model, which now precedes and determines the real world” (72). The deployment of the Borges tale and its application to the construct program is inconsistent with Felluga’s conclusion, despite its accuracy, regarding the third order of simulacra. The key problematic is that the Borges tale like that of the construct program does not illustrate Baudrillard’s version of simulation; instead they deal with lower levels of simulacra, the counterfeit and/or the industrial, where all meaning has not yet been completely absorbed and preceded by simulation or the model. Hegarty explains the Borges tale and its complicity with representational devices:

The empire stands as a natural sign for the territory, implying identity with the latter by virtue of being an Empire, rather than nation or state. The development of maps suggests the counterfeit – the possibility of making a copy as good as the ‘real’ sign (the cartographers counterfeiting the development of the Empire itself by the Military, for example). The drive to total accuracy suggests that truth is possible, and can be *produced*. (Hegarty 58-9)

The same analysis can be equally applied to the example of the construct, since both examples not only retain, but strengthen the distinction between the real world and that of appearance, or that which is simulated. Morpheus uses the construct program as a copy through which to faithfully render a representation of the dystopic real world of 2199. Thus, the accuracy with which Morpheus represents the real world to Neo shows, like the Borges tale, the possibility of truth and its production. Because the construct scene is either feigning the truth (first order simulacra) or faithfully representing it (second order simulacra), it is for this reason that it is incompatible with simulation (third order simulacra). In contrast to the strategies of counterfeiting or reproduction, simulation anticipates the unfolding of events and is thus always already transcendent, which makes every action, gesture, etc. issue from a model – as Baudrillard would say, it is neither real or unreal. In short, the question of a real or an original, like a distinction between an authentic and fake, has no space in which to occur within simulation (unless, of course, it is a simulacrum of a simulacrum) since everything is always already programmed and accounted for in advance of it occurring.

In part two of their pre-written discussion about *The Matrix*, Gordon provides his rebuttal to Felluga's article. Gordon's primary concern in the article is to discern whether or not the Wachowski brothers created a film that was equal to their artistic intentions, one which combined elements of a good action movie with substantial intellectual content.⁶ His final conclusion makes the claim that the Wachowskis failed in creating a film with a good mixture of intellectual and action content: "although *The Matrix*

⁶ Felluga bases this analysis on a interview published in the *American Cinematographer*: "Our main goal with *The Matrix* was to make an intellectual action movie. We like action movies, guns and kung fu, but we're tired of assembly-line action movies that are devoid of any intellectual content. We were determined to put as many ideas into the movie as we could" (Felluga 86).

entertains and gives us plenty to think about, especially its potent and paranoid central metaphor about the falsity of ‘reality’, I would have to term it a flawed attempt at an ‘intellectual action film,’ in which spectacle sometimes overrides or contradicts the ideas it proposes” (Gordon 101). While quite accurately, I believe, insisting that Baudrillard’s ideas are just one layer among the film’s intertextuality⁷, Gordon emphasizes how the Wachowski brothers misappropriate Baudrillard: “when a film alludes to a theorist whom it apparently misunderstands or intentionally simplifies, it loses some of its intellectual cachet” (100). His reasoning is two-fold: 1) unlike Baudrillard’s pessimism regarding the hopelessness of challenging hyperreality, *The Matrix* “offers a solution to the problem of simulation” (88); and 2) the film never presents a consolidated or total vision of simulation: “There are two worlds in the film – the dream world of the Matrix, which is a computer-simulated version of 1999, and the real world of the postapocalyptic Earth of 2199 – and there is a strict division between the two” (99). Gordon’s analysis, despite being a flawed reading of Baudrillard that renders ironic his accusation of the misappropriation of Baudrillard by the Wachowskis (if his accusations are accurate, then his flawed explication of Baudrillard’s work equally constitutes a misappropriation), should nevertheless be considered more closely since the two mentioned points have relevant implications for *The Matrix* and Baudrillard’s theory. Before addressing these two points of critique, I would like to highlight two specific areas where Gordon incorrectly diagnoses Baudrillard’s theory.

Firstly, Gordon contextualizes the content of Baudrillard’s work through critiquing what he sees as an extravagant and fantastic rhetorical style: “One needs first to

⁷ The film’s intertextual elements range, for Gordon, from Messianic themes found in Christianity and *Star Wars* to its borrowings of the concept of cyberspace from the cyberpunk genre, in particular from Gibson’s *Neuromancer*.

place Baudrillard's sweeping, often hyperbolic pronouncements – that simulation, or what he calls 'hyperreality,' has completely taken over the contemporary world – in perspective" (88). This perspective, for Gordon, is one of seeing Baudrillard's work as a science fiction form of theory that ought to be read metaphorically as an exaggeration along the same lines as the work of George Orwell (88). Gordon's critique of Baudrillard's rhetoric, while relying exclusively on the work of Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., does not offer any specific details or examples that would show the validity of the claim. Instead, the implicit assumption at work in Gordon's critique is, as Hegarty points out, reading Baudrillard's work as uncritical of what it analyses as a result of lacking an identifiable form of ideological critique. Gordon may very well be correct, as he later argues, that the elements of simulation, hyperreality, and virtual reality in Baudrillard appeal to science fiction filmmakers (89), but his uncritical denouncement of Baudrillard's theory through its rhetoric is unpersuasive and, at best, reflects Gordon's own biases.

Gordon's botched reading of Baudrillard continues when he shifts the context of critique from rhetoric to that of content. He argues that Baudrillard's theory of simulation is grounded in a misinformed analysis of virtual reality and cyberculture: "Ironically, although Baudrillard has been a tremendously influential critic of virtual reality, he has little knowledge of cyberculture but began his critique of hyperreality by attacking TV advertising and theme parks years before the digital revolution that brought about the Internet, the PC, and virtual reality" (89). The inaccuracy of such a reading is partly due to the fact that Gordon only refers to the texts *Simulacra and Simulation* and *America*, which in isolation from his other works can easily produce a skewed

interpretation. I would insist that it is simply incorrect that Baudrillard began his analysis of hyperreality though critiquing just TV advertising and theme parks. For instance, his first book *The System of Objects* talks at length about technology and its effects on consciousness, specifically seen in the gadget and the way in which its metafunctionality (its accessories, degree of automation, motivations of fashion) distorts in surpassing functionality plain and simple: “Too many accessory functions are introduced from the point of view of which *the object answers no need other than the need to function*; it answers, in other words, to the functional superstition according to which for any operation there is – there must be – a corresponding object, and if none exists then one must be invented” (Baudrillard, *System* 113). Deploying a form of structural linguistics, Baudrillard shows how the relationship between object and human has been displaced by a variety of factors; there is no longer a determined use-value for an object as its role is far more implicated in a culturally coded system of meaning where an object’s sign value and its prestige become key aspects of its meaning. An object’s denotations are, for the most part, eclipsed by connotations in what Baudrillard will term empty functionalism: “The fact remains that it *works*. As a sort of dangling parenthesis, as an object detached from its function, what the ‘gizmo’ or the ‘thingummyig’ suggests is a vague and limitless functionality – or perhaps better the mental picture of an imaginary functionality” (114). An example of such secondary or empty functionalism is the tail fin on cars that in reality weighs them down, but that projects an ultra modernism in resembling the aerospace technology of rockets and simultaneously the natural aerodynamics of fish. As Hegarty astutely points out, the imaginary function of objects in conjunction with the idea of the freedom of choice was really ahead of its time:

The ideology of freedom of choice is further maintained by the targeting of specific groups by particular advertisers, and promulgated in, for example, specialist magazines or websites. As Baudrillard was writing his analyses of consumer society in the late 1960's, the appeal to consumers that imagine themselves to be 'different' was less pronounced than today (he mentions 'personalization' of objects, but the massive incorporation of 'alternatives' offered by subcultures had yet to occur). (Hegarty 16)

In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard adds additional layers of interpretation to his analysis of the object and its role in a culturally coded system. One of the more important points raised in this text regards cultural recycling, where objects begin, for Baudrillard, to operate according to models and combinatorial variants as opposed to, for example, fulfilling a new practical need in society: "The ludic represents a very particular type of investment: it is not economic (useless object) and not symbolic (the gadget/object has no soul), but consists in a play with combinations, a combinatorial modulation: a play on the technical variants or potentialities of the object – in innovation *a playing with the rules of play*, in destruction a playing with life and death as the ultimate combination" (Baudrillard, *Consumer Society* 114). Cultural recycling, its dependence on models and combinatorial variants, will play a large part in defining the later mechanics of simulation for Baudrillard. The examples shown from Baudrillard's first two texts are not exhaustive in nature in terms of delineating the history of his thought, but they do show how Baudrillard was concerned with technological innovation and accompanying changes in perception, and how these elements in turn affected society. In conclusion, the metafunctionality of objects, the ideology of freedom of

choice, and combinatorial modulation very much displace, for Baudrillard, a direct correspondence of object to person – the object is no longer simply being used for an intended purpose. Thus, it is technology and perception and not, as Gordon would have it, cyberculture and virtual reality that characterize Baudrillard’s vision of hyperreality. Indeed, Hegarty will stress this point especially with regards to the importance of considering perception in an analysis of Baudrillard when addressing Kellner’s critique of Baudrillard being technologically deterministic:

This (media) technology is what ensures the ‘precession of simulacra’, the precedence of simulation over all that already existed as real, and it is not technology as such that determines, but models, and part of this cannot be separated from advances in technology (the idea of the model being inextricably linked with production). In other words, it is not only technology, but the alteration in perception that accompanies (*not* results from) it, that ‘determines’ our mode of perception. (Hegarty 60)

And although Hegarty’s response does not directly address Gordon’s assertion that Baudrillard’s theory of hyperreality is simply “hyperbolic and apocalyptic pronouncements” or a “visionary SF poem or film” as he borrows from critic Csicery-Ronay Jr., it does go far in showing that Baudrillard’s theory is far more sophisticated than Gordon would make it out to be – especially given the importance of giving sufficient consideration to the role that technology and perception bear for contemporary culture.

The second area where Gordon fails to accurately present Baudrillard’s ideas is in his analysis of simulation itself. The first example Gordon gives of Baudrillard’s theory

of simulation is the Borges tale. He deploys this example inaccurately in repeating Felluga's error (as analyzed above); that is, this example still retains a clear separation between representation and simulation. Such a distinction is simply impossible when dealing with the third order of simulacra, because simulation has already absorbed representational techniques:

So it is with simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. The latter starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Conversely, simulation starts from the *utopia* of this principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference.

Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself as a simulacrum. (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 11)

Still, the more glaring error in Gordon's explication of simulation is his conflation of the phases of the image with the orders of simulacra, which leaves Gordon incorrectly working with the fourth order of simulacra.⁸ Although there is some debate as to whether a fourth order of simulacra actually exists in Baudrillard's work, that is whether the fractal order stands apart from the third order of simulation,⁹ it is in the context of Gordon's article a fundamentally different issue. I will return to the question of a fractal

⁸ Gordon writes the following: "Baudrillard speaks of four orders of simulation: in the first, the image reflects reality; in the second, it masks reality; in the third, "it makes the absence of a profound reality"; and fourth, "it has no relation to reality whatsoever, it is its own pure simulation"" (Gordon 89).

⁹ There is debate as to whether the fourth order of simulacra, the fractal, ought to be designated as an order to itself. The clearest description of the fractal order occurs in Baudrillard's *Transparency of Evil*, but is already suggested, very briefly, in earlier texts such as *Simulations*. Hegarty summarizes the fractal as follows: "The new fractal dimension(s) is one where value becomes arbitrary: random and fixed at the same time. This means that all can become political, but not properly so, all can be sexual, but not fully, all can become economic or aesthetic. All of this occurs at the same time, and it becomes impossible to separate out previously discrete areas of human activity (Hegarty 64).

order in my discussion of Agent Smith, and the difference in the theories of Baudrillard and Deleuze with regards to the concept of repetition. *Simulacra and Simulation*, however, presents three orders of simulacra and, possibly, a complementary theory of the successive phases of the image. With regards to the phases of the image and the orders of simulacra, Hegarty explains how they can be seen to operate in conjunction:

The second phase is equivalent to the counterfeit, the third to production, and the fourth is Baudrillard's main concern (simulation). The four phases, like the three orders of simulacra, signal that there is an element of progress towards the final stage. The fourth phase of the image is equivalent to the third order of simulacra, but the use made of the phases insists less on assigning a set, historically determined place for each element of development. The phases of the image also install 'basic reality' as a category that is always within simulatedness. (Hegarty 51)

The orders of simulacra, in addition to having historical contingency, also demarcate an increasing degree of reification with each successive stage of simulacra where signification (meaning and value) becomes progressively more absorbed by simulation until the third order of simulacra, that of simulation, when they become utterly inseparable from the structural logic of simulation.

The following is a brief explication of the orders of simulacra. The first order of simulacra, the counterfeit, occurs during the Renaissance and is based on a natural law of value. The counterfeit order marks a decisive historical shift for Baudrillard in that society ceases to organize itself in a cruel hierarchy where social rank is static and social relations are determined by obligation and reciprocity. Against an utterly transparent

society, the Renaissance brings with it a form of social mobility as, for example, fashion proliferates into distinctive signs that are no longer responsible for a necessary reciprocity, but instead play on appearances in making reference to a real world without obligatory relations (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 84-5). For Baudrillard, then, what he will call “the metaphysics of natural law” marks a decisive turn from exclusively obligatory and transparent signs in the Feudal order to a democratized and arbitrary sign in the Renaissance with a playing with the boundaries of reality and appearance. The natural simulacrum feigns an obligatory bond to a closed system of blood, rank and caste, but in actuality is emancipated and enjoys the freedom of new combinations, arbitrary connections, and counterfeit values. It has the power to imitate nature through materials like stucco, a single and equivalent substance that mimics “velvet curtains, wooden corniches, charnel swelling of the flesh” (88). Indeed, stucco can be seen to foreshadow the second order of simulacra, the order of production. Similar to the equivalency that stucco exudes during the Renaissance, the order of production operates according to a market value where serial repetition and mass equivalence marks the transition to the Industrial Revolution. Unlike the counterfeit where the distinction between an original and a copy is played out or is at least presupposed, the second order of simulacra operates on a principle of effacing difference through the mechanical reproduction “of two or of n identical objects” (94-5). The only remaining origin to consider during the Industrial Revolution is that of technique, that is the possibility of serial reproduction. Baudrillard deploys the critiques of Benjamin and McLuhan here to show that the principle of production wins over “productive force” in the way that art and media mutate structurally so that reproduction becomes both origin and final goal in terms of social value (98-99).

Art and media (cinema, photography, fashion, publicity, information and communication) form industrial simulacra in that the social value of these media is found in their serial reproduction, that is the event where medium wins over the message and productive force (100). The industrial simulacra is most evident for Baudrillard in what he sees as reproduction, the conveyor belt and “dead work” eclipsing “live work” abolishing any sense of history where “social finality is lost in the series. The simulacra wins out over history” (100).

The third order of simulacra, simulation, operates according to a structural logic. Unlike the Industrial Revolution, which was characterized by reproducibility or, in other words, a quantitative equivalence in production, the post-industrial age is marked by distinctive oppositions (101). Pre-coded binaries feign referential distinctions and allow for simulation – *the metaphysics of the code* – to operate internally without recourse to outside signification. The neutrality of the sign is explained by Genosko as an internally produced, structural manipulation of signification: “Baudrillard thinks that the generalization of the sign form takes place through the process by which the code controls the production of meaning and difference through a ‘structural manipulation’ that is irreducible to a conscious psychology of the use of signs for social differentiation, which is to say, for the sake of a lived distinction” (Genosko, *Masters of Implosion* 114). The fact that Baudrillard’s third order of simulation produces meaning and difference internally functions not only to simulate a world of representation and references, but, more importantly, it serves to stabilize the structurality of the code in its anticipatory inertia. The anterior finality of the code makes it transcendent in that all distinctions are already determined in advance. His examples include questions and answers for political

and public polls, tests, surveys, referenda, etc. The question always anticipates the answer:

The entire communication system has passed from a complex syntactic structure of language to a binary system of question/answer signals – perpetual testing. Tests and referenda are, as we know, perfect forms of simulation: the question induces the answer, it is *design-ated* in advance. The *referendum*, then, is *only an ultimatum*: the unilateral question is precisely not an interrogation anymore, but the immediate imposition of a meaning which simultaneously completes the cycle. Every message is a verdict, delivered like the verdict of polling statistics. (Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange* 62).

Simulation, thus, finds itself as an almost absolute structural law in society where material and conceptual referentiality (use-value, exchange-value, etc.) has lost its capacity to operate within a representational discourse, and instead of labour power, fashion, conscious/unconscious thought, and acts of resistance functioning in opposition to a economic and political systems, models of simulation absorb each of these facets as merely another commodity form. The structural code of simulation overwhelms signification to the extreme boundary where all value becomes equivalent, that is the state where the sole referentiality of a sign is to be found in the equivalence of yet another sign ad infinitum – the signifier of another signifier, etc. It is the death of the real as Baudrillard will put it:

The systems of reference for production, signification, the affect, substance and history, all this equivalence to a ‘real’ content, loading the sign with the burden of ‘utility’, with gravity – its form of representative equivalence – all this is over

with. Now the other stage of value has the upper hand, a total relativity, general commutation, combination and simulation – simulation, in the sense that, from now on, signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real (it is not that they just happen to be exchanged against each other, they do so *on condition* that they are no longer exchanged against the real). (6-7)

Without recourse to an external point of view (epistemological, historical, etc.), the code works temporally, pre-programming every signifying element so as to ensure the code's absolute command and control. Again, pre-coded distinctions circulate in simulation, but only in such a way as to mask the fact that referential meaning has collapsed.

Combinatorial variants are ceaselessly reproduced in an endless cycle and are always already generated from abstract models.

Returning to Gordon's critique of the Wachowski brothers' use of Baudrillard, it is ironic that he would claim that the brothers misappropriated Baudrillard's theory of simulation in *The Matrix* while, evidently, repeating the very same error. His analysis is flawed both in his attack on Baudrillard's rhetoric as well as the incorrect conflation of the orders of simulacra with the phases of the image. Still, Gordon's other two points of critique, I would maintain, have a significant impact on reading *The Matrix* through Baudrillard's version of simulation. His first point argues that *The Matrix*, unlike Baudrillard's pessimistic work, offers a solution to the problem of simulation.¹⁰ This line of argument is questionable. Gordon would here seem to be implying that presenting a

¹⁰ This point is further contextualized in an analogy to Gibson's cyberpunk, but what really interests me about his argument is the fact that he sees no solution to simulation in Baudrillard: "*The Matrix* taps into this new mythology to invert Gibson's notion of cyberspace, creating not a New Jerusalem but a cyber-hell. In a virtual prison of the Matrix, human beings are maintained in a permanent dream state, unaware they are merely slaves of the machine. Just as *The Matrix* plays on but inverts Gibson's notion of cyberspace, so it also plays on Baudrillard's ideas of simulation, but without Baudrillard's pessimism, because *The Matrix* offers a solution to the problem of simulation whereas Baudrillard believes there is none" (Gordon 88).

watered-down version of Baudrillard's theory in *The Matrix* allows the Wachowskis to present a solution to the problem of simulation that is otherwise unavailable in a more accurate reading of Baudrillard. If this is the implication that Gordon would like to assert, then it still does not reconcile with the reading that he provides of simulation or hyperreality. An always already totalizing version of simulation would be necessary, I believe, to reach the conclusion that no solution is possible. And yet, Gordon clearly insists that Baudrillard's simulation is not entirely totalizing: "Baudrillard's central idea is that, in the postmodern world, the real has been almost totally displaced by the simulated" (Gordon 89). Despite the fact that this conclusion is reached through Gordon's flawed reading of the Borges tale and the orders of simulacra, it still makes for a conclusion that is worth considering. I would like to address the question of whether *The Matrix* "apparently misunderstands or intentionally simplifies" (Gordon 100) Baudrillard prior to returning to the issue of whether Baudrillard's version of simulation is really hopeless, and, thus, pessimistic, perhaps even nihilistic.

According to Gordon, the people imprisoned inside the cybernetic matrix who live in hyperreality provide one example of simulation that occurs in the film.¹¹ The conceptual backdrop of *The Matrix*, of having humanity enslaved by machines and harvested for body heat, holds more significance, I believe, for the visual and plot thematics of the film than it does for its intellectual cachet, as Gordon would put it. This conceptual context in lieu of a Baudrillardian reading should not necessarily emphasize

¹¹ Gordon's description of the simulation of the film is as follows: "*The Matrix* deals with what Baudrillard would call 'the fourth order of simulation,' with no relation to reality whatsoever. That is, the everyday world in which Neo exists is totally false, a dream world with no substance and no relation to 2199 (although it does strongly resemble the present-day world of the movie's audience). The machines have created a virtual reality simulacrum of the world of 1999, a world which no longer exists in the future" (91).

points regarding cyberspace and cybernetics in that the occupants of the matrix are cybernetically hacked on a micro-molecular level, but it should, instead, stress that this form of absolute command and control plays out in the mundane repetition of the events of the matrix, which effaces the possibility of difference since the program constructs in advance the possibilities of social movement and interaction. The prisoners of the matrix are perpetually living in the simulated world of 1999, but on the outside the rebels are living in the real world of 2199. Thus, Gordon's second point of critique that *The Matrix* maintains a clear separation of the two worlds, the 1999 version of the matrix and the real, post-apocalyptic one of 2199, indeed has merit. This point of critique is also mentioned by a number of other critics. David Webberman, for instance, makes a convincing claim in his essay that the film readdresses the older philosophical problem of the difference between reality and illusion as seen in Plato's cave allegory, and Descartes's *Meditations*. However, in order to make this claim Webberman points out in a footnote the appearance of *Simulacra and Simulations* in the film, and proceeds to directly associate Baudrillard with the postmodern without any explication of Baudrillard's work. The postmodern problem, for Webberman, then becomes the blurring line between reality and simulation which he sees as simply not a new philosophical problem. Moreover, contrary to Baudrillard's theory of simulation, Webberman provides an incorrect definition of simulation that at the core includes representation: "Simulation is a means of representing, in a life-like manner, objective processes and subjective experiences that may or many not have existed before, typically with the aid of computers" (Webberman 230). Similar philosophical lines of argument concerning Plato and/or Descartes in relation to *The Matrix* are presented by a number of

critics in *The Matrix and Philosophy*, and *Exploring the Matrix: Visions of the Cyber Present*. Although there is a clear connection between Baudrillard's theory of simulation and the work of Plato, the former, I believe, does introduce new and different philosophical problems. I will return to the connection between Baudrillard and Plato at the beginning of chapter two in outlining how Baudrillard and Deleuze begin with Plato's theory of the simulacrum, but develop the concept along different vectors.

Perhaps the most intriguing critique of the kind of simulation occurring in *The Matrix* comes directly from Baudrillard himself who, similarly to the mentioned critics, interprets simulation, at least initially, as being confused within older philosophic ideas. In an interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Baudrillard explains how *The Matrix* falls into Platonic categories:

Yes, but already there have been other films that treat the growing indistinction between the real and the virtual: *The Truman Show*, *Minority Report*, or even *Mulholland Drive*, the masterpiece of David Lynch. *The Matrix*'s value is chiefly as a synthesis of all that. But there the set-up is cruder and does not truly evoke the problem. The actors are in the matrix, that is, in the digitized system of things; or, they are radically outside it, such as in Zion, the city of resistors. But what would be interesting is to show what happens when these two worlds collide. The most embarrassing part of the film is that the new problem of simulation is confused with its classical, Platonic treatment. This is a serious flaw. (Genosko and Bryx 2)

Baudrillard, quite humorously, will add that "*The Matrix* is surely the kind of film about the matrix that the matrix would have been able to produce" (2). The insistence on

maintaining a separation between the world of the cybernetic matrix and a world of the Zion resistors precludes *The Matrix* from presenting a vision of simulation for Baudrillard. The problematic for *The Matrix*, it would seem, is that it presents a duality of categories; the real (or the more real) being defined by the existence of a material Zion and its resistance to the represented simulation of the virtual reality of the matrix program. In short, simulation here is still caught up within a contrast or distinction to representation in that we understand the simulated reality of the matrix program only through the real experience of the resistors, such as when Morpheus explains this exact distinction to Neo within the construct program. However, Baudrillard hints at how *The Matrix* could have deployed or more closely resembled simulation. This, he says, would have taken a collapse of the distinction between the two worlds. Such an implosive force would be that of simulation since the two poles of reference would necessarily lose their distinctiveness, plunging the entire system into a space that lacks referentiality, which effectively would remove choice.

It is worth noting that the film trilogy does expand on the structure of the cybernetic matrix at two particular points, but this still does not add sufficient meaning, for Baudrillard, to redeem the matrix from its entrapment in a Platonic dualism. For instance in *The Matrix*, we find out from Agent Smith during his interrogation of Morpheus that the current version of the matrix is not the first. Smith explains how the first version of the matrix was rejected by its occupants due to its utopian configuration: “Did you know that the first matrix was designed to be a perfect human world? Where none suffered, where everyone would be happy. It was a disaster. No one would accept the program. Entire crops were lost” (Wachowski 361). Following the same theme, *The*

Matrix Reloaded introduces the architect of the matrix, whom Baudrillard calls a pseudo-Freud figure, who in conversation with Neo explains to him that he, the saviour of humanity, the “one”, is already a pre-programmed anomaly in the matrix that supplements an unbalanced part of the matrix equation.¹² The architect explains it as follows:

Your life is the sum of a remainder of an unbalanced equation inherent in the programming of the matrix. You are the eventuality of an anomaly, which despite my sincerest efforts I have been unable to eliminate from what is otherwise a harmony of mathematical precision. While it remains a burden assiduously avoided, it is not unexpected and thus not beyond a measure of control [...]. (*The Matrix Reloaded*)

The pseudo-Freud expands his explanation of the programming of the matrix to state that it extends to include the world of Zion and its resistance. His explanation would initially seem to indicate the exact collision of the two worlds that Baudrillard proposes is necessary for *The Matrix* trilogy to achieve third order simulation. Such a prospect would see the programming of the cybernetic matrix working in totality where not only the occupants of the matrix but those seemingly radically outside it, as Baudrillard notes, are equally implicated within the anterior finality of pre-programmed, combinatorial models. I will return to this example after considering Baudrillard’s objection to this scene. He will object to this scene as being indicative of simulation, but in so doing will,

¹² Baudrillard describes the scene as follows: “The pseudo-Freud who speaks at the film’s [*The Matrix Reloaded*] conclusion puts it well: at a certain moment, we reprogrammed the matrix in order to integrate anomalies into the equation. And you, the resistors, comprise a part of it. Thus we are, it seems, within a total virtual circuit without an exterior” (Genosko and Bryx 3).

importantly, shift the context of analysis from one of the content of *The Matrix* to that of the film and its complicity within the global economy of cultural products:

Here again I am in theoretical disagreement (laughter). *The Matrix* presents the image of a monopolistically total force of the current situation, and in this way collaborates in its refraction. Basically, its dissemination on a world scale is complicit with the film itself. On this point it is worth recalling Marshall McLuhan: the medium is the message. The message of *The Matrix* is its own diffusion by an uncontrollable and proliferating contamination. (Genosko and Bryx 3)

Baudrillard argues that the content of *The Matrix trilogy* – its value as a cultural text – finds its expression through the front loading of the techniques used to promote the release of the films. Such an example is to be seen in the way the Wachowskis attempted to solicit publicity material from Baudrillard. He explains his contact with the Wachowskis in an interview with Hegarty: “They asked me to do something on the new one, actually. They got in touch when they started filming it. There had been something on the simulacrum in the first one. This time they wanted to set up a private showing for me, and for me to write something on it. That kind of thing professionalizes you though – I’m supposed to be in the virtual so it’s me you need to go and see. Always the same misunderstanding [...]” (Hegarty 140). Although Baudrillard refused the Wachowskis, the intention behind the offer undoubtedly was one that strove to add intellectual cachet to the publicity surrounding the release of the trilogy. Another example of the promotional techniques deployed in the release of *The Matrix* sequels, which Baudrillard refers to as the dissemination of the film on a world scale, is the way in which *The Matrix*

Revolutions was released on an unprecedented, global scale. The BBC News reported the following prior to the film's release: "It will be shown simultaneously in 65 countries in a campaign never before attempted with the release of a movie" (BBC News). The film hit screens in major cities such as London, Los Angeles, New York, Moscow and Tokyo at the same time. According to the same news report, the issues of popularity and piracy were behind the global release of the film: "Distributors Warner Brothers say they want to capitalise on the trilogy's popularity and deter potential pirates." Indeed, it is quite clear why Baudrillard opts to diagnose the value of the film trilogy as being symptomatic of consumer culture. Although the values of big-budget films, especially Hollywood blockbusters, are always implicated from the beginning in an economy of cultural products, this seems to especially be the case with *The Matrix* trilogy. The films' medium and message are deeply intertwined within the economic strategies of promotion and deterrence, making the trilogy, first and foremost, a consumer commodity.

William Merrin expands on Baudrillard's perspective of the trilogy being implicated in a global economics of consumer products by analyzing the American context of filmmaking:

Of course, to the best of our knowledge, our world is not a virtual reality illusion and so *The Matrix*'s central revelation has its own shelf-life. If this simulation pales, therefore, upon leaving the cinema, Baudrillard's does not, for his claims about our simulacral world are more radical than those offered in *The Matrix*. For him, simulacra are efficacious as the real: they are not unreal media productions (which is, after all, what *The Matrix* still proposes), rather they are precessionary, coded, and materialized models that come to invade and invest all areas of our

lives, experience and behaviours as the real, such that we too reproduce them as reality. (Merrin 9)

Merrin, quoting Gane, will go on to conclude that Baudrillard was ahead of both *The Matrix* and Gibson's cyberpunk in diagnosing the symptom of the matrix in America's cinematography: "Only America has this power of the cinematographisation of everyday life, he says, '*It is there that I discover the 'matrix' of the cinema*' (Gane 1993 34). Here, two years before Gibson, and seventeen years before the Wachowski Brothers, Baudrillard theorizes 'the matrix'. This matrix, however, is the simulacral power of the image to invade, invest and assume the force of the real. The matrix is the simulacrum" (9). Baudrillard and Merrin would seem to agree that the central concern with analyzing *The Matrix* is positioning it within a political economy, where the film's relevance is chiefly seen as an effect of the media structures that produced it. *The Matrix*, thus, becomes a simulacral effect of promotional strategies, such as advertising, for Baudrillard and a simulacral effect of American cinema for Merrin. However, Baudrillard's shifting of the context of analysis for *The Matrix* from that of plot structure and characters to that of a political economy, however accurate the conclusions reached, still, I believe, raises the question of how to characterize the textuality of the film. In other words, if Baudrillard is correct in asserting that *The Matrix* is not an example of third order simulation, then what other strategies can be used to describe what occurs in the films?

Returning to Baudrillard's critique of the architect of the matrix, it is telling that he refers to McLuhan in order to shift the context of his analysis away from a textual reading of the film. If we retain his method of criticism but do not follow his shift in context, then we arrive at a description of the second order of simulacra. The description

offered of the industrial simulacra echoes his critique of *The Matrix* in its use of McLuhan, but also in the significance placed on the concept of technique.¹³ Indeed, as Baudrillard explains, *The Matrix* is complicit with its own message and seems determined to proliferate as such. Again, unlike having pre-coded meanings already circulating in advance, the matrix program is in the process of reproducing its truth, and in its proliferation seeks a quantitative equivalence of its message, which positions it in the second order of simulacra, and not in the third. If the message of the matrix is its own diffusion as a type of serial reproducibility, then its technique operates according to market values where the mechanical, or more precisely the cybernetic, production of serial repetition and mass equivalence gets played out. Here a contrast that Baudrillard makes between the second and third orders of simulacra is worth pointing out:

And here it is a question of a reversal of origin and finality, for all the forms change once they are not so much mechanically reproduced but even *conceived from the point-of-view of their very reproducibility*, diffracted from a generating nucleus we call the model. Here we are in the third-order simulacra; no longer that of the counterfeit or an original as in the first-order, nor that of the pure series as in the second. Here are the models from which proceed all forms according to the modulation of their differences. Only affiliation to the model makes sense, and

¹³ McLuhan and Benjamin are used extensively in showing the importance of the industrial simulacra and how it differs from Marxist critiques. The significance of the industrial simulacra is first and foremost identified in its technique of reproduction that wins over live labour and, thus, the technique, for Baudrillard, can no longer be understood as a productive force. Here he writes that “Technique as medium dominates not only the “message” of the product (its use-value) but also the force-of-work that Marx wished to make the revolutionary message of production. Benjamin and McLuhan saw this matter more clearly than Marx; they saw the true message: *the true ultimatum was in reproduction itself*. And that production no longer has any sense; its social finality is lost in the series. The simulacra win out over history” (Baudrillard *Simulations* 100). Still, it would be incorrect to exclusively equate McLuhan as a theorist of the second order of simulacra, since his work importantly reappears during Baudrillard’s discussion of the relevance of tactility in the third of simulation.

nothing flows any longer according to its end, but proceeds from the model, the “signifier of reference,” which is a kind of anterior finality and the only resemblance there is. (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 100-01)

That the programming of the matrix has complete command and control over both worlds signals its technique of the reproduction of its own truth; this technique is both origin and final goal for the matrix. Consider for instance what the architect says to Neo: “Which brings us at last to the moment of truth where in the fundamental flaw [the unbalanced equation of the matrix] is ultimately expressed and the anomaly [Neo] revealed as both beginning and end” (*The Matrix Reloaded*). The matrix program hinges on the serial reproducibility found in second order simulation, as indeed Neo, according to the architect, has already been both origin and finality for the matrix on five previous occasions: “The matrix is older than you know. I prefer counting from the emergence of one integral anomaly to the emergence of the next, in which case this is the sixth version” (ibid). It is precisely this technique, seen as the goal of the matrix as both its origin and finality, that defines the function of the matrix programming in the film. This technique of the matrix can be clearly distinguished from the workings of third order simulacra. Indeed as Baudrillard points out, “And not only shouldn’t we look to technique or the economy for the secrets of the code; it is, contrary, the very possibility of industrial production that we should look in the genesis of the code and the simulacra” (*Simulations* 101). Analysing *The Matrix* from the standpoint of the second order of simulacra, and not the third, supports Smith’s explanation of the failure of the first utopian matrix program, where the programmers would still be in the process of attempting to efface difference through the reproduction of the same, “of two or of n identical objects” (84-5).

The programmers' interest in creating a perfect version of the matrix still lies in the realm of production, or more precisely, a consistent re-production of equivalent and reproducible codes that would be accepted on a mass scale by the occupants of the matrix, and not rejected as was the case with the first utopian version. In short, the sort of mass failure of the utopian version of the matrix would not occur in third order simulation simply because such a failure would already and necessarily have to be temporally accounted for in advance and, henceforth, issue from the code. It is reasonable to assume from Smith's description of the loss of entire crops of human battery cells – the energy source upon which the machines depend and the reason for the existence of the matrix – and, subsequently, the necessity to create a *better* or *more effective* matrix program, that indeed the matrix program is struggling with its origins and ends in order to build the perfect matrix program – one that is totalizing in its closed-circuitry. And in fact if we believe the architect's claim that there have existed six versions of the matrix following the failure of the utopian one, then the matrix has successfully repeated a consistent reproduction of the program.

Second order simulation also reinforces Felluga's and Gordon's reading of the construct program through the Borges tale, where the distinction between the real world and the cybernetic one is still, at least, presupposed. The construct program shows a simulacrum of the real post-apocalyptic world of 2199, and, thus, feigns to reproduce the real through a "representational imaginary" (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 3). The very existence of the construct program, that is, the possibility of using it so as to represent a more or less real distinction between the two worlds in *The Matrix* shows that the construct program is still functioning as other to the matrix program. This other, the

construct program, effectively provides a standpoint from which it is possible to differentiate the pole of the real world from that of the illusory one. The construct program, then, has to be necessarily seen as something that escapes or even supplements the coding of the matrix, and in this sense shows the impossibility of reading the matrix according to the third order of simulation, since recognizable distinctions do not exist in third order simulation in lieu of all distinctions having imploded into the make-up of the transcendent function of the code. In other words, there is no longer any space under the reign of the code in which to make distinctions; only pre-coded binaries circulate that issue directly from the closed-circuitry of the code.

Finally, the scene with the architect, while initially supporting a reading for simulation through the anterior finality of the matrix's code that seemingly extends to engulf both worlds, stops short of achieving third order simulation. Neo and the resistors consist of an anomalous and a not fully controllable variable within the matrix code. It is as if the architect claims that Neo has no choice in the matter of his anomalous DNA being reinserted into the code, which in turn would complete the closed circuit of the matrix, indeed, making it an example of the reign of the code. Despite the architect's best efforts, as is revealed in a self admission, to eradicate the anomaly it nevertheless remains a variable in the matrix program. This variable is not unexpected phenomenon as the architect claims but only a certain "measure of control" applies to it (*The Matrix Reloaded*). It is clear from the architect's admission that the programming of the matrix is not in complete command and control over both the virtual world and the real one. Moreover, when Neo resists being reinserted into the code of the matrix, the pseudo-Freud begins depending on coercive rhetorical strategies – for example, appealing

desperately to Neo that the fate of humanity hinges on his decision to re-enter the matrix's code: "the relevant issue is whether or not you are ready to accept the responsibility for the death of every human being in this world", or phrased somewhat differently, "Failure to comply with this process will result in a cataclysmic system crash killing everyone connected to the matrix, which coupled with the extermination of Zion will ultimately result in the extinction of the entire human race" (ibid). Again, the matrix is describing second order simulacra through its technique; that is, the reproduction of its truth as origin and finality as opposed to already working according to pre-coded, simulated scenarios where, evidently, no choice would exist for Neo. Choice still remains in the matrix program despite the architect's best efforts to conceal it through his rhetoric: "There are two doors. The door to your right leads to the source and the salvation of Zion. The door to your left leads back to the matrix, to her [Trinity] and the end of your species. As you adequately put, the problem is choice' (ibid). Third order simulation is not involved whenever individual choice exists, since choice constitutes a critical space from which a distinction can be made between reality and illusion. Baudrillard explains the phenomenon of choice with regards to simulation in a fragment from *Cool Memories IV*: "The – always more or less funereal and melancholy – charm of the simulacrum is that it allows us not to choose between illusion and reality" (115). And yet quite clearly Neo chooses the door on the left. He risks the fate of humanity, and refuses the architect's offer of being reinserted into the code. This example, thus, has to be seen as a coercive and persuasive offer made by the architect figure; a proposed conditionality (second order simulation) as opposed to a foreshadowed inevitability (third order simulation).

The above examples strongly support the viability of reading *The Matrix* trilogy through Baudrillard's concepts. And although the trilogy does not necessarily deploy a consistent version of third order simulacra, it does very much hint at the possibility of such a version occurring. Because as Baudrillard makes clear, the orders of simulacra are not entirely exclusive, but rather depend upon conditional shifts between the orders: "Each order submits to the order following. Just like the order of the counterfeit was abolished by that of serial production (we can see how art has passed entirely into the realm of the "mechanical"), so in the same way the entire order of production is in the process of tumbling into operational simulation" (*Simulations* 101). In this way, *The Matrix* trilogy serves as a perfect example through which to conceptually diagram the extreme limit of second order simulacra, one that almost approaches a lingering in the in-between of the second and third order of simulation. In fact, the scene that shows the interrogation of Neo by Agent Smith shows two points of transition, however brief, between the second and third orders of simulation: 1) a type of simulated surveillance that occurs in advance; and 2) a semiotic indeterminacy in the character of Neo.

The interrogation of Neo by Agent Smith is an early scene in *The Matrix* that follows Neo's failed escape from the corporate tower in which he works for the software company, Metacortex. His failed escape plan was coordinated by Morpheus, identified as a well-known terrorist who is wanted on a variety of criminal charges, who earlier contacted Neo in his apartment by hacking into his desktop computer. It is in this earlier scene that the audience sees the other side of Neo's life, the one involving his night life of creating and dealing in contraband software. Neo's character is developed in a duality: the Thomas A. Anderson who works for a software company during the day, and the Neo

who is a hacker by night. This scene is foregrounded as the viewer passes through one of a series of television sets, each separately showing the same Neo sitting alone at a table in an empty room. Agent Smith slowly enters the rooms, and begins methodically unraveling a string that opens the manila dossier entitled “Anderson, Thomas A.” This scene is one of the more significant ones in the trilogy, since it raises the issue of surveillance in connection to simulation. The television screens are seemingly recording and transmitting what occurs in the room. Also, Smith’s dossier reveals a surveillance file that he deliberately flips through as he explains to Neo: “As you can see, we’ve had our eye on you for some time now, Mr. Anderson” (Wachowski 291). This dossier, presumably, contains the complete records of Mr. Anderson’s actions from birth to present, which indicates a form of total surveillance in advance. William Bogart explains how simulated surveillance is different from its more traditional practices:

[T]he entire field of observation and all its elements are projected into a scene where everything is capable of circling back in on itself, where the offender is “netted” or captured in advance, the violation is already committed, the sentence already handed down, the time already served. Simulated surveillance is like a Mobius strip, with neither an inside nor an outside surface, or a Mandelbrot function that opens onto endless, nested levels of control, recording, speed traps. (Bogart 29)

Neo’s dual life of programmer and hacker inside the matrix is simulated in that surveillance precedes his actions. Thus, the way in which Neo hacks code and sells it as contraband software, which ought to designate a subversive act against the matrix, turns out to be a simulated gesture. As Agent Smith explains further to Neo, “It seems that you

have been living two lives. In one life, you are Thomas A. Anderson, program writer for a respectable software company. You have a social security number, you pay your taxes, and you help your landlady carry out her garbage” (Wachowski 292). Agent Smith flips a page in the surveillance dossier prior to continuing, “The other life is lived in computers where you go by the hacker alias Neo, and are guilty of virtually every computer crime we have a law for” (292). Neo is not captured and interrogated, as we find out from Smith, as a result of his illegal hacking activities, but rather because he has been contacted by the terrorist Morpheus. It thus follows that if Neo had not been contacted by Morpheus, the matrix would have let him continue hacking and dealing in illegal software. This example shows the type of simulated surveillance that Bogart hypothesizes, an utterly transparent system of surveillance:

The simulation of surveillance does not exactly mean the “illusion” of surveillance. Modern surveillance is not so much “illusory” as it is elevated to a kind of higher reality or, more exactly, pushed to its spatial and temporal limits by simulation. Simulation always aims for the “more real than real”; as a technical operation, we shall see, it works to *eliminate*, not foster, illusion. The better a simulation, the less awareness there is of the artifice that identifies it *as* a simulation [...] The simulation of surveillance, then, is not about creating an illusion of surveillance, but about rendering indiscernible, if you will, the fact of its illusion, viz., that control by observation technologies always involves, to some degree or other, the diminution of the *appearance* of deception. (Bogart 31-2)

The interrogation scene in *The Matrix* does show this type of perfect transparency of surveillance in society that is already simulated in advance. Neo's criminal activities are, thus, already identified and observed in advance but are seemingly disregarded since they pose no direct threat to the programming of the matrix – in other words, his activities have already been accounted for within the reign of the code. He is (already) guilty, as Smith points out, of just about every computer crime for which the matrix has a law. Furthermore, the duality of Neo's character is illusory. Although he is already guilty of every possible computer crime within the matrix, these actions are still ambivalent in terms of not having a genuine effect within or against the code. This shows the semiotic implosion that occurs at the level of the code in third order simulacra: it illustrates the indeterminacy of distinctions, actions, thoughts. There is no social determinacy behind the illusory distinction of Neo as software programmer and software hacker: both are equally active and passive as they are complicit and subversive within the reign of the code. The reign of the code, as Baudrillard explains, erases all identifiable meanings. There is no longer a correspondence between the referent and sign of Neo's actions since it is simply a play and exchange of signifiers within the code; referents that would presuppose distinctive values no longer exist in third order simulacra: "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, or their parallel meanings – all of that is erased" (104). Indeed, helping his landlady take out garbage, paying his taxes, and hacking code are all equally complicit within "the macro-molecular code of command and control" (104).

The example of the matrix's surveillance in advance, and the indeterminacy of Neo's duality both show a moment in *The Matrix* where third order simulation occurs. However, both examples quickly revert to the cruder, second order simulacra. Again, it is important to note that Neo is not brought in as a result of any of his own actions, but rather is interrogated as a result of being contacted by Morpheus. This point of contact marks the exact juncture at which point surveillance in *The Matrix* reverts from its most perfect form of being simulated in advance to its more traditional and cruder forms, with the interrogating agent and his paper dossier. These crude tools present an illusory example of simulated surveillance. This makes *The Matrix* a less compelling example of surveillance than, as Baudrillard suggests, *The Minority Report* and *The Truman Show* in terms of engaging a form of simulated surveillance that occurs in advance of events. Similarly, the indeterminacy of Neo's dual character is replaced by determinacy when he is unplugged from the matrix. There is a very distinct determinacy behind the actions of the unplugged Neo: he becomes the "one," the savior of humanity. The point at which he is unplugged from the matrix marks another reversion from third order simulacra to that of the second in the film. And again, it is made clear during his conversation with the architect where he chooses which decision to make. He rejects the architect's coercive arguments in refusing to be reinserted into the code of the matrix, and thus shows that there is a definite determinacy behind his thoughts and actions. His resistance against the architect does not issue from the code, which is to say that his resistance is not already accounted for within the code, but rather his actions are legitimately subversive in interrupting the closed-circuit of the code. In opposition to his illusory duality where Neo was already a part of the "the genetic code: an erased record, unchangeable, of

which we are no more than cells-for-reading” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 105), his resistance against the architect has to be seen as a signifying element outside of the programming of the matrix’s code. Indeed, he introduces conflict and change into that code.

In conclusion, *The Matrix* trilogy does not provide a consistent vision of any single order of simulation from Baudrillard’s work. Instead, examples such as the matrix’s technique of reproducing the truth, the construct program’s ability to represent distinctions, and the architect’s coercive rhetorical strategies demonstrate the operation of second order simulation in the trilogy. Other examples such as the illusory duality of Neo’s character and the matrix’s simveillance point to brief moments in the trilogy as examples of third order simulation. It is important, I believe, to not just insist on either the existence or non-existence of any single aspect of Baudrillard’s theory, especially when concerning the orders of simulation. It is far more important to consider the function of each order, if not its applicability, to a particular text. Herein lies the problem for critics such as Felluga and Gordon whose reading strategies are singularly determined to either prove or disapprove the appearance of simulation in *The Matrix*. Their reading strategies are limited in that, to paraphrase Hegarty, they are superficial in highlighting one or a few ideas in isolation – in this case, simulation (Hegarty 4). Moreover, Baudrillard emphasizes the importance of the transition from one order to another: “Each order submits to the order following” (Baudrillard, *Simulations* 101). And yet, it is not only a linear progression of the orders, “the precession of simulacra”, at stake in the work of Baudrillard. His analysis of Disneyland, for example, that although is indicative of an example of hyperreality, nevertheless shows a mixed operation of each of the orders of

simulacra: “Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation” (23).

If the orders are (or can be) entangled, given particular circumstances, then *The Matrix* trilogy is such an example.

Chapter Two: *Becoming, simulacra, and symbolic exchange in The Matrix* trilogy

It is not only in Baudrillard's work that one finds a developed theory of simulation. Deleuze's work also develops a theory of simulation, but significantly one that differs in a number of key areas from that of Baudrillard. Since simulation is one of the chief concerns presented in the film trilogy, and since the application of Baudrillard's theory to the trilogy showed significant examples of simulation but not a comprehensive version of it, I plan to deploy Deleuze's theory of simulation so as to expand the list of examples of different kinds of instances of simulation occurring in the films. As I showed in chapter one, Baudrillard's orders of simulacra are useful with regards to reading specific scenes in *The Matrix* trilogy but such an application also showed that no single order was conceptually sufficient in accounting for all the examples of simulation in the films. This second chapter then extends the analysis of the first in applying a different theory of simulation in the effort of analysing further elements of simulation in the films. This reading strategy, specifically in relation to the figure of Agent Smith, will, I believe, show the conceptual limits of each theory through engaging with and, thus, accounting for varying events in the films through the two types of simulation theories.

There are a number of points of intersection between Baudrillard's and Deleuze's theorizations of the concept of the simulacrum that aid in showing the different trajectories through which each theory unfolds. The simulacrum, for both theorists, intersects the Platonic distinction of Idea-copy and it is from this initial contact that both Baudrillard and Deleuze rework the distinction so as to arrive at different definitions of

the categories of the copy and model. The copy and model are key terms in the contemporary theorization of simulacra. The reworking of these terms marks the point at which both theorists will shift the concept of the simulacrum away from a context of representation. This shift, however, occurs according to divergent vectors: Baudrillard's theory of simulation becomes transcendent, whereas Deleuze's theory becomes immanent. This divergence along transcendent/immanent lines is further evidenced through the way in which the two forms of simulation interact with the concepts of repetition, difference, and territoriality.¹⁴

The initial moment of intersection of Baudrillard's and Deleuze's formulation of simulation appears in the overturning of Plato's model of representation, which is based on the distinction between the Idea and copy. The model of representation, as Massumi shows, functions according to the mechanics of internal similarity: "The terms copy and model bind us to the world of representation and objective (re)production. A copy, no matter how many times removed, authentic or fake, is defined by the presence or absence of internal, essential relations of resemblance to a model" (Massumi 2). The Platonic model of representation is a transcendent structure through which all signifying elements are attributed derivative value from the Idea: to echo Massumi's comments, the copy for Plato is always defined by its internal and essential resemblance to the transcendent model. The copy is only ever in possession of the values inherent to the Idea in a secondary and, thus, derivative manner. Put in a semiotic context the Idea and copy function within the model as a signifying chain where the value of any particular copy

¹⁴ Daniel W. Smith's "Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two directions in Recent French Thought" was quite helpful in outlining how such a contrast between two philosophers could be made along a transcendent/immanent distinction, as well as quite aptly pointing out a number of the key areas in Deleuze's thought that constitutes within an immanent network of concepts.

hinges on that of the Idea. Such a structural schematic would see the formation of the sign – meaning constructed through representation – through the correlation of copies (signifiers) and the Idea (transcendental signifier). The good philosopher in this case would be the one who could best approximate the goodness of the Idea. It follows that a copy as signifier hinges upon the degree of separation from (its correlation to) the Idea whereby it is imbued with its meaning as value (its representational quality as a sign); that is, the scale upon which the value (the goodness) of a copy is judged is based on how closely it approximates (its presence or absence on a correlative scale) the quality inherent to the Idea. The function of the Platonic model is, thus, to be found in the way in which it supports and depends upon the very possibility of the reproducibility of any particular copy, which is to say that the proper effect of the signifying chain is to populate the world with signs that in some way re-present the transcendent term of the Idea. If the initial movement within the Platonic model is one of internal resemblance whereby a copy can be said to possess an attribute in a secondary way, then the second movement is one of negative difference whereby the relative value of copies is distinguished amongst themselves and against the Idea. The second movement, that of negative difference, would appear, for example, when two competing philosophers sought for the Idea goodness. It is not only an internal resemblance to the Idea (the way in which each philosopher possesses goodness) at play in such an example, but also the negative difference between the two, or however many, competing philosophers (how much goodness each philosopher possesses in relation to the other). It is also this negative difference through which the simulacrum will be opposed to the copy but not to the Idea, since the very value of the simulacrum can not be posited in a positive way as it

does not pass through the Idea within the Platonic ontology. In this sense simulacra occupy a strange place within the Platonic formulation in that when seen as signs they refuse to derive value from the Idea, which is a break from the signifying chain of the structure of the model as well as a break from the mechanics of reproduction and representation. Unlike a copy that is a secondary possessor of the value of the Idea, simulacra only presuppose or, better yet, feign to possess such value in a secondary way. It is a difference between the good and the bad copy, as Jonathan Roffe notes: “in the *Sophist*, Socrates discusses the means with which we might distinguish between the philosopher (the good copy), who is in search of the Good (the model), and the sophist (the simulacrum of the philosopher – the bad copy), who uses the same skills as the philosopher in search of profit or fame” (250). Simulacra operate on the principles of dissimilarity and subversion as opposed to copies that operate on the principles of similarity and complicity. It could be said that simulacra threaten the structure of the model in proposing a potential to make volatile and thus unstable the Platonic ontology. The threat that simulacra pose to the model would be one of instability in that they jeopardize the accuracy of representation – simulacra haunt the mechanics of representation since the validity of the model itself comes in to question the instant a simulacrum is confused with a copy. It is in this sense that Deleuze will make the following remarks: “as a consequence of searching in the direction of the simulacrum and of leaning over its abyss, Plato discovers, in the flash of an instant, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notations of copy and model” (*Logic* 256). It will be the radical potentiality of the simulacra, for Deleuze, that will mark his divergence from the Platonic model. In contrast, Baudrillard will collapse

the triadic distinction of Idea-copy-simulacra in his third order of simulation. Where Deleuze will focus on the maximal difference posed by the simulacra, Baudrillard will focus on the maximal sameness posed by it. Both strategies depart from the Platonic model in divergent directions that are, however, still consistent in moving away from a representational ontology.

In response to the Platonic Idea-copy model Baudrillard will deploy his anti-representational concept of implosion, which is a structural force that sees the collapse of all poles of reference – the structure of the Platonic formulation folds in on itself with the result of a collapse in the distance and hence distinctiveness of the Idea and the real. Implosion in the work of Baudrillard bears witness to the reign of the code in third order simulation that replaces the Platonic model, but unlike the latter in which the Idea espouses a traceable origin of authenticity by which all other copies are judged, the code erases all possibility of an original and authentic frame of reference. The code is the end of representation. It precludes the possibility of representation since signs lose distinctiveness. All signs are indeterminate in the code as Baudrillard makes clear: “Finality no longer belongs to the term; there is no longer a term, nor a determination. Finality is there beforehand, inscribed in the code” (*Simulations* 108-09). From the standpoint of the transcendent code, the process of signification always already issues through and from it so as to preclude not only the possibility of a space of representation but also the sense of ‘play’ in post-structuralism. The implications of Baudrillard’s reworking of the Platonic ontology are clear: where degrees of similarity for copies and dissimilarity for simulacra constituted variance with regards to referential signification in the Platonic model, degrees of variation vanish (similarity and dissimilarity) in the reign

of the code. All signifying elements are already accounted for within the anterior finality of the code. The resemblance of copies and the perversion of simulacra have no space in which to operate under the code's regime, since, simply put, there is no longer a distinction to be made between that of copies and simulacra. All simulacra are copies, and vice versa. The code precludes the occurrence of actual change in that it already encapsulates all possible permutations of signification, which in turn leaves the entire system of reference weightless as only copies of copies of copies, based on a structurality of combinatorial modulation, issue from the code. As Massumi points out, "To the syntagmatic surface of slippage there corresponds an invisible paradigmatic dimension that creates those minimally differentiated signs only in order for them to blur together in a pleasureless orgy of exchange and circulation. Hidden in the images is a kind of genetic code responsible for their generation" (1). The minimally differentiated signs indeed exchange and circulate but only against and between themselves, which forms the syntagmatically closed circuit of the code. It is in this way that the code of Baudrillard's third order of simulacra constitutes the transcendent term in simulation in that all (non) signifying terms operate according to a strict repetition of the same. Change only occurs at the level of the structurality of the structure of the code (Baudrillard's theory of combinatorial modulation and cultural recycling as analyzed in chapter 1). Therefore, without the possibility of variance ever being introduced into the signs that issue from the code, signification endures a ceaseless repetition without difference. Here the code is seen as a totalizing structure in Baudrillard's transcendent ontology of the hyperreal. All meaning is always already derivative of the totality of the structure of the code.

Repetition of the same without difference defines the mechanics of the totalizing structure of third order simulation. This type of repetition is seen in *The Matrix* in the example, from chapter one, of the simulated nature of Neo's dual character. Both his illegal hacking operation and his legitimate programming job are indeterminate signs in the code of the matrix. Neither sign can be said to surpass a surface level of signification since neither is more subversive or productive in terms of undermining or being complicit with the code. All meaning is always already trapped in the anterior finality of the programmed matrix code. Indeed, Agent Smith's file on Neo reveals clearly how he is already guilty of every crime in the matrix world, but no action against Neo is necessary simply because none of his actions have a possibility of undermining the functioning of the matrix – in other words, his actions have no recourse to an external point of reference outside of the programming of the matrix. It is a perfectly transparent form of Bogart's concept of simveillance. The counter example to the indeterminacy of the code, as discussed in chapter one, is Neo's encounter with the architect of the matrix, where, indeed, Neo chooses to pursue a particular action: he refuses the architect's coercive arguments and risks the fate of humanity by choosing to not have his anomalous DNA reinserted into the matrix code. His decision forces change within the code; the failure of the code to anticipate every possible action or event in advance is shown. The matrix code ceases to exemplify the code of Baudrillard's third order of simulacra since Neo's action/decision proved to be outside of the totality of the matrix programming, which is not possible during the reign of the code since meaning is indeterminate.

The indeterminacy of signification is another method through which it is possible to characterize the transcendent structure of Baudrillard's third order of simulacra.

Massumi describes the concept of indeterminacy and its effects on the individual and contemporary culture: “Both linear and dialectical causality no longer function, therefore everything is indetermination. The center of meaning is empty, therefore we are satellites in lost orbit. We can no longer act like legislator-subjects or be passive like slaves, therefore we are sponges [...] A circuit has been created between the real and the imaginary, therefore reality has imploded into the undecidable proximity of hyperreality” (5-6). The idea of (in)determination is a key point through which Massumi contrasts Baudrillard’s and Deleuze’s versions of the simulacrum and their effect on contemporary culture: whereas Baudrillard’s form of simulation cannot but espouse a nostalgic cynical lament qua its utter lack of determination and decidability in terms of depicting the hyperreal conditions of post-industrial society, Deleuze and Guattari’s work on simulation opposes futility in opening “a glimmer of possibility”. Massumi concludes on this contrast with the following point: “Against cynicism, a thin but fabulous hope – of ourselves becoming realer than real in a monstrous contagion of our own making” (7). Before returning to the contrast between Baudrillard’s and Deleuze’s theory of simulation, I believe it is important to point out that Massumi’s critique of Baudrillard – his work lacking forms of resistance with which to oppose a world of hyperreality – omits the role of symbolic exchange. It is worthwhile, I believe, to give consideration to the role of symbolic exchange in Baudrillard’s theory of simulation since it is very much intended to provide a particular type of resistance. It is here, also, that I would like to return to Gordon’s claim (outlined in chapter one) regarding the Wachowskis’s misappropriation of Baudrillard.

Arriving at a similar conclusion as Massumi does regarding the cynicism of Baudrillard's theorization of the hyperreal, Gordon will claim that the Wachowskis either misunderstand or intentionally simplify the work of Baudrillard because unlike Baudrillard's supposed pessimism that sees challenging hyperreality as a hopeless cause *The Matrix* provides a solution to the simulation problem (Gordon 100). Evidently, the conclusion to *The Matrix* trilogy is a victory for humanity in that they propose a peaceful coexistence with the machines of the matrix, and, thus, it can easily be seen as a moralising story of hope for humanity in challenging a dystopian future controlled by machines. It is altogether clear, however, that *The Matrix* trilogy, with the exception of the brief moments of simveillance and Neo's dual character (as analyzed in chapter one), does not present a consolidated version of hyperreality, and therefore the conclusion drawn by Gordon regarding Baudrillard's form of simulation as trapped both in cynicism and hopelessness is unfounded in that it relies on the inconsistent parallel between Baudrillard's and the Wachowskis's texts. The pessimism assertion in Gordon's reading of Baudrillard, I believe, remains misguided even if considered on its own – apart from the inconsistency of the parallel between Baudrillard and the Wachowskis. Gordon's critique of Baudrillard maintains a degree of superficiality in that it fails to include a discussion of symbolic exchange. The error of making such an omission is made apparent by Genosko who outlines the significance of symbolic exchange as the key counter-point to simulation: "Baudrillard has taken the semiological principle that all value issues from the code and turned it into a nightmarish principle in which everything appears to be written in advance (hence the precession of simulacra); all signals are suspended in matrices embedded in codes. Symbolic exchange is Baudrillard's answer to

whether or not there remains any hope of opposition” (Genosko, “Baudrillard” 33). It is precisely this answer of symbolic exchange, as Genosko points out, that is integral to any non-reductive discussion of whether or not resistance is a veritable possibility in the work of Baudrillard – this point becomes increasingly important when contrasting Baudrillard to Deleuze, which I will return to after a discussion of symbolic exchange. That Baudrillard is morally ambivalent or even proclaiming a nihilistic vision of contemporary culture is an all too easy and far too prevalent conclusion reached by contemporary critics – both Hegarty’s insightful analysis of this phenomenon as well as the Matrix critics discussed in chapter one are worth recalling. To avoid an unwarranted and superficial dismissal of Baudrillard’s work, symbolic exchange has to bear some critical weight with regards to analyzing and applying the concept of simulation since quite clearly much of Baudrillard’s early work is devoted to an analysis of the varying modes of symbolic exchange that by definition stand in contrast to simulation.¹⁵ The relevant question qua resistance, if it is to be posed, is one that scrutinizes the concept of symbolic exchange as a response to simulation in the effort of diagnosing how it challenges the structure of hyperreality and, more importantly, whether or not it constitutes a veritable challenge to the totality of simulated reality.

Symbolic exchange, for Baudrillard, serves as a counter-point to simulation in that it is a chaotic force capable of interrupting, however briefly, the closed-circuitry of third order simulation. The sources to which symbolic exchange is indebted are critical to an understanding of the function of the concept. It is partly based on the socio-anthropological work of Marcel Mauss, for whom the theory of gift-exchange was

¹⁵ Hegarty provides a comprehensive outline of the way in which symbolic exchange develops in the work of Baudrillard from its early traces in *Consumer Society* to its most developed form in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (Hegarty 34-9).

essential to the analysis of the potlatch practices, the Kula, of the people of the Trobriand Islands. The concept of symbolic exchange is also indebted to Georges Bataille's work *The Accursed Share*, which further theorizes the concept of gift-exchange in Mauss's *The Gift*. The gift, for Mauss, is evidence of an extra-material dimension of an economy that precedes the development of the barter system, and the later economics of mercantilism and capitalism. This is a particularly significant point for Baudrillard given that the procession of simulacra are historically contingent and as such develop according to the socio-economic mutations of western culture, as I have discussed in chapter one. Of central importance to the function of the gift is that it serves as a vehicle through which one acquires or loses social status (prestige, honour, and rank) through the reciprocal obligation that binds the gift giver and gift receiver (and gift returnee) into the following circuitry: to give, to receive, and to return with interest. Again, the importance of this type of reciprocity is situated in its extra-material dimension that functions asymmetrically in (non-) relation to normalized economic practices. Hegarty explains this point as follows:

We have forgotten gift-economies, as exemplified in the potlatch. This is an adversarial form of gift-giving where to give creates an obligation to receive and also return the gift. This returned gift must be bigger and better than the first, and can even extend to the destruction of your own offering. There can be no equivalent to modern property in such a system, and all exchange takes place in the context of religious, political, ritual, social interaction, as none of these has yet acquired an autonomous existence. (34)

The extra-material dimension of the gift, as Hegarty shows, is an autonomous sphere that collects its power as a force of resistance since it is foreign to dominant modes of signification in the practices of economics, politics, and culture. This dimension of the gift is laden with further significance in the work of Bataille. As Bataille makes clear, the circulation of the gift can not be reduced to an act of acquisition alone:

It would be futile, as a matter of fact, to consider the economic aspects of potlatch without first having formulated the viewpoint defined by *general economy*. There would be no potlatch if, in a general sense, the ultimate problem concerned the acquisition and not the dissipation of useful wealth. (68)

For Bataille, the general economy is defined by the perpetual expenditure of energy that works outside of modern economic practices where production is overly dependant on consumption. The perfect example of such pure expenditure is found in the concept of solarly where life organizes itself around the sun's absolute disbursement of energy. To paraphrase Bataille, the sun radiates and dispenses energy without receiving any in return (28). As Hegarty explains, pure expenditure for society in the general economy of Bataille translates to sacrificial and wasteful acts: "Bataille extends this theory to sacrifice, arguing that the fundamental principle of the universe consists of waste, destruction, death, eroticism and transgression, rather than truth, wealth, security. There must always be an 'accursed share' to keep the system going" (34). Again, the general economy has to be read as an event occurring outside of modern economic systems. It is a wasteful event – for example a destruction of useful goods – that functions beyond the principles of productivity and utilitarianism. It is the aspects of obligatory reciprocity in

Mauss and the destruction of wealth in Bataille that forms the extra-material dimension of the gift that Baudrillard will look to as the counter point to simulation.

Reciprocal obligation and sacrifice, for Baudrillard, constitute the key concepts behind symbolic exchange through which the world of simulacra can be interrupted, reversed, or even cancelled. Genosko summarizes a picture of hyperreal society: "In the order of simulation, general connectivity rules the day, and in this new kind of postperspectival space, there has been a complete loss of critical distance that would allow for a distinction between the real and its models. And this entails the transfiguration of the real into the simulacral" ("Baudrillard" 33). Against the closed-circuitry of the reign of the code where, as Genosko points out, simulation precludes recourse to a space of critical distance (the foundation of resistance and representation) through the loss of individual and collective perspective, symbolic exchange re-introduces a perspective outside of the confines of simulation through which a critical distance is achieved in the reciprocity found in the extra-material dimension of symbolic exchange. The determinacy of symbolic exchange, its reciprocal obligation, and acts of destruction interrupt the closed circuitry of the hyperreal where social relations had hitherto been indeterminate and passive, lacking in perspective and critical distance.

Although highly controversial, Baudrillard's most recent example of symbolic exchange occurred during his response to the event of September 11th, 2001. In this event it was the power of the counter-gift that introduced reversibility and challenge to the closed circuit logic of post-industrial economics. Genosko explains how the twin towers, in the 1970s writing of Baudrillard, constituted the "divine form of simulation" where "competition and referentiality were eclipsed by correlation and replication: The

twin towers are signs of closure and redoubling, not of a system that can still surpass itself with original edifices. The twinness of the towers remain for Baudrillard the ‘perfect embodiment’ of today’s world order” (“Spirit” 34). It is this form of binary logic that signals the dominance of hegemonic global capitalism. The two suicide planes that embedded themselves in the towers gave a gift of destruction and waste to the closed-circuit of global capitalism. The dominance of the logic of hegemonic capitalism was interrupted so that the twin towers were forced to respond in kind: to commit suicide. The destructive gift of the planes is further explicated by Genosko: “What made suicide subversive and, in reverse, made all subversion suicidal, was that it escaped the monopolistic control over death exercised by contemporary societies of simulation through their sanctioned institutions (which prohibit suicide and either try to exclude symbolic relations or simulate them)” (“Spirit” 34). The destructive gift of the suicide planes in turn forced the twin towers into symbolic relations: they responded in kind and with interest by collapsing, committing suicide themselves. Herein lies the power of the extra-material dimension of symbolic exchange in releasing forces capable of overturning the hegemony of hyperreality. It is important to point out that the response of the twin towers (to respond in kind with suicide) is not a real phenomenon. In his response to the 9/11 event Baudrillard carefully phrases the response of the towers through an “as if” conditionality. Genosko makes clear the importance of this conditionality in the work of Baudrillard:

[Symbolic Exchange] is beyond the real/imaginary distinction, beyond all disjunctions and separations and splittings that follow from the irreversibility and individuality of death against life, the fascination with which it brings to an end,

but in the unnerving modality of ‘as though/if’: the twin towers collapsed by themselves as though in a response in kind to the challenge of the suicide planes. In a nutshell: disjunctivity with any content is shattered by acts of symbolic exchange because it takes away the ability to separate the terms in a structure in which each term is the imaginary of the other (the real is thus an effect of all such disjunctions). (“Spirit” 98-99)

It is in this way that symbolic exchange does not occur in what is considered the real. Symbolic exchange, as Genosko clarifies, plays at the level of forms in such a way that it can not be reduced to a simple disjunction of terms such as the separation of the terms of life and death since such a separation would result in a reification of that very disjunction in what Genosko analyzes as the effect of the real (“Spirit” 99). Symbolic exchange, instead, is a process of reversibility whereby each term is returned to the other that was hitherto excluded in the effectuation of the real – it is a conjunction or connection and not a disjunction or separation. Here the power of symbolic exchange is seen most clearly in the way in which it volatilizes a simulated structure – its reversibility forces an interruption in the closed-circuitry of simulation by forcing a connectivity of excluded terms. The monopoly on life and productivity in the structure of global economics is interrupted by the forced movement of the wasteful destruction of goods (death and sacrifice). Symbolic exchange forces the hegemonic structure of global economics to recognize death, which in the case of the event of 9/11, according to Baudrillard, resulted in the towers committing suicide *as if* they were returning the gift of death with interest.

It follows that symbolic exchange has to be recognized as a potential form of resistance in the work of Baudrillard, even though it never acts as a real phenomena. It is

always deployed through the modality of *as if/though*, but in doing so it forces hegemonic systems to recognize previously excluded terms – unproductive acts of death such as destruction and suicide. They are acts of violence that operate according to a principle of loss as opposed to accumulation and profitability. Importantly, Hegarty notes that symbolic exchange is not intended to serve the role of engendering revolutionary practices.¹⁶ Although symbolic exchange does not constitute a developed theory of revolutionary resistance, it nevertheless remains a viable form of possible resistance in its momentary potential of overturning overly codified systems (societies of simulation). It is for this reason, I believe, that Baudrillard's work can not be singularly termed as a cynical work that is devoid of a counter-point to simulation in appearing always already totalizing. Such a conclusion, as is the case with Gordon's and Massumi's analyses, can only be reached by excluding the concept of symbolic exchange. Baudrillard's description of hyperreal societies does not endorse hopelessness, since symbolic exchange evidently has a radical power to reverse the directionality of hegemonic systems.

To return to the contrast of the Baudrillardian and Deleuzian concepts of simulation, I believe that Massumi is quite correct in seeing the later as opening a radical space of resistance, change, and hope. Still, an argument concerning a form of radical resistance to totalizing systems in Deleuze need not be formulated in contra-distinction to Baudrillard. As I have shown in the above analysis, a contrast between both theories can not be formulated within a simple equation that would have Baudrillard's simulacrum as

¹⁶ Quoting from the *Mirror of Production*, Hegarty shows how symbolic exchange is inconsistent with forms of revolution, since symbolic forces are always about loss and not accumulation: "There is no suggestion of a process of an increase in 'symbolic' acts of violence (in terms of spectacle, for example) which will usher in a benevolent, unified society where symbolic exchange is the norm, as '[this utopian violence does not accumulate; it is lost.' It is sacrificial, not beneficial" (Hegarty 38).

hopeless and vice versa in the case of Deleuze. Such a formulation of the contrast between the versions of simulation is necessarily superficial in prioritizing Deleuze's theory over that of Baudrillard's through the omission of symbolic exchange. A well-founded claim could be made, I believe, regarding Deleuze's version of simulation as providing a more veritable form of resistance than Baudrillard's, but such a claim nevertheless would have to account for the role of symbolic exchange as a form of resistance in the work of Baudrillard. Although I do not intend to pursue this line of argument in this thesis, I believe it is important to point out that an argument following up on the relative value of resistance to hegemonic structures in the works of Deleuze and Baudrillard would certainly be more nuanced than the simple outline I have provided here. Such an argument could be contextualized in a transcendent/immanent distinction, which I will use to contrast the two versions of simulation. Before continuing on to an explication of Deleuze's concept of the simulacrum, I would like to show briefly the way in which symbolic exchange figures into what I have shown as Baudrillard's transcendent term of simulation. I showed above that Baudrillard's theory of simulation is transcendent in that the code disallows variance in its structurality due to the fact that signification always already issues from it as the same without difference. Since symbolic exchange has the power of reversibility when dealing with the hegemonic structure of the code of third order simulacra and that it functions as a brief and, perhaps, spontaneous interruption, it follows that symbolic forces could be seen as functioning immanently to the transcendent structure of simulation. Indeed, the dimension of the symbolic never overturns the system entirely and instead acts as a brief interruption of antagonistic violence. Also, as mentioned above, symbolic exchange is not a systematic

form of resistance that could be utilized on a mass scale for revolutionary purposes. The extra-material dimension of symbolic exchange – the way in which it originates outside of both archaic and modern forms of economics and, thus, offers the most radical possibility of loss in opposition to accumulation – positions it in the work of Baudrillard, as Hegarty states, as a form of ‘differance’: “It is always beyond, and constitutes a privileged, if always already constituted, Other” (37). In the function of Other beyond the confines of simulation, symbolic exchange serves the role of supplement to the structurality of the structure of simulation as a displaced or deferred center. The reversibility of terms brought about through symbolic forces precisely supplements simulation with the terms it had hitherto excluded so as to become a totalizing structure of simulation. To reverse simulation momentarily is to force upon it the excluded form of death as Other to life, loss as Other to accumulation. In short, the totality of simulation therefore depends upon the exclusion of non-productive elements – it relegates uncontrollable (non) values to the symbolic dimension. Simulation could not occur without its deferred center: symbolic exchange. It follows that Baudrillard’s work on simulation is transcendent, since the transcendent structure of the code (encoding all meaning in advance) is necessarily linked to the transcendent forces of symbolic exchange (introducing uncoded meaning into the code). It could then be concluded that Baudrillard’s early texts up to and including *Simulations* operate in the space in between the transcendent terms of simulation and symbolic exchange.

For Deleuze, like Baudrillard, the concept of the simulacrum is indebted to the Platonic formulation of the model-copy-simulacrum. The issue of representation is also at stake in Deleuze’s reworking of the Platonic model. Unlike Baudrillard, however, who

deploys his concept of implosion in order to collapse the distinction of the copy and simulacrum that in turn engulfs the mechanics of representation within the code of third order simulation, the task that Deleuze sets before him is to unhinge or, rather, to show how simulacra have always worked from the outside of a representational context, which is to say that simulacra work asymmetrically to the Platonic model. As Claire Colebrook explains, value only arises in Baudrillard to the extent to which something has been copied, whereas for Deleuze every copy has a different value according to its actual and original being (98). More specifically, the world is replete with simulacra for Baudrillard and they derive value only insofar as they issue from the code of third order simulation, but for Deleuze although the world is also replete with simulacra, each has a distinct and authentic value that is not derivative of a transcendent term such as the Baudrillardian code or the Platonic model. It is in this way that Baudrillard will substitute the code for the Platonic model and Deleuze will dispose of the model altogether or show how simulacra are Other to it. The transcendent term of the code ensures that value arises according to a repetition of the same, whereas simulacra, for Deleuze, always show a repetition of maximal difference. As Roffe notes, Deleuzian simulacra have the task of affirming, not copying, “a world populated by differences-in-themselves which are not copies of any prior model” (250). Roffe further concludes that because the simulacrum does not rely upon a model but rather makes up the world through its own force that it is:

... able to do things and not merely represent. It is as a result of this positive power that simulacra can produce identities from within the world, and without reference to a model, by entering into concrete relations – in this case, the philosopher is not the one searching for the Good, but the one who is able to

create new concepts from the material available in the world; concepts which will do something. (250-51)

That simulacra have the positive power of affirming materials in the world without reference to a representational model is the way in which Deleuze will move towards an immanent ontology that is opposed to both the Platonic and Baudrillardian transcendent ones.

It is in appendix one of *The Logic of Sense*, “The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy”, that Deleuze will explicate the simulacrum according to immanent principles. In this text he reads Plato against Plato in posing the following question: “Was it not Plato himself who pointed out the direction for the reversal of Platonism?” (256). The reversal of Platonism, for Deleuze, was already immanently at work in Plato’s representational model due to the way in which simulacra had to be repressed in order for copies to be judged within the context of the model. The platonic motivation, he writes:

has to do with selecting among the pretenders, distinguishing the good and bad copies or, rather, copies (always well-founded) and simulacra (always engulfed in dissimilarity). It is a question of assuring the triumph of the copies over simulacra, of repressing simulacra, keeping them completely submerged, preventing them from climbing to the surface, and ‘insinuating themselves’ everywhere. (257)

Simulacra have false pretensions in representing the inherent qualities of the Idea in that unlike copies they are not well-founded pretenders that espouse an essential and internal resemblance to the model. They are false pretenders that are based on an essential and

internal deviation to the model and as such they threaten to undermine the values of the Platonic model. The reversal of Platonism occurs when the threat of simulacra is realized in their potential to upset the ability of the Platonic model to distinguish between essence and appearance, Idea and image, and original and copy (256). Such distinctions are presupposed to be transparent in the model since copies, unlike simulacra, are guaranteed to derive value secondarily from the transcendent term of the Idea, which is to say that transparency is maintained by order in the Platonic model. Copies are ordered according to a repetition of the same in that they always derive value secondarily from the model. Simulacra, on the other hand, could be said in this context to operate chaotically since they insinuate themselves everywhere according to a repetition with maximal difference; that is, they do not pass through a transcendent term so as to acquire meaning but rather already have a positive meaning qua their being. This is to say that their being is not dependant on external objects in that operating asymmetrically to a model or code they are already asignifying elements from the standpoint of a transcendent structure. The transparency of the model is always jeopardized by the simulacrum since they are proof, as Deleuze states, of an internal unbalance: "That to which they pretend (the object, the quality, etc.), they pretend to underhandedly, under cover of an aggression, an insinuation, a subversion, 'against the father', and without passing through the Idea. There is an unfounded pretension, concealing a dissimilarity which is an internal unbalance" (257). It is this internal unbalance that is expressed by the radical power of simulacra. Their being for-themselves (Other to any system of reference) espouses the primary power of the production of positive identities. In short, the reversal of Platonism occurs when simulacra are no longer repressed so that resemblance is constituted by

internalized difference and not sameness, and where identity is constituted as a primary power of difference and not a derivative value (262).

Simulacra, unlike copies, each possess an internally differentiating power of identity formation, albeit one that is never static but one that is also fluctuating in the creation of further differentiating identities. They do not repeat the same or the similar since, for Deleuze, there exists no authenticity other than the difference in-itself of simulacra. Their force is a primary one that expresses identity through a repetition of the different – not just a play of different forms, but of the creation of self-differentiating substances. In this way they act immanently in and of the world. Nonsense, is

Baudrillard's response:

Theoretical production, like material production, loses its determinacy and begins to turn around itself, slipping abysmally [*en abyme*] towards a reality that cannot be found. This is where we are today: undecidability, the era of *floating theories*, as much as floating money. No matter what perspective they come from (the psychoanalytic included), no matter with what violence they struggle and claim to rediscover an immanence, or a movement without systems of reference (Deleuze, Lyotard, etc.), all contemporary theories are floating and have no meaning other than to serve as signs for one another. It is pointless to insist on their coherence with some 'reality', whatever that might be. The system has removed every secure reference from theory as it has from any other labour power. Theory no longer has any use-value, the theoretical mirror of production has also cracked. So much the better. What I mean is that the very undecidability of theory is an effect of the code. (*Symbolic Exchange* 44)

Baudrillard here claims that ontological philosophies that intend to explain object-subject relations in immanent terms, without recourse to external systems of reference, are tautological qua their necessary dependence – whether explicit or implicit – on negative difference as mode of signification, which is to say that such theories only acquire relative value within or amongst themselves. To produce theory is to simulate reality. To affirm the difference for-itself of the simulacrum, as Deleuze does, is an incoherent example for Baudrillard since simulation is resistant to theories that would formulate a determined connectivity between reality and, as it were, an external concept-object. Labour power as well as theory lack concrete reference points from where it would be possible to achieve a critical distance – or any form of distance required for either representation and/or identity formation. Since simulation has eclipsed representation there is no longer a space or a distance from which point a theorist could achieve a critical perspective in developing an ontological philosophy based on immanent principles. The fabric of social and philosophical referentiality is torn asunder, leaving a world of indeterminate meanings.

The Deleuzian response to Baudrillard's critique would highlight the importance of the terms "virtual" and "actual" and how they function differently in the transcendent and immanent philosophies of Baudrillard and Deleuze. Colebrook for instance will formulate the virtual and actual distinction in Baudrillard as follows:

The postmodern world is caught up in television, advertising, copies of designer goods, cloning, the meaningless repetition of brand-names and computer simulations of just about everything. Whether we celebrate or lament this world, we nevertheless describe it through a distinction between the actual and the

virtual: there was once a time when we were close to reality (which is actual) and now all we have are images (the virtual). This is why, following contemporary thinkers like Jean Baudrillard, postmodern culture has been described as a society of 'simulacra.' (97)

According to Colebrook's analysis of Baudrillard, the term "actual" is aligned with reality whereas the term "virtual" is aligned with the image/simulacrum. It is the production of virtual images issuing from the code that eclipses the referentiality of the actual. It is the historical process of the precession of the simulacra that Colebrook here seems to be referring to. However, it is not clear whether Colebrook refers directly to the work of Baudrillard, or whether she is making a statement about the reception of his ideas in a postmodern context. The difference being that although a separation between the terms "virtual" and "actual" can be seen in types of postmodernisms¹⁷, for Baudrillard such a separation can not exist in third order simulation. In third order simulation all distinctions, including that of the virtual and actual, collapse as a result of the implosive forces at work in the transition from second order simulacra to that of the third.

Nevertheless, both conclusions on Baudrillard equate to relatively the same conclusions in contrast to Deleuze's formulation of the virtual/actual. Colebrook's point is that whereas there exists a clear separation of the terms in postmodernism, and I would add that no separation exists between the terms for Baudrillard, there exists a significant

¹⁷ Here one could refer to Jameson's work *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* where there, indeed, exists at least instances of a separation of the terms "virtual" and "actual". One element of his periodization of postmodernism, for example, entails a forgetting of historical factors. This is in part due to the fragmentation of the individual, and the lack of a concrete or "actual" individuality in postmodernism – the analysis of Edward Munch's "The Scream" drives this point home. Other instances of the separation of the virtual and actual can be seen in the overly commercialized thematics Jameson reads in the work of Andy Warhol. It is a type of art exemplary of postmodernism in that it sees the emergence of a "depthlessness" and a "superficiality". These two examples can be likened to Colebrook's position on the postmodern in that only virtual images circulate without reference to actual existences.

connectivity between the terms for Deleuze. For example, when Baudrillard claims that “[t]heory no longer has any use-value,” (*Symbolic Exchange* 44) he is really saying that there is no longer an actual point of reference through which to ground concepts in a reality principle. Thus for Baudrillard, all contemporary theories float weightless (as imploded virtual/actual signs) and only gain value through exchanging against one another – they are simulacra of one another removed from the possibility of making a distinction between the actual and virtual. In contrast, there exists a connectivity of the actual-virtual for Deleuze since the becoming of something real and identifiable is linked with an intensive process. A key example is Zeno’s paradox that if the trajectory of the arrow is divided along discrete points in time-space it would never achieve its target. When the flight of the arrow is divided into discrete moments, those moments proliferate exponentially and thus mapping the flight of the arrow becomes an infinite exercise. The process of something becoming actualized is not reducible to representation. Its flight as well as its actualized impact on the target is actual/virtual. Deleuze will therefore insist that the real is always constituted simultaneously by both the actual and virtual. Colebrook lists two reasons why this is the case for Deleuze: 1) everything actual to begin with is already an image being produced by virtual potentials; and 2) the actual can not be reduced to just an effect of the virtual, but instead everything actual contains within itself a virtual power to become something else (Colebrook 98). Such a definition of the virtual in Deleuze’s philosophy has to be seen as something radically different than virtual reality. VR is an effect of an already actualized world in that it is a representation of a possibility of an already realized state. Here the example of the holodeck in Star Trek’s *Enterprise* series is a good example of VR. Although the images presented in the

holodeck may differ from reality, they are nevertheless based on what it differs from. The episodes where Moriarty takes control of the Enterprise, which in effect reverses the fact that he had always been defeated by Holmes, are based on possibilities extracted from an already actualized world. Deleuze's concept of virtuality, on the other hand, precedes the knowable or intelligible. Constantine V. Boundas states the distinction between the possible and the virtual as such:

Now, tendencies are real, not merely possible. They have the reality of the virtual which exists in order to be actualized. A virtual X is something which, without being or resembling X, has nonetheless the efficiency (the *virtus*) of producing X. In opposition to the virtual, the possible has no reality, whereas the virtual, without being actual, is real. (86)

For Deleuze, the possible exists in opposition to the virtual. Also, the possible here has to be contrasted with the potential for or the tendency of X becoming X. The possible is dependant on the real and in that way represents a varying state of the real. In contrast, the virtual is part of the intensive process by which something is actualized. It is a difference here of being-for-another and becoming-for-itself. It is thus beyond the field of representation for if it were otherwise Zeno's arrow, again, would not reach its target. The forces of the actual and the virtual have to be seen within the context of a continual engagement (an intensive process), always playing against and off one another. This is why the simulacrum is never static, but rather always in the process of becoming, of being different, and of changing what constitutes its nature as well as what constitutes its appearance. Its appearance and meanings are therefore always in flux.

Such continuously changing states in the world are partly accounted for by simulacra in Deleuze's ontology. This is because the simulacrum for Deleuze is a difference-machine. Unlike the Platonic formulation that represents elements in the world according to the model's principles of the same and the similar where a copy's derivative value is acquired through the Idea, and unlike the Baudrillardian formulation that also works (but does not represent) according to the code's principles of the repetition of the same where a copy's derivative value is acquired through the code, the Deleuzian one functions as a difference-machine without reference to a model or code where a copy's value is chiefly found in its positive power to become-other. To become-other is an intensive process that is not derivative of any model that anchors either identity or the horizon of thought in pre-formulated terms. Becoming is a process of a repetition of maximal difference. Deleuze explains how the repetition of the same and similar vary from his conception of the simulacrum:

That the Same and the Similar may be simulated does not mean that they are appearances or illusions. Simulation designates the power of producing an *effect*. But this is not intended only in a causal sense, since causality would remain completely hypothetical and indeterminate without the intervention of other meanings. It is intended rather in the sense of a 'sign' issued from a process of signalization; it is in the sense of a 'costume,' or rather a mask, expressing a process of disguising, where, behind each mask, there is yet another ... (*Logic* 263).

The simulacrum is not dependant on causality, which is to say that it does not find meaning in already formulated notions of identity and thought. Rather, it produces

difference along a curvature. The effect of such difference is seen in the appearance of a particular simulacrum, but can never be reduced to such appearance since as Deleuze notes there always exists another mask behind the mask of appearance. This is precisely what characterizes the intensive process of becoming in simulacra; that is, what constitutes the simulacrum as a difference-machine.

The importance Deleuze attributes to subterranean networks of masks folding upon further masks is in general what he sees as the affinity between simulacra and Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence. Deleuze notes the importance of this connection as follows:

Between the eternal return and the simulacrum, there is such a profound link that the one cannot be understood except through the other. Only the divergent series, insofar as they are divergent, return: that is, each series insofar as it displaces its difference along with all the others, and all series insofar as they complicate their difference within the chaos which is without beginning or end. The circle of the eternal return is a circle which is always ex-centric in relation to an always decentred center. (264)

Part three of *The Matrix* trilogy begins with Neo being stuck in the subway station "Mobil Ave.", which is explained by the oracle as a vehicle through which the Merovingian program smuggles things into and out of the matrix program from the machine world. The Trainman is the one who constructed the station and is the only one who can conduct subway cars into and out of "Mobil Ave". The particular subway car he does conduct to this station has its destination marked as "Loop". When the Trainman refuses to grant Neo transport back into the matrix, it is here that Neo runs into the

subway tunnel only to find out that he returns to precisely the same space from where he began. The profound link between the simulacrum and eternal recurrence, as Deleuze notes, could not be more explicit in this example. In Part three section two of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the depiction of the Moment Gateway is made:

“Behold,” I continued, “this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* have happened, have been done, have passed by before? ... And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane-must we not eternally return?” (270)

For Deleuze what returns is only that which makes difference. For Plato, according Deleuze, it is only the Same and the Similar which returns and it is the different – the simulacrum – that is repressed and “*made not to return*” (Deleuze, *Logic* 265). Indeed, simulacra are not made to return since they are the element which threatens to undermine the system upon which resemblance (representation) is guaranteed; that is, as Deleuze argues, repressing simulacra by making them not return is a process that “pretends to correct divergence, to recenter the circles or order the chaos, and to provide a model or make a copy” (265). If a Deleuzian version of simulacra is to be found in *The Matrix* trilogy, then it will occupy a space of resembling the unmatched and of a repetition – a recurrence – of the difference: the simulacrum as difference-machine.

How does the difference-machine, Deleuze’s simulacrum, apply to *The Matrix* trilogy? To put the concept to work in the context of the film trilogy, I will return to an example I used frequently in chapter one. In chapter one I used the scene from *The Matrix Reloaded* that showed the conversation between the architect and Neo as an

example that indicated the implausibility of applying Baudrillard's third order of simulation to that particular moment in the film trilogy. This was due to the fact that Neo chose to resist the pseudo-Freud's coercive arguments of having his anomalous DNA reinserted into the code of the matrix. Such choice evidently does not exist in Baudrillard's reign of the code since all meaning is indeterminate and formulated in advance. This example from *The Matrix Reloaded* offers a different trajectory of interpretation when Deleuzian criteria qua the simulacrum are applied to it as opposed to those of Baudrillard's. The architect's control room makes for a curious backdrop for the scene. What makes it curious is its semi-spherical shape that is technologized through a series of interconnected TV screens only interrupted by two doors on either side of the room. Is it the panoptic observation space of the matrix alluded to in the first *Matrix* by the TV screens through which the interrogation of Neo scene is foregrounded? With the click of the architect's wireless remote pen, the screens come alive with images of Neo. They display a magnitude of images of Neo doing and saying things in three distinct series, with each image series always corresponding to a single response made by the real Neo. The images ask questions, state exclamations, or show gestures in the three series: "Others? / How Many? / What others? Answer my question!", shortly later "Liar! / Bullshit! / Ahahaha [laughter] / Five before me?", and finally "You can't control me / I'm gonna smash you to bits / You can't make me do anything" (*The Matrix Reloaded*). The images ask questions and state exclamations, revealing, presumably, what is intended to represent the different possible directions that Neo's identity could have taken. The emotional range of responses varies from inquisitive innocence, to explosive anger, and impertinent laughter, whereas the rhetorical strategies and use of language range from

rational questioning, to volatile profanity, and imperative demanding. Additionally, there are images that, although they do not speak, raise a fist or the middle finger at the architect, or that look completely appalled. The magnitude of Neo-images display varying responses to the architect's explanation that this is the sixth version of the matrix program and that he is the sixth version of the 'one' who carries the anomalous DNA that supplements the unbalanced equation of the code. Are these images exemplary of the virtual dimension? Do they constitute simulacra?

This example would seemingly lend itself to a reading of Deleuze's simulacrum in that we could consider the variety of other possible directions along which Neo's identity could have been formed during his conversation with the architect. According to such a reading, this scene would show that the images are simulacra, that they are all subterranean caverns or masks existing behind the actualized Neo. If Neo is a simulacrum in this scene, then it is plausible to consider that his identity is not static and that multiple potentialities exist such as abruptly terminating his conversation with the architect by giving him the middle finger or smashing him to bits (is that possible?). This reading, however, does not work since the images hinge on possibilities and not virtualities. They are not part of the intensive process of Neo's becoming, which they would have to be in order to be considered simulacra. What makes the images possibilities and not virtualities is the fact that they are anchored in Neo's actual responses. At the conclusion of the first series of images the actual Neo remains calm and almost reticent in his silence. At the conclusion of the second one he offers a rational explanation of why he was unaware of there being five versions of the matrix program that preceded him: "There are only two possible explanations, either no one told me or no

one knows". And to the final series there corresponds Neo's pseudo-prophetic conclusion about the problem of choice inherent in the programming of the matrix code: "Choice. The problem is choice". To the excessive gestures and actions of the images there corresponds a composed and logical Neo who concludes each series. It is this identity that constitutes Neo. We could still claim that Neo's identity is not a static one because of the possibilities proposed by the images. And this would be coherent with Deleuze's theory of simulation in that beings/things are always in the process of becoming. However, the images represent possibilities that did not occur as evidenced by Neo's actual response. Even though in the film the images temporally precede Neo's actual response, they only become intelligible in light of the actual responses. And it is in this context that they have to be seen as effects and not affects. In other words, the images themselves do not occupy an active space within the intensive process of the becoming of Neo; they do not affect the change of his identity. The images instead point to discrete phases and gestures in time/space that occur as a result of the identity Neo already achieves; they are effects of his already changed identity.

What makes the images of Neo worth considering further, however, is that they are not merely possibilities, but actualized possibilities of Neo's character that get played out on the architect's screens. It is because of this reason that they could be seen as simulacra themselves were it not, again, for the fact that they are anchored in the realness of Neo; that is, they offer possibilities of Neo's character, but they do not stand on their own since they are comprehensible only as a reflection of Neo's comments. To use Zeno's paradox once again, if Neo's identity is in the process of becoming-other, then to identify discretely the points through which his identity takes flight would be an

indefinite task. The images are distinctly not part of the process of his becoming; they are ordered into three separate series and they are structured according to when Neo is about to speak. If it was possible to represent Neo's process of becoming, then the film would stall at that very moment in the hopeless task of attempting to identify the infinite points through which Neo's identity takes flight in the process of becoming-other.

Instead, it seems as if the images represent the fictional psychological process of Neo as he converses with the architect. It is the hot-tempered and excessive emotional urges represented by the images that Neo represses and through which he subsequently arrives at his cool and rational responses to the architect. Or, perhaps they are intended to represent Neo's unconscious as analyzed by the architect, because they are very much controlled by the pseudo-Freud's computerized pen with which he can turn on and off the screens and, thus, images by extension. Either way, they find meaning only through the real Neo's speech and action. As such, they are indicative of the possible and not the virtual. Boundas explains how the process of actualization differs for the possible and the virtual:

The possible resembles and represents the real. As for the limitation which affects the relation between the possible and the real, it is as if the real were what survives the abortion of the many possibles. When, on the other hand, we come to the rules of actualization of the virtual, we find them to be rules of difference and divergence: the actual does not resemble or represent the virtual that it embodies.

(86)

The architect's TV screens represent the images of Neo as possibilities of the real, which clearly distinguishes them from being virtual forces since the virtual dimension is not

representable in the real. It is in the context of representation and resemblance that the images acquire substantial value. They are more consistent with the Platonic model of copies than that of Deleuze's theory of simulacra. If the matrix code is an example of the Platonic model in the architect scene, then the Idea is the transcendental identity of Neo, whereas the images stand for copies. The actual Neo evidently embodies the closest relationship with the Idea of 'the one' (whether defined according to the machines or resistors), which makes him the good or even the best copy, whereas the images are examples of bad copies of the Idea. They are not simulacra since they are not based on dissimilarity. The point here is that the images are based on an internal relationship of similarity, and thus strive to represent the Idea or the function of 'the one' as best as possible. Furthermore, the images are working according to a causal relationship in that the actual Neo *did this* but the images *did that*. Images as Deleuzian simulacra work according to a curvature and not a causality – meaning and identity are always in flux. Each copy, as Deleuze points out, is a mask that disguises the existence of yet another mask beneath it. This is because becoming functions virtually as an intensive process and is beyond representation, or becoming is-for-itself as a self sufficient and positive process of differentiation whereas the Neo-images operate as objects-for-another in reflecting possibilities of the being of Neo.

The Neo images seem illustrative more of the Platonic simulacrum than that of the Deleuzian one. His identity, unlike the images, is not regulated according to a model of possibilities. His character is not a static one in that he neither strives to be a good copy of the matrix program's Idea of a complicit cyber-prisoner, nor of the way in which the architect explains the function of 'the one'. And although his pretensions are not

subversive in feigning to be a good copy while acting outside of the model, the matrix program nevertheless includes him within its logic. He is the embodiment of the unresolved equation in the programming of the matrix and is as such similar to the role of simulacra in the Platonic model as read by Deleuze. Both are included in their respective structures only in order to be excluded, as Deleuze notes, due to the fact that they are evidence of an internal unbalance and thus have the potential to insinuate themselves everywhere. Neo thus can be seen to threaten the code of the matrix in that if left uncontrolled he will strive to liberate all the occupants of the matrix. He will insinuate himself everywhere and threaten to collapse the structure of the matrix. This is why, just as Plato represses the sophist, the architect attempts to repress 'the one'. Indeed, the prescribed function of 'the one' according to the architect is as follows: "The function of the one is now to return to the source allowing a temporary dissemination of the code you carry reinserting the prime program". Neo resists such a function and becomes more than himself. He becomes 'the one', the revolutionary leader of Zion who risks the fate of humanity in the war against the machines. Neo's becoming-other is in sharp contrast to the architect's intended function for him. Neo chooses not to fulfill the intended function of the one, which otherwise would have made a compelling example of Baudrillard's third order of simulation. This example illustrates that Neo's function is neither predetermined nor derivative of a transcendent model such as the Platonic one or the Baudrillardian one. Neo becomes-other.

It is this power of *becoming* that most clearly distinguishes the versions of simulation found in Baudrillard and Deleuze, since meaning is always already pre-coded in advance for the former whereas for the latter meaning is always being re-coded

through becomings. As Colebrook notes, “Beings or things emerge from processes of copying, doubling, imaging and simulation ... We only realize virtual potentialities after they have been actualized. We never see the virtual or the power of simulation itself; we see created beings but not the process of becoming of which they are actual affects” (99). This is why, again, the images of Neo are neither simulacra in their own right nor evidence of the virtual. They are possibilities of the already developed identity of Neo as opposed to showing the virtual potentialities of his identity becoming-other. The process of becoming is beyond representational mechanics. As Colebrook argues, the power of the virtual can not be witnessed until after it becomes an actual affect. This is to say that the actual dimension of beings or things (the effects of the virtual) gets semiotically coded (the process of reification) by the discourses of culture, politics, economics, etc., but such effects of the real can only ever consider what something has become and, perhaps, what variety of things it could have become but did not. But the variety of things it could have become but did not are actual possibilities and not virtual potentialities as illustrated by the example of the images of Neo. The chief point here is that Deleuze’s simulation, unlike that of Baudrillard’s, is open-ended. The virtual potentialities of the being or thing are beyond the scope of coded meanings, which is to say that the future shape and meaning of the being/thing are open-ended. Massumi phrases this semiotic distinction in terms of the general indeterminacy of Baudrillard’s hyperreality and the affirmative determinacy of Deleuze’s simulation. Massumi explains the former as follows:

Images are no longer anchored by representation, therefore they float weightless in hyperspace. Words are no longer univocal, therefore signifiers slip chaotically

over each other. A circuit has been created between the real and the imaginary, therefore reality has imploded into the undecidable proximity of hyperreality. All of these statements make sense only if it is assumed that the only conceivable alternative to representative order is absolute indetermination, whereas indetermination as he speaks of it is in fact only the flipside of order, as necessary to it as the fake copy is to the model, and every bit as much a part of its system.

(6)

The circuitry between the real and imaginary, as Massumi points out, collapses all structure implodingly so as not to allow recourse to referential distinctions. This is what Massumi sees as Baudrillard's alternative to representation. It is a system of meaning that is forever foreclosed in a paradoxically totalized territorialization of signification, which is to say that even though meaning is indeterminate it is always as such territorialized preventing the occurrence of new meanings – uncoded or recoded value has no place within the reign of the code unless already participating within the circuitry of simulacra. In short, it is an order/structure in Baudrillard that feigns to present itself as sheer indeterminacy, but is nevertheless an already centered order/structure.

Against the general indeterminacy of Baudrillard's hyperreality, Deleuzian simulation, according to Massumi, has a distinct determinacy connected to the way beings/things are always in the intensive process of becoming-other. Along with becoming, as Massumi notes, there always corresponds in Deleuze a dual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization – a decoding and recoding of signification. There is no general indeterminacy in the process of becoming since simulation is a

positive power. The simulacrum holds within itself the power of its becoming. As Massumi explains,

Every body has its own propulsion, its own life force, its own set of sedimentations of pre-existing simulations of the 'real' persuasion. There is no generalized indetermination, but there are localized points of undecidability where man meets fly [referring to Cronenberg's *The Fly*]. The goal is to reach into one's world's quantum level at such a point and, through the strategic mimickry of double becoming, combine as many potentials as possible. (5)

Indeed, the process of becoming as Massumi reads it is a strategy whereby as many potentialities of "movement and rest" and "abilities to affect and be affected" are connected. Massumi is calling for or at least identifying the possibility of mass contagious amalgamations that affect identities in the post-industrial landscape in ways other than through resemblance and replication. It has to be for Massumi and Deleuze an unearthing of the radical potential of simulation that has the power to break with fixed identity politics and representational logic.

It seems pertinent to end this chapter with a discussion of Agent Smith's viral replication, since this example not only largely informs the plot of *The Matrix* trilogy but also most decisively shows how the films engage the problematic of simulation. The final battle scene in *The Matrix* serves both as conclusion to the film and simultaneously foregrounds the plot of the two later sequels. It is in this scene that rebels for the first time defeat agents, and that the prophecy of Neo as 'the One' is realized: Neo comes back to life after being shot three times in the chest by agent Smith, whom he will go on to finally confront victoriously. Upon seeing Neo revive, the three agents simultaneously

take aim and shoot at Neo. He stops the bullets in mid flight, plucks one of them from the air and after examining it drops it to the floor, precipitating the other to do likewise. It is this event that irrevocably alters the structure of the matrix code, as described in the screenplay:

All three [the crew of the hovercraft] stare transfixed with awe as the scrolling code accelerates, faster and faster, as if the machine language was unable to keep up or perhaps describe what is happening. They begin to blur into streaks, shimmering ribbons of light that open windows, as -- Each screen fills with brilliant saturated color images of Neo standing in the hall. (Wachowski 391)

The singular value this event holds for the film is emphasized by the radical effect it has in the bewilderment of the crew as they “stare transfixed with awe” at the changes taking place in the matrix, but more profoundly it is the actual changes to the matrix code described somewhat vaguely as an intensifying deterritorialization of the code itself. A disjunction between the content and form of the code is taking place as the machine language is incapable of accounting for the occurring actions. This is, in part, also reflected by the astonishment of the agents who, as the screenplay informs us, understand fear for the first time. The agents had always acted omnisciently on behalf of the matrix program until this event, whereas the resistors, at best, upon confronting them could only ever attempt to escape. The climax to this concluding scene in the film sees a reversal in roles as Neo not only defeats Agent Smith but also the sight of this defeat sends the two remaining Agents fleeing, as the resistors had done previously. The last moments of this battle scene see Neo charging at Smith, which precipitates a collision and explosion:

Agent Smith gets up, bracing himself as Neo charges him and springs into a dive. But the impact doesn't come. Neo sinks into Agent Smith, disappearing, his coat rippling as if he were a deep pool of water. Spinning around he looks to the others and feels something, like a tremor before a quake, something deep, something that is going to change everything. Suddenly a searing sound stabs through his ear-piece as his chest begins to swell, then balloon as -- Neo bursts up out of him. And with a final death scream, Agent Smith explodes like an empty husk in a brilliant cacophony of light, his shards spinning away, absorbed by the Matrix until -- Only Neo is left. (391-92)

With regards to the plot of *The Matrix* trilogy, it is very much set into motion by Neo's victory. The sequels will focus on Neo as the one capable of manipulating the code of the matrix and defeating the agents of the system, but it will also show the return of Agent Smith as the one capable of virally reproducing himself. The plot is further complicated by the fact that through his defeat Agent Smith is unplugged from the matrix and no longer only threatens to destroy the resistors but also the machine programs. In this way the plot changes from the duality of the machines vs. the resistors to a triadic structure of the "One" vs. the matrix system vs. Smith copies.

The difficulty in the application of Baudrillard's form of simulation to the film trilogy is apparent in this example. It is the breakdown of the structure of the matrix program that precludes reading it as symptomatic of the code of third order simulation. The unplugging of both Neo and Smith from the matrix program is an introduction of semiotic distinctiveness outside of the matrix code; that is, their actions and identities acquire an importance of their own as distinctive beyond the confines of the matrix.

Again, in the third order of simulation such distinctions can not occur unless already codified in advance where all distinctions are imploded. But such is not the case as the screenplay clearly identifies a separation of form and content in the matrix - the matrix language is incapable of signifying its content (the actions of Neo). The collision and ensuing fractalization of Agent Smith seems to complicate a Baudrillardian reading, and make a Deleuzian one more applicable due to the appearance of Agent Smith. It is the figure of Smith that undoes the binary logic of the struggle in the matrix between the machine oppressors and the human resisters. Neo explains the threatening nature of Smith to the machine overlord in the final instalment of the trilogy as he proposes a peace settlement between the machines and the humans: "The program Smith has grown beyond your control, soon he will spread through this city as he spread through the matrix. You cannot stop him". The roadmap to peace will thus be worked out if Neo is victorious in the final battle scene with Smith. Smith in this example can be read as constitutive of the Deleuzian simulacrum: "It renders the order of participation, the fixity of distribution, the determination of hierarchy impossible. It establishes the world of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchies. Far from being a new foundation, it engulfs all foundations, it assures a universal breakdown (*effondrement*), but as joyful and positive event, as an un-founding (*effondement*)" (Deleuze, *Logic* 263). This universal breakdown and un-founding of the hierarchy is evidenced by the necessity by which Neo and the machines are compelled to make peace. Smith's becoming-viral is a self-sufficiency that finds meaning only in its distribution of chaos. He no longer works on behalf of the machines with the goal of terminating the resisters' insurrection, which places him in a space other to determination and hierarchy – he does not seek to re-

enforce the matrix program. Indeed, he seeks the opposite. He is determined to ensure the universal breakdown of not only the matrix program but also of the resistors and Zion. His chaos – the proliferation of his copies as chaos – is a crowned anarchy. Every resistor, machine program, and matrix occupant that Smith absorbs into his proliferation is an attack on representation and functionality.

The death of representation and functionality within the matrix is witnessed during the final battle scene between Neo and Agent Smith. The setting to this final encounter is dreary. Shades of grey and dark green illustrate this dreariness during a thunderstorm as Neo walks along a random street in the matrix approaching Smith. Both sides of the road are lined by Smiths, some of whom look on curiously, or apprehensively, or menacingly. They can even be seen towering above the street as they look down from the windows of the buildings that line the road. A Smith walks out to greet Neo from the manifold copies: “Mr. Anderson, welcome back. We missed you. Do you like what I’ve done with the place?” Smith is referring to the way in which he has transformed all the occupants, resistors, agents and programs of the matrix into Smith simulacra. This scene indicates, as Deleuze writes, the crowned anarchy of simulacra where all order and hierarchy has been engulfed by the chaotic proliferation of simulacra. Furthermore, the emphasis Smith places on the plural pronoun signals the multiplicity yet distinctiveness of each Smith-simulacra; that is, they constitute a manifold of images not a magnitude – their becoming is not reducible to a particular criteria that would encompass their/its meaning. Instead, each Smith-simulacra is a difference-machine. Smith explains the events of his fractalization to Neo during their first encounter in the second part of the trilogy:

I killed you Mr. Anderson, I watched you die... with a certain satisfaction I might add. And then something happened, something I knew was impossible, but it happened anyway. You destroyed me Mr. Anderson. Afterwards, I understood the rules, I knew what I was supposed to do [referring to the fact he was supposed to return the machine mainframe] but I didn't, I couldn't, I was compelled to stay, compelled to disobey [...] I am no longer an agent of the system, because of you I have changed, I am unplugged, a new man.

It is clear from Smith's explanation of being 'unplugged' that what had constituted his identity has radically been altered. This is the way in which he becomes asignifying from the standpoint of the matrix code, since his identity no longer hinges on it – he no longer is an agent. A rebellious force compels him to resist the system and to disobey the rules regarding returning to the code. Such a force can be accounted for by a becoming-for-itself as a positive form of self differentiation, which is to say that his identity is no longer derivative of the matrix program, but it is a primary power in-itself. This primary power of self-differentiation signals the reversal of Platonism for Deleuze in that simulacra no longer have any affinity to the structure of the model. This point is, perhaps, what marks the simulacra with its traces of joy. Since simulacra are no longer repressed, they act and populate the world with chaotic but simultaneously creative meaning. They signify positive and new meaning insofar as being other to derivative and representation systems of signification. It is an affirmation of difference. That his identity is unhinged from a representational framework is the key point here. What he does and what he says is no longer predictable as it was in the first part of the trilogy. He is not simply an agent of the system determined to track down the resisters of Zion who

hack their way into the matrix. There is no longer a stability of his identity ensured by a resemblance to the matrix system, since his behaviour defies, as he himself proclaims, the workings of the system. He was supposed to return to the machine mainframe, but did not – and in so doing Agent Smith becomes-rogue program. Becoming-Rogue constitutes the primary power of difference-in-itself for Agent Smith, beyond the repetition of the same and the similar that ensured the essence of his identity in *The Matrix*.

During his first encounter with Neo in *The Matrix Reloaded*, there is a simultaneity of events (Deleuze, *Logic* 262) that occurs as manifold Smiths walk up to Neo from different angles. Each Smith states one of the following sentences: “Without purpose we would not exist. It is purpose that created us. Purpose that connects us. Purpose that pulls us. That guides us. That prides us. It is purpose that defies. Purpose that binds us. We are here because of you Mr. Anderson” (*The Matrix Reloaded*). The only reality to be apprehended behind the object of Smith is that difference is being produced without relation to a model. It is here that a different Smith speaks a different line with a different expression. This constitutes the assemblage of enunciation of the difference-machine of Smith. Indeed, as the above example makes clear, there is no logical coherency to the assemblage of statements other than that of affirming difference. Their purpose is simultaneously one that binds them together and one that defies representation. The battle scene between Neo and the proliferation of Smiths is the most lucid instance of the Deleuzian simulacra in *The Matrix* trilogy. Unlike the copies of Neo in the architect scene, which represented actual possibilities via their images on the television screens, the Smith images present the various lines-of-flight, the heterogeneous

vectors, along which the virtual potentials of Smith becoming-rogue program are actualized. How could it be read differently? Is it even possible to imagine the gestures of the hundreds of Smiths occurring from same and similar positions? The swarm of Smiths shows a proliferation of movement that continuously occupies different space. Each image of Smith swarms Neo from a different angle, using a different tactic, expressing different facial expressions, some of whom are successful in punching or kicking Neo, grasping his head, holding him from behind, throwing him on a bench, etc. Indeed, this is an example of repetition occurring through maximal difference.

As a final conclusion to chapter two, I would like to briefly mention two ways in which the Smith figure could be read through Baudrillard and, consequently, in distinction to the Deleuzian simulation reading provided above. Indeed, the Deleuzian simulacrum would seem best in accounting for the Smith figure due to his two main characteristics of being able to proliferate virally but also of having each copy of himself self-differentiate. This is to say that although Smith's viral reproducibility is not altogether at odds with the proliferation of copies that arises in Baudrillard's third order of simulation, it is the positive power of becoming and the accompanying self signifying process of self differentiation that is incompatible with reading Smith as an effect of a totalizing code that always already accounts for all types of signification. Consequently, a Baudrillardian reading of Smith would have to look outside of third order simulation. The two trajectories through which such a reading could be accomplished stem from the initial encounter of Neo and Smith, which stands as the singular event that spawned the proliferation of Smiths. The first of these possibilities is analyzing Smith as symptomatic of what constitutes – however problematically – Baudrillard's fourth order of simulation.

Baudrillard's fourth order of simulation is something of a fractalization of the world into separate yet equally signifying monads.¹⁸ Although unconvinced that the fractal dimension constitutes a separate order of simulation proper in Baudrillard's work,¹⁹ Hegarty, nevertheless, explicates the phenomenon as follows:

The new fractal dimension(s) is one where value becomes arbitrary: random and fixed at the same time. This means that all can become political, but not properly so, all can be sexual, but not fully, all can become economic or aesthetic. All of this occurs at the same time, and it becomes impossible to separate out previously discrete areas of human activity ... The speed and level of technology mean that the world is one infinitely dispersed entity (or, more accurately, non-entity). This is what distinguishes even this phase from postmodernisms that emphasize the dispersal of old hierarchies and orders: what we have is properly fractal, and there is a whole that chaotically orders the dispersal. Individual ideas, ideologies, concepts, theories are also driven to endlessly reproduce, like viruses (*as viruses*).

(64)

Reading Smith according to the fractal order of simulation holds interesting implications for his viral reproduction. It would seem in a way that his proliferation would parallel the very same movement in the fractal order that, as Hegarty notes, sees an endless viral reproduction of individual ideas and ideologies. This would seem consistent with the

¹⁸ The fourth order is first hinted at, although quite cryptically, in Baudrillard's work in *Simulations*: "“Order, signal, impulse, message”: all these attempt to render the matter intelligible to us, but by analogy, retranscribing in terms of inscription, vector, decoding, a dimension of which we know nothing – it is no longer even a “dimension,” or **perhaps it is the fourth** (that which is defined, however, in Einsteinian relativity, by the absorption of the distinct poles of space and time)” (emphasis added, 57).

¹⁹ The fractal order as constituting a separate order to itself has two inconsistencies, for Hegarty, being that, firstly, little textual evidence supports such a reading that shows, in general, a lack of interest on the part of Baudrillard to work with such a concept, and, secondly, it diminishes the value of other more integral concepts such as ‘impossible exchange’ and ‘symbolic exchange’ (Hegarty 64).

magnitude of Smiths in each of whom the ambition of destroying both the machine and human worlds is encapsulated, as well as in each of whom the ability to reproduce himself virally is passed on. Perhaps the most beneficial point with regards to applying the fractal order of simulation to the example of Smith is the movement away from the transcendental term of the metaphysics of the code in third order simulation where all signification is trapped in anterior finality. I have discussed quite extensively in both chapters one and two the problematic that the anterior finality of the code poses for reading *The Matrix* trilogy, mainly, in that new significations continuously appear throughout the films that clearly shows that meaning is not merely simulacral in the Baudrillardian sense. Indeed, it would be interesting to discuss in detail how a reading of Smith through the fractal order differs from a reading of him through the Deleuzian simulacrum. The main difficulty, I believe, with such an approach would be to account for, as Hegarty explains, the arbitrary value of fractal simulation; that is, the Smiths seems to possess a definite purpose with regards to chaotically bringing down both the machine and human worlds, which, at least upon an initial glance, would seem to be contradictory to the randomness with which the fractal multiplies.

With the possible problematic points of the fractal order of simulation in mind, the symbolic order as a different form of analysis – my second example of a way to approach the trilogy through Baudrillard and not directly through simulation – seems to me to be a more substantial method than that of the fractal. This is because, as noted above, the symbolic has the power to interrupt and reverse the logic of simulation through the introduction of terms of death that had hitherto been excluded from such logic so as to promulgate an ethos of accumulation through the intimate

institutionalization and thus simulation of anything other to productivity and profit. The singularity that characterizes the collision between Neo and Smith seems very much to exude the principles of interruption and reversal, since, as was noted, the matrix program forever changes as a result of this singularity. Moreover, it is Smith's viral proliferation that in this way can be seen to act as an immanent term within the general operation of simulation as represented qua the matrix code in unleashing wasteful and destructive acts. Again, Smith's purpose is that of bringing a destructive end not only to the matrix program but also to both the machine and human worlds. There is nothing simulated about such a purpose. The immanent workings of symbolic forces, here, find, I think, an interesting resonance with the generally immanent unfoldings of Deleuzian simulacra. Both processes of the symbolic and of becomings-other possess the characteristic of operating in either distinction or contradistinction to totalities such as the Platonic model or that of the Baudrillardian metaphysics of the code. Indeed, in a future project, it would be interesting to analyze further the similarities between both concepts, and more profoundly, to analyze whether the Baudrillardian symbolic is compatible with the Deleuzian simulacrum.

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