

Ways of Perceiving

Curation, Commentaries and Compositions.



Loss of the cognitive map

‘It is a cliché to say that we live in a postmodern world, and indeed “postmodern” has become one of the most used, and abused, words in the language. Yet it is striking that few people can say with any sense of assurance what that term “postmodern” actually means or involves.’

Stuart Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 2nd Ed., 2004



The International Style

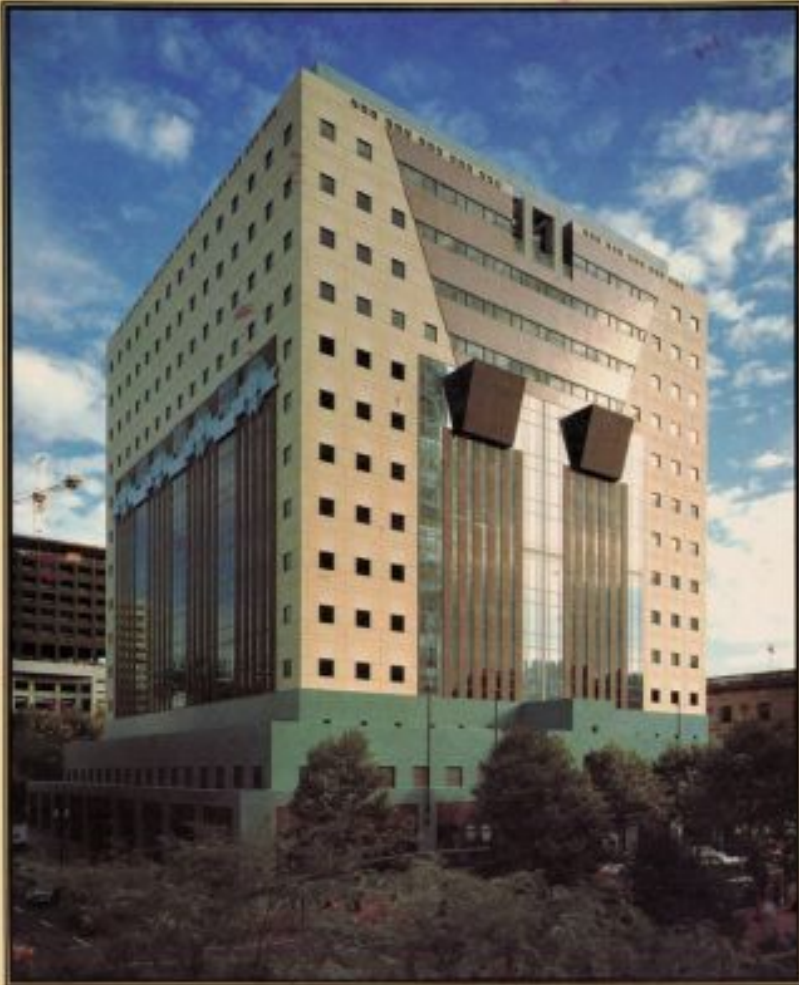
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,

Seagram Building

New York City.

**THE LANGUAGE OF
POST-MODERN ARCHITECTURE**

CHARLES JENCKS



THE FOURTH EDITION

Charles Jencks, *The
Language of Post-
Modern
Architecture*, 1977

‘Double-coding’



Philip Johnson, AT&T Building, New York, 1984



LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS

Revised Edition

Robert Venturi Denise Scott Brown Steven Izenour

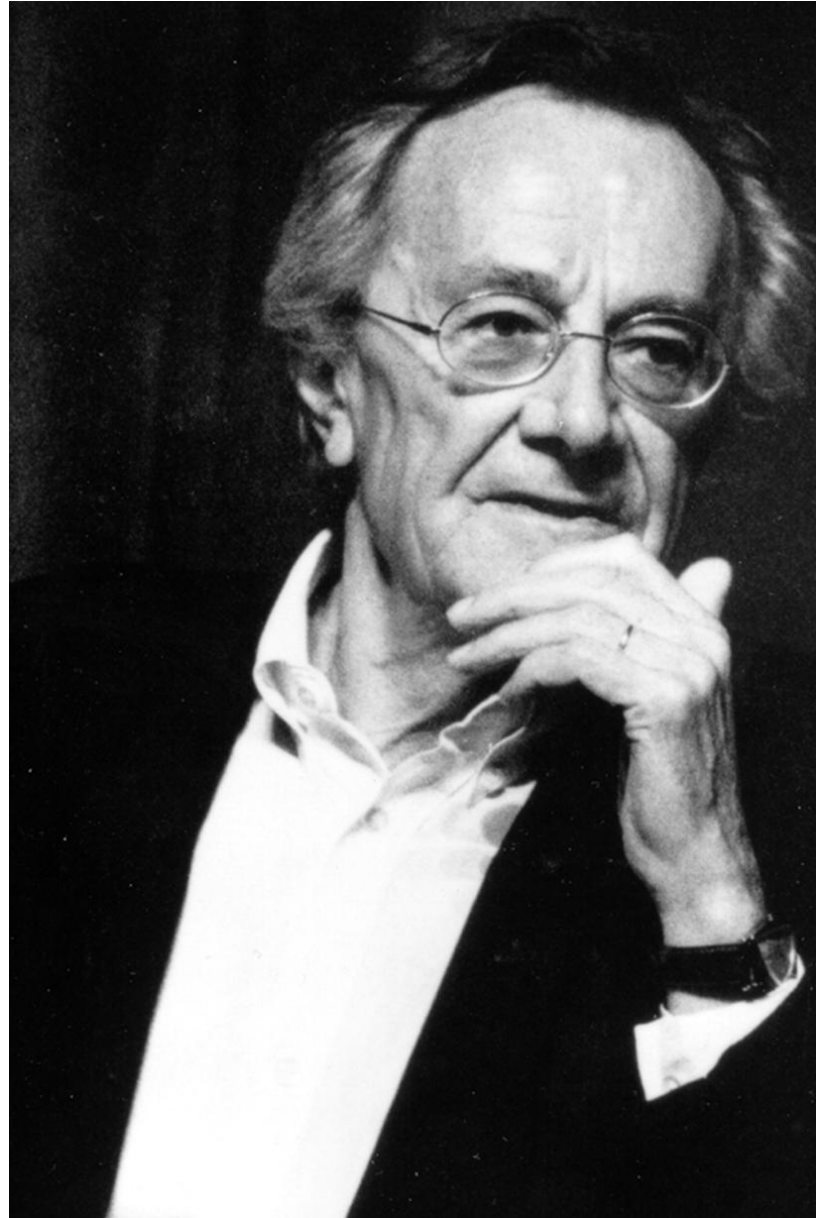


Robert Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972



Frank
Gehry's
House, Santa
Monica,
1977-8

Lyotard (1924-1998)



Lyotard's beginnings

- Synthesis of Marx & Freud
- “The philosophers of **suspicion**”: Marx, Freud, Nietzsche
- Modern optimism – PM scepticism
- After 1968, abandons Marxism
- 1974 *The Libidinal Economy*
- Critique of reason – experimentation with new ways of talking, seeing, living
- 1984 *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*
(Accessible from <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Lyotard-PostModernCondition1-5.html>)

Jean-François Lyotard

The Postmodern
Condition:
A Report on Knowledge

Translation from the French by
Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi
Foreword by Fredric Jameson

Theory and History of Literature, Volume 10

Postmodernity for Lyotard

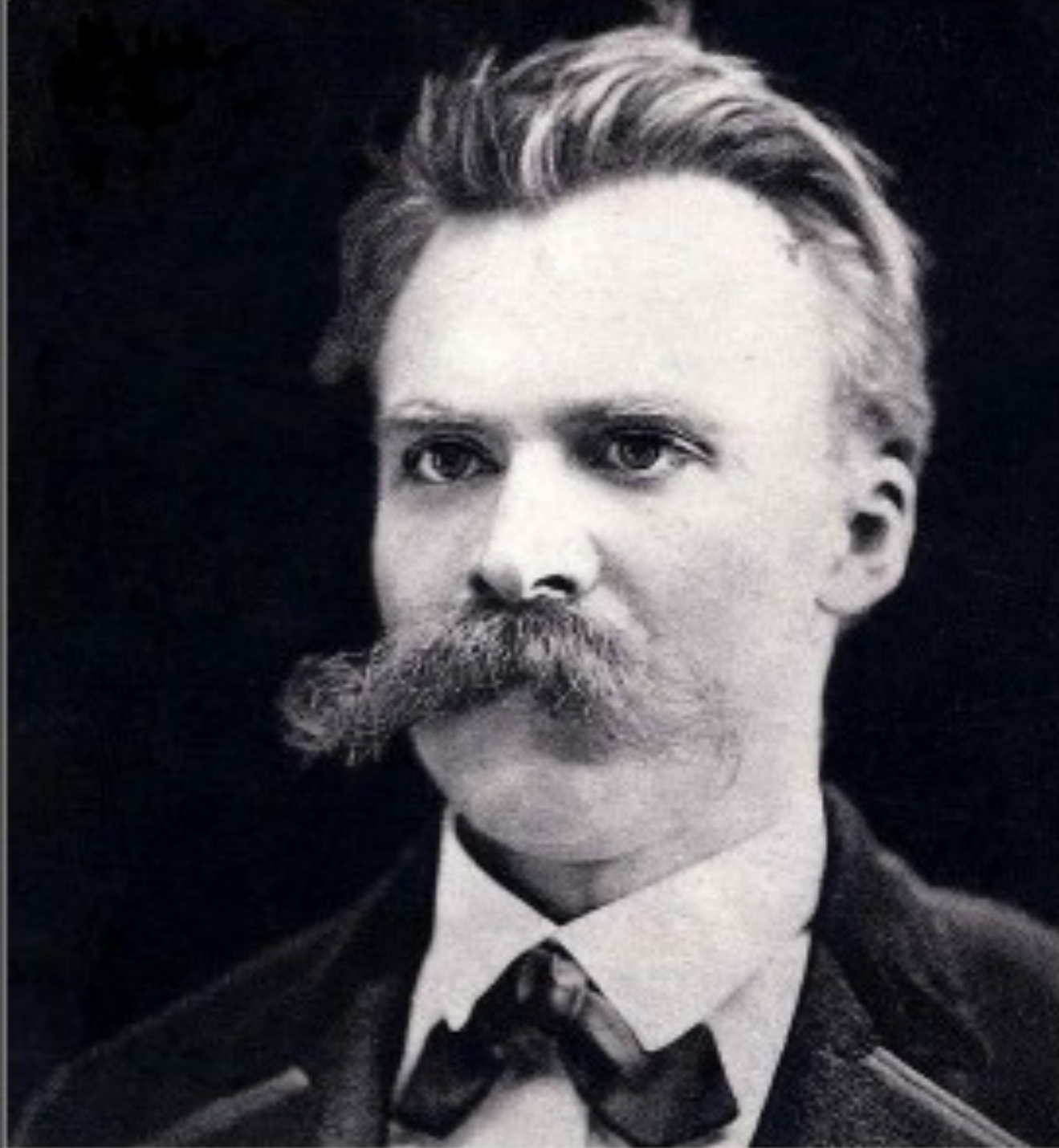
The postmodern
condition is
marked by a crisis
in the status of
knowledge in
Western
societies.

Postmodernity for Lyotard

There can no longer be Truth,
only truths.

Postmodernity for Lyotard

The end of belief
in universal theories



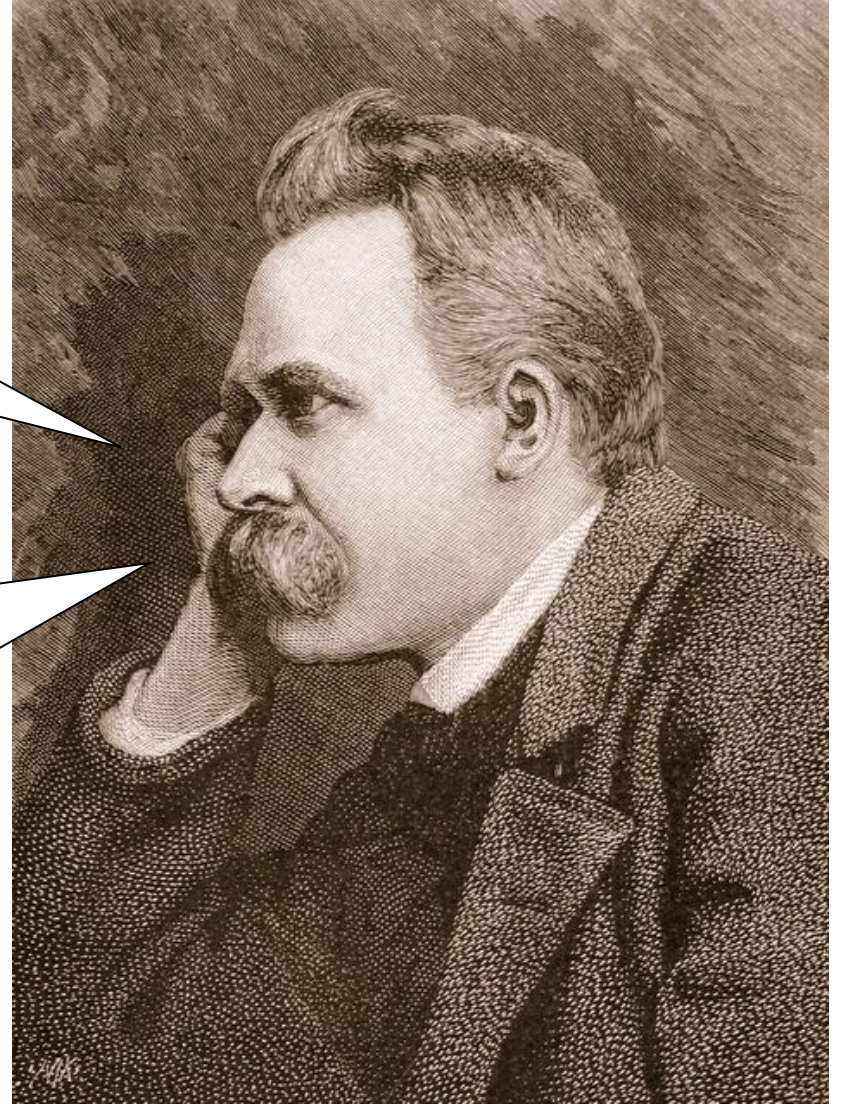
Friedrich
Nietzsche
1844-1900

The 19th century triumph of mediocrity



Truth is an illusion

*There are no facts,
only interpretations*



The revaluation of values

1979 *The Postmodern
Condition*

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“I define postmodernism
as incredulity towards
metanarratives.”
(Lyotard, 1979:4)

Metanarratives

- “Universal beliefs and theories.”
- “Metanarratives are the overarching stories we use to justify activities, institutions, values and cultural forms. They are the assumptions that underpin what we think and do.” (Adams & Dyson, 2004: 237)

Examples of metanarratives

- Religion
- Political ideologies
- Science
- Truth
- Justice

Postmodernity for Lyotard

The logic of maximum performance

Jean-François Lyotard

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The logic of maximum performance

- Today “the legitimation of power is based on its optimizing the system’s performance – efficiency.” (Lyotard, 1979:xxxiv)
- “Be operational – or disappear!”

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- The logic of maximum performance cannot judge what is true or just.
- Crisis in knowledge

Mininarratives are
provisional, temporary,
contingent, relational,
different, dissensual

Lyotard & postmodern knowledge

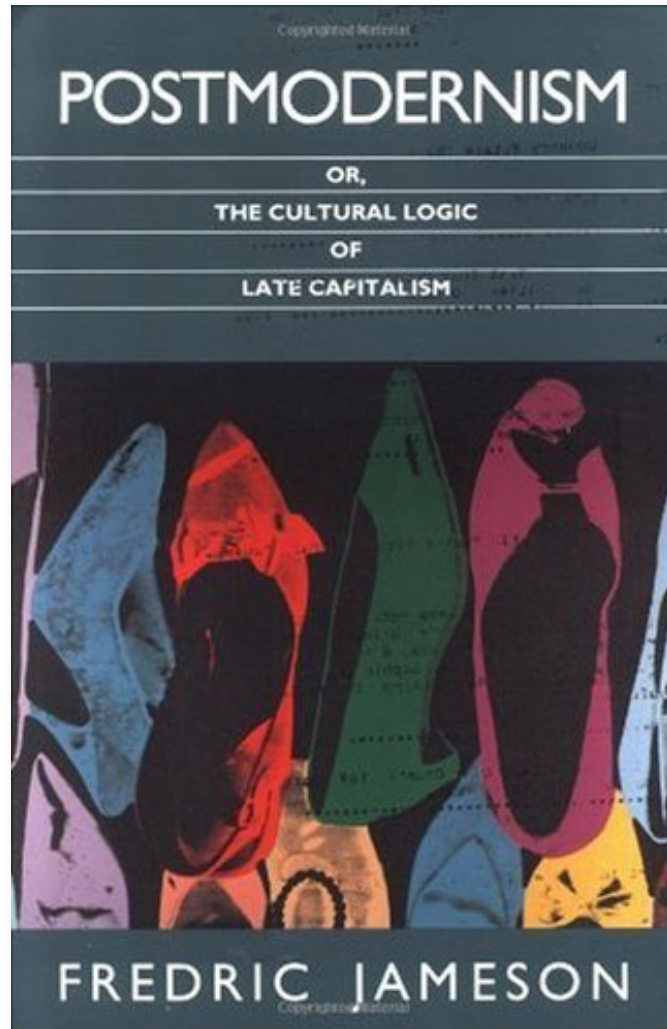
- Strategic mini-narratives
- Rejection of all compromise & engineered consensus
- Multiplicity of truths
- Key concepts: difference - play - experimentation
- Constant conflict & re-invention
- Creativity & variety & desire can never be controlled by any theory

Postmodernity = loss of credibility in the stories & institutions that have produced the modern world

- Universal knowledge
- Universal morality + law
- Scientific worldview
- History = progress
- Teleological histories
- The nation state
- “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” = the French Revolution
- The classless society = Communism
- The ability of reason to organise society + politics + industry

‘The narrative of the death of metanarrative is itself grander than most of the narratives it would consign to oblivion.’

Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time*, 1995



Fredric Jameson,
*Postmodernism, or, The
Cultural Logic of Late
Capitalism* (1984)

Depthlessness

Pastiche

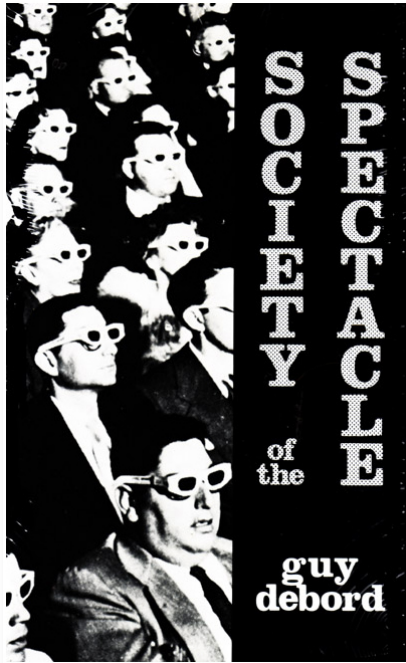
Historicism

Blurring of high/low

Loss of a cognitive map

"I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her "I love you madly", because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly". At this point, having avoided false innocence , having said clearly it is no longer possible to talk innocently, he will nevertheless say what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence." Umberto Eco

[Curb Your Enthusiasm](#) Larry David



‘The present age prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, appearance to essence.’

The Consumer Society

*Myths &
Structures*

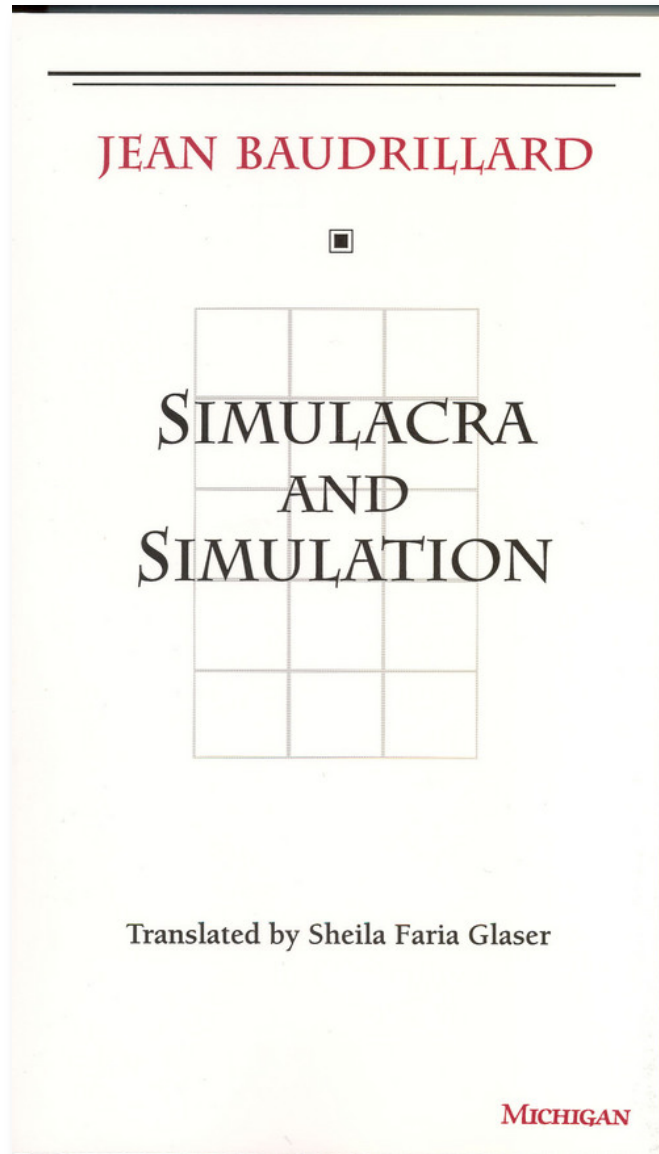


Jean Baudrillard

Consumption
today is primarily
a consumption of
signs or images

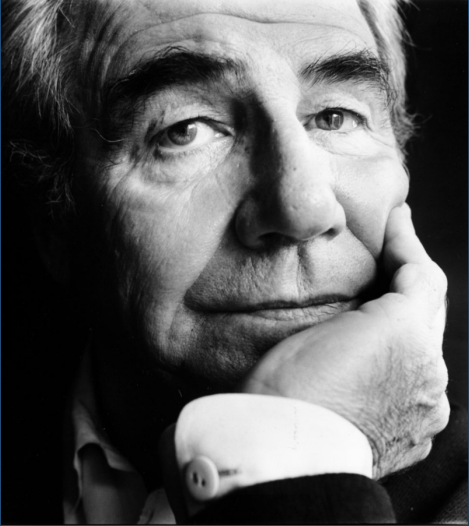


The Loss of the Real



Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981)

The postmodern world makes everything a simulacrum, a copy of reality – there is no longer a realm of the ‘real’ versus that of imitation or illusion; there is only simulation.



Postmodernist culture is a culture of the present made from fragments of the past:

‘All that remains to be done is to play with the pieces – that is postmodernism.’

JEAN BAUDRILLARD