FILM-PHILOSOPHY

The 'ABCs' Of B, Or: To Be And Not To Be B[1]

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I

From B to C and Always Already Back Again to A

> Movies - a tawdry corrupt art for a tawdry corrupt world - fit the way we feel
> - Pauline Kael (1968, 1970, 87)

> Cinema is the art of ghosts
> - Jacques Derrida (quoted in *Ghost Dance* [Ken McMullen, 1983])

Let's start with what I call the 'ABCs'. Animation (call that A[2]) animates movies (call that B[3]), then movies animate cinema (call that C). Furthermore, movies (B) are never not running beneath and traced in cinema (C), until both end in hypermovies and hypercinema, hyper B and hyper C, in what I call *hyperanimation* (hyper A).

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[1] This paper is composed of two parts both of which issue a challenge to the conventional understandings of B movies. The first speculates on B in terms of the work of Jacques Derrida, the second on what B for me morphs into in terms of the work of Jean Baudrillard. Its second part was presented in short form at the *B for Bad Cinema: Aesthetics, Politics and Cultural Value* conference at Monash University (Clayton) in Australia 15-17 April, 2009. At a few points during the course of the paper, that conference is referenced as *itself* part of the subject of the paper, part of what the paper challenges.

[2] Ordinarily I avoid capitalising the word 'animation', since that capital can grant it a propriety which for me animation 'itself' disseminates, seduces. See Cholodenko 2007a, 70.

[3] Here, too, for reasons which will become obvious, lower case b would suit 'movies' better for me. Again, I apply the capital letter for 'aesthetic' reasons only.

What my necessarily simple schematic of 'ABCs' means to propose is that: 1. Animation is never not at stake in movies and cinema, both forms of what I call *live action film animation* 2. The movie is never not at stake in cinema, which is a form for me of the movie, and 3. The movie is never not at stake in the B movie, or to put it another and unorthodox way, the movie is never not B movie. And therefore, beginning as B movies, movies (B) animate cinema (C).

To propose this, as it were, 'B before B' is to contend that the B movie is not simply the invention of the 1930s but rather synonymous with the movie 'as such', with for me what Tom Gunning famously canonised as 'the cinema of attractions', that first phase of the cinema from its advent to around 1905-1910. The cinema of attractions was a 'vulgar', exhibitionist, assaultive, exploitative cinema, long before the term 'exploitation cinema' arrived. Conceived 'as a series of visual shocks' (Gunning 1989, 33) directed at the viewer, such cinema showed scenes of sex, violence, mayhem, some presenting actual harm to the subjects filmed, some virtually threatening the very life of the viewer. Films like *The Arrival of a Train*, *The Railroad Smash-Up*, *Electrocuting an Elephant*, the *John Irwin-May Rice Kiss*, the *Serpentine Dance*[4] and Eugene Sandow flexing his muscles. They also included educational actuality films of natural curiosities, such as Charles Urban's *Unseen World* series beginning in 1903, which, Gunning tells us, 'presented magnified images of cheese mites, spiders and water fleas' (Gunning 1989, 39), the sort of film that a reformist of cinema as late as 1914 objected to as vulgar for showing 'such slimy and unbeautiful abominations' (ibid.),[5] which he claimed 'repulsed spectators with more refined sensibilities' (ibid.)

So for me, the cinema of attractions defines the movie; and what is at stake in that cinema, including in the places of its exhibition - fairgrounds,

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[4] See Ceram 1965, illustrations 210 and 211, for images of the dance. Of course, there were also films of belly dances. Indeed, Gunning tells us 'Films of erotic display made up an important genre of the cinema of attractions'. Gunning 1991, 156.

[5] For the words 'slimy and unbeautiful abominations', Gunning may be quoting Harry Furniss, *Our Lady Cinema*, reprint of 1914 edition (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), 41.

carnivals, bars, cafes, music halls, magic theatres - is the nature of the filmic image, of film 'itself' and of what animates it.

To consider this, here, as I have done before,[6] I turn to Maxim Gorky's July 4, 1896 review of the Lumière Bros program exhibited at Aumont's restaurant at the Nizhni Novgorod fair in Russia, a review paradigmatic for Tom Gunning and myself in terms of characterising the nature of film and film spectatorship (for me animation and animation spectatorship, too, especially as for me all film is a form of animation, hence my term live action film animation), a characterisation that sets the terms for my unorthodox notion of B, of B before the B that comes to be defined in the 1930s in technical terms as the second film on the bill, but also, it appears, inescapably so, in qualitative terms: less in value (moral, aesthetic,...).

Gorky opens with the famous words:

> Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows. If you only knew how strange it is to be there ... It is not life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre.

> Here I shall try to explain myself, lest I be suspected of madness or indulgence in symbolism. I was at Aumont's and saw Lumière's cinématograph - moving photography...

> ...Curses and ghosts, the evil spirits that have cast entire cities into eternal sleep, come to mind and you feel as though Merlin's vicious trick is being enacted before you. As though he had bewitched the entire street... (Gorky 1996, 5)

Gorky even commented on *The Arrival of a Train*:

> It speeds straight at you - watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones, and crushing into dust and into broken fragments this hall and this building, so full of wine, music and vice.

> But this, too, is but a train of shadows. (ibid.)

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[6] See Cholodenko 2004, Cholodenko 2005/2008, Cholodenko 2007c and Cholodenko 2009.

Here, let me introduce a schema for consideration. It is one after Jacques Derrida's articulation of the conditions of possibility of Western philosophy as a metaphysics of presence, whose effects have been felt through all of culture, including popular culture, for Derrida. It is a schema that I propose works for all modes of B - modes such as kitsch, camp, schlock, hack, cult, trash, sleaze, porn, toxic, gore, splatter, slasher, exploitation, midnight movies, genre films - notably western, gangster, sci-fi, ghost, vampire, zombie, mummy, cannibal, 'mondo' - including paracinema, whose elasticity of definition appears to allow it[7] - insofar as they all conform to Derrida's modelling of the binary hierarchy by means of which Western philosophy has determined Being as *presence*, a fullness of living meaning, truth, essence, ideality, interiorising and centering presence against a lack, an absence, a deficiency of itself.

Western metaphysics does this by an operation it performs on binary oppositions standing for what is logical and true - such pairs as presence/absence, superior/inferior, legitimate/illegitimate, proper/improper, good/bad, good/evil, true/false, serious/frivolous, health/disease, adult/child - such metaphysics elevating the first term as belonging to presence and excluding the second as a falling off from presence. This may also obviously take the cognate form - the relation of centre (mainstream!) to margin.

In either form, as it applies to the relation of movies (B) to cinema (C), B would be what at once enables and disenables C, what is never not traced, marked in, encrypted in and haunting it, what C seeks to efface and efface its effacing of, repress and repress its repressing of, but that, as ineffaceable and irrepressible, is never not traced, marked, encrypted and haunting therein, operative therein, even as it allows such oppositions to be installed in the first place.

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[7] Jeffrey Sconce defines 'paracinema' as follows: 'As a most elastic textual category, paracinema would include entries from such seemingly disparate subgenres as 'badfilm', splatterpunk, 'mondo' films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, government hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach-party musicals, and just about every other historical manifestation of exploitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft-core pornography.' (Sconce 1995, 372)

In other words, B would be what deconstructs C, turning it on and at the same time turning on it, making C but the special case, the reduced conditional form, of itself. It would be the trace, the supplement, the parergon - the spectre - of C. So when Derrida says 'cinema is the art of ghosts' (quoted in *Ghost Dance* [Ken McMullen, 1983]),[8] we would say 'the movies are the spectres which enable cinema to be Art'. And at the same time never simply be Art, even as soul/spirit is never not always already spectre.

The logic of the supplement, of the spectre, is that of the undecidable: 'both/and, neither/nor, at the same time'. It is the logic of the between, of for me animation as the animatic. The spectre (*psuché*) lies between the immaterial (soul, spirit, mind, thought as *psyche*, as *anima*) and the material (even thought as *animus*), between presence and absence, legitimate and illegitimate, proper and improper, good and bad, etc. Here the word 'entertainment' jumps forward to remind us that it comes from the French *entretenir*, meaning to hold between. For me, to hold us in (the) between.

No wonder there is such trouble trying to arrive at a definitive definition of B movies (and of 'badfilm', of 'paracinema'). Such a logic would make of B both legitimate and illegitimate, neither legitimate nor illegitimate, at the same time, both good and bad, neither good nor bad, at the same time.

For me, what makes definitive definition impossible for B movies (including paracinema) is that very 'elasticity' of the textual category of paracinema that Jeffrey Sconce highlights in his groundbreaking, canonical article on it (Sconce 1995), an elasticity for me of the nature of the animatic, which reanimates any attempt to definitively define anything, that very attempt for me one to render the animation of definition inanimate.

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[8] Given that the figure of the spectre is for Derrida 'perhaps the hidden figure of all figures' (Derrida 1994, 120), for me in film animation we find a privileged, exemplary instance of this 'figure of all figures' - which figure I call the animatic. This figure would mark a crucial 'conjunction' of what is privileged in film animation and what is privileged in Derrida. He declares: 'the logic of spectrality,...inseparable from the very motif...of deconstruction,...is at work, most often explicitly, in all the [my] essays published over the last 20 years...' (ibid., 178, note 3). It is a figure (including as the Homeric *psuché*) and logic I have elaborated in a number of articles in terms of film animation, photography, drawing, etc., including the articles listed in note 5, as well as Cholodenko 2008.

That impossibility of the in-between is marked in what Susan Sontag says about defining camp. One can read the *B for Bad Cinema* conference's call for papers, its description of films as 'good-because-bad' and 'bad-because-good', as analogous to the ambiguous play of Sontag's 'ultimate Camp statement: it's good *because* it's awful…' (Sontag 2007, 2008, 52)[9] - which taste she tells us

> turns its back on the good-bad axis of ordinary aesthetic judgment. Camp doesn't reverse things. It doesn't argue that the good is bad, or the bad is good. What it does is to offer for art (and life) a different - a supplementary - set of standards. (ibid., 49)

A supplementary set of standards for camp and for that conference's 'good-because-bad' and 'bad-because-good' best articulated for me by the very theorist of supplementarity - Derrida himself - supplementarity as not the so-called 'radical', simple inversion/reversal of opposing terms and attributes - where high becomes low and low becomes high, where good becomes bad and bad becomes good - but rather a Derridean coimplication of opposing terms and attributes, whose comminglings cannot be unknotted in determinate, mutually exclusive oppositions that allow a resolution of the relation of high and low, of good and bad, or, for live action film animation, of cinema and movies.

And it is an appreciation of such irresolvability that I see animating, without any mention of Derrida, Matt Hills's challenge to what he calls the 'dialectic of value' (Hills 2002, 182) of scholars and practitioners of cult and of 'fan cult(ure)s' (ibid.) - I'd say their reductive either/or logics - Hills challenging that dialectic, that either/orism, with what is for him 'the essentially contradictory process' of cult and fan cultures and the specific modes of 'between-ness' (ibid.) of cult fandoms, of fan cultures, including between consumerism and 'resistance', and of cult media, including between cult and culture and the 'textual' and the 'extratextual'.[10]

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[9] Umberto Eco misquotes Sontag's words as 'it's beautiful because it's horrible' (Eco 2007, 417).

[10] A fuller list of Hills' categories of 'between-ness' include: 'community and hierarchy', 'knowledge' and 'justification', 'fantasy' and 'reality', categories that

To so theorise the relation of B and C after Derrida is to reiterate the way in which I brought Derrida's logics to the relation of animation and live action cinema in my essay '*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, or The Framing of Animation', in *The Illusion of Life: Essays on Animation* (Cholodenko 1991b). Try this exercise with that essay: replace the word 'animation' with any term of B and replace 'live action' with any term of C, such as 'mainstream', 'centre' and the like, and see if it does not work. (By the by, animation is excluded from Sconce's definition of paracinema.)

For me, the B movie is privileged in, for and as live action film animation, delivering for and as it, it as animatic, its privileged figure, a figure that after Derrida I have nominated 'the Cryptic Complex', with its whole set of affects, shocks, attractions (which at once attraction and repel, or better, attract in the repelling and repel in the attracting at the same time), the Complex composed of *the shock of the uncanny, the return of death as spectre* - for me perhaps the figure of all figures of the living dead - *and the aftershock of endless mourning and melancholia and cryptic incorporation.*[11] For me, this Complex underlies cinema, regardless of whatever other affects are laid upon it. It runs under narrative cinema - what Gunning calls the 'cinema of narrative integration' - never not informing it, operating within it, supporting it even as it deconstructs it, and vice versa, to then reemerge for him in the '70s/'80s 'Spielberg-Lucas-Coppola cinema of effects' (Gunning 1986, 70), making B for me run under cinema to emerge in what I call hyper B in the '70s.

The result: the movies, therefore cinema, therefore live action film animation, is never not B. So it is not a case of 'From B (Bad Movies) to C (Good Cinema) and Back to B (Bad Movies) Again', for cinema, indeed live action film animation, are always already never not B (Bad Movies), as they are never not A - film animation.

The life of the Cryptic Complex of live action film animation is lifedeath - at once the life of death and the death of life. It is the life of the

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situate cult media between cult and culture, the 'textual' and the 'extratextual', the 'textual' and the 'spatial' and the 'self' and the 'other'.

[11] For my first elaboration of this Complex, see Cholodenko 2004, 107.

hauntological, which conjures the ontological (and all its attributes - presence, essence, identity, self-identity, the good, production, reproduction, representation) - even as the ontological tries to conjure away, to exorcise, the hauntological.

Live action film animation is of the order of those who reside in the in-between, the living dead - the spectre and its relatives in the family: the vampire, the zombie, the mummy, etc. Their names are legion. Every such film is for me irreducibly a tale from and of the crypt, of the grave and the graveyard, of the cemetery and the exhuming of what lies dead and buried therein. Of the land of the dead, who return as living dead to turn the movies, their viewers and movie theatres into what composes, or should I say rather, decomposes, them, turns spectatorship into spectreship, into at once haunting and being haunted, cryptically incorporating and being cryptically incorporated. Every such film is thus an initiation in (to) death, including one's own status as living dead, and at the same time an attempted exorcism of death and of that initiation in it. As with Gorky. And with Gunning. Which means that the first, last and enduring attraction of 'the cinema of attractions' is 'the movie of attractions', whose first, last and enduring attraction is animation, is the animatic, as privileged mode of live action film animation, which ironically privileges the life of death.

When Gorky situates the movies in the Kingdom of Shadows, he puts them in Hades, in Hell. He even wonders why such an invention of the Lumières, that 'could probably be applied to the general ends of science, that is, of bettering man's life and the developing of his mind' (Gorky 1996, 6), is being exhibited at Aumont's, 'where vice alone is being encouraged and popularised' (ibid.). So it comes as no surprise to see Charles Flynn 78 years later say of B movies, which he calls 'schlock/kitsch/hack' movies: 'One thing all these films have in common - perhaps the *only* thing - is their utter disreputability' (Flynn 1975, 5). It is a point Sconce reiterates in 1995 when he declares of the paracinematic subculture that is it 'organized around what are among the most critically disreputable films in cinematic history' (Sconce 1995, 372), that 'paracinematic community' (ibid.) representing for him 'the

most developed and dedicated of cinephilic subcultures ever to worship at "the temple of schlock"' (ibid.). It is a 'temple' of schlock/kitsch/hack that for me goes all the way back to the advent of movies, of live action film animation.

In this regard, my Pauline Kael epigraph serves well: 'Movies - a tawdry corrupt art for a tawdry corrupt world - fit the way we feel' (Kael 1968, 1970, 87). And her 'When you clean them up, when you make movies respectable, you kill them. The wellspring of their *art*, their greatness, is in not being respectable' (ibid., 115). That applies for me to those who write about movies as well as to moviemakers.

So I utilise Sconce's characterisation of the textual category of paracinema as a 'most elastic' (Sconce 1995, 372) one to include all B, as I take B all the way back to the beginning of movies, as I employ the stretch the word 'bad' (as in badfilm) gives me to include, as the OED tells us it does, evil. To associate movies with evil is nothing new. The first international conference of DOMITOR (International Association to Promote the Study of Early Cinema), held in June 1990, was called 'An Invention of the Devil: Early Cinema and Religion' (See Cosandey et al. 1992).

And I take that connection, that privileging of evil for cinema, is a claim Francis Ford Coppola makes in his *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), in the rendezvous of the Prince of Darkness' avatar, Dracula, and Minna as Dracula is on the way to see, as the barker calls out, 'the wonder of modern civilisation, the latest sensation, the greatest attraction of the century, the new wonder of the world' - the cinématograph - and their (Dracula and Minna) then crossing with it (the movies), their copulating and cross-fertilising, as it were, with live action film animation, privileging Dracula's relation to it, the vampire's relation to it and the genre of the vampire film for it, and vice versa. Coppola even has a train - one reanimating Gorky's train 'of shadows' (Gorky 1996, 5) - bear down upon the couple in that mise-en-scène of live action film animation's advent.

And we know that Dracula is either the first or second most popular character in the history of movies, the other being Sherlock Holmes. I would propose a 'war' between them - between evil and the one who would detect, master and arrest it, render it inanimate, crucially including Holmes' avatar, Dr van Helsing - a war played out between the forces of evil and of good in movies and cinema, in their narratives, in their relations from the earliest days, as Georges Méliès's playing Mephistopheles in so many films attests, but enchantingly so.

So the efforts to 'uplift', to 'elevate', the movies, to make them purely good, to turn movies from the dark toward the light, first marked in the effort to make the darkened movie theatre itself literally 'light theatre' for refined, 'high-class' people,[12] then in D.W. Griffith's goal to turn movies into Art, can never and has never for me escaped B, which is to say that 'cinema' - which very word has come to connote film Art - has never escaped 'movie' - which very word for me not only connotes but denotes B. Meaning of course that I think it a worrying sign of the growing reputability of the disreputable B that the conference that animated this paper was called 'B for Bad Cinema' rather than 'B For Bad Movies', because 'Cinema' gives B movies, badfilm, paracinema, respectability, proving Sconce's point, made already in 1995, that paracinema is taking hold in the academy (Sconce 1995, 372-373). Now, of course, its grasp is much firmer. But I would dispute the academy

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[12] See Gunning 1991, chapter 5: 'Complete and Coherent Films, Self-Contained Commodities', and chapter 6: 'From Obscene Films to High-Class Drama', on this middle-class reform of the movies by the Motion Picture Patents Company and the National Board of Censorship beginning in 1909, their reanimation/transformation for me of movies into cinema, a reform including of the movies' places of exhibition. The terms of condemnation of the cinema of attractions of that period that Gunning relates here, with the clergy's call to replace its lower-class popular entertainment with 'respectable "moral, educational, and cleanly amusing" means of expression' (147) and its excoriation of its venues as 'house[s] of assignation' (ibid.) and 'dens of iniquity' (ibid., 152), are consistent with Gorky's vision of what movies could be as an instrument of good instead of the evil it is for him at Aumont's. Testifying in late 1908 on his visit to such 'breeding places of vice' (ibid., 151), the Reverend Evers is quoted by Gunning as declaring: 'The most suggestive, the most enticing actions which appeal only to the lowest and most evil passions in men and women were thrown upon the screen for small boys and girls to look upon. I was indeed saddened by this open exhibition of depravity' (ibid., 152).

was ever the unitary entity Sconce in largest part presents it as. I know Edward Colless and I were teaching genre theory and screening badfilms starting in the early '80s. I'm confident we weren't the only film academics doing that.

II

B FOR BAuDrillard (Hyper)cinema

> Since the world drives to a delirious state of things, we must drive to a delirious point of view
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> > - Jean Baudrillard (1990b, 9)

Let me state at the outset, if you thought the first part of this paper was speculative, this part would be irretrievably, unashamedly speculative, even hyper-speculative, a kind of theory-fiction, or even hyper-theory fiction. For me, what it may lose in objective validity, it may gain in coherence, in affinity with the delirious world of today, a world of sudden, shocking, catastrophic, seismic, implosive global events, events recalling that butterfly of chaos theory that flaps its wings and causes a hurricane on the other side of the planet, apocalyptic events like 9/11, the 'War on Terror', the 'Climate Crisis' and now the 'Global Financial Crisis', events which, added to all the other sudden, shocking disasters that assault us in our daily lives 'inside' and 'outside' the media, 'inside' and 'outside' the academy, make *me* delirious.

In Part 1 of this paper I have considered B, B movies. Here I want to consider what for me B morphs into, what I have dubbed hyper-B.

To say hyper-B is for me to say Baudrillard, for me the singular theorist of the hyper-, of hyperreality, mass media and contemporary 'culture'.

The privileged connection I have proposed between film and the bad, film and evil - for me privileged in and by B movies, even for me from live action film animation's very inception - is marked by Baudrillard in his

longest meditation on film - *The Evil Demon of Images*, the Inaugural Mari Kuttna Lecture on Film presented at the University of Sydney in 1984, published in 1987.

In the very title of his talk, Baudrillard links cinema irrevocably to evil, to Descartes' evil demon, to the devil - a privileged link many a film makes, as we know, especially B films. And for Baudrillard, and myself, all films make.

The Evil Demon of Images lays out Baudrillard's thinking of the nature of cinema not merely in terms of representation - Plato's original and good copy - but in terms of simulation - Plato's bad copy, that pernicious simulacrum, of the order of evil, of Seduction, of Illusion, of the fatal, which undoes, leads astray, representation, leads astray both original and copy, making them forms of it, and that makes of cinema an evil conjuror that not only makes appear, produces, the order of the good - order of meaning, truth, presence, essence, reason, reality, the reality principle, representation, production, reproduction, the individual, identity, self-identity, the social - but makes disappear, denegates - in a word, seduces - that order and its constitutive elements.[13]

Here, Baudrillard thinks the history, or rather destiny, of cinema, a destiny passing from 'the most fantastic or mythical to the realistic and hyperrealistic' (Baudrillard 1987, 33), a destiny ostensibly recapitulating for him his orders of simulacra, orders of: 1. Seduction 2. Reality, and 3. Hyperreality.

To be on the 'safe side', let me briefly reprise what characterises the second and third orders for Baudrillard. And while I do so, I hope you will

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[13] In a 1984 interview entitled 'Is an Image Not Fundamentally Immoral?', Baudrillard announces: 'I don't consider myself to be deeply sociological. I work more on symbolic effects than on sociological data. I have the impression that cinema is more concerned with the imaginary of a society, the way a society escapes,...the way in which it disappears rather than the way in which it creates itself, builds itself up' (Baudrillard 1993e, 68).

be thinking about badfilm, paracinema, in terms of that third order, hyperreality.[14]

The second order, that of reality, can be thought in terms of all those elements I just listed for the order of the good, as well as being for Baudrillard a world of metaphor, Christianity, materialism, law, the polar, the dialectic and contradiction. The passage beyond that order and all composing it into its/their pure and empty form arrived during or just after World War II, when the world for Baudrillard passed through Elias Canetti's dead point, blind spot, black hole into hyperreality, increasingly virtual reality. The third order is a world of models that animate a 'real' without truth or reality. It is a world of *excess*, of *extreme phenomena* and *events*, whose logic and process is that of the exponential, the hypertelic, the ecstatic (no longer the dialectic, now the ecstatic, but in its metastatic expression, what I call hyperanimatic), the 'more x than x', the pushing of things to their limits where they at once fulfil and annihilate themselves, or reverse on themselves, showing their opposite was always already immanent in them, in either case 'living on' in their pure and empty, virtual forms.

It is a world of the obese (i.e. simultaneous hypertrophy and atrophy), of the obscene (i.e. abject, pornographic hypervisibility), of terrorism (i.e. hyperviolence) and its hostage, of simultaneous acceleration and inertia, simultaneous exponential instability and exponential stability, transpolitics, transaesthetics, the viral, the fractal, the clone - which hyperproliferate and hypersaturate the virtual world - the quantum, the global, the mass, the transdevaluation of all values, a world where our cold media have telescoped into reality, short-circuiting it and the polarities that have ostensibly heretofore sustained its 'givens', volatilised the grand narratives of our culture - the never-ending progress of history and human evolution, liberation through science and technology, their capacity to know and control everything, the rule of reason, logic, order and law - exterminated

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[14] Baudrillard will later come to nominate a fourth order of simulacra, that of the viral, the fractal, the clone, an order that is still under the rubric, and which I am so subsuming in my characterisation, of hyperreality.

the great referentials of the culture - the individual, the social, the subject, identity, class, culture itself, the human, history, fact, production, reproduction, representation - indeed the principle of referentiality itself - and hypersaturate us with endless solicitations and useless information and data.

Here the social is no longer the social. It implodes in the mass, the pure and empty form, the simulation of, the social (See Baudrillard 1983b). This is a world of metastasis, of the cybernetic and the molecular, the codes of DNA and digitality, of television and the computer and their imageless screens of absorption where, fascinated, we, Telematic Man, see nothing. This is the world where, inverting Marshall McLuhan, man has become the extension of, the satellite of, the excrescence upon, his media technologies. This is the world of virtual reality. This is, as Baudrillard coined it, '*The desert of the real itself*' (Baudrillard 1983a, 2), a world of increasingly definitive indeterminacy, of the end of finalities, of hysteresis, of nonresolution. As Baudrillard declared: 'The revolution of our time is the uncertainty revolution' (Baudrillard 1993a, 43).

And hyperreal film is of the nature of hyperreality, partaking of *all* of its qualities and processes, including those I have encapsulated here. More, film is a privileged performer and propagator of them.

Hyperreal film is for Baudrillard film that increasingly simulates film, simulates earlier film - what could be called copying, remaking, pastiche, hyper-quotationality, radical eclecticism - but many think that, many even love it. For Baudrillard, who approaches film with a primal joy for it carried over from his childhood,[15] film is more than that. For him, what makes film

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[15] Baudrillard is not only not approaching film from a particular academic film perspective, his stance toward cinema is intentionally unacademic period, Baudrillard refusing any designation of himself as film scholar. Rather, he professes himself 'unrestrained film buff... - ...in a sense uncultured and fascinated' (Baudrillard 1987, 28) and describes his joy for cinema as 'a kind of primal pleasure, of anthropological joy in images, a kind of brute fascination unencumbered by aesthetic, moral, social or political judgements. It is because of this that I suggest they are immoral, and that their fundamental power lies in this immorality' (ibid.). Baudrillard's 'brute fascination for images, above and beyond all moral or social determination' (ibid.) is wedded for me to his love of movies, especially older American movies, a love anything but of Capital C Culture (here his self-declared 'allergy to culture with a big

film is 'an image - that means not only a screen and a visual form but a myth, something that belongs to the sphere of the double, the phantasm [I say spectre, *psuché*], the mirror, the dream...' (Baudrillard 1987, 25). Beginning for him as warm, enchanted, of the order of Seduction, Illusion, myth, magic, film passes from that, becoming for him increasingly lacking in one thing: film itself. Passing beyond itself, film increasingly becomes cold, disenchanted, disillusioned, hyperreal, a hypersimulation, a 'vast machine of special effects' (ibid., 17. See also 30-32; and Baudrillard 1993b, 23), a technological, operational, military war game-type - and I would add administrative, managerial and computational - exercise which cinema performs for itself devoid of not only magic (except of a mechanical kind [Baudrillard 1993b, 23]), enchantment, Seduction and illusion, but meaning, truth, reality, cause, effect, etc., as well. All of which leaves one cold, empty, indifferent, fascinated - not seduced - with this 'formal, empty perfection' (Baudrillard 1993c, 30), lacking 'any element of make-believe' (ibid.), fascination being the affect that goes for Baudrillard with disappearance. In interviews he has indeed stated how he bemoans the 'loss of the cinema of my youth' (Baudrillard 1993b, 23).

Baudrillard puts hyperreal film very simply even: 'It is kitsch, it's not cinema' (ibid.). In other words, it is hyperkitsch, hypercinema, the pure and empty simulation of cinema (Baudrillard 1987, 30-31).[16]

If you compare, for instance, Todd Browning's 1931 *Dracula* with Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* of 1992 or George A. Romero's zombie series, beginning in 1968 with *Night of the Living Dead*, I think you will understand what Baudrillard is talking about and getting at, a profound *reanimating* of film as hyperfilm, the pure and empty form of film.

C' [Baudrillard 1993b, 24]) and Capital A Art, including High Art cinema (Baudrillard 1993c, 31). In stating 'I would rather see a second-rate American film than a French film' (ibid., 33), Baudrillard for me acknowledges B movies as a preference.

[16] Given what I have said about Baudrillard's take on hyperrealist cinema, I would propose that he offers us a way to write the next installment, as it were, of Gilles Deleuze's two volumes on cinema, but it would not be simply *Cinema 3* but rather *"Cinema 3": The Hyper-Movement- and Hyper-Time-Image*, for me movies and cinema read through animation as the animatic in its hyperreal, metastatic expression.

Moreover, even as cinema passes beyond itself, so it for Baudrillard increasingly precedes and models reality, increasingly 'telescopes' into reality, short-circuits reality, and then cinema and reality implode in each other, leaving no room for representation as such, each suffering a loss of specificity, where cinema attempts 'to abolish itself in the absolute of reality, the real already long absorbed in cinematographic (or televised) hyperreality' (ibid., 34).

But hyperreal film is not a matter of simple reversal, of film becoming reality and reality becoming film, but rather of film becoming at once more and less film than film and at the same time more and less reality than reality, as hyperreality is reality at once more and less reality than reality and at the same time more and less film than film. In other words, it is a matter not of simple reversal but rather of *hyper-indetermination*, as each takes off on its own hyperanimated, hyperanimatic trajectory, each denegating the other and itself more and more, leaving one in an increasingly definitive state of radical, virtual uncertainty. The empty form of cinema enwrapping at once itself and the empty form of reality, and vice versa - a quadruple mummification for me. As Baudrillard states: *'Cinema is fascinated by itself as a lost object just as it (and we) are fascinated by the real as a referential in perdition'* (ibid., 33).

Such indistinguishability is diabolical, the very form of evil itself for Baudrillard. While good is for him the principle of reconcilability, including at once the separability and reconcilability of good and evil, evil is the principle of irreconcilability, including the irreconcilability and inseparability of good and evil. Evil is superior principle for Baudrillard, especially as it is allied with his sovereign principles of Seduction, Illusion, the fatal, cruelty, likewise irreconcilable.

So while all live action film animation is of the order of evil, ruled by the evil demon, by the devil and his minions, of the order of B - B for both bad and evil - where 'C' would seek to dissimulate its badness, its evil, pretending to be good - hyper-live action film animation is hyper-evil, the pure and empty form of evil, where evil is more good than the good and

good more evil than evil, where the fatal, become hyperfatal, is more banal than the banal, and the banal, become hyperbanal, is more fatal than the fatal, all fatal not only to film but to themselves.

Here my 'Cryptic Complex' of film morphs into, reanimates as, 'hyper-Cryptic Complex' of hyper-film, the spectre hyper-spectre, the uncanny hyper-uncanny, the attraction hyper-attraction, hyper-shock (predicted by Walter Benjamin, and Maxim Gorky before him), where, for instance, instead of at once the attraction of the repulsion and the repulsion of the attraction of B movies, as we characterised the attraction in Part I, we have the exponential - the hyper-attraction, the attraction at once more and less attraction than attraction and at the same time more and less repulsion than repulsion, yielding an attraction more repulsion than repulsion, and concomitantly, a repulsion more attraction than attraction.

For Baudrillard, *everything* tends in this same direction, passing into their pure and empty hyper forms, all subject to and operating in terms of the maximalising, 'optimising', 'pushing the envelope', 'raising the bar', 'over the top', extreme, excessive process of hypertelia, of *ecstasis*. In passing into their hyperforms, everything becomes everywhere except in itself, and everything is in itself but itself, and enmeshed in the vertiginous, delirious processes of cancerous proliferation, saturation, promiscuity, mixings, exacerbation, extenuation, diffusion, and dispersion.

In light of all this, I propose that the *B for Bad Cinema* conference statement's descriptors of paracinema - 'sleazy', 'excessive', 'trash', 'disreputable', etc. - insofar as they are meant to reference post-World War II films, are forms of that cinema that Baudrillard describes as hyperreal cinema, cinema of the order of hyperreality.[17] The statement gives as the logic

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[17] In '"Trashing" the Academy', Sconce characterises paracinema using the late '60s-'70s Marxist film theory term 'counter-cinema' (Sconce 1995, 381), a counter-cinema for him counter not only to Hollywood mainstream cinema but to 'the (perceived) counter-cinema of [film] aesthetes and the cinematic academy' (ibid.), who propounded the term. Insofar as for me Sconce still binds his paracinematic counter-cinema to Baudrillard's second order, my take on it parts company with, indeed we could say exceeds, his. In that regard, his appeal to paracinema as a form of 'an aesthetic of excess' (ibid., 380) is surpassed by paracinema for me as an excess of aesthetics (at once too much and too little), as the exceeding of aesthetics, the

of paracinema 'good-because-bad or bad-because-good'. But I propose that, after Baudrillard, that either/or logic of simple reversal is not adequate to paracinema.[18] Rather, the logic of paracinema as hypercinema is: bad at once more and less bad than bad and at the same time more and less good than good. This logic means that bad is everywhere except in the bad, and concomitantly, good everywhere except in the good, what would be the pure and empty, hyperreal, virtual forms of bad and good - hyperbad, hypergood. In such a light, badfilm is not simply badfilm. Rather, I would nominate it *hyperbad* film. Hyperbad film - and here I challenge the subtitle of the *B for Bad Cinema* conference: 'Aesthetics, Politics and Cultural Value' - lies beyond 'cultural value', for it lies beyond both culture and value, as it does aesthetics (hence aesthetic value, aesthetics as value, as taste - including bad), art (including bad art), morals and politics - all of which are second order, order of reality, whereas hyperreality is the order of the transdevaluation of all values.

In hyperreality, culture passes into its pure and empty form, hyper-culture, where America with its banal *inculture* has taken the lead for Baudrillard, is privileged in his modeling of hyperreality - where the low is more high than high and the high more low than low, the ugly more beautiful than the beautiful and the beautiful more ugly than the ugly - the country where life everywhere is cinematised for him, as he describes in his book *America* (published in French in 1986, in English in 1988) - the country, I would add, more associated with, isomorphic with and making B and hyper-B movies than any other. In hyperreality, politics passes into the

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beyond aesthetics, as well as the beyond politics, the social, etc. In other words, paracinema as of the third order of the hyper.
[18] In their Introduction to Section 1 of *The Cult Film Reader*, the editors of the anthology, Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik, declare that 'the postsemiotic writings of Jean Baudrillard have found welcome applications' (Mathijs and Mendik 2008, 22, note 3) in writings on cult film. But my research to date of that literature has found Baudrillard referenced only a few times. In most cases, his work is misunderstood and misrepresented; and even in the few cases where it is not, it is, as in the rest, treated cursorily, all cases thus shortchanging its and his relevance to the theorising of cult film, badfilm, paracinema, a shortchanging I hope this essay begins to remedy. As for Derrida, I can find only one writer so far citing his work, that is, Matt Hills.

transpolitical, aesthetics passes into transaesthetics, into anaesthetics, making Baudrillard, by the by, 'the extreme' French theorist of aesthetics, far more so than Pierre Bourdieu and Roland Barthes, contrary to Sconce's nomination of the latter two as that extreme in his Introduction to *Sleaze Artists* (Sconce 2007, 8).

To the degree paracinema exemplifies and performs the extreme, excessive processes of hyperreality, it is hyperbad, of the order of hyper-B. A key point: insofar as the 'more more' of 'more x than x' is also 'more less', 'more less than less', hyperfilm can accommodate not only hyper-perfection but hyper-imperfection - the more trash than trash, more sleaze than sleaze, more failure than failure, more cynicism than cynicism (what I call 'cine-cism' than 'cine-cism'!) - so near and dear to the 'badder than bad' heart of badfilm, paracinematic, cultists. In the hyperreal, both hyper-perfection and hyper-imperfection are the effect not of art (or non-art) but of model as 'tactical reference values' (Baudrillard, 1987, 32).

Hyper-B, the more and less B than B, the pure and empty form of B, is of the order of hyper-live action film animation, of hyper-life, hyper-death, hyper-lifedeath, of life more death than death, more dead than dead, and death more life than life, more alive than alive, which 'explains' why it is that hyper-vampire and hyper-zombie hyper-horror genres have the most 'animation', the most 'life', in and of them today of all hyper-genres, narrativising hyper-good 'against' hyper-evil, hyper-life 'against' hyper-death, even as they perform them, virally multiplying themselves as well as each other, as well as infecting, contaminating, other hyper-genres, like hyper-action, hyper-thriller, hyper-sf and hyper-apocalypse, hyper-spawning and hyperanimating hyper-subgenres at every turn, pushing them all to be more than they are, which others return the challenge, all hypertoxically massing together, colluding, even as they outbid each other, pushing to the limits the hyper-films in their own hyper-genres and in the others. The 'to the max', metastatic, epidemic hyper-'lifedeath' of film-viruses, film-fractals, film-clones, infecting, contagious, fatal to the spectator as to themselves.

Perhaps the most astonishing, hyperanimatic cross-over of all is that hyper-B is more C than C and hyper-C more B than B!, so hyper-B would be more mainstream than the mainstream!, more good than the good, and hyper-C more margin than the margin!, more bad than the bad, which figures one side of Sconce's 1995 assertion that cult cinema was entering the mainstream, as well as for him 'the academy' (Sconce 1995, 373). Indeed, as John Waters has said, 'Everything in midnight movies is now in Hollywood movies' (quoted in *Midnight Movies: From the Margin to the Mainstream* [Stuart Samuels, 2005]). Here, at once cult, arguably drawn from 'the depths of…mass culture' (Taylor 2007, 259), becomes more Hollywood than Hollywood and Hollywood more cult than cult.

In passing beyond reality into hyperreality, hyperreal films (and I take paracinema to be a privileged exemplar of hyperreal live action film, though not necessarily delimited to it given my understanding in Part 1 of paracinema's extension into the pre-World War II world) increasingly hyperconform to the second order modelings brought to bear upon them, objectively ironising those modelings, whether those modelings are straight or subjectively ironical, dissuading, deterring, neutralising those modelings thereby. In other words, such films operate like Baudrillard's mass, which functions for him like dark matter, I'd say even dark energy, dissuading, deterring, neutralising the messages the social and those who work on its behalf solicit of it. Which means increasingly that a sociological analysis, even a critical sociological analysis, of hyperreal film is increasingly missing out on what the hyperreal is and is doing to the social, including the individual in the social, which social, of course, subtends sociology, including critical sociology. So that a sociological modeling of these increasingly beyond-the-social films does not work, is turned on itself, hyperconforming only to itself, made thereby to enter the third order despite itself. This is Baudrillard's *Zelig* effect, which 'leads astray all possible interpretations' (Baudrillard 1987, 16), seducing interpretation 'as such'.

So as with all other forms/modes of the margin, the 'illegitimate' and the 'improper', that assume and support the existence of the social -

Baudrillard's second order 'reality' - and want in to it, want to be legitimated in and by it, want to be considered proper by it, even to become the social's mainstream - 'from the margin to the mainstream', as the saying goes - even 'more mainstream than the mainstream' for us - scholars and fans of paracinema ironically redouble their efforts to preserve, conserve and belong to what has for Baudrillard disappeared or is increasingly disappearing - the social, 'reality', the mainstream, the academy, the university - so every effort to model oneself - anything even - on, in terms of, that social, 'reality', mainstream, academy, university, is already a simulacrum of it for him, one seeking to dissimulate its nature.

Indeed, text after text by the not only socially-, sociologically-, university-, and cultural studies' identity politics'-based but invested theorists of badfilm, cult film, paracinema, have as their theme - ironically, too, for me - the validating, the legitimating, of trash and a trash aesthetic, the reclaiming of trash for art, for aesthetics, for academe, for legitimate film culture, for official Film Studies!

Here I find telling the quotation marks around 'trashing' in the title of Sconce's seminal article, '"Trashing" the Academy', ironising the trash and trashing thereby. (Indeed, the article is peppered with quotation marks, suspending, even ironising, what they bracket.) So despite its 'radical' rhetoric of 'subverting and transgressing', the 'paracinematic community', as Sconce terms it, does not want to bring down the academy, it wants *in* to it, turning its oppositional, 'counter-cultural', 'counter-aesthetic' rhetoric into so much hype (recollecting Tom Wolfe's double-move, the 'two-step', of the New York avant-garde in *The Painted Word* [1975]). It seems 'the paracinematic community' will even trash trash to get in, all the more ironically so given trash culture in key regards was *never not* aligned, indeed inextricably coimplicated, with legitimate film culture, to say nothing of trash having long ago trashed itself in *hypertrash*.

So, while paracinema talks up its game of the bad, its aesthetes' aims and givens place it in Baudrillard's order of the good, the productive, the useful, the social, paracinema seeking reconciliation with the good that it

takes as the social and all its terms, even the auteur, the fullest form of individual identity. I ask: is this enterprise to seek to redeem, to save, trash, not an almost evangelical one, a 'whitewashing' of trash(!), as the effort to preserve second-order reality is a nostalgic one?

Counterposing his work to that of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu - for Baudrillard a defender of the social and moral order whose work is deterministic, reductive and anachronistic (Baudrillard 1983a, 27-28 and Baudrillard 1993d, 63) - and whose sociology of taste informs, indeed anchors, that of Sconce's and others' theorising of paracinema,[19] Baudrillard writes of the need in the non-deterministic, de-polarised 'social space' of the quantum universe that is the hyperreal world today 'to analyse a non-deterministic society non-deterministically' (Baudrillard 2001, 18)[20] - an analysis neither 'metaphorical', 'literal', 'paranormal' nor 'supernatural' (as Sconce in his book *Haunted Media* characterises the analyses of Baudrillard and of 'many of Baudrillard's acolytes and interpreters' (Sconce 2000, 182)),[21] but rather hyperreal, and pushing things further.

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[19] Bourdieu's book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), with its deterministic sociological analyses of taste, its discrete, distinctive, structuralist and fixed - for me inanimate - definitions/terms/categories/classifications, its reductive either/or modelings, its taking as givens the social, the political, the economic, truth, reality, the Marxist axioms of class struggle and the dialectic, its goal of a reflexive sociology as science of society, is explicitly referenced by Sconce in '"Trashing" the Academy', providing the form, model and theoretical armature for Sconce's sociological reading of paracinema in terms of taste.

[20] For Baudrillard, the passage from 'the conventional universe' (Baudrillard, 2001, 18) to 'a quantum universe' (ibid.) has the most profound, disturbing consequences for conventional, second order systems of analysis and interpretation, of making meaning. The quantum universe is one where the real and the order of rational determination are increasingly the exceptions and where therefore 'traditional analysis no longer has any purchase, and solutions worked out at this level come to grief on a general uncertainty in the same way as classical calculations come to grief in quantum physics' (Baudrillard 2001, 20). For my speculations of the relation of quantum cosmology to animation, including science fiction film, see Cholodenko 2006.

[21] My research to date has uncovered no mention by Sconce of Baudrillard's work in relation to paracinema. Rather, it is only here, in *Haunted Media*, and in his 'A Spectre is Haunting Television Studies' (Sconce 2008), that I have found Sconce marshaling Baudrillard's work, and it is in connection with electronic media. Sconce's treatment of Baudrillard in both pieces calls for extended analysis, which is unfortunately beyond the limits of this article. But I must say that, while I applaud Sconce's so deploying Baudrillard and finding certain merit in his ideas, at the same

In the hyperreal, cinema 'lives on', no longer with its double, spectre, vampire, zombie, etc., but as them, like the hyperreal, hypersimulacral, virtual human of whom Baudrillard says: 'He who has no shadow is merely the shadow of himself' (Baudrillard 2004, 103). The spectre, the vampire, the zombie of himself. Passing from the 'Hell of the Other' to the 'Hell of the Same', like hyper-lifedeath film - *itself* hyper-spectre, hyper-vampire, hyper-zombie, hyper-mummy, etc. - he is his own, to reiterate Gorky, 'Kingdom of Shadows', his *own* Hades, Hell - perdition. To which George Romero - perhaps unwittingly - attests when, recalling for us Baudrillard's 'uncertainty revolution', he states:

> In my zombie movies, the dead brought back to life represent a kind of revolution, a radical change in the world that many of my human characters can't understand, preferring to label the living dead as the Enemy when in reality they are us. I use blood in all its horrendous magnificence to make the public understand that my movies are more of a sociopolitical chronicle of the times than dumb adventures with a generous dollop of horror. (quoted in Eco 2007, 422)[22]

Here I must highlight a key aspect of that radical reanimation for us. While earlier noting the complicity, collusion, of hypervampire and hyperzombie, I must here emphasise the challenge that each at the same time directs against the other, a challenge for us increasingly being won by the hyperzombie, increasingly therefore the privileged figure of the living dead today, a privilege Jamie Russell in his *Book of the Dead* has underscored (Russell 2005, 192). This makes perfectly good sense in terms of Baudrillard's orders. The hypervampire - the vampire in its metastatic expression - is still vampire, which is a figure of Seduction, Illusion, evil, cruelty, even enchantment, metamorphosis, singularity, aristocracy, complexity, cannyness, knowledge, the force of desire, eroticism, sensuality, passion, the heroic, maximal radical

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time his treatment of not only Baudrillard but his 'host of more earnest imitators' (Sconce 2000, 182), as Sconce styles them, whom Sconce unqualifiedly condemns (without explicitly naming them even), as well as his characterization of the relation between Baudrillard and them, is for me problematic in a number of regards, in terms of both undertheorising and mistheorising.

[22] The quote is probably from Romero's "Il brutto nel cinema" speech given by him at the *La Milanesiana* arts festival in 2006 and published in *la Repubblica*, 7 July, 2006 (referenced in Eco 2007, 443).

otherness, quality. In such a light, the hypervampire is the vampire in its *minimal* form.

On the other hand, the hyperzombie - the zombie in its metastatic expression - is still zombie, which is a figure of fascination, disillusion, degree zero evil and cruelty, disenchantment, metastasis, viral, cancerous 'positivity', the clone, the mass, simplicity, the programmed, the automatic - precisely not the automaton James B. Twitchell takes the zombie for (Twitchell 1985, 261), the automaton being a figure of Seduction, of enchantment (Cholodenko 2007b, 507-508) - the robot, brain-deadness, passionlessness, indifference, the abject, mass death, the apocalypse,[23] minimal radical otherness, quantity. In such a light, the hyperzombie is the zombie in its *maximal* form. Like the terminator of the *Terminator* movies, it has but one instruction to follow, one operation to execute. In its case: eat flesh.

So while the vampire is privileged figure for B, the zombie in its hyperform is privileged figure for hyper-B, and for more. For Russell, 'the zombie seems the perfect monster for these troubled times' (Russell 2005, 192).[24] For me, the hyperzombie figures the 'individual' as the metastatic clone-mass of today's apocalyptic hyperreality, where 'each' is 'his' own simulacrum, where each is even 'his' own hypercult (hyper-B film).

'Finally', two more radical uncertainties to speculate upon.

First, once past Canetti's catastrophic, apocalyptic dead point, blind spot, black hole, it is possible to read all after it as never not the case before that passage (Baudrillard 1986, 23), which hypothesis would make hyperreality never not the case, including therefore hyperreal cinema as never not the case.

Second, given Baudrillard's suspension of the destiny of the world between his two irreconcilables, undecidable between them - the radical Illusion of Seduction and the Perfect Crime of hyperreality - speculating

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[23] Jamie Russell specifically names mass death and the apocalypse as contemporary features of the zombie (Russell 2005, 192).

[24] For Russell, the zombie is synoptically 'Bound up with ideas of the apocalypse, of race, of Otherness, of contagion, brainwashing and mass death...' (Russell 2005, 192).

whether the latter might not indeed be an avatar of the former,[25] I would be remiss in not noting that the jury is still out on hyperreal film, on the hyperbad movie.

A movie that can in any case assert what famous 19th century French actress and rumoured lover of George Sand, Marie Dorval, is quoted by Baudrillard (1990a, 9) as proclaiming - 'I'm not beautiful; I'm worse' - something from which that privileged examplar of hyperreality, the hyperbad Michael Jackson, should have taken a cue when he thought to utter merely 'I'm bad'.

The end of The End…

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[25] On Baudrillard's two irreconcilable hypotheses, see Baudrillard 1996, 5 and 74; and Baudrillard 2000, 53 and 55.

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