

In Baudrillard's thesis *Simulacra and Simulation*, specifically in *The Precession of Simulacra*, Baudrillard focuses on Disneyland in the *Hyperreal and Imaginary* chapter. He explains the role of Disneyland in the scope of simulacra, labelling it to *the third order of simulation*, which is, shortly said, the masking of the absence of reality. His main argument is that Disneyland is there as an imaginary reality in order to present everything outside of Disneyland as real, when in fact America (or everything else) is already in the hyperreal, which is an imaginary reality. It *conceals* the fact that reality is not there anymore. He presents Disneyland as a miniaturised America in which all its values are summarized, put on display, inflated and intensified, to then be celebrated by the visiting crowds. Because of this small, contained oversaturation of culture, **he argues that you can take individuals and crowds into account within his presentation of Disneyland, which he then uses to be able to perceive of Disneyland as an 'objective' reflection of America and as an ideology.**

He reinforces his argument by referring to Disneyland as a 'deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real.' (Baudrillard 1983, 25). In other words, it is there to reassure people of the idea that fantasy is Disneyland, so that the idea that everything else is also fantasy is unlikely to occur. The childlike nature of Disneyland is there to make us believe that this is a place meant for children and that 'real' life, where the adults are, exists outside of Disneyland. This masks childishness everywhere, especially adults that go to Disneyland to act the role of the child, out of belief that they can let go of reality here, when it is as real as everywhere. He concludes by saying Disneyland is just one of these imaginary stations, which surround big cities like Los Angeles, and that they are here to feed "reality energy" (Baudrillard 1983, 26) to these cities, places that he defines as large networks with large proportions of circulation, that are all unreal and in which space and dimensions do not play a role.

I want to give Baudrillard credit, who wrote this in 1981, for how relevant and applicable this text is to refer to other institutions, networks, and realities in contemporary culture. Especially the clarity of writing and in connecting Disneyland to American culture alongside the performativity of childhood versus adulthood make this one of the most interesting chapters of his thesis. Connecting Baudrillard's ideas of 'deterrence machines', intensified displays of cultures and imaginary realities that hide absences of the fact that there is no reality can be easily linked to digital phenomena, platforms and networks like memes, that inflate, display and celebrate (online) culture. Or Instagram, which is also a deterrence machine and a fictional reality, not one that even tries to mask the absence of reality, but fully only refers to other signs and realities, a system that only rejuvenates and pumps out copies of signs and fictions that already have their own copies of copies. Or the infatuation with aesthetics which dominate platforms like Pinterest and shape modern culture where in aesthetics are nothing more than collections of copies, networks of simulacrum. An aesthetic is a reality constituted only of images that fit together purely based on colour, feeling or appearance and create fictional realities that, by calling them aesthetics, does not create awareness of creating a reality as such (which is more the case with Disneyland) putting both (online) contemporary aesthetics and Instagram in the fourth stage of simulacrum. My only criticism of the text would be how little emphasis Baudrillard puts on calling Disneyland an ideology (and how this can be crucial for

understanding the text), and how he comes to this conclusion with almost no arguments, except for arguing that when American values are ‘exalted here in miniature and comic strip form. Embalmed and pacified.’ (Baudrillard 1983, 25). I think having your only reasoning to perceive Disneyland as an ideology is because American values are amplified and displayed in Disneyland is not sufficient to come to this conclusion. An ideology already exists in America; the intensification of it does not incorporate new ideas. Though I do believe Disneyland can be perceived as an ideology through Baudrillard’s theory, in a way he did not explain. Disneyland is not only there to mask the absence of reality, but also to constitute beliefs. It simulates ideas that Disneyland is the only fictional reality, that it is the only place where childishness is accepted in adults because it is only fantasy, and just because Disneyland is perceived as only a fantasy and a form of entertainment its place in our society becomes domesticated and normalized which supports the contrast between real and fiction. Thus, it becomes a set of beliefs that establishes itself in a more primary ideology.

Bibliography:

Baudrillard, Jean. “Hyperreal and Imaginary.” Essay. In *Simulations*, 23–26. Semiotext(e), Foreign Agents, 1983.