

Contributi/2

«*To be dead is an unthinkable anomaly*»

Reversed Necropolitics and the Death Imaginary

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The concept or the theory of Death in the thought of Jean Baudrillard is not given the particular attention it needs. When one speaks of the thought of Baudrillard, one rarely will mention 'death' as one of the keywords of his corpus. I think, though, that it deserves such a key place, for three reasons. Firstly, because the theme of Death is a gargantuan concept in the history of Philosophy and it even emerges with the definition of Philosophy itself, since, at least, Plato. Every philosopher, more or less is preoccupied with it, as an archetypal necessity of both human culture and of philosophy in particular. It is always interesting to see how each philosopher or each person thinks on it, as their thoughts on Death are a departure point and an indication of their whole philosophical system or, for non-philosophers, of their whole way of life. Secondly, it is important to examine this theme in Baudrillard because it inseparably interconnects, explains, and is explained by all the other, key, and the less prominent themes in his philosophy (if it is possible to divide themes in the corpus of a philosopher in such a way). Baudrillard's thinking might take new dimensions when viewed through his thoughts on Death. Finally, Baudrillard is considered a difficult thinker, because, unlike other philosophers, he grasps themes which people are used to seeing as the pre-occupation or within the realm of fiction, even science-fiction (robots, clones, hyper-reality – The Matrix film). I would like to show, using simple language, that his philosophy, especially surrounding the subject of Death, is completely naked of any metaphysical, romanticised, fantastic, or fiction-like properties; it is realistic and political.

Introduction

Baudrillard completely excludes any metaphysical or romanticised views on Death, as for him «the real event of death»¹, especially the after-death, namely

¹J. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, London 1993, p. 134: «The real event of death is imaginary». From now on, cited in-text as 'SED'. Two important secondary literature books on Baudrillard, which discuss many of his books and concepts, are: W. Pawlett, *Jean Baudrillard:*

immortality, is simply one of the manipulative imaginary inventions of power or sovereignty; therefore it could be said to be an illusion or even a kind of propaganda or opium of the people (in Marx's words). Another example of an imaginary is Madness. Both Madness² and Death are omissions or exclusions of Civilization – an effect of the strategies power employs in its efforts to define and impose the 'normal' human being or normalcy. «To be dead is an unthinkable anomaly»³, just as it is to be mad. Death and the dead are excluded, they even «*cease to exist*»⁴, as «*it is not normal to be dead*»; it is greatly *offensive* to be dead: «Death is a delinquency, and an incurable deviancy»⁵. Those lines seem surreal, they are hyper-real though, using his terms, and they make perfect sense when they are included in the system of *hyper-reality*⁶ or simply the system of his whole thought.

Normalcy is an incredibly *racist* invention, and in its name, children, the old, the mad, the poor, women, etc., become inhuman.⁷ They are excluded firstly by being confined in physical spaces, such as the asylum, the prison, the school, the factory, the cemetery, and when these places cease to strictly exist, the exile remains symbolically in society⁸. There is no need for huge walls to be literally erected anymore, no material confinements – like the asylum for example, because «madness has *completed* its normalising labour on society [...]»⁹. The same applies to Death; mission completed. Death is already engraved in the civilized mind as the “social line” that separates the living from the dead¹⁰.

1. Death as the Great Omission of Civilization and Baudrillard's Reversed Necropolitics

Paraphrasing Foucault who writes that the great omission of Western Civilization is Madness¹¹, in Baudrillard's terms, it can be said that it is Death. What Foucault writes on Madness can be more or less applied, in the case of Baudrillard, for Death.

Life and Death are equivalent «in the indifferent fatality of survival. In survival death is repressed [...]»¹². In other words, *survival* is what characterizes

Against Banality, London and New York 2007, and Id., *Violence, Society and Radical Theory: Bataille, Baudrillard and Contemporary Society*, London and New York 2016.

² Madness is examined thus by Foucault in M. Foucault, *Madness: The Invention of an Idea*, translated by A. Sheridan, 2011. Baudrillard very often refers to Foucault and his treatise of madness, in comparison to his own way of treating Death.

³ SED, p. 126.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 31: «From now on political economy is the *real* for us, [...]».

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ M. Foucault, *Madness*, cit., pp. 83-92; and SED, p. 126.

¹² SED, p. 127.

contemporary, civilized societies, and neither life, nor death. Life and Death are neutralized by survival, which is synonymous to «death deferred»¹³, because, in order to become a worker, or enter the labour system, one must die first: «A man must die to become labour power».¹⁴ To die, in this sense, means to go on neither by dying nor by living, but only by *surviving*: «Labour is slow death»¹⁵, or labour is survival. Sovereignty has the power to relieve humans from the *mortgage of death*¹⁶, and also from the mortgage of birth and of life, I would add, «in order to work»¹⁷.

Power/Sovereignty invents these separating and dividing lines between the normal and the human and the abnormal and the inhuman, because its exercise of control and power rests in what is defined as normal and human. The normal and the human is the apt to *labour*. Otherwise, he is dead (even if still alive), or mad, or old, or childish, or criminal. Otherwise, he does not even exist in formal and normal society. Thus, he should ask for no reward from it, he should only pay to it as a form of punishment. Every human is born indebted¹⁸ but never credited, and those who are abnormal are also in the position of not being able to pay the debt, as they are cut off from labour – the only acceptable means that contributes the accepted currency of money.

The normal human, the ‘real’ human, performs his labour because the only thing that is normal to exist for him is life, and, as a merely *living* being, labour is the correct fulfilment of this life (*animal laborans* in the *vita activa* as Arendt would put it). *Immortality* is another supplementary imaginary he is served by the master so as to work in this life, expecting to be compensated in the next.¹⁹

Baudrillard’s philosophy of Death, I would say, forms the essence of *necropolitics*²⁰ – before the term was coined. Foucault’s thought was focused mainly on life manifestations and their reduction to bio-manifestations, hence the term *biopolitics*. On the other hand, Baudrillard takes it a step further as he speaks of power drawing its power (influence/authority/ supremacy/dominance/strength) from Death: «power is death *deferred*»²¹ and «[...] it is on the manipulation and administration of death that power, in the final analysis, is based»²². The separation of Life and Death entails more sub-separations such as «the soul and the body, the male and the female, good and evil, etc.»²³. Baudrillard’s theory on Death could be more accurately characterized as *reversed necropolitics*, and here is a series of quotes worth citing, explaining why:

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁸ See M. Lazzarato, and, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, translated by J.D. Jordan, Los Angeles 2012.

¹⁹ SED, pp. 127-131.

²⁰ See A. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, «Public Culture», XV, 2003, I, pp. 11-40.

²¹ SED, p. 40.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

²³ *Ibid.*

Whoever works *has not been put to death*, he is refused this honour. And labour is first of all the sign of being judged worthy only of life. Does capital exploit the workers to death? Paradoxically, the worst it inflicts on them is refusing them death.²⁴

The power of the master always primarily derives from this suspension of death. Power is therefore never, contrary to what we might imagine, the power of putting to death, but exactly the opposite, that of allowing to live a life that the slave lacks the power to give. The master confiscates the death of the other while retaining the right to risk his own. The slave is refused this, and is condemned to a life without return, and therefore without possible expiation.

By removing death, the master removes the slave from the circulation of symbolic goods.²⁵

The revolution can only consist in the abolition of the separation of death, and not in equality of survival.²⁶

The emergence of survival can therefore be analysed as the fundamental operation in the birth of power. Not only because this set-up will permit the necessity of the sacrifice of this life and the threat of recompense in the next (this is exactly the priest-caste's strategy), but more profoundly by instituting the prohibition of death and, at the same time, the agency that oversees this prohibition of death: power. Shattering the union of the living and the dead, and slapping a prohibition on death and the dead: the primary source of social control. Power is possible only if death is no longer free, only if the dead are put under surveillance, in anticipation of the future confinement of life in its entirety. This is the fundamental Law, and power is the guardian at the gates of this Law.²⁷

Political economy is an economy of death, because it economises on death and buries it under its discourse.²⁸

The new social contract: society as a whole, with its science and technology, becomes collectively responsible for the death of each individual.²⁹

2. The Archaeology or the Genealogy of Death

Borrowing Foucault's terms again, Baudrillard engages in an archaeology or a genealogy of death by visiting the concept of death in the primitives.

The Evolution from the Primitive or the Savage to the Civilized human or society is parallel to «the exclusion of the death and of death»³⁰. It is indicative of this exclusion the fact that the cemetery from the centre of the town slowly moves to the periphery, and, in contemporary cities, death and the dead are even further hidden from the life of the city, both physically and mentally. As already

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

mentioned, the factory has no function and reason to exist because labour is spread everywhere – neither does the asylum, because psychological chains and therapies are everywhere, just as in the case of the cemetery: death is everywhere in the city³¹.

The double, which for us is an uncanny concept and takes notions similar to death and the dead, was again included in society and in life for primitives in the literal terms of spirits, shadows, spectres, reflections, and images³².

Baudrillard continues his brief history of Death, by focusing on the Church³³. Our conception of Death comes from the 16th Century, where death lost all its exchangeability and collectivity. From then on, «the obsession with death and the will to abolish death through accumulation become the fundamental motor of the rationality of political economy»³⁴. Death comes to existence from the «society discriminates against the dead. The institution of death, like that of the afterlife and immortality, is a recent victory for the political rationalism of castes, priests and the Church: their power is based on the management of the imaginary sphere of death»³⁵. These statements explain the quotation from Raoul Vaneigem that Baudrillard uses as a directional motto at the beginning of his chapter «Political Economy and Death»: «We do not die because we must, we die because it is a habit, to which one day, not so long ago, our thoughts became bound»³⁶.

The desire to eliminate death is what drives the search for objectivity: eternity, afterlife and immortality in the case of Religion; truth in the case of Science; progress in the case of Time; and productivity in the case of Economics. Life accumulates in order to abolish Death, and, similarly, the accumulation of Religion, Science, and Economics functions in the same way; all serve as factors of Life accumulated against Death³⁷. We want to attach life to certainties and supposed objectivities, so as to encapsulate it in a protected shell.

3. Eros, Sex, Birth, Death

Bataille as Baudrillard reads him – and as I read Baudrillard's view – views death and sex as excesses (luxuries, anti-economies), which form his definition of *eroticism*³⁸:

[W]e can no longer differentiate between sexuality and death [, which] are simply the culminating points of the festival nature celebrates, with the inexhaustible

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 140-144.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-148.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-158.

multitude of living beings, both of them signifying the boundless wastage of nature's resources as opposed to the urge to live on characteristic of every living creature.³⁹

We are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity.⁴⁰

What does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioners ...? The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participants as they are in their normal lives.⁴¹

Baudrillard also adds that

Erotic nakedness is equal to death insofar as it inaugurates a state of communication, loss of identity and fusion. The fascination of the dissolution of constituted forms: such is Eros (pace Freud, for whom Eros binds energies, federates them into ever larger unities).⁴²

So it might be that Eros is the attraction towards the lost oneness of the «semiotic chora». Death is the craving for the same monism; as he explains in *The Vital Illusion*: «Death is neither resolution nor involution, but a reversal and a symbolic challenge»⁴³.

If the union of two lovers comes about through love, it involves the idea of death, murder or suicide . . . [a] continuous violation of discontinuous individuality . . . the orifices, gulfs and abysses whereby beings are absorbed into continuity, somehow assimilates it to death.⁴⁴

Sacrificial death, however, is anti-productive and anti-reproductive. It is true that it aims at continuity, as Bataille says, but not that of the species, which is only the continuity of an order of life, whereas the radical continuity in which the subject is ruined by sex and death always signifies the fabulous loss of an order. [...] Erotic excess and the reproductive sexual function have nothing in common. The symbolic excess of death has nothing in common with the body's biological losses.⁴⁵

Baudrillard's reading of Bataille's *Eroticism* is, I think, the primary material he uses and which inspires him to form the philosophy of birth, death, immortality, and sex, he develops in *The Vital Illusion*⁴⁶. If one specifically focuses on the quotations from Bataille, one can grasp the basic line of his thought in the *The Vital Illusion*. Beyond the excerpts quoted above, the paragraph that most accurately predicts and serves as an abstract of the thought developed in the later books mentioned is this:

³⁹ G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, p. 61; quoted by Baudrillard in SED, p. 155.

⁴⁰ G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, p. 15; quoted by Baudrillard in SED, p. 156.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17; quoted by Baudrillard in SED, p. 156.

⁴² SED, p. 156.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ G. Bataille, *Eroticism*, pp. 21ff; quoted by Baudrillard in SED, p. 157.

⁴⁵ SED, pp. 157-158.

⁴⁶ See J. Baudrillard, *The Vital Illusion*, edited by J. Witwer, New York 2000. From now on, in-text reference as *VI*.

The subject's identity is continually falling apart, falling into God's forgetting. But this death is not at all biological. At one pole, biochemistry, asexual protozoa are not affected by death, they divide and branch out (nor is the genetic code, for its part, ever affected by death: it is transmitted unchanged beyond individual fates). At the other, symbolic, pole, death and nothingness no longer exist, since in the symbolic, life and death are reversible.

Only in the infinitesimal space of the individual conscious subject does death take on an irreversible meaning. Even here, death is not an event, but a myth experienced as anticipation. The subject needs a myth of its end, as of its origin, to form its identity.⁴⁷

4. Death and the Human Being as an Ontological Attraction

The Vital Illusion is not, as it might seem, a treatise on clones and genome technology. The clones and the genome technology are only what inspired or motivated Baudrillard to think on the human.

The first creatures (bacteria, etc.) were immortal because they were cloning themselves endlessly. That was a universe of indivisible beings, asexual, a universe of identicals, of «semblables»⁴⁸, of a state of oneness. In our case, the cells of our bodies are governed by the law of apoptosis; this means that, after they divide a finite number of times, they are programmed to die. If they do not, then we have the case of cancer, which are cells that 'decide' not to die, and this quest for immortality is what kills them in the end, along with all the other cells in the same body. With one exception, the case of Henrietta Lacks, whose cancerous cells still live, while all the other cells and the body as a whole died⁴⁹. *Death* is what defines us as beings of alterity or difference, as sexed beings, and, by necessity, as mortal beings. According to Freud, as Baudrillard reads him, the death drive is nothing but the nostalgia for that immortal, un-differentiated, and homogenised state of being⁵⁰.

In our state of being, reproduction becomes *procreation*⁵¹. Procreation is defined, in contrast with simple reproduction, by the appearance of *birth* and *death*, and of the phenomena of sex, difference, and mortality, that characterize this second type of being:

the first two will die for the first time, and the *third* for the first time will be born. We reach the stage of beings that are sexed, differentiated, and mortal.⁵²

The Final Solution is «the enormous enterprise we living beings ourselves undertake today: a project to reconstruct a homogeneous and uniformly consistent universe – an artificial continuum this time – that unfolds within a

⁴⁷ SED, p. 159.

⁴⁸ VI, p. 13. VI stands for J. Baudrillard, *The Final Solution: Cloning Beyond the Human and Inhuman* in *The Vital Illusion*, cit., pp. 1-30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*

technological and mechanical medium [...]»⁵³, with the aim «of reactivating this pathological immortality, the immortality of the cancer cell, both at the individual level and at the level of the species as a whole. This is the revenge taken on mortal and sexed beings by immortal and undifferentiated life forms»⁵⁴.

Sex and *Death*, along with *humans* themselves, are in the process of becoming useless and obsolete⁵⁵ because of a desire to eliminate them as the obstacles of immortality. The process of the desire for an artificial, technological liberation from Death follows the same path as the liberation and revolution that has happened regarding sex. The first phase is the liberation or the relief of procreation from the sexual act through contraception. The second phase is the liberation or the relief of procreation from the sexual function, through artificial insemination and cloning. Thus we are moving towards being relieved from the act of sex itself⁵⁶.

Death follows a parallel revolution⁵⁷. As sex is dissociated, liberated, and relieved from procreation and procreation from sex, Death is dissociated from life and life from Death⁵⁸. We want to proclaim sex and Death as unnecessary, useless and obsolete things, along with thought and human beings themselves. In other words, *sex*, *Death*, *thought*, and *human beings* are towards being proclaimed as useless and obsolete, and are to be maintained only as an «*ontological attraction*» through virtuality; that is cybersex and cyberdeath⁵⁹. They will become leisure activities, luxuries, and diversions, having lost their *vitality* and having entered *virtuality* and *simulation*⁶⁰. This is the next stage of civilization, where the *vital* and the *real* are dead, and *hyper-reality* artificially replaces what was naturally known to humans and their civilization as reality. Baudrillard talked about the murder of the real in a lecture he gave in 1999 at Wellek Library of University of California, Irvine. This lecture is one of the lectures included in *The Vital Illusion*⁶¹.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁸ See also SED, p. 173: «The same objective that is inscribed in the monopoly of institutional violence is accomplished as easily by forced survival as it is by death: a forced 'life for life's sake' (kidney machines, malformed children on life-support machines, agony prolonged at all costs, organ transplants, etc.)».

⁵⁹ See *Ibid.*, p. 177: «Our whole technical culture creates an artificial milieu of death».

⁶⁰ *VI*, pp. 11-12.

⁶¹ See J. Baudrillard, *The Murder of the Real*, in *The Vital Illusion*, edited by J. Witwer, New York 2000, pp. 66-67. The phrases «Perfect Crime» and «The Murder of the Real» are used interchangeably: «By shifting to a virtual world, we go beyond alienation, into a state of radical deprivation of the Other, or indeed of any otherness, alterity, or negativity. We move into a world where everything that exists only as idea, dream, fantasy, utopia will be eradicated, because it will immediately be realized, operationalized. Nothing will survive as an idea or a concept. You will not even have time enough to imagine. Events, real events, will not even have time to take place. Everything will be preceded by its virtual realization. We are dealing with an attempt to construct an entirely positive world, a perfect world, expurgated of every illusion,

Cloning follows a nostalgia for the prototypic double, which survives in nature through twins. In that immortal state of being, as described before, we were all doubles, and «in an unconscious still deeper than the psychological unconscious, we never overcome, we never fully accept this separation and this individuation»⁶². We deeply repent and are nostalgic, not only for becoming individuals, and sexed beings, but also even more deeply nostalgic for the origins of life, for having evolved from inorganic to organic life:

Any given liberation, emancipation, or individuation is also experienced as anomie and as betrayal, in fact as the source of endless neurosis, a neurosis that becomes increasingly serious as one moves further away from the nostalgic point of origin. Liberty is hard to take. Life itself, finally, may be hard to take, as a rupturing of the inorganic chain of matter.⁶³

We fabricate a solution to this fascination and nostalgia for these origins through cloning. This is a project

to put an end to the genetic game of difference, to stop the divagations of the living. Aren't we actually sick of sex, of difference, of emancipation, of culture? The world of individuals and social relations itself offers striking examples of this exhaustion – or resistance – or nostalgic attachment to some prior state of being. In any case, we are dealing with a kind of revisionism, a crucial revision of the whole process of evolution and especially that of the human race – a species unable to brave its own diversity, its own complexity, its own radical difference, its own alterity.⁶⁴

This project is an «adventure», a «heroic test»⁶⁵ and an «experiment»⁶⁶ involving the whole of the species, in order to find the truly «human» inside the human⁶⁷. The method for finding the «human quality» is through the elimination of what can resist and survive cloning, simulation, and technological management. Whatever survives must be the essence of the human:

If we discover that not everything can be cloned, simulated, programmed, genetically and neurologically managed, then whatever survives could truly be called 'human': some inalienable and indestructible human quality could finally be identified. Of course, there is always the risk, in this experimental adventure, that nothing will pass the test – that the human will be permanently eradicated.⁶⁸

This experimentation exerts a violence on the human species equal or even more intense than the violence humans have ever evoked on any other species

of every sort of evil and negativity, exempt from death itself. This pure, absolute reality, this unconditional realization of the world – this is what I call the Perfect Crime».

⁶² *VI*, p. 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

and, more broadly, on nature in ecology⁶⁹. For one thing «[h]umankind does not discriminate»⁷⁰ and one can «hardly accuse humanity of egocentrism»⁷¹. The self-preservation instinct seems to have been swept away and replaced by the obsession with experimentation⁷². The ground of this obsession with experimentation of the human kind on itself is the fact that «apparently, the human race cannot bear itself, cannot bear to be reconciled to itself»⁷³, it repents the evolutionary process that made it what it is (differentiated, sexed, mortal, etc.)⁷⁴, and humankind is also obsessed with playing the role of the hero and the survivor.

While during previous eras, with the climax reached in the Enlightenment⁷⁵, the human race fought to define the human, humanness, and this resulted in Humanism, in the current era, humankind is fighting to abolish the borders between the Human and the Inhuman. The «genetic simulation of life» is neither Human or Inhuman⁷⁶. This, as Nietzsche has foreseen, will either result in the Superhuman or the Subhuman, and as Baudrillard sees it, it is the Subhuman that will prevail⁷⁷. The Subhuman is what remains from the «abolition of all that is 'human, all too human' in us: our desires, our failings, our neuroses, our dreams, our handicaps, our viruses, our frenzies, our unconscious, and even our sexuality»⁷⁸. As for Life, it is degraded to «sheer survival», because «it is reduced to the lowest common denominator, to the genome, the genetic inheritance»⁷⁹.

5. Conclusion: The Pornography of Death and the New Necropolises

The Vital Illusion takes us back to *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, where Baudrillard writes, again, more theoretically what is expressed in *The Vital Illusion*. He talks of the pornography or the sexualization of Death, and Death as «the real sexualization of life»⁸⁰. He also writes about the society's new necropolises, which are

the computer banks or the foyers, blank spaces from which all human noise has been expunged, glass coffins where the world's sterilised memories are frozen. Only the dead remember everything in something like an immediate eternity of knowledge, a quintessence of the world that today we dream of burying in the form of microfilm and archives, making the entire world into an archive in order that it be discovered

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 19.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁰ SED, pp. 184-185.

by some future civilisation. The cryogenic freezing of all knowledge so that it can be resurrected; knowledge passes into immortality as sign-value. Against our dream of losing and forgetting everything, we set up an opposing great wall of relations, connections and information, a dense and inextricable artificial memory, and we bury ourselves alive in the fossilised hope of one day being rediscovered.

Computers are the transistorised death to which we submit in the hope of survival.¹

He finally concludes that

political economy is only constructed (at the cost of untold sacrifices) or designed so as to be recognised as immortal by a future civilisation, or as an instance of truth.²

If political economy is the most rigorous attempt to put an end to death, it is clear that only death can put an end to political economy.³

This observation on political economy is my last argument on Baudrillard performing a *reversed necropolitics*, and I will close this article with that and two other remarks. The first is an aphoristic remark from *Cool Memories V*, where he enumerates the discontents of the virtual, which means that one will never know the Real, and the worst part of this is the possibility «for future generations, of never knowing death»⁴. The second remark is the repetition of the quote from the title: «To be dead is an unthinkable anomaly», which fits perfectly with *The Vital Illusion's* analysis of why humans – the differentiated, sexed, and mortal species – are so awry in digesting the addition of Death into their state of being.

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¹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴ J. Baudrillard, *Cool Memories V: 2000-2004*, Cambridge 2006, p. 55.