

does not address the conservatism that exists among many young people. To address that conservatism one must be willing to live with contradiction, recognizing that aspects of popular youth culture are not necessarily counter-hegemonic.

If we were to follow Lipsitz's argument we might end up thinking that hip hop culture is youth culture today. While it is true that hip hop culture carries much sway, care should be taken not to produce narratives of youth culture that place hip hop culture as overdetermining youth culture. Discourse around Gen Xers, Slackers and grunge rockers are mainly concerned with young white male youth who seem to be lamenting that they will never wield the same kind of power to organize the lives of others as their daddies did and still do.

Many of the essays in *Microphone Fiends* use rap as the point of departure to address youth culture today. While rap as artform and hip hop as cultural practice/lifestyle have been an articulation of the urban black subaltern hipster with profound effects for popular culture generally, many youth in various corners resist what they see as the taint of blackness, exhibiting the symptoms of fear of a black planet. Rap's power as an articulate form that forces onto the agenda questions of a political nature, does not mean that rap is droppin' science for all.

In another essay that works with rap as its analytical base, "The State of Rap: Time and Place in Hip Hop Nationalism," Jeffrey Louis Decker argues that two different forms of nationalism exist in rap music. He identifies those forms as 1) a nationalism that harkens back to black nationalism of the 1960s and appropriates the images of folks like Malcolm X, Angela Davis and so on, as exemplified by Public Enemy, and 2) a nationalism that is Afrocentric and sees Africa as the base through which its politics will ultimately be expressed, as exemplified by X Clan.

Decker analyzes the lyrics of P.E. and X Clan to demonstrate how the two groups differ in articulated political influences. Yet his analysis demonstrates that eventually both groups produce a kind of sexism that places women in very proscribed, restricted and limited positions. While his exercise is

an interesting one, Decker's project does not address the overall problematic of a nationalist politics but instead focuses on "the language of nation to rearticulate a history of racial oppression and struggle which can energize the movement toward black empowerment and independence" (100). I would contend that the use of nation as a conceptual tool continues to produce a disabling politics of inconsistency and domination, and thus leaves Decker's argument in a weak position.

After dealing with the politics of the "boys" that Decker turns to the music and videos of Queen Latifah to recapture any moment of possibilities in what he terms nationalist rap. Decker wants to hold on to the discourse of nation, but by moving to Latifah he is forced to jettison nation in favour of a diasporic gathering—a fluidity of borders. I would contend, however, that Latifah's rap—especially "Ladies First"—defies nation as we know it in relation to rap's nationalism. Instead Latifah's music is diasporic, or what Paul Gilroy calls a black Atlantic "product." Monie Love from England raps on the same album and specific song and Winnie Mandela's image is in the video—all point to questions that exist beyond the strict confines of nation to address the more interesting and complex relations of transatlantic identifications and the historical relations, practices, memories and desires that the best rap evokes.

The diaspora is further explored in George Yudice's "The Funkification of Rio." Yudice writes of the ways in which subaltern youth in Brazil have begun to disrupt and challenge the mythic idea of racial harmony in Brazil through their cultural identifications. The *funkeiros*, contrary to popular belief, dance for the revolution. Their music calls for resistance to domination. The ways in which they acquire African American music circumvents the traditional capitalist mode of seller/consumer and instead operates very much in the form of a "cartel." Those with access to North America and in particular New York, bring in the music, which quickly makes the rounds in various reincarnated forms. Yudice's description of the pro-

duction and consumption of funk in Brazil echoes the development of sound-system culture in the Caribbean and its exportation to the U.S.A. that fuelled the formative days of rap.

However, the narrative that Yudice paints of rap and hip hop culture in Brazil is one of state cooperation and support. The state, in collaboration with rap artists and DJs, has supported a number of youth programs. It is not the same case with funk, thus the *funkeiros* are the targets of state harassment via the police. "The Funkification of Rio" is a solid article that demonstrates the relations of the black Atlantic and the transcultural sharing of black expressive cultures. The *funkeiros* subvert the spaces that are frequently used in Brazil to produce national myths of oneness (samba halls and soccer arenas). Thus the *funkeiros* are in the forefront of dismantling notions of national coherence as the state apparatus tries to literally force them—through harassment, murder and lack of radio-play of their music—out of the national imaginary.

*Microphone Fiends* comes on the heels of *Black Noise*, but they are vastly different books. Not simply because one is an edited collection and the other is not. Rose in *Black Noise* clearly demonstrates the emergence of rap music and hip hop culture as oppositional in the realm of a postindustrial or deindustrialized North America. Her discussion of graffiti is of particular importance to the complexity of her book. By insisting on locating graffiti as an important part of hip hop culture, Rose is able to demonstrate in a much stronger way the relationship between the politics of hip hop and the processes of deindustrialization and postindustrialization in America. For *Black Noise* the issue is not whether youth have an organized political movement, but that the practices of youth force us and them to live life differently, putting new encounters on the road/street/map.

*Microphone Fiends*, in trying to address the vastness of youth cultures, falls short of an attempt to demonstrate that youth culture is not always filled with possibilities. There is no discussion of the messiness of the hip hop nation, Gen Xers,

Slackers, those who make it in, and those who are out. The very category of "youth" needs to be theorized and interrogated—regardless of the book's intended audience—since it is clearly not transparent. What about the cultural politics of conservative and fundamentalist youth who are organizing in the anti-abortion movement; organizing against affirmative action, equity and access; campaigning for conservative political parties; or who are members of the Third Millennium?

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Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. New York: Verso, 1993

BY Bill Little

Why is it possible to manipulate signs and meanings? This is not merely a formal question for the Left, as the last thirty or so years of inquiry into the arbitrary relations of signifier and signified have proven. It is more of an anathema to the Left, on both theoretical and practical grounds. If the great emancipatory projects remain unfulfilled, it is due to the difficulty of making things mean what they should mean.

In Germany and Austria, for example, long-repressed phantoms of the Left have reappeared to make their challenges, and on the Left's very homeground of the post-War years—the hegemony of signs of the European social imaginary. The emergence of Neonazism is emblematic. In the last year, people in Vienna were shocked to discover that Neo-Nazis had been conducting paramilitary training exercises in the Vienna Woods, which surround the city. There were German-style firebomb attacks on refugee centres and skinhead rallies against "drugs." The government hastily rewrote the Verbotsgesetz, (the forbidden-activities law) on National Socialist Wiederbetätigung, or reenactment, to

make it more enforceable. A number of trials ensued against neo-Nazi firebombers and hate literature propagandists, culminating in September with VAPO (People's Extra-parliamentary Opposition) "Führer" Gottfried Küssel's ten-year sentence for publicly airing his views on National Socialism on American Television. During the same time Jörg Haider's right-wing Freiheitspartei (the Austrian Freedom Party), seemingly riding a new tide of populism and electoral victory, sponsored a referendum to severely restrict the number of refugees and foreigners entering the country. It was unsuccessful but opened up, as Haider said, "the left wing's monopoly of history." More recently a series of letter bombs targeted human rights and refugee advocates, including the mayor of Vienna who lost three fingers.

The resulting instability in the political climate seems symptomatic of Left ineffectiveness. It is a problem of significance as much as anything. The safety net of social democratic order and discourse, grounded fundamentally in reference to the Holocaust and Fascism, is on the defensive. That the far Right can control the social agenda attests to the virulence of its significations and the mysterious weakness of those of the Left. It is more than the apparent inability of the government to condemn unequivocally the extreme Right or find strong counter-positions on its issues. It runs to a deeper equivocation of the Left about itself and to a failure to realize its project.

In Canada, too, I am surprised, upon returning after being away, to discover how solidly the corporate discourse has established itself, with the deficit and free trade. In a recent article in *Saturday Night*, Rick Salutin lamented the inability of any of the three socialist provincial governments to mount an effective discursive (or any other) attack on the encroachment of a corporate-dictated agenda. They, like the coalition governments of Germany and Austria, do not seem to be able to articulate a strong position against the Right. The relevant question might not be "Why can't they articulate their position better," but, "What if they could articulate it?"

The paradox that Baudrillard poses in

*The Transparency of Evil* is familiar, but it addresses the above question. He is not breaking any new thematic ground for himself here when he argues that progressive movements, constrained to demonstrate and interpolate the meaningfulness behind social relationships, ironically end up by emptying the social of meaningfulness. Now he seeks to show that a sort of internal expiry has infected the Left (or the modernist project) without Leftists knowing it. He suggests that "after the orgy" of leftist analyses since the 1960s, everything that could have been liberated has been, but only from any fixed referentiality, value, origin, purpose or place. It has all been represented, all pushed onto the agenda, but in an attitude, says Baudrillard, of endless self-reproduction and proliferation. What has disappeared, or been transformed, is the imaginary, the trompe l'oeil, the perspectivism, that, by representing us to ourselves in an illusory double or mirror, also acted as a resistance to the realization of discourse. The great drives, thoroughly symbolic, existed in anticipatory desire for their ends. This was their imaginary function, to see themselves reflected in their magnitude as transcendence, discovery, the infinite, and to violently deny

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the past, overstep the present and command the future. The imaginary image existed in an anticipatory tension with the project, a "hot," antagonistic or otherwise tenuous distance that allowed discourse to determine itself, to pose limits, and as a by-product, to create the ground for a violence of forms, transgressions of laws, passion of identity.

The implosion or collapse of the

imaginary relation results in an unacknowledged indifference of the Left to itself. For Baudrillard, the projects still exist in the "real," still generate their discourse (endlessly and without real resistance or

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stakes), but at the level of the imaginary, the figure of transcendence has been replaced by the transsexual, the transpolitical and the transeconomic. We see ourselves less in a mirror of boundaries and transgressions than in a mirror of political, sexual and economic indifferention—as clones, transsexuals, prosthetic attachments, computers, digitalization and codes. Or perhaps Baudrillard is saying that we see less and less of ourselves altogether, as the tension between the "real" and the symbolic implodes. None of these strange creatures that inhabit Baudrillard's universe has an Other; they are only points in a network of disembodied circulation. They all signal an operational world where everything is being reduced to its simple, digital components before being made to circulate. With no ability to transcend their aims in an imaginary, the emancipatory projects collapse upon their objects—the masses, sex, knowledge, art, nature, goods. Because these never really did exist fully, they are made to exist, and the familiar Baudrillardian world of simulation subtly replaces the old one.

The implications for the Left are twofold. Firstly, the attempt to render the world rational and transparent inadvertently results in a "whitewashed" society, one in which negativity has become obsolete. This is tantamount to erasing the ground on which the Left stands because, for Baudrillard, the Left intellectual's domain is the negative. Secondly, the further soci-

ety goes in this direction—the more "positivized"—it becomes, the more susceptible it is to anomaly, viral attack and mass abreaction. The systems suffer from unpredictable returns of exiled negativity in the form of catastrophe, random violence, terrorism, epidemic and other "extreme phenomena." The Right is perhaps better situated to take advantage of this because it erects its discourse of order on the fetishization of categories rather than their dissolution and

exchangeability. In any case, the Left is in the position of adding flame to the fire when it tries to address these issues.

This is surely not an unsympathetic challenge to the Left, but one that leads in an uncertain direction. For Baudrillard the problem is posed in terms of the relationship between the symbolic and the rational. The analysis of evil is a case in point. When the Ayatollah condemned Salman Rushdie to death, according to Baudrillard, he spoke with a power that was much greater than one of simple material or military wealth. "Power exists solely by virtue of its symbolic ability to designate the Other, the Enemy, what is at stake, what threatens us, what is Evil." The Ayatollah spoke "Evil" because he negated all Western values of progress, rationality, political ethics and democracy with a single utterance. He spoke with power because the West has ceded the power of evil and symbolism to him and others, as a result of the operationalization of its values and the "leukemization" of the body politic. The power to speak evil no longer exists in the West. Only a positive discourse exists on the rights of man which the typically irreverent Baudrillard characterizes as pious, weak, useless and hypocritical.

In Germany and Austria the reaction to the neo-Nazis lends itself to this sort of analysis. The neo-Nazis are dangerous, but their capacity for violence is nothing beside the punitive power of the state. It is because they deign to speak "Evil" — about refugees, about the Holocaust, about

Hitler — that they incite a disproportionate fear of Nazi virulence and resurgence. They evoke the "accursed share" which the assumed existence of a social democratic consensus sought to suppress. Like Mitterand naming the Ayatollah "absolute evil," anti-Fascists suddenly find themselves colluding with evil, calling neo-Nazi spokesmen "Auschwitzlugner" (liars), spreading destabilizing innuendo about drug use, homosexuality and infidelity among the movement's leaders, and, in parody of the Gestapo, keeping detailed files on neo-Nazis and extreme Right organizations.

The power to speak "Evil" has been exiled from the post-War political discourse. This must be the source of the Left's peculiar ineffectiveness. Under the sign of the Holocaust and terror of Fascism, Social Democracy in both countries has evolved along a course of rights, consensus and rational management. The official response to neo-Nazism is heavily coded with law and order while a substantial response to the extreme Right issues of refugees, foreigners, drug users and AIDS victims has not been forthcoming. (This is in part to avoid alienating the apparent right-wing vote and in part because there is no language with which to respond). By banning neo-Nazi groups from the legitimate body politic and, in Austria, rewriting the laws on Nazi Wiederbetätigung, the Left continues along the course of management by silencing one half of the discourse and letting the courts, in their limited arena, deal with a fundamental challenge to the premises of the social democratic state. It must also be said that no amount of people in the street holding candles in silent vigil will suffice to fill this emptiness. Planned marches and crowd scenes only signify more emptiness. Because the Left discourse no longer lives in any passionate relation to transcendence, utopia or Truth, people depend on this ultimately futile show of numbers to demonstrate solidarity to each other. Even the concept of solidarity itself betrays a passivity of response that holds no stakes, makes no real demands and expresses no vision. The Left attempts to reenact itself by "necro" reference to the Holocaust and combative gestures towards *Rechtsextremis*,

but does not admit to itself that this eruption of evil in its midst is nothing but a sign of its own empty projects and weakness. While the Holocaust was a horror historically, we might ask the repugnant question, as Baudrillard does, about whether—given its constant use to found a leftist discourse, the constant return to its site to render it more and more factually and analytically transparent, and the constant levelling ability of the media to replace thus rendered facts and histories with any other—the Holocaust really did occur (like that), or at least, whether it can be said to exist for us today.

A Baudrillardian critique like this is compelling but elusive. It is compelling as an explication of the paradox at the limit of the universalization of exchange value (the "viral"), and of its repercussions for Left criticism. The individual's subjective moment of understanding and decision is convincingly shown to be lost to discourse. Baudrillard is certainly speculative and hyperbolic, but in the manner of a machine of enunciation he demarcates a near future or recent (unrecognized) past, both by assuming a Western world radically entering into simulation and susceptible to "viral" attack, and by describing it as if the process were already complete. And we cannot say that he does not find a responsiveness there.

His critique is elusive because this plays uncertainly on Baudrillard's contraposition of the symbolic and the rational. The spheres of metaphysics and sociology are blurred (perhaps in the manner of the contagious superconductivity he portrays), and it is never clear whether we are in the domain of the logic of reason, causes, realization and the law, or in that of theatre, game rules, seduction and metamorphoses. By moving the analysis to the systemic structure of signification and discourse, Baudrillard can speculate, announce a total emptiness and throw down a challenge from the position of the symbolic, while at the level of his sociological analysis in the rational world, the confusion of forms, motivations and practices tumbles over itself, as indifferent to or as interested in politics, clones and the crisis of art as it is in ironic strategies. He moves

quickly to describe the form and thus, like a literary machine, would seduce it onto a course, but from such a level of abstraction (post-situationist, post-post-structuralist?) and to such an incomprehensible "Otherness" of ritual game and gesture, that we may not wish to give ourselves up to the looseness and arbitrariness this implies.

Baudrillard's "reversibility" seems to be a sociological phenomenon whereby the idea of, say, politics, reverses itself as it becomes detached from its imaginary and referentiality. Instead of dissolving the alienating government structure in an ideal of Greek city politics, political qualities like citizenship, moral responsibility, leadership and power itself dissolve in simulation, in the people's corresponding indifference to politics without stakes, and in the move of power to more genetic, uncompromising spheres. But isn't reversibility also a mysterious metaphysical principle, whereby things or ideas just flip their meanings by themselves, without intervention from the "real" world? Baudrillard suggests as much by opposing the rational sphere, where logic is based on irreversibility (of time, meaning, progress), to the symbolic, where things are reversible by "nature," and according to rules which are played up to but remain unknown. Does the essential kernel of things just flip because the essence is symbolic and "objectively" ironic, or is it made to flip through struggle in the real as a parody of the symbolic?

By means of a vulgar pragmatism we may ask, in the end, whether the value of Baudrillard's analysis is not simply contained in what it can do. With respect to the neo-Nazis we are offered a strategy of analysis that would not reason with hatred of foreigners and Jews, the use of violence, the reenactment of Fascism, etc., but would undermine the concept of difference that informs reason. Neonazism and racism are a fetishization of difference, the virulent reverse side of the same liberal system of commodity exchange. In Baudrillard's agonistically conceived universe, on the other hand, where Objects (and races) are radically Other, racism may be turned from its path only through irony: "an ironic give-and-take founded precisely on racial terms: not at all through the legit-

imation of differences by legal means, but through an ultimately violent interaction grounded in seduction and voracity." The Nazis would not be debated or exterminated but the polarity between them and their objects of hatred would be diffused, "brasilianized," by ironic doubling and by valorization of the Other as an Exotic Other, a distant mirror in which to see ourselves and to "exchange gifts." If the Nazis are not allowed to be the sole holders of the symbolic wealth, their menace declines to the status it deserves; namely, a feeble abreactionary attempt to recover life in the social scene.

Perhaps Baudrillard would suggest that the overabundance of symbolism that emanates from the swastika—that transcendence of mere racism that constitutes the "Evil" of *neonazism*—is something to be respected, at least as an enemy. Is this acceptable? Baudrillard's ironic critique is elusive, but it is also a worthy challenge to think through.

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Laura E. Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-building*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

BY Nicole Shukin-Simpson

Laura E. Donaldson's *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-building*, engages postcolonial and feminist criticism—what many feel is the critical juncture in a radical politics—with a perspicuity equal to the task. In the company of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said and bell hooks, among others, Donaldson tracks the guises of nationalistic identity that accompany and even constitute colonialist regimes. She does so through an analysis of the subtle intersections of race, gender and