leisure practice and identities. The articulations among class, gender, subcultures, reading formations, fantasy, identity, and ideology become the ground of questioning rather than the reproductive logic of decodings that necessarily make meanings for the dominant formation. Generative abstractions replace condensed abstractions.

Post-modernism

Post-modernism, the most recent development within critical discourses on the media, offers both a dizzying concatenation of sites and levels of analysis and a new direction into the question of the individual/social relationship. Post-modernist theory circulates in a wide variety of disciplines, but it has been the work of Jean Baudrillard that has led to a radical rewriting of the media/audience relationship. Baudrillard’s project involves the destruction of sociological models of the reproduction of the social field for media/audience relations. He challenges the veracity, indeed the referentiality, of socialization models that describe the relation of the individual to the social field of norms or ideology.

For Baudrillard, the social exists as a global plane of effectiveness, an open system of systems entailing all action and all structures. Within this social field, the collective action of individuals is regulated neither by law nor by rationality but by information flows as simulation (simulation). The increasing circulation of signs, media, and representational systems over the last century has absorbed the real into its simulated representations. Since knowledge of one’s conditions of existence depends on a closed circuit of signs about signs, no grounds remain for the individual to recognize collective identities (class, gender) around which an authentic action might take place.

This version of post-modernism challenges not only traditional socialization models, it refutes any notion of mediation between the individual and the social, between signification and the real. This collapse of the subject into the social and of the real (and representation) into simulacra predicates dual axes for the play of power: the media and the mass. The aggregate of individuals absorbed into the electronic media function in Baudrillard’s variant of post-modernism as the locus of (and metaphor for) social action that is no longer based on meaning or identity. The audience as the mass is simultaneously the object (the end point) of simulations and the disinterested subject of the circulation (the enactment) of different social action.

Quite different is the refusal of socialization which comes from the mass [the audience]; from an innumerable, unnamable, and anonymous group, whose strength comes from its very destruction and inertia. Thus, in the case of the media, traditional resistance consists of reinterpreting messages according to the group’s own code and for its own ends. The masses, on the contrary, accept every thing and redirect everything en bloc into the spectacular, without requiring any other code, without requiring any meaning, ultimately, without resistance, but making everything slide into an indeterminate sphere which is not even that of non-sense, but that of overall manipulation/fascination (Baudrillard, 1983, pp. 43-4).

This audience functions as the central pivot point for post-modernism’s destruction of the subject and the social. Baudrillard locates power at the site of the disinterested viewing of the mass. In the absence of collective identity, resistance takes the form of ‘hyperconformity’: the mass resists in the ‘fatal’ strategy of the recycling of signs.

The ‘mass’ in post-modernism functions as a term that denies the possibility of any collective representation of individuals and as an immense theoretical condensation that allows the theorist to speak at the same time (and in the same way) of individual psychology, class action, and social codings. Baudrillard’s ‘mass’ has been incorporated into audience analysis on two key ways. The first has been in the elaboration of the general model of the simulation of the masses in the media, particularly television. The second has been in the analysis of new cinematic or televised forms in relation to their simulation affects on implied viewers. In developing the first tactic, Arthur Kroeker (1985, p. 40) has argued:

The audience is constituted on the basis of its relation to the object and its reaction to it; the audience is nothing more than a ‘serial unity’ (‘beings outside themselves in the passive unity of the object’); membership in the TV audience is always only on the basis of ‘alterity’ or ‘exterior separation’, . . . ‘abstract sociality’ is the false sociality of a TV audience which as an empty, serial unity is experienced as a negative totality.

The television audience becomes in this account the ideal specification of the mass. Outside any social connection or personal embodiment, it becomes the perfect metaphor for a model of media power that echoes the totalizing vision of the Frankfurt School’s critique. In developing the second tactic, recent film and television analysis focuses on purely textual features, such as pastiche, genre blending, and self-referentiality, as representing new forms of sociality. Texts as different as Miami Vice and Pepsi commercials or Happy Days and Jane Fonda’s Workout are seen as foregrounding forms of identification that have more to do with simulation effects than ideology. In a manner similar to Screen theory, these post-modernist critiques tend to condense conceptualizations of the audience with the simulating positions that are interpreted in these texts (e.g. Morse, 1987-8; Polan, 1986).

The conception of mass in post-modernism opens up the question of the effectiveness of the audience/text relationship outside of the consideration of practices of making meaning. Power in this model is centred on relations of affect rather than ideological reception. This opening, however, has been sealed off by lines of inquiry that condense the audience/mass, on the one hand, with an account of the death of the social and, on the other, with accounts of differences in contemporary discursive forms. (One of the paradoxes of post-modernism is that, while it begins with a critique of representation, its analytic practice is even more exclusively textual than that of post-structuralism.) Both of these lines of inquiry evacuate the site of audience in its specificity in favour of general theoretic accounts of sociality and textuality in the late twentieth century. In rejecting the problematic at the heart of audience research (effects as mediating), post-modernism points out absurdly, as it were, the impossibility of constructing a single analysis of audience. By pushing the concept of an abstracted totality to its logical extreme, post-modernism signals the necessity of partial reconstructions of both the individual and the social as level of abstraction in media studies.
ys in which privilege is conveyed in ethnographic texts and how voices, particularly of marginal groups, are suppressed.

Concerns within these and other traditions (including postmodernism) have to experiments in writing ethnography (Richardson 1994). An example is the of a 'dialogic' form of writing that seeks to raise the profile of the multiplicity of voices that can be heard in the course of fieldwork. As Lincoln and Denzin (1994: 984) put it: '...there always is more than one voice': polyvocality, not one story, but many tales, dramas, pieces of fiction, fables, mories, histories, autobiographies, poems, and other texts to inform our use of lifeways, to extend our understandings of the Other...

Manning (1995) cites, as an example of the postmodern preference for allowing variety of voices to come through within an ethnographic text, the work of Hiller (1989), who conducted research in Africa. Manning (1995: 260) describes text as 'periodically' dialogic in that it is 'shaped by interactions between informants or the other and the observer'. This postmodern preference for allowing multiple voices and for turning the ethnographer into a 'bit player' of the misttrust among postmodernists of 'meta-narratives' – that is, positions or grand accounts that implicitly make claims about absolute truths and therefore rule out the possibility of alternative versions of reality. On the other hand, 'mini-narratives, micro-narratives, local narratives are just stories that make no truth claims and are therefore more acceptable to postmodernists' (Manning 1992: pxii).

Postmodernism has also encouraged a growing reflexivity in considerations of the conduct of social research and the growing interest in the writing of nography is very much a manifestation of this trend... This reflexivity can be seen in the way in which many ethnographers have turned inwards to mine the truth claims inscribed in their own classic texts... the end, what postmodernism leaves us with is an acute sense of uncertainty. arises the issue of how we can ever know or capture the social reality that ors to others and in so doing it points to an unresolvable tension that will go away... because. to quote Lincoln and Denzin (1994: 528) again: 'On one hand there is the need for validity, or certainty in the text as a from somorphism and authenticity. On the other hand there is the sure and certain knowledge that all texts are socially, historically, politically, and culturally sted. We, like the texts we write, can never be transcendent.' At the same e, of course, such a view renders problematic the very idea of what social entific knowledge is or comprises.

(Bryman 2001: 469-70)

Try taking an object and describing it first of all in a modernist writing style and then in a postmodernist writing style.

Communication Studies: The Radical Resource

70 WHAT'S THE TOPIC? Postmodernist readings
WHAT'S THE TEXT? Jean Baudrillard
Simulations

The passage that precedes the reading of Disneyland, which is printed below, is itself prefixed by a passage from the Bible, from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

The simulacrum is never that which contains the truth – it is the truth that conceals that there is none.
The simulacrum is true.

This is Baudrillard's starting point for an argument about the uncertain character of reality (these days). He speaks of a story in which the cartographers (map-makers) of the Empire make a map 'so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory'. The map becomes overdrawn as the Empire declines and Baudrillard uses this metaphor for the changing character of reality itself, as if the Empire functions in the story as a kind of meta-narrative (or grand or archetypal story).

'Abstraction today,' he says, 'is no longer that of the map.' Put simply he means that representations can no longer be assumed to depend on a reliable reality. He continues: 'It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper real'. Rather than continuing to abstract he then demonstrates his theory with a sharp reading of Disneyland which begins by advertising the fact that 'Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation'.

HYPERREAL AND IMAGINARY

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusions and phantasms: Pirates, the Frontier, Future World, etc. This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturised and religious revelling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit.
In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and
affection of the crowd, and in that sufficiently excessive number of gadgets used
there to specifically maintain the multitudinous affect. The contrast with the
absolute solitude of the parking lot – a veritable concentration camp – is total.
Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetise the crowd into direct
flows – outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile. By an
extraordinary coincidence (one that undoubtedly belongs to the peculiar
enchantment of this universe), this deep-frozen infantile world happens to have
been conceived and realised by a man who is himself now cryogenised: Walt
Disney, who awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centigrade.

The objective profile of America, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland,
even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are
exalted here: in miniature and comic strip form. Embalmed and pacified.
Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (cf. Martin does
it well in Ulamente, jeux d'espace), digest of the American way of life, panegyric to
American values, idealised transposition of a contradictory, reality. To be sure.
But this conceals something else: and that 'ideological' blanket exactly serves to
cover over a third-order simulation: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is
the 'real' country, all of 'real' America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are
there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipres-
ence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make
us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America
surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simu-
lation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology),
but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the
reality principle.

The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set
up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility,
the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world,
in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the 'real' world, and
to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly amongst
those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions as to their
real childishness.

Moreover, Disneyland is not the only one. Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain,
Marine World: Los Angeles is encircled by these 'imaginary stations' which feed
reality, reality-energy, to a town whose mystery is precisely that it is nothing
more than a network of endless, unreal circulation – a town of fabulous propor-
tions, but without space or dimensions. As much as electrical and nuclear power
stations, as much as film studios, this town, which is nothing more than an
immense script and a perpetual motion picture, needs this old imaginary made
up of childhood signals and faked phantasms for its sympathetic nervous system.

(Baudrillard 1983: 204-5)