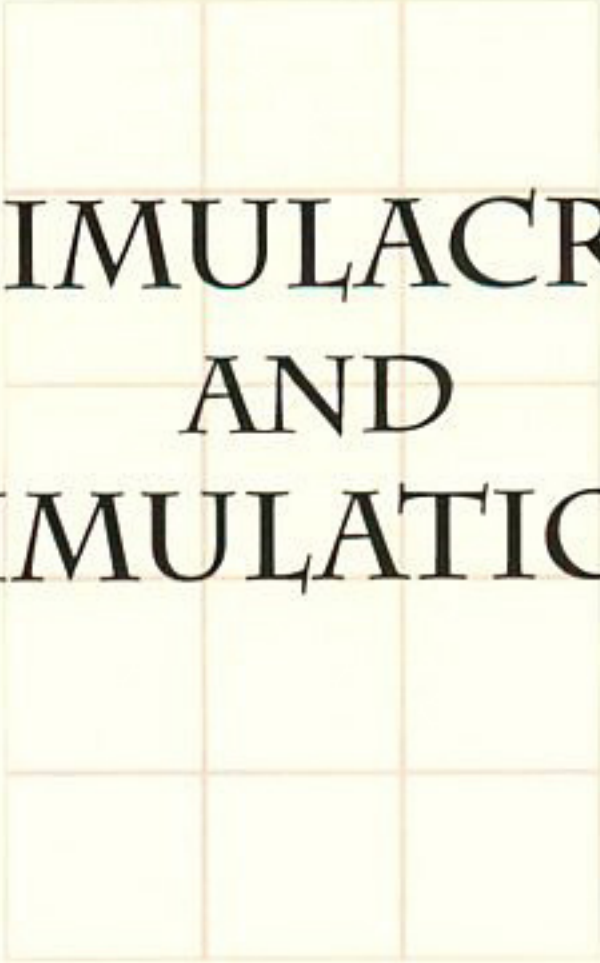

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

A large, light-colored grid symbol consisting of a 3x3 grid of squares, centered on the page behind the title text.

SIMULACRA
AND
SIMULATION

Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser



MICHIGAN

CLONE STORY

Of all the prostheses that mark the history of the body, the double is doubtless the oldest. But the double is precisely not a prosthesis: it is an imaginary figure, which, just like the soul, the shadow, the mirror image, haunts the subject like his other, which makes it so that the subject is simultaneously itself and never resembles itself again, which haunts the subject like a subtle and always averted death. This is not always the case, however: when the double materializes, when it becomes visible, it signifies imminent death.

In other words, the imaginary power and wealth of the double - the one in which the strangeness and at the same time the intimacy of the subject to itself are played out (heimlich/ unheimlich) - rests on its immateriality, on the fact that it is and remains a phantasm. Everyone can dream, and must have dreamed his whole life, of a perfect duplication or multiplication of his being, but such copies only have the power of dreams, and are destroyed when one attempts to force the dream into the real. The same is true of the (primal) scene of seduction: it only functions when it is phantasmed, rremembered, never real. It belonged to our era to wish to exorcise this phantasm like the others, that is to say to want to realize, materialize it in flesh and bone and, in a completely contrary way, to change the game of the double from a subtle exchange of death with the Other into the eternity of the Same.

Clones. Cloning. Human cuttings ad infinitum, each individual cell of an organism capable of again becoming the matrix of an identical individual. In the United States, a child was born a few months ago like a geranium: from cuttings. The first clone child (the lineage of an individual via vegetal multiplication). The first born from a single cell of a single individual, his "father," the sole progenitor, of which he would be the exact replica, the perfect twin, the double.*1

Dream of an eternal twining substituted for sexual procreation that is linked to death. Cellular dream of scissiparity, the purest form of parentage, because it finally allows one to do without the other, to go from the same to the same (one still has to use the uterus of a woman, and a pitted ovum, but this support is ephemeral, and in any case anonymous: a female prosthesis could replace it). Monocellular Utopia which, by way of genetics, allows complex beings to achieve the destiny of protozoas.

What, if not a death drive, would push sexed beings to regress to a form of reproduction prior to sexuation (besides, isn't it this form of scissiparity, this reproduction and proliferation through pure contiguity that is for us, in the depths of our imaginary, death and the death drive - what denies sexuality and wants to annihilate it, sexuality being the carrier of life, that is to say of a critical and mortal form of reproduction?) and that, at the same time, would push them metaphysically to deny all alterity, all alteration of the Same in order to aim solely for the perpetuation of an identity, a transparency of the genetic inscription no longer even subject to the vicissitudes of procreation?

Let's leave the death drive aside. Is it a question of the phantasm of auto-genesis? No, because such a fantasy still passes through the figures of the mother and the father, sexed parental figures that the subject can dream of effacing by substituting himself for them,

but without denying the symbolic structure of procreation at all: becoming one's own child is still being someone's child. Whereas cloning radically abolishes the Mother, but also the Father, the intertwining of their genes, the imbrication of their differences, but above all the joint act that is procreation. The cloner does not beget himself: he sprouts from each of his segments. One can speculate on the wealth of each of these vegetal branchings that in effect resolve all oedipal sexuality in the service of "nonhuman" sex, of sex through immediate contiguity and reduction - it is still the case that it is no longer a question of the fantasy of auto-genesis. The Father and the Mother have disappeared, not in the service of an aleatory liberty of the subject, but in the service of a matrix called code. No more mother, no more father: a matrix. And it is the matrix, that of the genetic code, that now infinitely "gives birth" based on a functional mode purged of all aleatory sexuality.

The subject is also gone, since identical duplication puts an end to his division. The mirror stage is abolished in cloning, or rather it is parodied therein in a monstrous fashion. Cloning also retains nothing, and for the same reason, of the immemorial and narcissistic dream of the subject's projection into his ideal alter ego, since this projection still passes through an image: the one in the mirror, in which the subject is alienated in order to find himself again, or the one, seductive and mortal, in which the subject sees himself in order to die there. None of this occurs in cloning. No more medium, no more image - any more than an industrial object is the mirror of the identical one that succeeds it in the series. One is never the ideal or mortal mirage of the other, they can only be added to each other, and if they can only be added, it means that they are not sexually engendered and know nothing of death.

It is no longer even a question of being twins, since Gemini or Twins possess a specific property, a particular and sacred fascination of the Two, of what is two together, and never was one. Whereas cloning enshrines the reiteration of the same: I + I + I + I, etc.

Neither child, nor twin, nor narcissistic reflection, the clone is the materialization of the double by genetic means, that is to say the abolition of all alterity and of any imaginary. Which is combined with the economy of sexuality. Delirious apotheosis of a productive technology.

A segment has no need of imaginary mediation in order to reproduce itself, any more than the earthworm needs earth: each segment of the worm is directly reproduced as a whole worm, just as each cell of the American CEO can produce a new CEO. Just as each fragment of a hologram can again become the matrix of the complete hologram: the information remains whole, with perhaps somewhat less definition, in each of the dispersed fragments of the hologram.

This is how one puts an end to totality. If all information can be found in each of its parts, the whole loses its meaning. It is also the end of the body, of this singularity called body, whose secret is precisely that it cannot be segmented into additional cells, that it is an indivisible configuration, to which its sexuation is witness (paradox: cloning will fabricate sexed beings in perpetuity, since they are similar to their model, whereas thereby sex becomes useless - but precisely sex is not a function, it is what makes a body a body, it is what exceeds all the parts, all the diverse functions of this body). Sex (or

death: in this sense it is the same thing) is what exceeds all information that can be collected on a body. Well, where is all this information collected? In the genetic formula. This is why it must necessarily want to forge a path of autonomous reproduction, independent of sexuality and of death.

Already, biophysioanatomical science, by dissecting the body into organs and functions, begins the process of the analytic decomposition of the body, and micromolecular genetics is nothing but the logical consequence, though at a much higher level of abstraction and simulation - at the nuclear level of the command cell, at the direct level of the genetic code, around which this whole phantasmagoria is organized.

From a functional and mechanistic point of view, each organ is still only a partial and differentiated prosthesis: already simulation, but "traditional." From the point of view of cybernetics and computer science, it is the smallest undifferentiated element, each cell of a body becomes an "embryonic" prosthesis of this body. It is the genetic formula inscribed in each cell that becomes the veritable modern prosthesis of all bodies. If the prosthesis is commonly an artifact that supplements a failing organ, or the instrumental extension of a body, then the DN A molecule, which contains all information relative to a body, is the prosthesis par excellence, the one that will allow for the indefinite extension of this body by the body itself - this body itself being nothing but the indefinite series of its prostheses.

A cybernetic prosthesis infinitely more subtle and still more artificial than any mechanical prosthesis. Because the genetic code is not "natural": just as every abstract and autonomized part of a whole becomes an artificial prosthesis that alters this whole by substituting itself for it (pro-thesis: this is the etymological meaning), one can say that the genetic code, where the whole of a being is supposedly condensed because all the "information" of this being would be imprisoned there (there lies the incredible violence of genetic simulation) is an artifact, an operational prosthesis, an abstract matrix, from which will be able to emerge, no longer even through reproduction, but through pure and simple renewal, identical beings assigned to the same controls.

My genetic patrimony was fixed once and for all when a certain spermatozoa encountered a certain ovum. This heritage contains the recipe for all the biochemical processes that realized me and ensure my functioning. A copy of this recipe is inscribed in each of the dozens of millions of cells that constitute me today. Each of these cells knows how to manufacture me; before being a cell of my liver or of my blood, it is a cell of me. It is thus theoretically possible to manufacture an individual identical to me starting with one of these cells. (Professor A. Jacquard)

Cloning is thus the last stage of the history and modeling of the body, the one at which, reduced to its abstract and genetic formula, the individual is destined to serial propagation. It is necessary to revisit what Walter Benjamin said of the work of art in the age of its mechanical reproducibility. What is lost in the work that is serially reproduced, is its aura, its singular quality of the here and now, its aesthetic form (it had already lost its ritual form, in its aesthetic quality), and, according to Benjamin, it takes on, in its

ineluctable destiny of reproduction, a political form. What is lost is the original, which only a history itself nostalgic and retrospective can reconstitute as "authentic." The most advanced, the most modern form of this development, which Benjamin described in cinema, photography, and contemporary mass media, is one in which the original no longer even exists, since things are conceived from the beginning as a function of their unlimited reproduction.

This is what happens to us with cloning, no longer only at the level of messages, but at the level of individuals. In fact this is what happens to the body when it ceases to be conceived as anything but a message, as a stockpile of information and of messages, as fodder for data processing. Thus nothing is opposed to the body being serially reproduced in the same way Benjamin describes the reproduction of industrial objects and the images of the mass media. There is a precession of reproduction over production, a precession of the genetic model over all possible bodies. It is the irruption of technology that controls this reversal, of a technology that Benjamin was already describing, in its total consequences, as a total medium, but one still of the industrial age - a gigantic prosthesis that controlled the generation of objects and identical images, in which nothing could be differentiated any longer from anything else - but still without imagining the current sophistication of this technology, which renders the generation of identical beings possible, though there is no possibility of a return to an original being. The prostheses of the industrial age are still external, exotechnical, those that we know have been subdivided and internalized: esotechnical. We are in the age of soft technologies - genetic and mental software.

As long as the prostheses of the old industrial golden age were mechanical, they still returned to the body in order to modify its image - conversely, they themselves were metabolized in the imaginary and this technological metabolism was also part of the image of the body. But when one reaches a point of no return (deadend) in simulation, that is to say when the prosthesis goes deeper, is interiorized in, infiltrates the anonymous and micro-molecular heart of the body, as soon as it is imposed on the body itself as the "original" model, burning all the previous symbolic circuits, the only possible body the immutable repetition of the prosthesis, then it is the end of the body, of its history, and of its vicissitudes. The individual is no longer anything but a cancerous metastasis of its base formula. All the individuals produced through cloning individual X, are they anything other than a cancerous metastasis - the proliferation of the same cell such as occurs with cancer? There is a narrow relation between the key concept of the genetic code and the pathology of cancer: the code designates the smallest simple element, the minimal formula to which an entire individual can be reduced, and in such a way that he can only reproduce himself identically to himself. Cancer designates a proliferation ad infinitum of a base cell without taking into consideration the organic laws of the whole. It is the same thing with cloning: nothing opposes itself any longer to the renewal of the Same, to the unchecked proliferation of a single matrix. Formerly, sexed reproduction still stood in opposition to this, today one can finally isolate the genetic matrix of identity, and one will be able to eliminate all the differential vicissitudes that once constituted the aleatory charm of individuals.

If all cells are conceived primarily as a receptacle of the same genetic formula - not only all the identical individuals, but all the cells of the same individual - what are they but the

cancerous extension of this base formula? The metastasis that began with industrial objects ends with cellular organization. It is useless to ask oneself if cancer is an illness of the capitalist age. It is in effect the illness that controls all contemporary pathology, because it is the very form of the virulence of the code: an exacerbated redundancy of the same signals, an exacerbated redundancy of the same cells.

The stage of the body changes in the course of an irreversible technological "progression": from tanning in the sun, which already corresponds to an artificial use of the natural medium, that is to say to making it a prosthesis of the body (itself becoming a simulated body, but where lies the truth of the body?) - to domestic tanning with an iodine lamp (yet another good old mechanical technique) - to tanning with pills and hormones (chemical and ingested prosthesis) - and finally to tanning by intervening in the genetic formula (an incomparably more advanced stage, but a prosthesis nonetheless, that is, it is simply definitively integrated, it no longer even passes through either the surface or the orifices of the body), one passes by different bodies. It is the schema of the whole that is metamorphosed. The traditional prosthesis, which serves to repair a failing organ, changes nothing in the general model of the body. Organ transplants are still of this order. But what should be said of mental modeling via psychotropic agents and drugs? It is the stage of the body that is changed by them. The psychotropic body is a body modeled "from the inside," no longer passing through the per-spectival space of representation, of the mirror, and of discourse. A silent, mental, already molecular (and no longer specular) body, a body metabolized directly, without the mediation of the act or the gaze, an immanent body, without alterity without a *mise en scène*, without transcendence, a body consecrated to the implosive metabolism of cerebral, endocrinal flows, a sensory, but not sensible, body because it is connected only to its internal terminals, and not to objects of perception (the reason why one can enclose it in a "white," blank sensoriality - disconnecting it from its own sensorial extremities, without touching the world that surrounds it, suffices), a body already homogeneous, at this stage of plastic tactility, of mental malleability, of psychotropism at every level, already close to nuclear and genetic manipulation, that is to say to the absolute loss of the image, bodies that cannot be represented, either to others or to themselves, bodies enucleated of their being and of their meaning by being transfigured into a genetic formula or through biochemical instability: point of no return, apotheosis of a technology that has itself become interstitial and molecular.

* NOTES *

One must take into account that cancerous proliferation is also a silent disobedience of the injunctions of the genetic code. Cancer, if it fits with the logic of a nuclear/computer science vision of human beings, is also its monstrous excrescence and negation, because it leads to total disinformation and to disaggregation. "Revolutionary" pathology of organic abandonment, Richard Pinhas would say, in *Fictions* ("Notes synoptiques a propos d'un mal mysterieux" [Synoptic notes on a mysterious illness]). Entropic delirium of organisms, resisting the negentropy of informational systems. (It is the same conjunction as that of the masses vis-a-vis structured social formations: the masses are also cancerous metastases outside any social organicity.)

The same ambiguity is operative in cloning: it is at once the triumph of a controlling

hypothesis, that of the code and of genetic information, and an eccentric distortion that destroys its coherence. Besides, it is probable (but this is left to a future story) that even the "clonic twin" will never be identical to its progenitor, will never be the same, if only because it will have had another before it. It will never be "just like what the genetic code in itself would have changed it to." Millions of interferences will make of it, despite everything, a different being, who will have the very same blue eyes of its father, which is not new. And the cloning experiment will at least have the advantage of demonstrating the radical impossibility of mastering a process simply by mastering information and the code. Note: A version of this essay with a different ending appeared under the title "The Hell of the Same" in Baudrillard's *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (London and New York: Verso, 1993).-TRANS.

I. Cf. D. Rorvik, *A son image: La copie d'un homme* (In his image: The copy of a man) (Paris: Grasset, 1978).