



JEAN  
BAUDRILLARD

From Marxism to  
Postmodernism and Beyond

DOUGLAS KELLNER

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compiled by Chris McKay



Critical theory; cultural studies

**Jean Baudrillard**

From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond

*Douglas Kellner*

'Douglas Kellner provides a deft and trustworthy guide through the dizzying, hyperreal world of Baudrillard's imaginary. At the same time he remains resolutely unseduced by its charms. The result is a trenchant political critique of the figure he calls the "Walt Disney of contemporary metaphysics".' Martin Jay, University of California, Berkeley

This is the first full-scale critique in English of the work of Jean Baudrillard, a fascinating French thinker who has, during the past twenty years, opened new lines of cultural thought and discourse while sharply questioning many of the Marxian, Freudian, and structuralist positions that were characteristic of the previous era of radical social theory. According to a Canadian journal that devoted a special issue to him, Baudrillard is "a talisman; a symptom, a sign, a charm, and, above all, a password to the next universe."

The author argues that though today Baudrillard is celebrated as one of the most innovative thinkers in the discourses of poststructuralism and postmodernism, his reception has been remarkably uncritical and ahistorical. There has been little analysis of his complex intellectual trajectory, of his involvement in a series of debates within the French post-May 1968 intellectual scene, and of his dramatic transformations in thinking and writing in the 1970's and 1980's.

In this book, the author begins the process of mapping out, contextualizing, and critically appraising Baudrillard's trajectory. He deals first with Baudrillard's early writings, notably *The System of Objects* and *The Consumer Society*, which form the original matrix of his thought. The remainder of the book is organized thematically, analyzing Baudrillard's early development of a neo-Marxian social theory (*The Mirror of Production*), his break with Marxism (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*), his turn to a postmodern position (*Forget Foucault* and *Of Seduction*), and the surprising developments in his work of the 1970's and 1980's (*America* and *The Divine Left*).

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