“The Airborne Toxic Event” and Simulation

Or, *White Noise* Meets
Jean Baudrillard
Simulation Defined

- Model of reality for which no original/referent exists
  - “It is the generation by models of a real without origin” (170).
- Signs replace referents
  - “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, or even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real itself . . .” (170).
- State of simulation is “hyperreal”
The Divine Irreference of Images: Simulation and the Reality Principle

- Simulation deconstructing “difference between ‘true’ and ‘false,’ between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’” (171)
  - Illness
  - Army
  - Divinity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Simulation</th>
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<td>Purports to refer to or exchange for the real</td>
<td>Refers to or exchanges for itself</td>
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Simulation absorbs representation in the “phases of the image” (173):

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
Examples of Simulacra

- Disneyland is the “real” America
- Watergate is not a scandal

Image source: DLRP Magic

Image source: Time Cover Archive
“We are in a logic of simulation which has nothing to do with a logic of facts and an order of reasons. . . . Facts no longer have any trajectory of their own; they arise at the intersection of the models” (178).

“All the referentials intermingle their discourses in a circular, Moebian compulsion” (179).
Simulation as Deconstruction

Problem/Threat

 “Parody makes obedience and transgression equivalent, . . . cancel[ing] out the difference upon which the law is based” (181).

 If we cannot identify the process of simulation, then we cannot identify the process of the real.

Result

 “The only weapon of power, its only strategy in this defection, is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere. . . . For that purpose, it prefers the discourse of crisis, but also—why not—the discourse of desire” (182).
Rejuvenating the Fiction of the Real

- State of simulation engendering nostalgia: “There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity, and authenticity” (174).
Applications to White Noise?

- Jack arguing that professors not disaster victims because media never shows them as such
- Media origin of Steffie’s symptoms and collapse of “real” and “false” symptoms (125-126)
- Real vs. false déjà vu (133)
- Jack’s computer-modeled death (140-141, 150, 158)
- SIMUVAC using the real to map the simulation (138-139)
  - Later, won’t let real injuries mar simulation

The UW Airborne Supposedly Non-Toxic Event!
Applications to *White Noise*?

- Steffie as simulated and real victim
- Man carrying television and complaining about lack of media coverage: Event not “real” without media representation
- Existence of multiple interpretations
  - 217-219: Students vs. Murray’s interpretation of car crash films
- Equalizing of differences
  - 181: Heinrich’s male pattern baldness “no different” from baldness emerging from cancer treatment
  - Hitler/Elvis both mama’s boys