# Baudrillard Aff – Madeline

# Notes

## Aff Explanation

### Hyperreality

#### Baudrillard’s basic argument is that the world has become a system of signs and signifiers. He calls this world “hyperreality” (as opposed to reality). We use language to symbolize everything; we use signifiers to determine the world around of us (think of the classic chair example—if I say the word “chair,” you think of something that you associate with the word chair, and I think of something different. In this case, the word “chair” is the signifier). Signifiers can also be things like brands—what’s the difference between a white t-shirt from Calvin Klein and one from Walmart? In reality, almost nothing—but the brand holds different social significance, thus you view one t-shirt as fundamentally different from and more valuable than the other.

#### Baudrillard says that signs and signifiers are no longer created or proliferated to refer to reality—rather, they are created for their circular purposes. The signifier “Calvin Klein shirt” doesn’t necessarily mandate that you own a better shirt, but rather just that it’s attached to the meaning of the brand itself, regardless of the item it supposedly describes. Or, think of a cherry fruit snack. You have a chemical sugar syrup that has universally been labeled “cherry flavor” despite failing to resemble cherries at all. Not only that, but we then mold the syrup BACK into the shape of a cherry. We constantly produce and enjoy these cherry fruit snacks not because they effectively replace cherries, but just for their own purposes. That is how all signifiers work in Baudrillard’s world. Important note: all individual words are also signifiers.

#### As you may know, Baudrillard took many of his theories from Marx, and there are thus many overlaps with capitalism. However, Baudrillard argues that the consumption society no longer operates based upon control over means of production, but rather using signs to encourage consumerism.

### Education

#### The education system is an example of a system completely predicated off of signifying reality, particularly science education. A GPA is just a signifier that the world has determined has a substantial amount of social significance, but what is it besides a decimal number? What is a 36 on the ACT? They’re not tangible, real things, but they shape the way we live because we live in hyperreality. Science classes try to replicate the natural world through labs and science experiments that are fundamentally reliant upon the broad assumption that a certain analogy can replace or equate “reality.” For example, the Blades evidence in the 1AC talks about how syrup solution is put into plastic bags, which are then put into water so that the students can explore the way nutrients diffuse out of intestines during the digestion processes. But this demonstration is so over-simplified, it bears little to no resemblance of the real way intestines work.

### Impacts

#### Signs and signifiers assign almost arbitrary value onto the world, but it’s not a neutral act.

#### There’s a value to life impact: the murder of reality that we’ve conducted via the transition into hyperreality justifies the system’s maintenance of control at all costs, including acts of terrorism. It also means we’re divorced from the “real world” that we’ve destroyed, which causes panic/depression, etc.

#### The better impact is destruction of alterity. When you use signifiers to both assign static meaning onto something AND replace its original existence in your understanding of the world, that causes a violent erasure/assimilation into hegemonic world orders. Whatever that entity was before you signified it has been violently destroyed by your use of language and hyperreality.

### Solvency Mechanism

#### There are multiple ways you can characterize the solvency mechanism, and most of them have been outlined in the cards at some point, so you could do a bit of re-highlighting and read a slightly different aff. The common theme through all of these is that they all work *within* the system. The system of meaning-making has no inherent set of values it operates off of; thus, if you try to attack it with an external critique, it can just shift to incorporate your movement. Here are a few basic methods—

#### Acceleration: the proliferation of signs and signifiers has, in turn, proliferated meanings. To destroy the obsessive attachment to meaning, we should just overwhelm the system by spewing out as much meaningless stuff as possible. This is demonstrated by the “performance” about AP Intro to STEM, which is just a long, useless, jargon-y rant. You must over-identify with the system.

#### Taking Hostages: if you take something hostage, there’s nothing external for the system to attack. The point of holding something hostage is that it puts the system in a position of being unable to respond or retort, thus it collapses in on itself.

#### Mystification: this can also be done with the weird AP Intro to STEM argument. By forcing the system to recognize that a bunch of signifiers strung together with all of their designated meanings can be absolutely meaningless, the whole point of the “designated meaning” collapses.

## Strategies

### vs. framework

#### You’re going to want to impact turn notions of fairness or education because debate is a reflection of the broader desire to know and understand everything—basically, your proliferation of meaninglessness in debate is an attempt to take it down.

#### Additionally, these affs use pointless plan texts on purpose. Read a bunch more plan texts on framework to accelerate the system.

### vs. identity K’s

#### A lot of the Baudrillard cards are specific to the fact that external attempts to bring the system down fail because the system can just incorporate their movement. There are now t-shirts being manufactured that say “Unflinching Paradigmatic Analysis” or “Cap Debater,” which just prove that the capitalist system is enveloping a lot of afropessimist or anticapitalist alts. This aff solves all K’s about oppression better, and proves that their alt fails inevitably. If you win your hyperreality framing, you win the debate.

#### Specifically, the Baudrillard ’00 card under solvency is super good in making this argument—especially the bottom part (where the yellow highlighting is). Make this your 2ar.

### vs. cap

#### This one seems noncompetitive with the aff, but a lot of Marxists got mad at Baudrillard’s characterization of the consumer society. Defend your interpretation of the consumer world as having transitioned into hyperreality. The t-shirt example above will be particularly useful to explain why your characterization of the system of capital is correct. Additionally, a lot of the offense against identity K’s is applicable to capitalism alts as well because they are direct, “material” oppositions to the system.

#### Also, the Artrip and Debrix evidence under “impact” should be cross-applied.

### vs. straight-up (like DAs)

#### Make loads of ridiculous, nonsense arguments against this. Make them suffer and wish they’d never gone down this rabbit hole. Say all sorts of random stuff, because what links to the creation of an ironman suit? Literally nothing.

#### If you have questions about the file, feel free to email: madelinebrague@gmail.com

#  1ACs

## v1

#### Welcome to AP Intro to STEM. We will start off with learning to construct a small thermal exhaust port—but students, please be aware that it is susceptible to direct hits from proton torpedoes despite being ray-shielded; it may set off a chain reaction.

#### First, decompress the antimatter storage tanks.

#### You then need to realign the aft gamma ray impulse housing.

#### Then, once you’ve reimbursed the electro-gnome, you’ll need to de-clog the dorsal Fergnatz matrix.

#### Wait—I’m detecting a frequency shift in the multiphasic charm cannon. Depolarize the aft axial shock prism chamber and reroute emergency power through the axionic deflector shell. That should compensate for the static discharge.

#### Remember to clear the ionic build-up in the tellurium shift coil before penticarboxic acid disulfate solution diffuses into the air.

#### You see, this is why the United States Federal Government should fully fund grants for after-school development of a cybernetic gallium-arsenide Iron Man suit.

#### Science is the ultimate game of simulation and simulacra. The image of the scientist, the very act of prescriptive and objective analysis of a controllable world destroys the reality it was meant to explain—it is the destruction of alterity itself

Blades 1 (David W. Blades, Professor of Science Education and Curriculum Studies at University of Victoria, “The Simulacra of Science Education” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42976388.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1cea938b0da0ae7403f6d54d16223470)//meb> \*edited for ableist language

8Questions concerning the principles of what counts as reality lie at the heart of the life work of French sociologist1 Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard states that his oeuvre focuses on "the mass effect, the mass forms that I analyze, and which, somewhere, no longer produce any difference" (1993/1983, p.45). Initially a Marxist, Baudrillard turned around Marx's notion of production as a cause of modern alienation by suggesting that the cause of the modern alienating social order today is not production but consumption. The events of 19682 led to significant changes in the thinking of many French intellectuals; during this time Baudrillard' s research moved from an examination of the structural relationships between the consumer and what is consumed to the argu- ment that the consumer was "an effect of the way that consumer goods circulate as meanings" (Baudrillard, quoted in Horrocks & Jevtic, 1996, p.21, italics in text). For example, while a pair of blue jeans may not vary a great deal from brand to brand, jeans presenting a label such as Tommy Hilfiger may be consumed over other brands. What captured Baudrillard' s attention was how a signifier such as a label signified not only a product but also a particular meaning about the product that affected consumption. To make sense of these meanings, Baudrillard focused on the signs under which consumerism circulates. Drawing inspiration from psychoanalysis and anthropology, Baudrillard discov- ered that the meaning of signs exists in their 'symbolic exchange' and that what is given in a sign does not necessarily have to correspond to any physical reality. This insight moved Baudrillard into some of his most original and disturbing work. By the early seventies Baudrillard realized that the use of some signs is a type of sign as well. To illustrate his point, imagine a scientist. Why is this so easy to do? Of course, there is no generic scientist, yet when asked to imagine scientists many children and adults immediately picture someone, usually a male, in a white lab coat, even though lab coats are not commonplace in the daily professional practice of many branches of science.3 The lab coat is a signifier of science, but its use is also a sign as well. Advertisers use this signifier in generating claims about their product. This toothpaste has been, they claim, "clinically tested" and is therefore the best. How do we know? The camera in the advertisement turns to scientists producing report after report - presumably their objective studies of the product - vesting their claims with authority. How do we know the people holding the reports are scientists? They are wearing lab coats! In this way, the sign circulates as a sign itself (of authority and definite knowledge), further abstracting the signifier from the signified, which are typically very messy experiments that, to protect one's clothing if not health, require a first defense in the form of a lab coat. Baudrillard' s argument that the use of a sign can further abstract signifiers reinforces Derrida's position that signs are caught in an endless circulation of meanings and use. Baudrillard agrees with Derrida that the loss of correspondence of signifiers to reality means "the world is a game" (1993/1983, p.46) but he further comments that such a game is pathological because the real, in the sense of authentic, becomes increasingly distant in the circulation of signs to the point of no longer being present. This extreme position could not be more opposite to the structuralist position that reality is readily available and understood through signifiers that have direct correspondence to reality (Cherryholmes, 1988; Hochberg, 1968). From a structuralist position, the analysis of relation- ships between signifiers leads to meaning about reality which can be shared and holds a semblance of objectivity (Cherryholmes, 1988). For example, structuralism maintains the English word "wolf' only makes sense in relation in a particular system of words where "wolf' is a sign signifying a particular set of sensations (the signified), and not, for example, those sensations that lead us to use the word "rock." That fact that it is possible to translate the signified into another system of signifiers, such as "lobo" in Portuguese, yet still refer to the same set of sensory inputs, supports the structuralist belief in the essential similarity of human experience and logic of understanding; in Shakespearean terms, "that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."4 At the Zoo Baudrillard's arguments could be considered "poststructural" in his claim that, due to the growth of representation in the media and technological innovation, we no longer live in a world where signs are obligated to correspond to reality (Baudrillard, 1983). He points out that the use of signs becomes a sign itself as signifiers multiply to where the sign "no longer resembles in the slightest the obliged sign of limited diffusion" (p.85). What is produced, he claims, is pure simulacra, a social game played with increasing signification more and more distant from reality. Not only are these games played with signs, suggests Baudrillard, they also "imply social rapports and social power" (p.88) arising from technology through the "presumption of an ideal counterfeit of the world" In his work, The Order of Things (1973/1966), Foucault uses the historical development of the zoo to illustrate how this counterfeiting operates to frame perception: It is often said that the establishment of botanical gardens and zoological collections expressed a new curiosity about exotic plants and animals. In fact, these had already claimed men's [sic] interest for a long while. What had changed was the space in which it was possible to see them and from which it was possible to describe them. (p. 1 3 1 ) With the advent of zoos, argues Foucault, animals and plants became specimens for public display, carefully indicated with the "correct" terminology for each signified object (. . .on the left, children, lying in the shade is Canis lupis, a wolf. . .). He suggests that a trip to the zoo is not just a taking in of the sights and sounds but participation in a predetermined discourse on ways of seeing, hearing, smelling, and in some cases even touching a constructed reality leading to certain modes of thought about life as we gaze at the "wild" animals or "exotic" plants carefully catalogued and maintained by science. Foucault takes this a step further, however, by pointing out that not only do we receive this privileged scientific discourse, we participate and extend the discourse in our expectations of what we will see at the zoo. Historically, notes Foucault, this expectation moved from a folk naturalism to the sensational as more and more forms of life were "discovered" by Europeans traveling to distant lands. The result was the creation of zoos as a kind of theater: Visitors at the zoo expect to be informed by what they experience, but this information is anticipated as entertainment. Baudrillard's arguments support Foucault's analysis, but considera- bly push the point that existing signs are counterfeits no longer obligated to reality. Zoos are often justified as a place of scientific research, a public assurance that the world is being cared for; pandas may be nearly extinct but their survival is guaranteed thanks to breeding programs at zoos. We can relax and enjoy watching pandas playing with a rubber ball. But divorced from its ecology, is a panda really a panda? Cut off from their family groupings and hunting expeditions, is what is presented as a wolf in a zoo really a wolf? Baudrillard' s arguments suggest that there is nothing "wild" or "exotic" at the zoo, there is nothing present at all; the entire space is a simulacra, a constructed and managed collection of signs bearing no correspondence to reality since even the signifiers "wild" and "exotic" are themselves signs. In perhaps his most significant work, Simulacra and Simulation (1994/1981), Baudrillard provides an example of how modern science, far from representing and investigating reality, produces signs that contribute to the distancing of human experience from reality. Consider, he advances, the case of the discovery of the mummified corpse of Ramses II. Why, ponders Baudrillard, was this mummy considered "priceless"? He suggests that Ramses does not signify anything for us, only the mummy is of an inestimable worth because it is what guarantees that accumulation has meaning. Our entire linear and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view. To this end the pharaohs must be brought out of their tomb and the mummies out of their silence. And so, he continues, scientists repair a mummy that was never intended to be repaired; the testimony and role of the mummy - the reality the mummy signified - is lost as the mummy becomes objectified through science and so invaded by procedures that repair the mummy which are working against the practice of the original embalmers and thus the entire spiritual significance of mummification. In our modern world, we hate to lose the mummy to the natural world; we consume the mummy instead, turning Ramses' corpse into a spectacle. No longer a signifier of a belief system, Ramses becomes a simulacrum, an "irreparable violence towards all secrets" (p. 11) where everything is collected, examined, dissected, and then "preserved" and re-presented through the activity of science. As Baudrillard points out, mummies don't rot from worms: they die from being transplanted from a slow order of the symbolic, master over putrefaction and death, to an order of history, science, and museums, our order, which no longer masters anything, which only knows how to condemn what preceded it to decay and death and subsequently to try to revive it with science.

#### The whole operation of science education reflects the entertaining procession of signs represented by Bill Nye—science allows the consumption of the simulacra that has produced a complete detachment from the signified—education reform is impossible because it rests upon simulation

Blades 1 (David W. Blades, Professor of Science Education and Curriculum Studies at University of Victoria, “The Simulacra of Science Education” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42976388.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1cea938b0da0ae7403f6d54d16223470)//meb> \*edited for ableist language

In the name of the development of student science literacy, science education has become a media event. Shows such as "3-2-1 Contact" or the popular "Bill Nye the Science Guy" appear to directly challenge the banal image of science by moving in the precisely opposite direction: Science is represented as a fast-paced, exciting investigation of the natural world, an adventure designed to attract children to science. Bill Nye, for example, is a former comedian who "bungee jumps, SCUBA dives, parachutes, and does all sorts of cool stuff with science" (Disney.com, 2000, p.l). Dressed in the traditional signs of science - white lab coat and geeky bow tie - Nye enthusiastically moves audiences through a series of quick film clips, amusing anecdotes, science demonstrations, and features of "way cool" scientists in an effort to amuse, captivate, and entertain. Recent additions to the Bill Nye approach include a series of Internet web sites that contain advice to teachers, ideas of experiments children can do in their homes, and features from past episodes of the television show. Sponsored by the National Science Foundation and produced by the Walt Disney Company for public television, this show has won more than a dozen daytime Emmy awards. Described as an "ambassador for science" (Nye, 2000), his appeal to children that science is fun and interesting has led to a series of honors, including participation in the President of the United States' round table forum on education, appointment to the U.S. Department of Energy Task Force on Education, presentation to the House Committee on Science Education in the Congress of the United States, and Guest of Honour at the dedication of Cornell University's memorial to the late astronomer Carl Sagan. It is hard to watch Bill Nye the Science Guy closely. A certain relaxation takes over; science becomes fun again, or appears to be fun. A rapid succession of facts slide between shots of children trying an idea suggested to them by a teacher; suddenly Bill is stomping through a marsh talking about wetlands; I laugh out loud. Everyone is cool: the teacher, the children, scientists and, of course, Bill the most. Without a doubt, this is entertainment, an excellent example of what Baudrillard (1983) describes as a "hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself' (p. 142) in the best tradition of Disney productions. But despite the sometimes frenetic pace of the presentation, the glitzy and slick presentation, Bill Nye the Science Guy still retains the tradition of predetermined "experiments" and the authority of science "facts" in science education; it is in the final analysis a simulacrum of science. At no point do students hear about the difficulty of scientific research, the long tedious hours of hunting an idea that more often than not ends in a blind alley. Students are never seen thinking of an experiment themselves or engaged in the social action considered essential in an STS approach. The show is brisance, a blinding explosion of images that are hyperreal, distant from any reflection of the profound reality of science and, like an explosion, leaving only images and traces of a presence once the smoke has cleared. Science education has long provided entertainment for television. Currently, there is such a current demand for science shows that entire channels are exclusively devoted to science. Twenty-four hours a day anyone with access to cable television in Canada or the United States can marvel at the sexual potency of lemmings, learn about NASA missions to planets and moons, be astounded at the destructive power of tornadoes or volcanoes (you can choose), watch wild dogs engage in social interac- tions on the African savanna, or be astounded at the power of the Great White Shark, all with a glorious sense of detachment, safe in the comfort of their homes. I admit to enjoying these shows, but as Baudrillard (1993/1987) ob- serves, there is something more than peculiar about these images: If they fascinate us so much it is not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation - this would not be new - it is on the contrary because they are sites of the disappearance of meaning and representation, sites in which we are caught quite apart from any judgement of reality, thus sites of a fatal strategy of denigration of the real and the reality principle, (p. 1 94, italics in text) What is presented in the sign of science is the hyperreal, a trip to the zoo from the comfort of our chairs. What is represented is not present in any sense; how can the lives of mountain gorillas even hope to be present in any authentic way when the lights, sounds, smells, and talking of camera crews changes their environment? Through television we become vo- yeurs of the natural world as science - from space shuttle broadcasts to the glimpses of the ocean floor - is offered for consumption, a small brisance every thirty minutes. The collections of facts that characterize these shows of science may lead to concern about the loss of Amazon rainforest, but only for a few minutes and certainly not enough to consider the deforestation in our backyards; at the commercial it's time to get something to eat. The sad consequence of this indifference, suggests Baudrillard (1996/1992), is that "we no longer know what to do with the real world. We can no longer see any need whatever for this residue, which has become an encumbrance" (p.42). Motorists traveling along freeways through the national parks kill - and are sometimes killed - as nature strolls across the roadways at night. It's an irritating problem and hopefully overhead bridges for creatures, such as wolves, will allow them to migrate over highways without bothering us or contacting us at all. Our science education is thus an education about our relation to the natural world, the reminder that through science and technology humanity can solve these uninvited intrusions, encouraging an acquies- cence to ways of thinking that began with an education that taught us not to be bothered by anything difficult or messy like reality: just learn the facts for the test next week Is an Authentic Science Education Possible? Now, is it the function of education merely to help you to conform to the pattern of this rotten social order, or is it to give you freedom - complete freedom to grow and create a different society, a new world? - Krishnamurti, Think on These Things By the mid-1980s, many jurisdictions around the world were striving to reform science education toward an STS approach (Bybee & Mau, 1986). The depressing situation is, however, that these well-intentioned reform efforts have "done more to stabilize an obsolete curriculum than to provide insight and guidance for realizing a new vision of teaching" (Hurd, 1991, p.35). Our vision is missing because we are trying to reform what isn't there: Schools do not engage in science education but simulacra of science education. In the lived curriculum of classrooms, what operates under the sign of science education continues to be a content-driven, ~~bulimic~~ pedagogy driven by standardized testing that caters to the intellectual elite bound for postsecondary study. In Simulacra and Simulation (1981/1994) Baudrillard argues that the difficulty of change is due to the way a simulacrum can last indefinitely because it is nothing but the object of a social demand, and thus as the object of the law of supply and demand, it is no longer subject to violence and death. Completely purged of a political dimension, it, like any other commodity, is dependent on mass production and consumption, (p.26, emphasis in text) His point suggests that the demand for television shows enticing children to be entertained by science will be counterproductive to realizing science education in the lives of children, assuming that is even remotely the intention. What these shows accomplish is the entrenchment of the simulacra of science education - and the generation of revenues - at least until boredom overtakes the audience and the show is cancelled. But the mass production of what is called "science" in our schools through centralized school systems and the relentless march of standardized testing ensure that sooner or later someone will reinvest in the production of television broadcasts that feature a more entertaining science education than can be accomplished in classrooms typically lacking the technological wizardry. In the end, however, science becomes in classrooms or on TV a simulacrum produced by social demand for an education purged of the political act necessary in the actual study of the world.

#### The system of simulacra is derived from the lack of relevance of reality—the sign, its meaning, exceeds the value of what it was supposed to represent. Expansion is an unsustainable function of inequality because it simulates a level playing field that destroys the meaning of the playing field at all, exacerbating structural antagonisms towards marginalized groups—the education system has become nothing more than an agglomeration of signifiers proliferated beyond meaning, infused with attempted meaning to replace the lost significance

Williams 16 (James Williams, Professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics at Soka University, “Key Pedagogic Thinkers: Jean Baudrillard” [https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515)//meb](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515%29//meb) \*edited for ableist language

Rejecting the Marxist emphasis on production in The Consumer Society, Baudrillard examined the roles of consumerism and consumption in advanced capitalism, arguing that the sheer abundance of consumer goods has diminished their use-value and elevated their sign-value.[[1]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote01) On its face, the argument may seem counterintuitive. The abundance of consumer goods in modern society suggests greater use-value, not less: ostensibly, people buy goods for their utility. For Baudrillard, however, what diminishes use-value and heightens sign-value is the individual need for recognition that the abundance of goods cannot satisfy. The causal factor is not the actuality of abundance but rather the growing need for social differentiation as anonymity becomes the norm in an over-populated world. Baudrillard, like Thorstein Veblen before him, argued that the sign-value of goods is now a measure of one’s status in our increasingly undifferentiated society. Veblen’s Theory of the Leisure Class (1899/1994) was arguably the first major work to introduce the concept of conspicuous consumption in the developed world as a measure of social status, and Benedict’s Patterns of Culture (1934/2005) identified one of the more extreme forms, which existed among the Kwakiutl Indians of the Pacific Northwest. A tribe member who sought to gain increased social status burned all of his possessions to show how indifferent he was to ‘things.’ The ritual act illustrated a total victory of sign-value over ‘thing-value.’[[2]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote02) Baudrillard’s (1998) most vivid illustration of the modern triumph of sign-value is ‘the magnificent dress that the star wears for just one evening’ (p. 46). In The Consumer Society, Baudrillard (1998) called into question the institutionalized sign system of signification, what Stewart (1995) characterized as the Cartesian ‘two-world ontology’ in which there is a foundational distinction between the world of physical representations and what they represent (p. 178). For Descartes, the ‘two worlds’ were the world of things, resextensa,and the world of thought, res cogitans. The world of thought takes precedence because the world of things is subject to doubt whereas the existence of the world of thought is, like avowals, certain in the mind of the individual. Baudrillard followed in the Cartesian tradition in granting primacy to the thought value of the thing over the thing itself, but he shifted the perspective to the world of things and signs, where signs represent the perceived social value, or meaning, of things. He proposed that, in a consumer society, what something means, its sign, takes precedence over its physical existence. Baudrillard laid the foundation for his analysis of consumerism squarely on the welfare state and its rise in advanced capitalist societies. Consumerism, he argued in The Consumer Society, was made possible by the growth of entitlements and the emergence of the modern welfare state, proposing that its goal is to create a condition of ‘social equilibrium’ in which entitlements and consumerism are balanced, achieved through higher levels of public assistance and ‘by increasing the volume of goods’ (p. 50). Although political rhetoric maintains that entitlements, or public assistance, reduces poverty, economists have known at least since the 19th century that wealth redistribution through public assistance programs (e.g., England’s New Poor Law of 1834) increases, rather than reduces, the number of people living at the subsistence level (Clark, 2007; Ricardo, 1821). The taxation required to pay for entitlements is one factor. Another is that, historically, even small increases in household income have resulted in higher birth rates, thus expanding the population and lowering overall material prosperity and living standards. Baudrillard concluded, therefore, that the true political motivation for increasing public assistance is that it increases consumerism. With more money to spend, those at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum increase the demand for goods and services, enabling politicians and the media to tout that advanced capitalism is reducing, if not eliminating, inequalities, for even those at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale are able to own TVs and mobile phones like those in the middle and upper classes. Baudrillard recognized that the taxation required to provide public assistance unavoidably pushes members of the middle class, who carry the highest tax burden, downward into the poverty class (see Pew Research Center, 2012) and decreases their consumption ability. He nevertheless saw this as a necessary condition for creating what he called the illusion of ‘social equilibrium.’ Thus, entitlement programs and increased consumerism only simulate equality and democracy because ‘growth itself . . . is a function of inequality’ (p. 53). The link between growth and inequality is manifold, involving maximization of profit, income level, taxation, birth rates, and production. When profits increase, for example, the financially advantaged can pay a higher price for goods and services and hence the price of those goods and services rise, placing them further and further out of reach of the financially disadvantaged (Allinson, 2004). To maintain a high level of consumerism in such conditions, production must increase the amount of affordable, poorly made goods to maximize inventory turnover, which further increases profit and raises the price of goods and services. On this account, Baudrillard (1998) concluded that it is ‘the need of the inegalitarian social order—the social structure of privilege—to maintain itself that produces and reproduces growth as its strategic element’ (p. 53), with inequality being the result. The consumerism that characterizes advanced capitalism becomes relevant to education when we consider one of the frequently discussed topics in education circles today - commodification. Commodification involves more than the focus on treating education, especially higher education, as a business. It also involves increasing the size, if not the number, of schools as well as increasing the number of students having access to schools, given that capitalism is predicated on the growth of commodities and population. Influenced by politicians and the media, there is a tendency among the populace to ignore the unsustainability of perpetual growth and to view the commodification of education positively as democratization leading to more social equality, given that education has historically been a socioeconomic leveler. We also find in this view the tendency to classify students as consumers and education itself as the ‘good’ that is consumed. Baudrillard would consider these perceptions to be off the mark, not only because many factors mask the true nature of education and the status of students but also because, as he reminded us, ‘equality’ today is not based on equality of intellect, musical ability, or political power but on equal access to goods. Faced with the impossibility of bringing about actual equality, ‘a real equality of capacities, of irresponsibilities, of social chances and of happiness,’ we are left with ‘the democracy of social standing, the democracy of the TV, the car and the stereo’ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 50). We therefore begin our analysis with a position that many educators will find shocking, which is that Baudrillard’s work, especially Simulacra and Simulation, maintains that there is no education. Although this view may seem radical, his reasoning is clear. ‘Education’ has multiple meanings, but from the Baudrillardian perspective the term describes a system of practices that includes not only teaching and learning but also (and at a minimum) funding, research, public policy, and the media’s characterization of and influence on that system, as in yearly media reports of the ‘best universities.’[[3]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote03) When all of these factors are taken into account, the result is merely a simulation of education that masks the inequalities inherent in advanced capitalism. Understanding the nature of the simulation is difficult for stakeholders because they are participants – actors, if you will – in the mise-en-scène. Just as everyone in advanced capitalist societies is entitled to a TV, a mobile phone, etc., and just as the demand for equal access to commodities and the proliferation of goods have led to the loss of their use- value, so too has simulated education lost its use-value. Baudrillard recognized that sign-value increases in priority over use-value when the supply of goods becomes more available to a greater and greater percentage of the population and when anonymity becomes the social norm in an ever-expanding population. Thus, when essentially everyone can own a TV, the primary question is, What kind of TV does one own? When essentially everyone can own a car, the question is, What kind of car does one own? Baudrillard’s (1998, p. 50) concept of the ‘democracy of social standing’ entails that the value of an 80- inch Sony flat-screen TV is that it signifies higher social standing than the 50-inch Visio flat screen. The value of the BMW 750 is that it signifies a higher social standing than the Toyota Corolla. For Baudrillard, the ‘constraint of relativity’ (p. 61) inherent in sign-value has led to an opu-lux culture based on branding.[[4]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote04) Stated another way, Baudrillard saw consumerism in advanced capitalist societies as being driven to a significant degree by the search for social differentiation, if not social distinction, which is a fundamental requirement for happiness. He identified the United States as the apotheosis of consumerism, so we cannot be surprised that here every young person is expected to go to college or university as a social requirement for happiness. Education’s sign-value, therefore, is high, but it has only marginal use-value as well as a diminishing exchange-value. Consider that according to a Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy report (2013), only 35% of jobs in the US will require a bachelor’s degree by 2020. Also, a recent Pew Research Center study (Desliver, 2014), reported that 44% of recent college graduates in the US work at jobs that are unrelated to their area of study. Sign-value dominates. As in the case of the mobile phone, sign-value drives demand reflexively, increasing the level of consumerism, which in turn affects the sign-value. What was once a privilege limited to the wealthy (owning a mobile phone) became an entitlement, with the US government, for example, offering ‘Lifeline phone service,’ which provides free mobile phones to persons on public assistance. Education also was once largely limited to families of means, but today it has most of the characteristics of an entitlement - subsidized, like free mobile phones, through government funding. Perhaps the best-known funding efforts targeting higher education are the GI Bill of 1944; the Middle Income Student Assistant Act of 1978, Pell Grants, and President Obama’s call for tuition-free community college education, but these are just four among a plethora of assistance programs. Moreover, these higher-education funding programs pale when compared to the level of federal funding for public education, elementary through high school, which is the highest in the world but nevertheless produces, at best, middling outcomes, as various studies have reported (e.g., The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA). Just as sales of mobile phones surged on the basis of their entitlement status, college attendance has likewise surged. In 1960, 45.1% of high school graduates enrolled in college after receiving their diploma; by 1970, the number had increased to 51.7%; by 2013, it had increased to 65.9% (Digestof Educational Statistics, 2013a). Getting a college degree is a bit more complex than purchasing a mobile phone owing to higher cost and admission criteria, but these criteria increasingly are becoming vestiges of higher education’s former status as a privilege. Consider that Harvard’s basic admission requirements in the late 19th century involved testing applicants on their working knowledge of four languages, Latin, Greek, French, and German. The examination included knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman history and geography as well as the history and geography of modern England and America. Applicants also were tested on their familiarity with English classical literature and their ability to write clearly and intelligently about the books they had read. Finally, they had to demonstrate proficiency in elementary algebra and plane geometry, an acquaintance with the laws and phenomena of physics, or a knowledge of descriptive physics and elementary astronomy. Students who wanted admission to the university’s advanced programs were required to pass more rigorous exams (Greenough, 1892). The emphasis on privilege began to change in the 1920s, when President Charles W. Eliot and his successor, A. Lawrence Lowell, dropped the Latin and Greek requirements. Other schools followed suit. During that decade, the SAT exam was developed and eventually adopted by most colleges to assess applicants. But starting in the 1960s, various groups began challenging the SAT as being unfair and undemocratic because it served as a barrier to admissions growth as well as a barrier to the entitlement of a college education. In response, over the last several decades, the exam has been modified several times to make it easier, as in 1992, when the SAT was re-normed and students who took the exam received an extra 150 points. The small percentage of test-takers with a perfect score ended up with higher scores than the test actually allowed. When several decades of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that a majority of matriculating students were testing remedial in writing, a writing section was added to the SAT in 2006 with the aim, ostensibly, of motivating public schools to do a better job of teaching high school students how to write. Unfortunately, public schools seemed to ignore the message, and scores on the writing section of the SAT dropped every year, escalating claims that the test was unfair (Williams, 2014). Educational Testing Service (ETS) therefore decided that, starting in 2016, the writing section would be ‘optional’—and therefore of no value with respect to assessing students’ college preparedness or to motivating better instruction in public schools. Indeed, the entire history of SAT modifications shows that they failed to improve students’ scores, and today we find that many colleges and universities across the United States have dropped the test from the admission process. The rationale in each case has been characterized as an effort to further democratize higher education and increase enrollments, especially among historically underrepresented groups, thereby increasing social equality. Whether that goal as been achieved remains an open question, but there is no doubt that student populations have increased. But at what cost? The social goal in a consumer society is to find ways to compensate for inequality with regard to ‘capacities’ by creating a system in which, if failure is not an option, failure is difficult to achieve. In this context, we may want to reflect on Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe’s (1996) analyses of American textbooks, which found that the average literature text for 12th-grade English classes was simpler than ‘the average 7th or 8th grade reader published before World War II’ (p. 499). They also found that there were no differences in terms of difficulty between Advanced Placement English texts and those used in the lowest- level English classes. Nevertheless, a recent ACT report on retention and degree rates showed that, nationwide, the 4-year degree completion rate for colleges offering bachelor and master degrees was 21.6%. At schools that also offered doctoral degrees, it was 20.9%. The 6-year rate was, respectively, 43.3% and 45.3% (ACT, 2012). In this light, efforts to address educational disparities appear to have been unable to compensate for systemic inequalities. Baudrillard (1998) observed that the litany in advanced capitalism is ‘that all will be given to . . . [consumers] and that they have a legitimate, inalienable right to plenty’ (p. 32). With regard to education, we find that in the US, circa 1940, only 22% of males and 28% of females completed high school. That figure rose every decade thereafter. By 1991, not only had males caught up with females, but the overall high school completion rate jumped to a remarkable 80% (Snyder, 1993). By 2013, the number had increased to 90% (DigestofEducational Statistics, 2013b). Undergraduate enrollment also increased, from approximately 7.4 million in 1970 to more than 17.7 million in 2013 (US Department of Education, 2015). Declining SAT and ACT scores make it difficult to conclude from these data that students became smarter over the years. They appear to be the result of two factors: the growing perception of college as a requirement for social happiness, and efforts to game the system by ~~dumbing~~ down texts and curricula, diminishing the meaning of grades through grade inflation (see Williams, 2014). Indeed, if ‘growth itself . . . is a function of inequality’ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 53), the increases in undergraduate admissions have not served to increase equality, but just the opposite. Equal access to goods necessarily involves lowering the quality of those goods while simultaneously stimulating opu-lux branding. As more students enroll at university, two related results seem inevitable. First, the sign-value as well as the exchange-value of an undergraduate degree will continue to drop until they are ‘annihilated’ (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 7) for all but the schools whose branding has placed them in the top tier. Second, more students will fail and drop out—until the decline in academic standards reaches a level similar to what exists in many school districts where failure is no longer an option. Levine and Dean (2012) reported that decreasing academic standards and the corollary of grade inflation in higher education are, in no small part, due to the advent of official student evaluation systems, use of which in tenure and promotion decisions too readily leads faculty into pandering and self-censorship when it comes to assigning grades. Arum and Roksa (2011) noted in this regard that ‘college teachers ask themselves, ‘What grade will ensure no complaint from the student, or worse, a quasi-legal battle over whether the instructions for an assignment were clear enough?’ So the number of A-range grades keeps going up, and the motivation for students to excel keeps going down’ (p. 7 ). Here we begin to see one of the costs of commodification, grade inflation and less-educated students, both of which serve to maintain the simulacrum of education. Arguably, inflated grades do not reflect a true assessment of performance— they do not appear to have any real meaning. Indeed, grade-point averages (GPAs) may have reached the status of being purely sign-values that are misidentified as standing for real values. As Baudrillard noted, simulation begins with the implosion of meaning, until it ‘envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum’ (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6). These outcomes seem to contradict the basic principles of commodification. If we take education to be the commodity and students the consumers, neither outcome is viable, for high failure and dropout rates defeat democratization efforts, and they are incongruent with commercial enterprise. In addition, they fail to produce social equilibrium and appear to confirm Baudrillard’s assertion that the growth of consumerism resulting from democratization is a function of inequality. The apparent contradiction is resolved, however, if we consider that our notions about education have included a fundamental error: we mistakenly classify students as consumers and classify education as the commodity. A Baudrillardian perspective would identify students as the commodity, or goods, and education as a simulation of the real that does not produce anything other than the illusion of an education. On this account, the principle of social equilibrium, achieved ‘by increasing the volume of goods’ (p. 50) or inventory, can be understood not only as a response to the inequality among students but also as a means of increasing inventory turnover, which perpetuates the simulation and increases higher education’s bottom line. Commodification will continue. Sign-value will continue to dominate. Social inequality will expand. The inevitable decline will be more and more difficult to recognize owing to the increasing meaninglessness of sign differentiation through the multiplication of sign instantiation. How does one adjudicate the prestige value of brand signs - Oxford, Cal Tech, Stanford, Harvard - if an elevated consumerism increases branding efforts to a point where sign differentiation is no longer possible? From a Baudrillardian perspective, there is an inverse relationship between the growth of sign-value members and the prestige value of their signs. Baudrillard argued that our entire society has become a simulacrum and that the distinction between use- value and sign-value - vaporous for decades - has evaporated. We have for some time now seen evidence in America as everything from textbooks and journalism has undergone a near universal ~~dumbing~~ down. In higher education, academicians have been devalued to such a degree that on most college campuses 50% or more of the faculty have adjunct status. Populism rules, and we find that students rarely address faculty as ‘Doctor,’ for doing so would be incongruent with consumerism’s goal of social leveling. As a reflection of the broader simulated society, higher education administrators are agents in the leveling process but nevertheless exempt from it. Intent on maintaining a high level of consumerism, they facilitate high dropout rates and the production of poorly made goods to maximize inventory turnover. Worth noting is that when administrators allow grade inflation so as to manipulate dropout rates, they permit poorly made goods (poorly educated students) to be ‘produced’ willy-nilly. Ironically, the proliferation of magna and summacum laudes lessens the ‘brand name’ value of these degrees as they become more common. Their exchange-value diminishes, along with their use-value, and the true value of education retreats. The end result, in either case, is what Baudrillard described, education as a simulacrum.

#### The complete destruction of reality necessitates the system’s regime of total control, justifying endless violence and loss of value to life—the collapse of meaning prevents any real critique of the system

Robinson 12 (Andrew Robinson, political theorist and activist, “Jean Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Implosion” https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/)//meb

What are the social effects of all these changes? The main function of the changes is to actualise and preserve the system. Ultimately, the system seeks only to preserve itself. The ultimate end of politics, concealed by democratic discourse, is to maintain control of the population by any means necessary, including terror. The system is a kind of violence without consequences. It constantly dominates through deterrence, without this gesture being returned or reversed. It is sustained by fascination for the system’s operations. And its effects on the everyday? The social is now a special effect. The appearance of networks converging on an empty site of collective happiness produces the special effect. Consumption now functions like labour. It is a kind of work, which gives the system sign-value. We have lost the social, the real, and power. We don’t know how to mourn them. We become fascinated by the real as a lost object. Melancholy (depression) becomes the dominant tone of social life. It is a brutal disaffection arising from generalised simulation and the loss of intensity and meaning. The system seems too strong to be checked. People become fascinated at what is happening to signs and to reality. The lines between categories become vague and categories begin to disappear, or become poorly defined or all-encompassing. The lack of differentiation – the collapse of the segmenting categories – brings us back to a terrifying, undivided nature. Interstitial space – the space between things – disappears. We are overwhelmed by the over-proximity of all things, like in the Lacanian view of psychosis. It’s not so much that reality doesn’t exist, as that it is inaccessible from within a regime of simulation. Transparency has the effect of curtailing intensity. Social life falls into a stupor or inertia, ‘deterred’ by the code and by its own transparency. Today, illusion no longer counts. Survival depends on the real, the object. This has negative effects. Objectivity is the opposite of fatality, and is always subject to law. This is another way of saying that we are lacking the symbolic dimension. This lack resounds throughout various fields, putting an end to values. The autonomy of the system of signs puts an end to the regime of signs, of representation, and of production. Aesthetics are destroyed by the cold, systematic reproduction of functional objects, including objects signifying beauty. Signs become socially mobile, as in the phenomena of kitsch and cliché. All the humanist criteria of value – from morality to truth to aesthetics – disappear, because the code rests on indifference and neutralisation. Capitalism almost becomes a parody of itself. The situation of indistinction which reason and science have historically struggled against is now coming into existence, because of hyperreality – because a lot of what exists is neither objectively true nor subjectively imagined. Panic tends to arise because of the functioning of value separately from its referential contents. We are living through a collapse of meaning.

#### Pointing out the arbitrariness of signs and signifiers is key to disrupting the system—reinjecting it with external meaning allows it to sustain itself by faking the appearance of truth and objective reality—we’re psychologically programmed to believe that a collapse of the system through meaning would destroy our potential for life, but that’s exactly why only our method solves

Robinson 12 (Andrew Robinson, political theorist and activist, “Jean Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Implosion” https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/)//meb

Baudrillard’s account of a functionally-obsessed code does not conclude with a smoothly functioning totality. The system which results depends on the constant maintenance of a regime of control. Such a system is very unstable, open to collapsing at the slightest rupture. For instance, systems of power depend on a master-signifier, which is ultimately arbitrary and contingent. (There is no longer a master-signifier of the entire system, but agencies such as states and companies still have leaders for example). When it is obvious that it is arbitrary and contingent, power is unpinned from its apparent obviousness. It comes to seem purely arbitrary, and this interferes with its functioning. When power occupies the empty place of power, it comes to seem obscene, impure and ridiculous, and eventually collapses. Baudrillard refers to this instability as implosion. This means that he sees the system collapsing from within. The system is no longer expanding – hence the turn to deterrence instead of war. It is in ‘involution’ – collapsing in upon itself. For Baudrillard, the system has reached its culmination. It is accelerating towards its limit, which today is expressed as implosion (rather than explosion or revolution). The growing density of simulations is destroying it. Implosion is swallowing all the energy of the real. Implosion is similar to the idea of ‘internal contradictions’ in Marxism. It refers to a tendency to collapse arising from the system’s own dynamics. Implosion arises from the destruction of meaning and the reality-effect due to the precession of simulacra. The problem for the system is that signs need a separate reality in order to refer to something, and hence to function as signs. In the current regime of simulation, social realities are generated from signs and models which precede them. The model produces the “real”, the medium, and the message all at once. Reality separate from the regime is either destroyed, denied, or incorporated. As a result, the signs stop referring to anything. At the same time, therefore, a total system of meaning is created, and its meaningfulness is destroyed. All signs or referentials are combined in a vicious circle or Moebius strip. Truth, equivalences, rational distinctions break down. Without a clear outside or referent, the reality-effect breaks down. Without a focus of intensity, meaning breaks down. Meaning can no longer be pinned-down in particular places. It circulates at increased speed, without any referent or guarantee. For instance, economic growth is increasingly unstable. Economic bubbles form and burst, commodities (such as Internet companies or real-estate) are immensely valued and then collapse, emerging “tigers” from Korea to Ireland to Mexico suffer sharp collapses. Baudrillard sees the same thing happening with everything from fashion to art to politics. The problem is structural. Once the system reaches saturation, it starts to fall in on itself, like a black hole. Saturation leads to inertia. For Baudrillard, [global cities](https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-global-cities-1/) have already become black holes, eating up past social phenomena and meanings. They are entirely functional zones, arranged around sites such as hypermarkets (massive supermarkets), shopping centres and transport networks. The system is based on functionality. Yet in hypermarkets and modern universities, functions seem to become indeterminate – hence cities seem to disintegrate. This is because they have lost their distinct purposes or use-values. They become polyfunctional black-boxes with different input-output combinations. Usefulness is itself an ideology, which relies on the simulation of shortage or the creation of artificial scarcity. It is actually a moral convention, not a fact of nature. Today, supermarkets are also insurance companies, banks, pharmacists, government information dispensers, home-delivery services; today’s universities are also corporate research subcontractors, vocational trainers, immigration monitors, producers of brand-name merchandise, profiteers on debts, affiliates of regional development councils, housing providers, monitors of student dissent… This kind of hyper-functionalism renders them almost functionless – they can no longer be defined by a particular core function. They become a means without end. An operationalism without specific functions. All the different functions become simultaneous, without past, future or distinction. All mental, temporal, spatial and signalled coordinates become interchangeable in the simulated world. Hence, institutions cease to be related to specific functions, and cease to be believable as guarantors of meaning. This has social effects. Power has ceased to believe in the university. Degrees no longer have the value they once did. Like work, they persist on the basis of a dead referential, as a simulation. The real function of these functionless institutions is deterrence (see below). Their hyperreality, their simulation of functions, neutralises the surrounding territory. People won’t notice the absence of education when there’s a “world-class” university next-door. And if they do, they won’t feel they can compete with such a monolith. There are, of course, [exceptions](https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/%28http%3A//socialsciencecentre.org.uk/), but on the whole, such simulations shut down social life. For Baudrillard, the system is haunted by a constant sense of crisis. And this crisis is not simply a limit. It is ever-present. The system constantly presents its own crisis as spectacle. It juxtaposes its ideal (the advert) to its crisis (news, disaster movies, crime dramas, action films). But it is distributed in ‘homeopathic doses’ – in tiny amounts absorbed in other things. Hence, it doesn’t explode. It is constantly drip-fed to us instead. The world becomes non-representational through lack of signs. After meaning, we are left with manipulation, touch, circulation, ventilation. It becomes a world of panic. Explosions are foreseen and foreclosed. But implosion, the death of the cybernetic combinatory world, is a constant threat. Some social institutions collapse more quickly than others. Law is in crisis because it is a power of the second order. It is undermined by parody, which makes submission and transgression equivalent. Indeed, the social order prefers to opt for the real, taking simulations for reality. Power is disempowered by the slippage of significations and the lack of referentiality. It is turned into an empty simulation of power. It is at risk of collapse from being dissolved in the play of signs. At one point Baudrillard argues that power no longer produces anything but the signs of its resemblance, the appearance of power. (Real power, perhaps, requires a symbolic aspect). This crisis of law is the condition for a particular transition. Law is replaced by the norm. Rather than explosions which escape the law, the present period deals with deviance as anomalies which deviate from the average. People are now anonymous, subject to an anonymous terror. People can be exterminated, not to achieve their death, but because they are statistically indifferent. Power tries to defend itself against the collapse of meaning by reinjecting the real and the referential everywhere. It tries to convince people that the social world is still objectively real. It prefers to refer to crisis, or even to desire, than to admit its own collapse. Historically, it combated threats from the real by recuperating them in equivalent signs. Now, it combats the threat from simulation by playing at crisis. It embraces theories of ideology, and even radical critiques, as ways to maintain the appearance of truth. The responsible subject is in a similar situation of crisis. The system rests on responsibility. But in a system based on bureaucratic programming, irresponsible actors are required – figures like Eichmann who simply obey orders or perform functions. The system is left constantly trying to exhort people to be responsible subjects while producing them as simple conductors of social power. Subjects are put into drift, into something like a constant unconscious state. Without fixed relations, everything turns into flows of transference. The replacement of meaning with functions makes people expect everything to work all the time. A few seconds’ delay in a webpage loading becomes an inexplicable source of immense frustration. Causes have disappeared, but effects have become immense – as when a local disaster causes a global shutdown. And with the responsible subject no longer there (because it is an effect of the old subject-object split), people try desperately to impute responsibility. The excessive reservoir of ‘floating responsibility’ through finding scapegoats or guilty parties is just waiting to be invested in any particular incident. The Katrina or Christchurch disasters get projected onto looters; Chilean forest fires are [targeted as ‘terrorism’](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-16452691); social insecurity is projected onto Muslims, immigrants, minorities. Social problems of increasing triviality are subjected to immense crackdowns and moral panics. In a wave of disproportion, mitigation and even innocence are cast aside in the search for someone to blame. Meanwhile, people are repeatedly subject to tirades to ‘take responsibility’ for problems (from unemployment to alcoholism to post-traumatic stress) which the experts know very well are not really self-caused. We are subject to a blackmail by identity, condemned for what we are labelled as in the code, not for what we are. For Baudrillard, this is a consequence of the disappearance of causes and the power of effects. It reflects something deeper: the world is held collectively responsible for the system. If the system is infringed, the world will have to be destroyed. Or rather, we are ‘psychologically programmed to destroy ourselves’ if the system collapses. We could think of this as the code blackmailing reality. Though the code is tautological and does not depend on reality, it holds reality responsible for itself, and punishes reality if it collapses or crashes. This generalisation of responsibility can be traced back to the loss of symbolic exchange. Generalised, unlimited responsibility occurs because nothing is exchanged anymore, the terms of exchange are simply exchanged among themselves. The system produces nothing but vertigo and fascination. Generalised responsibility becomes the same as generalised irresponsibility and the collapse of social relations. Values such as responsibility, justice and violence continue to circulate only as simulations imposed by the state. This in turn is fatal for the ‘scene’ of politics. On a similar note, there is an ideology of exhuming, documenting, rediscovering the real – from reality TV to the preservation of historical artefacts and indigenous groups – which according to Baudrillard, simply reinforces the process of killing and then simulating. What is preserved is never what it would have been without intervention. We constantly recreate and relive bits of the past and present which are now simulated. The real has become our utopia, that we dream of as if of a lost object. An entire culture now labours at counterfeiting itself. This only exacerbates the problems. Inertia gets worse and worse as simulations of past forms, frozen in time, proliferate and overgrow their uses. Production and meaning are replaced by simulation and fascination. The content – information, culture, commodities – is now simply the support for the operation of the code, the medium. The function of the code is simply to reproduce the masses. Information devours its own contents by turning the real into the hyperreal.

## v2

#### Welcome to AP Intro to STEM. We will start off with learning to construct a small thermal exhaust port—but students, please be aware that it is susceptible to direct hits from proton torpedoes despite being ray-shielded; it may set off a chain reaction.

#### First, decompress the antimatter storage tanks.

#### You then need to realign the aft gamma ray impulse housing.

#### You see, this is why the United States Federal Government should fully fund grants for after-school development of a cybernetic gallium-arsenide Iron Man suit.

#### Science is the ultimate game of simulation and simulacra. The image of the scientist, the very act of prescriptive and objective analysis of a controllable world destroys the reality it was meant to explain—it is the destruction of alterity itself

Blades 1 (David W. Blades, Professor of Science Education and Curriculum Studies at University of Victoria, “The Simulacra of Science Education” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42976388.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1cea938b0da0ae7403f6d54d16223470)//meb> \*edited for ableist language

8Questions concerning the principles of what counts as reality lie at the heart of the life work of French sociologist1 Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard states that his oeuvre focuses on "the mass effect, the mass forms that I analyze, and which, somewhere, no longer produce any difference" (1993/1983, p.45). Initially a Marxist, Baudrillard turned around Marx's notion of production as a cause of modern alienation by suggesting that the cause of the modern alienating social order today is not production but consumption. The events of 19682 led to significant changes in the thinking of many French intellectuals; during this time Baudrillard' s research moved from an examination of the structural relationships between the consumer and what is consumed to the argu- ment that the consumer was "an effect of the way that consumer goods circulate as meanings" (Baudrillard, quoted in Horrocks & Jevtic, 1996, p.21, italics in text). For example, while a pair of blue jeans may not vary a great deal from brand to brand, jeans presenting a label such as Tommy Hilfiger may be consumed over other brands. What captured Baudrillard' s attention was how a signifier such as a label signified not only a product but also a particular meaning about the product that affected consumption. To make sense of these meanings, Baudrillard focused on the signs under which consumerism circulates. Drawing inspiration from psychoanalysis and anthropology, Baudrillard discov- ered that the meaning of signs exists in their 'symbolic exchange' and that what is given in a sign does not necessarily have to correspond to any physical reality. This insight moved Baudrillard into some of his most original and disturbing work. By the early seventies Baudrillard realized that the use of some signs is a type of sign as well. To illustrate his point, imagine a scientist. Why is this so easy to do? Of course, there is no generic scientist, yet when asked to imagine scientists many children and adults immediately picture someone, usually a male, in a white lab coat, even though lab coats are not commonplace in the daily professional practice of many branches of science.3 The lab coat is a signifier of science, but its use is also a sign as well. Advertisers use this signifier in generating claims about their product. This toothpaste has been, they claim, "clinically tested" and is therefore the best. How do we know? The camera in the advertisement turns to scientists producing report after report - presumably their objective studies of the product - vesting their claims with authority. How do we know the people holding the reports are scientists? They are wearing lab coats! In this way, the sign circulates as a sign itself (of authority and definite knowledge), further abstracting the signifier from the signified, which are typically very messy experiments that, to protect one's clothing if not health, require a first defense in the form of a lab coat. Baudrillard' s argument that the use of a sign can further abstract signifiers reinforces Derrida's position that signs are caught in an endless circulation of meanings and use. Baudrillard agrees with Derrida that the loss of correspondence of signifiers to reality means "the world is a game" (1993/1983, p.46) but he further comments that such a game is pathological because the real, in the sense of authentic, becomes increasingly distant in the circulation of signs to the point of no longer being present. This extreme position could not be more opposite to the structuralist position that reality is readily available and understood through signifiers that have direct correspondence to reality (Cherryholmes, 1988; Hochberg, 1968). From a structuralist position, the analysis of relation- ships between signifiers leads to meaning about reality which can be shared and holds a semblance of objectivity (Cherryholmes, 1988). For example, structuralism maintains the English word "wolf' only makes sense in relation in a particular system of words where "wolf' is a sign signifying a particular set of sensations (the signified), and not, for example, those sensations that lead us to use the word "rock." That fact that it is possible to translate the signified into another system of signifiers, such as "lobo" in Portuguese, yet still refer to the same set of sensory inputs, supports the structuralist belief in the essential similarity of human experience and logic of understanding; in Shakespearean terms, "that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."4 At the Zoo Baudrillard's arguments could be considered "poststructural" in his claim that, due to the growth of representation in the media and technological innovation, we no longer live in a world where signs are obligated to correspond to reality (Baudrillard, 1983). He points out that the use of signs becomes a sign itself as signifiers multiply to where the sign "no longer resembles in the slightest the obliged sign of limited diffusion" (p.85). What is produced, he claims, is pure simulacra, a social game played with increasing signification more and more distant from reality. Not only are these games played with signs, suggests Baudrillard, they also "imply social rapports and social power" (p.88) arising from technology through the "presumption of an ideal counterfeit of the world" In his work, The Order of Things (1973/1966), Foucault uses the historical development of the zoo to illustrate how this counterfeiting operates to frame perception: It is often said that the establishment of botanical gardens and zoological collections expressed a new curiosity about exotic plants and animals. In fact, these had already claimed men's [sic] interest for a long while. What had changed was the space in which it was possible to see them and from which it was possible to describe them. (p. 1 3 1 ) With the advent of zoos, argues Foucault, animals and plants became specimens for public display, carefully indicated with the "correct" terminology for each signified object (. . .on the left, children, lying in the shade is Canis lupis, a wolf. . .). He suggests that a trip to the zoo is not just a taking in of the sights and sounds but participation in a predetermined discourse on ways of seeing, hearing, smelling, and in some cases even touching a constructed reality leading to certain modes of thought about life as we gaze at the "wild" animals or "exotic" plants carefully catalogued and maintained by science. Foucault takes this a step further, however, by pointing out that not only do we receive this privileged scientific discourse, we participate and extend the discourse in our expectations of what we will see at the zoo. Historically, notes Foucault, this expectation moved from a folk naturalism to the sensational as more and more forms of life were "discovered" by Europeans traveling to distant lands. The result was the creation of zoos as a kind of theater: Visitors at the zoo expect to be informed by what they experience, but this information is anticipated as entertainment. Baudrillard's arguments support Foucault's analysis, but considera- bly push the point that existing signs are counterfeits no longer obligated to reality. Zoos are often justified as a place of scientific research, a public assurance that the world is being cared for; pandas may be nearly extinct but their survival is guaranteed thanks to breeding programs at zoos. We can relax and enjoy watching pandas playing with a rubber ball. But divorced from its ecology, is a panda really a panda? Cut off from their family groupings and hunting expeditions, is what is presented as a wolf in a zoo really a wolf? Baudrillard' s arguments suggest that there is nothing "wild" or "exotic" at the zoo, there is nothing present at all; the entire space is a simulacra, a constructed and managed collection of signs bearing no correspondence to reality since even the signifiers "wild" and "exotic" are themselves signs. In perhaps his most significant work, Simulacra and Simulation (1994/1981), Baudrillard provides an example of how modern science, far from representing and investigating reality, produces signs that contribute to the distancing of human experience from reality. Consider, he advances, the case of the discovery of the mummified corpse of Ramses II. Why, ponders Baudrillard, was this mummy considered "priceless"? He suggests that Ramses does not signify anything for us, only the mummy is of an inestimable worth because it is what guarantees that accumulation has meaning. Our entire linear and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view. To this end the pharaohs must be brought out of their tomb and the mummies out of their silence. And so, he continues, scientists repair a mummy that was never intended to be repaired; the testimony and role of the mummy - the reality the mummy signified - is lost as the mummy becomes objectified through science and so invaded by procedures that repair the mummy which are working against the practice of the original embalmers and thus the entire spiritual significance of mummification. In our modern world, we hate to lose the mummy to the natural world; we consume the mummy instead, turning Ramses' corpse into a spectacle. No longer a signifier of a belief system, Ramses becomes a simulacrum, an "irreparable violence towards all secrets" (p. 11) where everything is collected, examined, dissected, and then "preserved" and re-presented through the activity of science. As Baudrillard points out, mummies don't rot from worms: they die from being transplanted from a slow order of the symbolic, master over putrefaction and death, to an order of history, science, and museums, our order, which no longer masters anything, which only knows how to condemn what preceded it to decay and death and subsequently to try to revive it with science.

#### The system of simulacra is derived from the lack of relevance of reality—the sign, its meaning, exceeds the value of what it was supposed to represent. Expansion is an unsustainable function of inequality because it simulates a level playing field that destroys the meaning of the playing field at all, exacerbating structural antagonisms towards marginalized groups—the education system has become nothing more than an agglomeration of signifiers proliferated beyond meaning, infused with attempted meaning to replace the lost significance

Williams 16 (James Williams, Professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics at Soka University, “Key Pedagogic Thinkers: Jean Baudrillard” [https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515)//meb](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515%29//meb) \*edited for ableist language

Rejecting the Marxist emphasis on production in The Consumer Society, Baudrillard examined the roles of consumerism and consumption in advanced capitalism, arguing that the sheer abundance of consumer goods has diminished their use-value and elevated their sign-value.[[1]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote01) On its face, the argument may seem counterintuitive. The abundance of consumer goods in modern society suggests greater use-value, not less: ostensibly, people buy goods for their utility. For Baudrillard, however, what diminishes use-value and heightens sign-value is the individual need for recognition that the abundance of goods cannot satisfy. The causal factor is not the actuality of abundance but rather the growing need for social differentiation as anonymity becomes the norm in an over-populated world. Baudrillard, like Thorstein Veblen before him, argued that the sign-value of goods is now a measure of one’s status in our increasingly undifferentiated society. Veblen’s Theory of the Leisure Class (1899/1994) was arguably the first major work to introduce the concept of conspicuous consumption in the developed world as a measure of social status, and Benedict’s Patterns of Culture (1934/2005) identified one of the more extreme forms, which existed among the Kwakiutl Indians of the Pacific Northwest. A tribe member who sought to gain increased social status burned all of his possessions to show how indifferent he was to ‘things.’ The ritual act illustrated a total victory of sign-value over ‘thing-value.’[[2]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote02) Baudrillard’s (1998) most vivid illustration of the modern triumph of sign-value is ‘the magnificent dress that the star wears for just one evening’ (p. 46). In The Consumer Society, Baudrillard (1998) called into question the institutionalized sign system of signification, what Stewart (1995) characterized as the Cartesian ‘two-world ontology’ in which there is a foundational distinction between the world of physical representations and what they represent (p. 178). For Descartes, the ‘two worlds’ were the world of things, resextensa,and the world of thought, res cogitans. The world of thought takes precedence because the world of things is subject to doubt whereas the existence of the world of thought is, like avowals, certain in the mind of the individual. Baudrillard followed in the Cartesian tradition in granting primacy to the thought value of the thing over the thing itself, but he shifted the perspective to the world of things and signs, where signs represent the perceived social value, or meaning, of things. He proposed that, in a consumer society, what something means, its sign, takes precedence over its physical existence. Baudrillard laid the foundation for his analysis of consumerism squarely on the welfare state and its rise in advanced capitalist societies. Consumerism, he argued in The Consumer Society, was made possible by the growth of entitlements and the emergence of the modern welfare state, proposing that its goal is to create a condition of ‘social equilibrium’ in which entitlements and consumerism are balanced, achieved through higher levels of public assistance and ‘by increasing the volume of goods’ (p. 50). Although political rhetoric maintains that entitlements, or public assistance, reduces poverty, economists have known at least since the 19th century that wealth redistribution through public assistance programs (e.g., England’s New Poor Law of 1834) increases, rather than reduces, the number of people living at the subsistence level (Clark, 2007; Ricardo, 1821). The taxation required to pay for entitlements is one factor. Another is that, historically, even small increases in household income have resulted in higher birth rates, thus expanding the population and lowering overall material prosperity and living standards. Baudrillard concluded, therefore, that the true political motivation for increasing public assistance is that it increases consumerism. With more money to spend, those at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum increase the demand for goods and services, enabling politicians and the media to tout that advanced capitalism is reducing, if not eliminating, inequalities, for even those at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale are able to own TVs and mobile phones like those in the middle and upper classes. Baudrillard recognized that the taxation required to provide public assistance unavoidably pushes members of the middle class, who carry the highest tax burden, downward into the poverty class (see Pew Research Center, 2012) and decreases their consumption ability. He nevertheless saw this as a necessary condition for creating what he called the illusion of ‘social equilibrium.’ Thus, entitlement programs and increased consumerism only simulate equality and democracy because ‘growth itself . . . is a function of inequality’ (p. 53). The link between growth and inequality is manifold, involving maximization of profit, income level, taxation, birth rates, and production. When profits increase, for example, the financially advantaged can pay a higher price for goods and services and hence the price of those goods and services rise, placing them further and further out of reach of the financially disadvantaged (Allinson, 2004). To maintain a high level of consumerism in such conditions, production must increase the amount of affordable, poorly made goods to maximize inventory turnover, which further increases profit and raises the price of goods and services. On this account, Baudrillard (1998) concluded that it is ‘the need of the inegalitarian social order—the social structure of privilege—to maintain itself that produces and reproduces growth as its strategic element’ (p. 53), with inequality being the result. The consumerism that characterizes advanced capitalism becomes relevant to education when we consider one of the frequently discussed topics in education circles today - commodification. Commodification involves more than the focus on treating education, especially higher education, as a business. It also involves increasing the size, if not the number, of schools as well as increasing the number of students having access to schools, given that capitalism is predicated on the growth of commodities and population. Influenced by politicians and the media, there is a tendency among the populace to ignore the unsustainability of perpetual growth and to view the commodification of education positively as democratization leading to more social equality, given that education has historically been a socioeconomic leveler. We also find in this view the tendency to classify students as consumers and education itself as the ‘good’ that is consumed. Baudrillard would consider these perceptions to be off the mark, not only because many factors mask the true nature of education and the status of students but also because, as he reminded us, ‘equality’ today is not based on equality of intellect, musical ability, or political power but on equal access to goods. Faced with the impossibility of bringing about actual equality, ‘a real equality of capacities, of irresponsibilities, of social chances and of happiness,’ we are left with ‘the democracy of social standing, the democracy of the TV, the car and the stereo’ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 50). We therefore begin our analysis with a position that many educators will find shocking, which is that Baudrillard’s work, especially Simulacra and Simulation, maintains that there is no education. Although this view may seem radical, his reasoning is clear. ‘Education’ has multiple meanings, but from the Baudrillardian perspective the term describes a system of practices that includes not only teaching and learning but also (and at a minimum) funding, research, public policy, and the media’s characterization of and influence on that system, as in yearly media reports of the ‘best universities.’[[3]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote03) When all of these factors are taken into account, the result is merely a simulation of education that masks the inequalities inherent in advanced capitalism. Understanding the nature of the simulation is difficult for stakeholders because they are participants – actors, if you will – in the mise-en-scène. Just as everyone in advanced capitalist societies is entitled to a TV, a mobile phone, etc., and just as the demand for equal access to commodities and the proliferation of goods have led to the loss of their use- value, so too has simulated education lost its use-value. Baudrillard recognized that sign-value increases in priority over use-value when the supply of goods becomes more available to a greater and greater percentage of the population and when anonymity becomes the social norm in an ever-expanding population. Thus, when essentially everyone can own a TV, the primary question is, What kind of TV does one own? When essentially everyone can own a car, the question is, What kind of car does one own? Baudrillard’s (1998, p. 50) concept of the ‘democracy of social standing’ entails that the value of an 80- inch Sony flat-screen TV is that it signifies higher social standing than the 50-inch Visio flat screen. The value of the BMW 750 is that it signifies a higher social standing than the Toyota Corolla. For Baudrillard, the ‘constraint of relativity’ (p. 61) inherent in sign-value has led to an opu-lux culture based on branding.[[4]](https://journals.beds.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/jpd/article/view/334/515#footnote04) Stated another way, Baudrillard saw consumerism in advanced capitalist societies as being driven to a significant degree by the search for social differentiation, if not social distinction, which is a fundamental requirement for happiness. He identified the United States as the apotheosis of consumerism, so we cannot be surprised that here every young person is expected to go to college or university as a social requirement for happiness. Education’s sign-value, therefore, is high, but it has only marginal use-value as well as a diminishing exchange-value. Consider that according to a Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy report (2013), only 35% of jobs in the US will require a bachelor’s degree by 2020. Also, a recent Pew Research Center study (Desliver, 2014), reported that 44% of recent college graduates in the US work at jobs that are unrelated to their area of study. Sign-value dominates. As in the case of the mobile phone, sign-value drives demand reflexively, increasing the level of consumerism, which in turn affects the sign-value. What was once a privilege limited to the wealthy (owning a mobile phone) became an entitlement, with the US government, for example, offering ‘Lifeline phone service,’ which provides free mobile phones to persons on public assistance. Education also was once largely limited to families of means, but today it has most of the characteristics of an entitlement - subsidized, like free mobile phones, through government funding. Perhaps the best-known funding efforts targeting higher education are the GI Bill of 1944; the Middle Income Student Assistant Act of 1978, Pell Grants, and President Obama’s call for tuition-free community college education, but these are just four among a plethora of assistance programs. Moreover, these higher-education funding programs pale when compared to the level of federal funding for public education, elementary through high school, which is the highest in the world but nevertheless produces, at best, middling outcomes, as various studies have reported (e.g., The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA). Just as sales of mobile phones surged on the basis of their entitlement status, college attendance has likewise surged. In 1960, 45.1% of high school graduates enrolled in college after receiving their diploma; by 1970, the number had increased to 51.7%; by 2013, it had increased to 65.9% (Digestof Educational Statistics, 2013a). Getting a college degree is a bit more complex than purchasing a mobile phone owing to higher cost and admission criteria, but these criteria increasingly are becoming vestiges of higher education’s former status as a privilege. Consider that Harvard’s basic admission requirements in the late 19th century involved testing applicants on their working knowledge of four languages, Latin, Greek, French, and German. The examination included knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman history and geography as well as the history and geography of modern England and America. Applicants also were tested on their familiarity with English classical literature and their ability to write clearly and intelligently about the books they had read. Finally, they had to demonstrate proficiency in elementary algebra and plane geometry, an acquaintance with the laws and phenomena of physics, or a knowledge of descriptive physics and elementary astronomy. Students who wanted admission to the university’s advanced programs were required to pass more rigorous exams (Greenough, 1892). The emphasis on privilege began to change in the 1920s, when President Charles W. Eliot and his successor, A. Lawrence Lowell, dropped the Latin and Greek requirements. Other schools followed suit. During that decade, the SAT exam was developed and eventually adopted by most colleges to assess applicants. But starting in the 1960s, various groups began challenging the SAT as being unfair and undemocratic because it served as a barrier to admissions growth as well as a barrier to the entitlement of a college education. In response, over the last several decades, the exam has been modified several times to make it easier, as in 1992, when the SAT was re-normed and students who took the exam received an extra 150 points. The small percentage of test-takers with a perfect score ended up with higher scores than the test actually allowed. When several decades of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that a majority of matriculating students were testing remedial in writing, a writing section was added to the SAT in 2006 with the aim, ostensibly, of motivating public schools to do a better job of teaching high school students how to write. Unfortunately, public schools seemed to ignore the message, and scores on the writing section of the SAT dropped every year, escalating claims that the test was unfair (Williams, 2014). Educational Testing Service (ETS) therefore decided that, starting in 2016, the writing section would be ‘optional’—and therefore of no value with respect to assessing students’ college preparedness or to motivating better instruction in public schools. Indeed, the entire history of SAT modifications shows that they failed to improve students’ scores, and today we find that many colleges and universities across the United States have dropped the test from the admission process. The rationale in each case has been characterized as an effort to further democratize higher education and increase enrollments, especially among historically underrepresented groups, thereby increasing social equality. Whether that goal as been achieved remains an open question, but there is no doubt that student populations have increased. But at what cost? The social goal in a consumer society is to find ways to compensate for inequality with regard to ‘capacities’ by creating a system in which, if failure is not an option, failure is difficult to achieve. In this context, we may want to reflect on Hayes, Wolfer, and Wolfe’s (1996) analyses of American textbooks, which found that the average literature text for 12th-grade English classes was simpler than ‘the average 7th or 8th grade reader published before World War II’ (p. 499). They also found that there were no differences in terms of difficulty between Advanced Placement English texts and those used in the lowest- level English classes. Nevertheless, a recent ACT report on retention and degree rates showed that, nationwide, the 4-year degree completion rate for colleges offering bachelor and master degrees was 21.6%. At schools that also offered doctoral degrees, it was 20.9%. The 6-year rate was, respectively, 43.3% and 45.3% (ACT, 2012). In this light, efforts to address educational disparities appear to have been unable to compensate for systemic inequalities. Baudrillard (1998) observed that the litany in advanced capitalism is ‘that all will be given to . . . [consumers] and that they have a legitimate, inalienable right to plenty’ (p. 32). With regard to education, we find that in the US, circa 1940, only 22% of males and 28% of females completed high school. That figure rose every decade thereafter. By 1991, not only had males caught up with females, but the overall high school completion rate jumped to a remarkable 80% (Snyder, 1993). By 2013, the number had increased to 90% (DigestofEducational Statistics, 2013b). Undergraduate enrollment also increased, from approximately 7.4 million in 1970 to more than 17.7 million in 2013 (US Department of Education, 2015). Declining SAT and ACT scores make it difficult to conclude from these data that students became smarter over the years. They appear to be the result of two factors: the growing perception of college as a requirement for social happiness, and efforts to game the system by ~~dumbing~~ down texts and curricula, diminishing the meaning of grades through grade inflation (see Williams, 2014). Indeed, if ‘growth itself . . . is a function of inequality’ (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 53), the increases in undergraduate admissions have not served to increase equality, but just the opposite. Equal access to goods necessarily involves lowering the quality of those goods while simultaneously stimulating opu-lux branding. As more students enroll at university, two related results seem inevitable. First, the sign-value as well as the exchange-value of an undergraduate degree will continue to drop until they are ‘annihilated’ (Baudrillard, 1993, p. 7) for all but the schools whose branding has placed them in the top tier. Second, more students will fail and drop out—until the decline in academic standards reaches a level similar to what exists in many school districts where failure is no longer an option. Levine and Dean (2012) reported that decreasing academic standards and the corollary of grade inflation in higher education are, in no small part, due to the advent of official student evaluation systems, use of which in tenure and promotion decisions too readily leads faculty into pandering and self-censorship when it comes to assigning grades. Arum and Roksa (2011) noted in this regard that ‘college teachers ask themselves, ‘What grade will ensure no complaint from the student, or worse, a quasi-legal battle over whether the instructions for an assignment were clear enough?’ So the number of A-range grades keeps going up, and the motivation for students to excel keeps going down’ (p. 7 ). Here we begin to see one of the costs of commodification, grade inflation and less-educated students, both of which serve to maintain the simulacrum of education. Arguably, inflated grades do not reflect a true assessment of performance— they do not appear to have any real meaning. Indeed, grade-point averages (GPAs) may have reached the status of being purely sign-values that are misidentified as standing for real values. As Baudrillard noted, simulation begins with the implosion of meaning, until it ‘envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum’ (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6). These outcomes seem to contradict the basic principles of commodification. If we take education to be the commodity and students the consumers, neither outcome is viable, for high failure and dropout rates defeat democratization efforts, and they are incongruent with commercial enterprise. In addition, they fail to produce social equilibrium and appear to confirm Baudrillard’s assertion that the growth of consumerism resulting from democratization is a function of inequality. The apparent contradiction is resolved, however, if we consider that our notions about education have included a fundamental error: we mistakenly classify students as consumers and classify education as the commodity. A Baudrillardian perspective would identify students as the commodity, or goods, and education as a simulation of the real that does not produce anything other than the illusion of an education. On this account, the principle of social equilibrium, achieved ‘by increasing the volume of goods’ (p. 50) or inventory, can be understood not only as a response to the inequality among students but also as a means of increasing inventory turnover, which perpetuates the simulation and increases higher education’s bottom line. Commodification will continue. Sign-value will continue to dominate. Social inequality will expand. The inevitable decline will be more and more difficult to recognize owing to the increasing meaninglessness of sign differentiation through the multiplication of sign instantiation. How does one adjudicate the prestige value of brand signs - Oxford, Cal Tech, Stanford, Harvard - if an elevated consumerism increases branding efforts to a point where sign differentiation is no longer possible? From a Baudrillardian perspective, there is an inverse relationship between the growth of sign-value members and the prestige value of their signs. Baudrillard argued that our entire society has become a simulacrum and that the distinction between use- value and sign-value - vaporous for decades - has evaporated. We have for some time now seen evidence in America as everything from textbooks and journalism has undergone a near universal ~~dumbing~~ down. In higher education, academicians have been devalued to such a degree that on most college campuses 50% or more of the faculty have adjunct status. Populism rules, and we find that students rarely address faculty as ‘Doctor,’ for doing so would be incongruent with consumerism’s goal of social leveling. As a reflection of the broader simulated society, higher education administrators are agents in the leveling process but nevertheless exempt from it. Intent on maintaining a high level of consumerism, they facilitate high dropout rates and the production of poorly made goods to maximize inventory turnover. Worth noting is that when administrators allow grade inflation so as to manipulate dropout rates, they permit poorly made goods (poorly educated students) to be ‘produced’ willy-nilly. Ironically, the proliferation of magna and summacum laudes lessens the ‘brand name’ value of these degrees as they become more common. Their exchange-value diminishes, along with their use-value, and the true value of education retreats. The end result, in either case, is what Baudrillard described, education as a simulacrum.

#### All external critique feeds the system because it operates on the plane of the nonexistent real—only by fighting it through the simulation it has created will it implode. We endlessly proliferate meaning to collapse the system from within and prevent its regeneration

Baudrillard 93 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5o2oXdmBrRYbHR5VGlWM242LVE/view)//meb

We will not destroy the system by a direct, dialectical revolution of the economic or political infrastructure. Everything produced by contradiction, by the relation of forces, or by energy in general, will only feed back into the mechanism and give it impetus, following a circular distortion similar to a Moebius strip. We will never defeat it by following its own logic of energy, calculation, reason and revolution, history and power, or some finality or counter-finality. The worst violence at this level has no purchase, and will only backfire against itself. We will never defeat the system on the plane of the real: the worst error of all our revolutionary strategies is to believe that we will put an end to the system on the plane of the real: this is their imaginary, imposed on them by the system itself, living or surviving only by always leading those who attack the system to fight amongst each other on the terrain of reality, which is always the reality of the system. This is where they throw all their energies, their imaginary violence, where an implacable logic constantly turns back into the system. We have only to do it violence or counter-violence since it thrives on symbolic violence not in the degraded sense in which this formula has found fortune, as a violence 'of signs', from which the system draws strength, or with which it 'masks' its material violence: symbolic violence is deduced from a logic of the symbolic (which has nothing to do with the sign or with energy): reversal, the incessant reversibility of the counter-gift and, conversely, the seizing of power by the unilateral exercise of the gift. 25 We must therefore displace everything into the sphere of the symbolic, where challenge, reversal and overbidding are the law, so that we can respond to death only by an equal or superior death. There is no question here of real violence or force, the only question concerns the challenge and the logic of the symbolic. If domination comes from the system's retention of the exclusivity of the gift without counter-gift the gift of work which can only be responded to by destruction or sacrifice, if not in consumption, which is only a spiral of the system of surplus-gratification without result, therefore a spiral of surplus-domination; a gift of media and messages to which, due to the monopoly of the code, nothing is allowed to retort; the gift, everywhere and at every instant, of the social, of the protection agency, security, gratification and the solicitation of the social from which nothing is any longer permitted to escape then the only solution is to turn the principle of its power back against the system itself: the impossibility of responding or retorting. To defy the system with a gift to which it cannot respond save by its own collapse and death. Nothing, not even the system, can avoid the symbolic obligation, and it is in this trap that the only chance of a catastrophe for capital remains. The system turns on itself, as a scorpion does when encircled by the challenge of death. For it is summoned to answer, if it is not to lose face, to what can only be death. The system must itself commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide. So hostages are taken. On the symbolic or sacrificial plane, from which every moral consideration of the innocence of the victims is ruled out, the hostage is the substitute, the alter-ego of the 'terrorist' the hostage's death for the terrorist's. Hostage and terrorist may thereafter become confused in the same sacrificial act. The stakes are death without any possibility of negotiation, and therefore return to an inevitable overbidding. Of course, they attempt to deploy the whole system of negotiation, and the terrorists themselves often enter into this exchange scenario in terms of this calculated equivalence (the hostages' lives against some ransom or liberation, or indeed for the prestige of the operation alone). From this perspective, taking hostages is not original at all, it simply creates an unforeseen and selective relation of forces which can be resolved either by traditional violence or by negotiation. It is a tactical action. There is something else at stake, however, as we dearly saw at The Hague over the course of ten days of incredible negotiations: no-one knew what could be negotiated, nor could they agree on terms, nor on the possible equivalences of the exchange. Or again, even if they were formulated, the 'terrorists' demands' amounted to a radical denial of negotiation. It is precisely here that everything is played out, for with the impossibility of all negotiation we pass into the symbolic order, which is ignorant of this type of calculation and exchange (the system itself lives solely by negotiation, even if this takes place in the equilibrium of violence). The system can only respond to this irruption of the symbolic (the most serious thing to befall it, basically the only 'revolution') by the real, physical death of the terrorists. This, however, is its defeat, since their death was their stake, so that by bringing about their deaths the system has merely impaled itself on its own violence without really responding to the challenge that was thrown to it. Because the system can easily compute every death, even war atrocities, but cannot compute the death-challenge or symbolic death, since this death has no calculable equivalent, it opens up an inexpiable overbidding by other means than a death in exchange. Nothing corresponds to death except death. Which is precisely what happens in this case: the system itself is driven to suicide in return, which suicide is manifest in its disarray and defeat. However infinitesimal in terms of relations of forces it might be, the colossal apparatus of power is eliminated in this situation where (the very excess of its) derision is turned back against itself. The police and the army, all the institutions and mobilised violence of power whether individually or massed together, can do nothing against this lowly but symbolic death. For this death draws it onto a plane where there is no longer any response possible for it (hence the sudden structural liquefaction of power in '68, not because it was less strong, but because of the simple symbolic displacement operated by the students' practices). The system can only die in exchange, defeat itself to lift the challenge. Its death at this instant is a symbolic response, but a death which wears it out.

#### Language operates through hyperreality—it cannot operate around a basis of common understandings

Agozino 3 (Biko Agozino, Professor of Sociology at the University of the West Indies, “Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason” http://site.ebrary.com/lib/wfu/reader.action?docID=10479754#)//meb

This is the story of a crime—of the murder of reality. And the extermination of an illusion—the vital illusion, the radical illusion of the world. The real does not disappear into the illusion; it is illusion that disappears into integral reality. That is how Baudrillard starts what appears to be a rejoinder to Habermas, without mentioning him in his Perfect Crime (1996). Whereas Habermas writes about the life-world as a social fact, Baudrillard starts from the opposite assumption that the world (not just the life-world) reveals itself only through appearances that are better seen as clues to its non-existence rather than a proof of its being. He suggests that the world could have been a perfect crime—without a criminal, motive, victim or clue, were it not for the appearances that betray the secrets of the world. This sounds similar to what Habermas called the ‘counterfactual’ nature of social contract ideas for, according to Baudrillard, ‘Just as we cannot plumb the first few seconds of the Big Bang, so we cannot locate those few seconds in which the original crime took place either’ (1996: 2). Baudrillard argues that even when truth-claims are made, it is like a Madonna striptease in which the promise is to reveal the truth by rendering it naked yet what the voyeurs get is only the appearance of nudity wrapped in secondary clothing that appears less erotic compared to the charm of the dress. This is an indirect way of raising the question why Habermas preoccupied himself with truth-claims of validity without offering a theory of deception and falsehood. On the contrary, Baudrillard points out that ‘Not to be sensitive to the degree of unreality and play, this degree of malice and ironic wit on the part of language and the world is, in effect, to be incapable of living.’ Baudrillard goes beyond the idea that the social contract is ‘counterfactual’ by arguing that it is a ‘radical illusion’ committed by an original crime that ‘altered’ the world from the beginning, rendering it unreal or never identitcal with its original self. Furthermore, contrary to the idea that self-regulation is a democratic requirement for communication in a plural society, he points out that the three-dimensional view of power (to make people do what you want, or to stop them from doing what they want, or to construct what they eventually say they want) could be seen as abusive (1996:12). From this critique of the classicist idea of free will, he questions the idea that communication is geared towards the production of meaning. He suggests that contrary to the view of communication being based on shared meanings, meaning is never fixed as the truth but always interfaces with illusion. Having adopted a skeptical approach to notions of truth, reality and meaning, Baudrillard accords fictional accounts the same status as empirical or philosophical statements. He points out that Bertrand Russell based The Analysis of Mind on a fable or fiction in which the world was created only a few minutes ago but is peopled by indivudals who remember a past that is in fact an illusion. This is clearly a critique of the social contract theories that Habermas paid such meticulous attention to in his work. Baudrillard equates philosophical faith in the idea of the social contract with an equally ~~‘blind~~ faith’ among natural philosophers that even the evidence of biology and geology supporting evolution were simulated by God in order to protect the mystery of the creation of the universe from inquisitive scientists. In other words, Baudrillard thinks that it is a waste of time to dwell on the origin of the social contract when we could be discussing the ways that virtual reality is effectively replacing reality everywhere through modern technology (1996: 94-5). Anticipating reaction to this provocative statement, Baudrillard points out that critics say that no one should discredit reality in the face of people who find it difficult to get by and who have a right to see their sufferings as real. He sees such resentment as coming from profound contempt for illusion, a contempt that, according to him, social theorists apply to themselves by ‘reducing their own lives to an accumulation of facts and evidence, causes and effects’ (1996: 97). On the contrary, Baudrillard argues that the very nature of language makes it impossible to talk about the real since language can only deliver a virtual reality that is ‘in its very materiality, deconstruction of what it signifies’. He concludes that fictional writing is not inferior to theoretical writing in terms of its approximation of reality because both genres are characterized by a void running beneath their surface: ‘the illusion of meaning, the ironic dimensions of language, correlative with that of the facts themselves, which are never anything but what they are’ (1997:98)

#### The complete destruction of reality necessitates the system’s regime of total control, justifying endless violence and loss of value to life—the collapse of meaning prevents any real critique of the system

Robinson 12 (Andrew Robinson, political theorist and activist, “Jean Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Implosion” https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/)//meb

What are the social effects of all these changes? The main function of the changes is to actualise and preserve the system. Ultimately, the system seeks only to preserve itself. The ultimate end of politics, concealed by democratic discourse, is to maintain control of the population by any means necessary, including terror. The system is a kind of violence without consequences. It constantly dominates through deterrence, without this gesture being returned or reversed. It is sustained by fascination for the system’s operations. And its effects on the everyday? The social is now a special effect. The appearance of networks converging on an empty site of collective happiness produces the special effect. Consumption now functions like labour. It is a kind of work, which gives the system sign-value. We have lost the social, the real, and power. We don’t know how to mourn them. We become fascinated by the real as a lost object. Melancholy (depression) becomes the dominant tone of social life. It is a brutal disaffection arising from generalised simulation and the loss of intensity and meaning. The system seems too strong to be checked. People become fascinated at what is happening to signs and to reality. The lines between categories become vague and categories begin to disappear, or become poorly defined or all-encompassing. The lack of differentiation – the collapse of the segmenting categories – brings us back to a terrifying, undivided nature. Interstitial space – the space between things – disappears. We are overwhelmed by the over-proximity of all things, like in the Lacanian view of psychosis. It’s not so much that reality doesn’t exist, as that it is inaccessible from within a regime of simulation. Transparency has the effect of curtailing intensity. Social life falls into a stupor or inertia, ‘deterred’ by the code and by its own transparency. Today, illusion no longer counts. Survival depends on the real, the object. This has negative effects. Objectivity is the opposite of fatality, and is always subject to law. This is another way of saying that we are lacking the symbolic dimension. This lack resounds throughout various fields, putting an end to values. The autonomy of the system of signs puts an end to the regime of signs, of representation, and of production. Aesthetics are destroyed by the cold, systematic reproduction of functional objects, including objects signifying beauty. Signs become socially mobile, as in the phenomena of kitsch and cliché. All the humanist criteria of value – from morality to truth to aesthetics – disappear, because the code rests on indifference and neutralisation. Capitalism almost becomes a parody of itself. The situation of indistinction which reason and science have historically struggled against is now coming into existence, because of hyperreality – because a lot of what exists is neither objectively true nor subjectively imagined. Panic tends to arise because of the functioning of value separately from its referential contents. We are living through a collapse of meaning.

#### Pointing out the arbitrariness of signs and signifiers is key to disrupting the system—reinjecting it with external meaning allows it to sustain itself by faking the appearance of truth and objective reality—we’re psychologically programmed to believe that a collapse of the system through meaning would destroy our potential for life, but that’s exactly why only our method solves

Robinson 12 (Andrew Robinson, political theorist and activist, “Jean Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Implosion” https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/)//meb

Baudrillard’s account of a functionally-obsessed code does not conclude with a smoothly functioning totality. The system which results depends on the constant maintenance of a regime of control. Such a system is very unstable, open to collapsing at the slightest rupture. For instance, systems of power depend on a master-signifier, which is ultimately arbitrary and contingent. (There is no longer a master-signifier of the entire system, but agencies such as states and companies still have leaders for example). When it is obvious that it is arbitrary and contingent, power is unpinned from its apparent obviousness. It comes to seem purely arbitrary, and this interferes with its functioning. When power occupies the empty place of power, it comes to seem obscene, impure and ridiculous, and eventually collapses. Baudrillard refers to this instability as implosion. This means that he sees the system collapsing from within. The system is no longer expanding – hence the turn to deterrence instead of war. It is in ‘involution’ – collapsing in upon itself. For Baudrillard, the system has reached its culmination. It is accelerating towards its limit, which today is expressed as implosion (rather than explosion or revolution). The growing density of simulations is destroying it. Implosion is swallowing all the energy of the real. Implosion is similar to the idea of ‘internal contradictions’ in Marxism. It refers to a tendency to collapse arising from the system’s own dynamics. Implosion arises from the destruction of meaning and the reality-effect due to the precession of simulacra. The problem for the system is that signs need a separate reality in order to refer to something, and hence to function as signs. In the current regime of simulation, social realities are generated from signs and models which precede them. The model produces the “real”, the medium, and the message all at once. Reality separate from the regime is either destroyed, denied, or incorporated. As a result, the signs stop referring to anything. At the same time, therefore, a total system of meaning is created, and its meaningfulness is destroyed. All signs or referentials are combined in a vicious circle or Moebius strip. Truth, equivalences, rational distinctions break down. Without a clear outside or referent, the reality-effect breaks down. Without a focus of intensity, meaning breaks down. Meaning can no longer be pinned-down in particular places. It circulates at increased speed, without any referent or guarantee. For instance, economic growth is increasingly unstable. Economic bubbles form and burst, commodities (such as Internet companies or real-estate) are immensely valued and then collapse, emerging “tigers” from Korea to Ireland to Mexico suffer sharp collapses. Baudrillard sees the same thing happening with everything from fashion to art to politics. The problem is structural. Once the system reaches saturation, it starts to fall in on itself, like a black hole. Saturation leads to inertia. For Baudrillard, [global cities](https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-global-cities-1/) have already become black holes, eating up past social phenomena and meanings. They are entirely functional zones, arranged around sites such as hypermarkets (massive supermarkets), shopping centres and transport networks. The system is based on functionality. Yet in hypermarkets and modern universities, functions seem to become indeterminate – hence cities seem to disintegrate. This is because they have lost their distinct purposes or use-values. They become polyfunctional black-boxes with different input-output combinations. Usefulness is itself an ideology, which relies on the simulation of shortage or the creation of artificial scarcity. It is actually a moral convention, not a fact of nature. Today, supermarkets are also insurance companies, banks, pharmacists, government information dispensers, home-delivery services; today’s universities are also corporate research subcontractors, vocational trainers, immigration monitors, producers of brand-name merchandise, profiteers on debts, affiliates of regional development councils, housing providers, monitors of student dissent… This kind of hyper-functionalism renders them almost functionless – they can no longer be defined by a particular core function. They become a means without end. An operationalism without specific functions. All the different functions become simultaneous, without past, future or distinction. All mental, temporal, spatial and signalled coordinates become interchangeable in the simulated world. Hence, institutions cease to be related to specific functions, and cease to be believable as guarantors of meaning. This has social effects. Power has ceased to believe in the university. Degrees no longer have the value they once did. Like work, they persist on the basis of a dead referential, as a simulation. The real function of these functionless institutions is deterrence (see below). Their hyperreality, their simulation of functions, neutralises the surrounding territory. People won’t notice the absence of education when there’s a “world-class” university next-door. And if they do, they won’t feel they can compete with such a monolith. There are, of course, [exceptions](https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-9/%28http%3A//socialsciencecentre.org.uk/), but on the whole, such simulations shut down social life. For Baudrillard, the system is haunted by a constant sense of crisis. And this crisis is not simply a limit. It is ever-present. The system constantly presents its own crisis as spectacle. It juxtaposes its ideal (the advert) to its crisis (news, disaster movies, crime dramas, action films). But it is distributed in ‘homeopathic doses’ – in tiny amounts absorbed in other things. Hence, it doesn’t explode. It is constantly drip-fed to us instead. The world becomes non-representational through lack of signs. After meaning, we are left with manipulation, touch, circulation, ventilation. It becomes a world of panic. Explosions are foreseen and foreclosed. But implosion, the death of the cybernetic combinatory world, is a constant threat. Some social institutions collapse more quickly than others. Law is in crisis because it is a power of the second order. It is undermined by parody, which makes submission and transgression equivalent. Indeed, the social order prefers to opt for the real, taking simulations for reality. Power is disempowered by the slippage of significations and the lack of referentiality. It is turned into an empty simulation of power. It is at risk of collapse from being dissolved in the play of signs. At one point Baudrillard argues that power no longer produces anything but the signs of its resemblance, the appearance of power. (Real power, perhaps, requires a symbolic aspect). This crisis of law is the condition for a particular transition. Law is replaced by the norm. Rather than explosions which escape the law, the present period deals with deviance as anomalies which deviate from the average. People are now anonymous, subject to an anonymous terror. People can be exterminated, not to achieve their death, but because they are statistically indifferent. Power tries to defend itself against the collapse of meaning by reinjecting the real and the referential everywhere. It tries to convince people that the social world is still objectively real. It prefers to refer to crisis, or even to desire, than to admit its own collapse. Historically, it combated threats from the real by recuperating them in equivalent signs. Now, it combats the threat from simulation by playing at crisis. It embraces theories of ideology, and even radical critiques, as ways to maintain the appearance of truth. The responsible subject is in a similar situation of crisis. The system rests on responsibility. But in a system based on bureaucratic programming, irresponsible actors are required – figures like Eichmann who simply obey orders or perform functions. The system is left constantly trying to exhort people to be responsible subjects while producing them as simple conductors of social power. Subjects are put into drift, into something like a constant unconscious state. Without fixed relations, everything turns into flows of transference. The replacement of meaning with functions makes people expect everything to work all the time. A few seconds’ delay in a webpage loading becomes an inexplicable source of immense frustration. Causes have disappeared, but effects have become immense – as when a local disaster causes a global shutdown. And with the responsible subject no longer there (because it is an effect of the old subject-object split), people try desperately to impute responsibility. The excessive reservoir of ‘floating responsibility’ through finding scapegoats or guilty parties is just waiting to be invested in any particular incident. The Katrina or Christchurch disasters get projected onto looters; Chilean forest fires are [targeted as ‘terrorism’](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-16452691); social insecurity is projected onto Muslims, immigrants, minorities. Social problems of increasing triviality are subjected to immense crackdowns and moral panics. In a wave of disproportion, mitigation and even innocence are cast aside in the search for someone to blame. Meanwhile, people are repeatedly subject to tirades to ‘take responsibility’ for problems (from unemployment to alcoholism to post-traumatic stress) which the experts know very well are not really self-caused. We are subject to a blackmail by identity, condemned for what we are labelled as in the code, not for what we are. For Baudrillard, this is a consequence of the disappearance of causes and the power of effects. It reflects something deeper: the world is held collectively responsible for the system. If the system is infringed, the world will have to be destroyed. Or rather, we are ‘psychologically programmed to destroy ourselves’ if the system collapses. We could think of this as the code blackmailing reality. Though the code is tautological and does not depend on reality, it holds reality responsible for itself, and punishes reality if it collapses or crashes. This generalisation of responsibility can be traced back to the loss of symbolic exchange. Generalised, unlimited responsibility occurs because nothing is exchanged anymore, the terms of exchange are simply exchanged among themselves. The system produces nothing but vertigo and fascination. Generalised responsibility becomes the same as generalised irresponsibility and the collapse of social relations. Values such as responsibility, justice and violence continue to circulate only as simulations imposed by the state. This in turn is fatal for the ‘scene’ of politics. On a similar note, there is an ideology of exhuming, documenting, rediscovering the real – from reality TV to the preservation of historical artefacts and indigenous groups – which according to Baudrillard, simply reinforces the process of killing and then simulating. What is preserved is never what it would have been without intervention. We constantly recreate and relive bits of the past and present which are now simulated. The real has become our utopia, that we dream of as if of a lost object. An entire culture now labours at counterfeiting itself. This only exacerbates the problems. Inertia gets worse and worse as simulations of past forms, frozen in time, proliferate and overgrow their uses. Production and meaning are replaced by simulation and fascination. The content – information, culture, commodities – is now simply the support for the operation of the code, the medium. The function of the code is simply to reproduce the masses. Information devours its own contents by turning the real into the hyperreal.

# case

## overview

#### Debate is a reflection of the broader system of simulation—systems of education work to both simulate the world and codify it into consumable pieces of information. Science specifically works to destroy mystery and categorize the unexplainable, demonstrating a violent attempt to exercise control over the universe.

#### Like science, debate reflects the will to knowledge and the desire to predict the world through violent incorporation into the system. Any attempts of external critique sustain the system by giving it a value referent, or something to wrap itself around—our method is to reveal the meaninglessness of the signs in education, the signs in science, and the signs in debate so that the can only find flaw in itself and collapse.

#### Voting aff obscures debate on the premise of subtle mimicry—the key is to imitate the form of order by signing an aff ballot, but what you’ve voted for is the destruction of violent assimilation.

## hyperreality

#### Signs have exceeded reality—the system of understanding the world, the “code,” has replaced its referent by operating on the basis of its own hyperfunctionality

Baudrillard 83 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “Fatal Strategies” [http://faculty.humanities.uci.edu/poster/books/Baudrillard,%20Jean%20-%20Selected%20Writings\_ok.pdf)//meb](http://faculty.humanities.uci.edu/poster/books/Baudrillard%2C%20Jean%20-%20Selected%20Writings_ok.pdf%29//meb) \*edited for ableist language

More generally, visible things do not terminate in obscurity and in silence; they vanish into what is more visible than the visible: obscenity. An example of this ex-centricity of things, of this drift into excrescence, is the irruption of randomness, indeterminacy, and relativity within our system. The reaction to this new state of things has not been a resigned abandonment of traditional values, but rather a ~~crazy~~ overdetermination, an exacerbation, of these values of reference, function, finality, and causality. Perhaps nature is, in fact, horrified by the void, for it is in the void, and in order to avoid it, that plethoric, hypertrophic, and saturated systems emerge. Some-thing redundant always settles in the place where there is no longer any-thing. Determinacy does not withdraw to the benefit of indeterminacy, but to the benefit of a hyperdeterminacy: the redundancy of determinacy in a void. Finality does not disappear in favor of the aleatory, but rather in favor of hyperfinality, of a hyperfunctionality: more functional than the functional, more final than the final - the hypertelic (hypertélie). Having been plunged into an in-ordinate uncertainty by randomness, we have responded by an excess of causality and teleology. Hypertelic growth is not an accident in the evolution of certain species, it is the challenge of telos as a response to increasing indeterminacy. In a system where things are increasingly left to chance, telos turns into ~~delirium~~, and develops entities that know all too well how to exceed their own ends, to the point of invading the entire system. This is true of the behavior of the cancerous cell (hypervitality in a single direction), of the hyperspecialization of objects and people, of the operationalism of the smallest detail, and of the hypersignification of the slightest sign: the leitmotiv of our daily lives. But this is also the chancroid secret of every obese and cancerous system: those of communication, of information, of production, of destruction - each having long since exceeded the limits of functionality, and use value, in order to enter the phantasmic escalation of finalities. The ~~hysteria~~ of causality, the inverse of the ~~hysteria~~ of finalities, which corresponds to the simultaneous effacement of origins and causes, is the obsessive search for origins, for responsibility, for reference; an attempt to extinguish phenomena in infinitesimal causes. But it is also the genesis and genetics complex, which on various accounts are represented by psychoanalytic palingenesis (the whole psyche hypostatized in prime infancy, every sign a symptom); and biogenetics (all probabilities saturated by the fatal ordering of molecules); and the hypertrophying of historical research, the delirium of explaining everything, of ascribing everything, of referencing everything ... All this becomes a fantastic burden - references living one off the other and at the other's expense. Here again we have an excrescent interpretive system developing without any relation to its objective. All of this is a consequence of a forward flight in the face of the haemorrhaging of objective causes. Inertial phenomena are accelerating. Arrested forms proliferate, and growth is immobilized in excrescence. This is the form of the hypertelic, that which goes beyond its own ends: the crustacean that strays far from the ocean unable to return (to what secret end?); or the increasing gigantism of Easter Island statues. Tentacular, protuberant, excrescent, hypertelic: this is the inertial destiny of a saturated world. The denial of its own end in hyperfinality; is this not also the mechanism of cancer? The revenge of growth in excrescence. The revenge and summons of speed in inertia. The masses are also caught in this gigantic process of inertia by acceleration. The masses are this excrescent process, which precipitates all growth towards ruin. It is the circuit that is shortcircuited by a monstrous finality. Exxon: the American government requests a complete report on the multinational's activities throughout the world. The result is twelve 1,000 page volumes, whose reading alone, not to mention the analysis, would exceed a few years work. Where is the information? Should we initiate an information dietetics? Should we thin out the obese, the obese systems, and create institutions to uninform? The incredible destructive stockpiling of strategic weapons is only equaled by the worldwide demographic overgrowth. As paradoxical as it may seem, both are of the same nature and correspond to the same logic of excrescence and inertia. A triumphant anomaly: no principle of justice or of proportion can temper either one; they incite one another. And worse, there isn't even so much as Promethean defiance here, no excessive passion or pride. It appears simply that the species has crossed a particular mysterious point, where it has become impossible to turn back, to decelerate, or to slow down.

## solvency

#### Using educational institutions is key to accessing the inside of the system and imploding meaning

Norris 4 (Trevor Norris, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, “Jean Baudrillard and Educational Practice” http://infed.org/mobi/jean-baudrillard/#links)//meb

Born in 1929 in Reims, France, Jean Baudrillard studied sociology under Henri Lefebvre, and taught during several tumultuous decades at Nanterre, beginning shortly before the student uprising of May 1968. That same year saw the publication of his first book, The System of Objects, a study of the meaning derived from consumption as the process by which human social relations become mediated by objects. Jean Baudrillard sought to provide an understanding of the new “hyper” form of advanced capitalism and technology which emerged through the virtual and simulated character of contemporary experience. His account of the “implosion of meaning” entailed by the proliferation of signs and the reduction of the sign to the status of commodity points toward the simultaneous experience of the loss of reality and the encounter with hyperreality. In The Consumer Society Jean Baudrillard outlines how consumers buy into the “code” of signs rather than the meaning of the object itself. His analysis of the process by which the sign ceases pointing towards an object or signified which lies behind it, but rather to other signs which together constitute a cohesive yet chaotic “code”, culminates in the “murder of reality”. The rupture is so complete, the absence so resounding, and the code so “totalitarian” that Baudrillard speaks of the combined “violence of the image” and “implosion of meaning”. Politics, religion, education, any human undertaking is swept up and absorbed by this process and ultimately neutralized; any liberating activity becomes complicit in the reproduction of its opposite. “The code is totalitarian; no one escapes it: our individual flights do not negate the fact that each day we participate in its collective elaboration.”[1] More recently, Jean Baudrillard’s preoccupation with the simulated and his radical questioning of what remains of the “real” led him to such provocative statements as “the gulf war did not take place”[2]and “the collapse of the towers of the World Trade Center is unimaginable, but that is not enough to make it a real event.”[3] Jean Baudrillard’s radical questioning of the character of signs, symbols and simulation in our postmodern age points towards the necessity to reconsider the role of contemporary educational practices as a possible site of resistance to the ‘code’. Is education invariably complicit in the “murder of the real”?

#### Exposing the emptiness of pedagogy is key to confuse the system and make retaliation impossible

Baudrillard 83 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “Fatal Strategies” http://faculty.humanities.uci.edu/poster/books/Baudrillard,%20Jean%20-%20Selected%20Writings\_ok.pdf)//meb

The universe is not dialectical: it moves toward the extremes, and not toward equilibrium; it is devoted to a radical antagonism, and not to reconciliation or to synthesis. And it is the same with the principle of Evil. It is expressed in the cunning genius of the object, in the ecstatic form of the pure object, and in its victorious strategy over the subject. This victory operates by subtle forms of radicalizing hidden qualities, and by combating obscenity with its own weapons. To the more true than true we will oppose the more false than false. We will not oppose the beautiful and the ugly; we will seek what is more ugly than the ugly: the monstrous. We will not oppose the visible to the hidden; we will seek what is more hidden than the hidden: the secret. We will not seek change, nor oppose the fixed and the mobile; we will seek what is more mobile than the mobile: metamorphosis ... We will not distinguish the true from the false; we will seek what is more false than the false: illusion and appearance ... In this ascent to extremes, while we may need to oppose it in a radical way, we may perhaps need to accumulate the effects of obscenity and seduction. We will seek something faster than communication: the challenge, the duel. Communication is too slow; it is an effect of slowness; it proceeds through contact and speech. The look is much faster; it is the medium of the media, the quickest. Everything must occur instantaneously. We never communicate. In the to and fro of communication the speed of the look, of light, and of seduction is already lost. But also, against the acceleration of networks and circuits, we will seek slowness; not the nostalgic slowness of the mind, but an insurmountable immobility, what is slower than the slow: inertia and silence. Inertia is insurmountable even with effort, as is silence even in a dialogue. There is a secret here as well. Just as the model is more real than the real (being the quintessence of the significant aspects of a situation), acquiring thus a vertiginous impression of truth, the amazing aspect of fashion is that it is more beautiful than the beautiful: it is fascinating. Its seductive capacity is independent of all judgements. It exceeds the aesthetic form in the ecstatic form of unconditional metamorphosis. Whereas the aesthetic form always implies a moral distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, the ecstatic form is immoral. If there is a secret to fashion, beyond the sheer pleasures of art and taste, it is this immorality, the sovereignty of ephemeral models, the fragile and total passion which excludes all feelings, and the arbitrary, superficial and regulated metamorphosis, which excludes all desire (unless in fact this is desire). If in fact this is desire, we can imagine that in the social, in the political, and in every domain other than the ornamental, desire would also show a preference for immoral forms, which are equally affected by the potential denial of all value judgements and more dedicated to the ecstatic destiny that wrenches things from their "subjective" quality, leaving them solely to the attraction of the redoubled trait, of the reduplicated definition, and that wrenches them from their "objective" causes, leaving them solely to the power of their unbridled effects. Every characteristic thus elevated to the superlative power, caught in an intensifying spiral - more true than the true, more beautiful than the beautiful, more real than the real - is assured a vertiginous effect that is independent of all content or specific quality, and which presently has the tendency of being our only passion. The passion of intensification, of escalation, of mounting power, of ecstasy, of whatever quality so long as, having ceased to be relative to its opposite (the true to the false, the beautiful to the ugly, the real to the imaginary), it becomes superlative, positively sublime as if it had absorbed the energy of its opposite. Imagine something beautiful that has absorbed all the energy of the ugly: you have fashion ... Imagine truth having absorbed all the energy of the false: you have simulation ... Seduction is itself vertiginous, being the effect not of some simple attraction, but of an attraction that is redoubled in a sort of challenge to or fatality of its essence: "I am not beautiful, I am worse," proclaimed Marie Duval. We have become completely absorbed by models, completely absorbed by fashion, completely absorbed by simulation: Roger Caillois was perhaps correct in his terminology, and our whole culture is in the process of shifting from games of competition and expression to games of risk and vertigo. Uncertainty, even about fundamentals, drives us to a vertiginous overmultiplication of formal qualities. Hence we move to the form of ecstasy. Ecstasy is that quality specific to each body that spirals in on itself until it has lost all meaning, and thus radiates as pure and empty form. Fashion is the ecstasy of the beautiful: the pure and empty form of a spiraling aesthetics. Simulation is the ecstasy of the real. To prove this, all you need do is watch television, where real events follow one another in a perfectly ecstatic relation, that is to say through vertiginous and stereotyped traits, unreal and recurrent, which allow for continuous and uninterrupted juxtapositions. Ecstatic: such is the object of advertising, and such is the consumer in the eyes of advertising. Advertising is the spiraling of use value and exchange value to the point of annulment, into the pure and empty form of a lack ... But we need to go further: anti-pedagogy is the ecstatic form, that is to say, the pure and empty form of pedagogy. The anti-theater is the ecstatic form of theater: no more stage, no more content; theater in the streets, without actors, theater for everyone by everyone, which, to a certain extent, would merge with the exact unfolding of our lives, lives without illusion. Where is the power of illusion if theater delights merely in mimicking our daily life and in transfiguring our work place? Yet it is in this manner that art looks to escape itself, to deny itself. The more art tries to realize itself, the more it hyperrealizes itself, the more it transcends itself to find its own empty essence. There is vertigo here as well, a vertigo mise-en-abyme and stupefied. Nothing has been more effective in stupefying the "creative" act, in making it shine in its pure and inane form, than Duchamp's unexpected exhibition of a wine rack in an art gallery. The ecstasy of a prosaic object transfers the pictorial act into its ecstatic form - which henceforth without an object will spiral in on itself and in a sense disappear, but not without exercising over us a definite fascination. Art, today, merely practises the magic of disappearance.

#### Information is dissuasive and counterproductive to communication—the only solution is to reflect useless meaning back to the system. All “movements of liberation” operate on the terrain of the system and regenerate the utility of hyperreality

Baudrillard 00 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, *Simulacra and Simulations,* http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/simulacra-and-simulations-viii-the-implosion-of-meaning-in-the-media/)//meb

We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning. Consider three hypotheses. Either information produces meaning (a negentropic factor), but cannot make up for the brutal loss of signification in every domain. Despite efforts to reinject message and content, meaning is lost and devoured faster than it can be reinjected. In this case, one must appeal to a base productivity to replace failing media. This is the whole ideology of free speech, of media broken down into innumerable individual cells of transmission, that is, into "antimedia" (pirate radio, etc.). Or information has nothing to do with signification. It is something else, an operational model of another order, outside meaning and of the circulation of meaning strictly speaking. This is Shannon's hypothesis: a sphere of information that is purely functional, a technical medium that does not imply any finality of meaning, and thus should also not be implicated in a value judgment. A kind of code, like the genetic code: it is what it is, it functions as it does, meaning is something else that in a sense comes after the fact, as it does for Monod in Chance and Necessity. In this case, there would simply be no significant relation between the inflation of information and the deflation of meaning. Or, very much on the contrary, there is a rigorous and necessary correlation between the two, to the extent that information is directly destructive of meaning and signification, or that it neutralizes them. The loss of meaning is directly linked to the dissolving, dissuasive action of information, the media, and the mass media. The third hypothesis is the most interesting but flies in the face of every commonly held opinion. Everywhere socialization is measured by the exposure to media messages. Whoever is underexposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial. Everywhere information is thought to produce an accelerated circulation of meaning, a plus value of meaning homologous to the economic one that results from the accelerated rotation of capital. Information is thought to create communication, and even if the waste is enormous, a general consensus would have it that nevertheless, as a whole, there be an excess of meaning, which is redistributed in all the interstices of the social just as consensus would have it that material production, despite its dysfunctions and irrationalities, opens onto an excess of wealth and social purpose. We are all complicitous in this myth. It is the alpha and omega of our modernity, without which the credibility of our social organization would collapse. Well, the fact is that it is collapsing, and for this very reason: because where we think that information produces meaning, the opposite occurs. Information devours its own content. It devours communication and the social. And for two reasons. 1. Rather than creating communication, it exhausts itself in the act of staging communication. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning. A gigantic process of simulation that is very familiar. The nondirective interview, speech, listeners who call in, participation at every level, blackmail through speech: "You are concerned, you are the event, etc." More and more information is invaded by this kind of phantom content, this homeopathic grafting, this awakening dream of communication. A circular arrangement through which one stages the desire of the audience, the antitheater of communication, which, as one knows, is never anything but the recycling in the negative of the traditional institution, the integrated circuit of the negative. Immense energies are deployed to hold this simulacrum at bay, to avoid the brutal desimulation that would confront us in the face of the obvious reality of a radical loss of meaning. It is useless to ask if it is the loss of communication that produces this escalation in the simulacrum, or whether it is the simulacrum that is there first for dissuasive ends, to short-circuit in advance any possibility of communication (precession of the model that calls an end to the real). Useless to ask which is the first term, there is none, it is a circular process that of simulation, that of the hyperreal. The hyperreality of communication and of meaning. More real than the real, that is how the real is abolished. Thus not only communication but the social functions in a closed circuit, as a lure to which the force of myth is attached. Belief, faith in information attach themselves to this tautological proof that the system gives of itself by doubling the signs of an unlocatable reality. But one can believe that this belief is as ambiguous as that which was attached to myths in ancient societies. One both believes and doesn't. One does not ask oneself, "I know very well, but still." A sort of inverse simulation in the masses, in each one of us, corresponds to this simulation of meaning and of communication in which this system encloses us. To this tautology of the system the masses respond with ambivalence, to deterrence they respond with disaffection, or with an always enigmatic belief. Myth exists, but one must guard against thinking that people believe in it: this is the trap of critical thinking that can only be exercised if it presupposes the naivete and stupidity of the masses. 2. Behind this exacerbated mise-en-scène of communication, the mass media, the pressure of information pursues an irresistible destructuration of the social. Thus information dissolves meaning and dissolves the social, in a sort of nebulous state dedicated not to a surplus of innovation, but, on the contrary, to total entropy.\*1 Thus the media are producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite, of the implosion of the social in the masses. And this is only the macroscopic extension of the implosion of meaning at the microscopic level of the sign. This implosion should be analyzed according to McLuhan's formula, the medium is the message, the consequences of which have yet to be exhausted. That means that all contents of meaning are absorbed in the only dominant form of the medium. Only the medium can make an event whatever the contents, whether they are conformist or subversive. A serious problem for all counterinformation, pirate radios, antimedia, etc. But there is something even more serious, which McLuhan himself did not see. Because beyond this neutralization of all content, one could still expect to manipulate the medium in its form and to transform the real by using the impact of the medium as form. If all the content is wiped out, there is perhaps still a subversive, revolutionary use value of the medium as such. That is and this is where McLuhan's formula leads, pushed to its limit there is not only an implosion of the message in the medium, there is, in the same movement, the implosion of the medium itself in the real, the implosion of the medium and of the real in a sort of hyperreal nebula, in which even the definition and distinct action of the medium can no longer be determined. Even the "traditional" status of the media themselves, characteristic of modernity, is put in question. McLuhan's formula, the medium is the message, which is the key formula of the era of simulation (the medium is the message the sender is the receiver the circularity of all poles the end of panoptic and perspectival space such is the alpha and omega of our modernity), this very formula must be imagined at its limit where, after all the contents and messages have been volatilized in the medium, it is the medium itself that is volatilized as such. Fundamentally, it is still the message that lends credibility to the medium, that gives the medium its determined, distinct status as the intermediary of communication. Without a message, the medium also falls into the indefinite state characteristic of all our great systems of judgment and value. A single model, whose efficacy is immediate, simultaneously generates the message, the medium, and the "real." Finally, the medium is the message not only signifies the end of the message, but also the end of the medium. There are no more media in the literal sense of the word (I'm speaking particularly of electronic mass media) that is, of a mediating power between one reality and another, between one state of the real and another. Neither in content, nor in form. Strictly, this is what implosion signifies. The absorption of one pole into another, the short-circuiting between poles of every differential system of meaning, the erasure of distinct terms and oppositions, including that of the medium and of the real thus the impossibility of any mediation, of any dialectical intervention between the two or from one to the other. Circularity of all media effects. Hence the impossibility of meaning in the literal sense of a unilateral vector that goes from one pole to another. One must envisage this critical but original situation at its very limit: it is the only one left us. It is useless to dream of revolution through content, useless to dream of a revelation through form, because the medium and the real are now in a single nebula whose truth is indecipherable. The fact of this implosion of contents, of the absorption of meaning, of the evanescence of the medium itself, of the reabsorption of every dialectic of communication in a total circularity of the model, of the implosion of the social in the masses, may seem catastrophic and desperate. But this is only the case in light of the idealism that dominates our whole view of information. We all live by a passionate idealism of meaning and of communication, by an idealism of communication through meaning, and, from this perspective, it is truly the catastrophe of meaning that lies in wait for us. But one must realize that "catastrophe" has this "catastrophic" meaning of end and annihilation only in relation to a linear vision of accumulation, of productive finality, imposed on us by the system. Etymologically, the term itself only signifies the curvature, the winding down to the bottom of a cycle that leads to what one could call the "horizon of the event," to an impassable horizon of meaning: beyond that nothing takes place that has meaning for us but it suffices to get out of this ultimatum of meaning in order for the catastrophe itself to no longer seem like a final and nihilistic day of reckoning, such as it functions in our contemporary imaginary. Beyond meaning, there is the fascination that results from the neutralization and the implosion of meaning. Beyond the horizon of the social, there are the masses, which result from the neutralization and the implosion of the social. What is essential today is to evaluate this double challenge the challenge of the masses to meaning and their silence (which is not at all a passive resistance) the challenge to meaning that comes from the media and its fascination. All the marginal, alternative efforts to revive meaning are secondary in relation to that challenge. Evidently, there is a paradox in this inextricable conjunction of the masses and the media: do the media neutralize meaning and produce unformed [informe] or informed [informée] masses, or is it the masses who victoriously resist the media by directing or absorbing all the messages that the media produce without responding to them? Sometime ago, in "Requiem for the Media," I analyzed and condemned the media as the institution of an irreversible model of communication without a response. But today? This absence of a response can no longer be understood at all as a strategy of power, but as a counterstrategy of the masses themselves when they encounter power. What then? Are the mass media on the side of power in the manipulation of the masses, or are they on the side of the masses in the liquidation of meaning, in the violence perpetrated on meaning, and in fascination? Is it the media that induce fascination in the masses, or is it the masses who direct the media into the spectacle? Mogadishu-Stammheim: the media make themselves into the vehicle of the moral condemnation of terrorism and of the exploitation of fear for political ends, but simultaneously, in the most complete ambiguity, they propagate the brutal charm of the terrorist act, they are themselves terrorists, insofar as they themselves march to the tune of seduction (cf. Umberto Eco on this eternal moral dilemma: how can one not speak of terrorism, how can one find a good use of the media there is none). The media carry meaning and countermeaning, they manipulate in all directions at once, nothing can control this process, they are the vehicle for the simulation internal to the system and the simulation that destroys the system, according to an absolutely Mobian and circular logic and it is exactly like this. There is no alternative to this, no logical resolution. Only a logical exacerbation and a catastrophic resolution. With one caution. We are face to face with this system in a double situation and insoluble double bind exactly like children faced with the demands of the adult world. Children are simultaneously required to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects, responsible, free and conscious, and to constitute themselves as submissive, inert, obedient, conforming objects. The child resists on all levels, and to a contradictory demand he responds with a double strategy. To the demand of being an object, he opposes all the practices of disobedience, of revolt, of emancipation; in short, a total claim to subjecthood. To the demand of being a subject he opposes, just as obstinately and efficaciously, an object's resistance, that is to say, exactly the opposite: childishness, hyperconformism, total dependence, passivity, idiocy. Neither strategy has more objective value than the other. The subject-resistance is today unilaterally valorized and viewed as positive just as in the political sphere only the practices of freedom, emancipation, expression, and the constitution of a political subject are seen as valuable and subversive. But this is to ignore the equal, and without a doubt superior, impact of all the object practices, of the renunciation of the subject position and of meaning precisely the practices of the masses that we bury under the derisory terms of alienation and passivity. The liberating practices respond to one of the aspects of the system, to the constant ultimatum we are given to constitute ourselves as pure objects, but they do not respond at all to the other demand, that of constituting ourselves as subjects, of liberating ourselves, expressing ourselves at whatever cost, of voting, producing, deciding, speaking, participating, playing the game a form of blackmail and ultimatum just as serious as the other, even more serious today. To a system whose argument is oppression and repression, the strategic resistance is the liberating claim of subjecthood. But this strategy is more reflective of the earlier phase of the system, and even if we are still confronted with it, it is no longer the strategic terrain: the current argument of the system is to maximize speech, the maximum production of meaning. Thus the strategic resistance is that of the refusal of meaning and of the spoken word or of the hyperconformist simulation of the very mechanisms of the system, which is a form of refusal and of non-reception. It is the strategy of the masses: it is equivalent to returning to the system its own logic by doubling it, to reflecting meaning, like a mirror, without absorbing it. This strategy (if one can still speak of strategy) prevails today, because it was ushered in by that phase of the system which prevails. To choose the wrong strategy is a serious matter. All the movements that only play on liberation, emancipation, on the resurrection of a subject of history, of the group, of the word based on "consciousness raising," indeed a "raising of the unconscious" of subjects and of the masses, do not see that they are going in the direction of the system, whose imperative today is precisely the overproduction and regeneration of meaning and of speech.

## impact

#### Language is inherently violent because it destroys the complexity of alterity and allows subjects to reduce others into the realm of Western “understanding”

Buk-Swienty 17 (Alexander Buk-Swienty, Bachelor’s in American Studies at the University of Southern Denmark, “The Violence of Language and Literature” [http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/)//meb](http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/%29//meb) **\*edited for ableist language**

Language is not merely a pure and neutral tool but on the contrary, it is a violent thing that introduces division I want to outline some notes towards the consequences of the idea of language as, at its very basic operation, a violent order. For this I turn to Slavoj Žižek’s reflection on the subject in his book Violence (2009), where he proposes the category symbolic violence: the violence of language. We can begin this discussion of violence from the normative perspective that views a violence as a deviation from this norm. For example, in the current workings of our society, we have decided that killing each other is ethically wrong, and therefore, should I go murder my [neighbour](http://arkbooks.dk/preverse-psychopathology-in-the-castle-reading-kafka-with-lacan/), this act would be deemed violent. However, as Žižek argues, this idea of an untainted or pure backdrop from which deviant acts are experienced as violent, fails to take into account the inherently violent nature of such a backdrop. Language is violent because it reduces the complexity of reality whilst simultaneously imbuing it with new symbolic complexities, which force reality into an external field of meaning. Language is one such backdrop. Language is seen as a neutral or perhaps even a peaceful medium. It is that which is emblematic of the non-violent, and when language is used for violence this use is to be understood as pathological, a deviation. As Žižek, turning to Hegel, writes: “…Hegel was already well aware, there is something violent in the very symbolisation of a thing, which equals its mortification. This violence operates at multiple levels. Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. […] It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it.” [1](http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/#fn-1561-1) Seen this way, language is violent because it reduces the complexity of reality whilst simultaneously imbuing it with new symbolic complexities, which force reality into an external field of meaning. “When we name gold ‘gold’,” Žižek writes, “we violently extract a metal from its natural texture, investing into it our dreams of wealth, power, spiritual purity and so on, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the immediate reality of gold.” [2](http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/#fn-1561-2) What we are dealing with is the distinction between ‘reality’ as it is in itself and the symbolization of reality. As Lacan would have it, when we enter language, we enter a slippery slope of signifiers. Signifiers with no real final destination other than those the tautological Master-signifiers: the law is the law because it is the law. Therefore, even though we might share the same empirical ‘reality’, this reality is mediated through symbolization, and thus we essentially live in multiple ‘realities’ overdetermined by symbolization. Žižek’s point is that we don’t react on the immediate reality of things, but the ‘false’ realities as mediated through the symbolic images. While these images are malleable, they are in the end the limit of our only reality. It is as if the attempt at empathy, the ability to share the feelings of the other becomes its opposite: not my attempt at understanding the other, but the wish for the other to be like me. Literature delimits just as severely as it expands. In this way, we can also understand for example, the feminist critique of patriarchal language or phallogocentricism. The patriarchal image/figure of a woman, as construed through symbolization, overdetermines the female subject. This not only reduces her immediate reality to a fixed position in a symbolic field, it also affects how she perceives herself. This is the power of performativity. A concept too complex to precisely define here, so for want of a better example, we can think of it in terms of the ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ that do not stem from any ‘truth’ but are generated and executed through a logic that emerges from symbolization. Through patriarchy, we can see the asymmetricality of language at work and how it violently determines experience. What we need to take away from this is firstly, how the fundamental idea of any symbolization is essentially a violent overdetermination of immediate reality because it is a reflexive act that returns to and has an effect on immediate reality. And secondly, how a division between reality, and how we experience the meaning of reality, occurs as reality is mediated through language. As Žižek writes: “Reality in itself, in its ~~stupid~~ existence, is never intolerable: it is language, its symbolisation which makes it such.” [3](http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/#fn-1561-3) From this we might also posit, that symbolization never escapes ideological framework. Thus we can see language is not merely a neutral tool for the sole purpose is peaceful communication. There is always something more violent at stake when it comes to symbolization: hierarchy, demarcations, and reduction/condensation.

#### The system causes global implosive violence as a method of creating meaning for its own existence by destroying all mysterity in the world and rendering it intelligible

Artrip and Debrix 14 (Ryan Artrip, doctoral candidate in ASPECT at Virginia Tech, and François Debrix, Director of ASPECT and Professor of Political Science at Virginia Tech, “The Digital Fog of War: Baudrillard and the Violence of Representation” http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-11\_2/v11-2-debrix.html)//meb

It is in this always operative tendency of rendered appearances to yield meaning (even if their meaning is to be information-worthy), not in the image or event itself, that we situate the conditions of possibility and reproducibility for the ever-thickening representational fog and for the violence/virulence of images, or better yet, of appearances. To make war or, as the case may be, the terror event mean something—even in some of the most immediate reactions often designed to evoke injustice or, indeed, incomprehension—is the generative point of violence, the source of representation as a virulent/virtual code and mode of signification. Baudrillard writes, “Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible.” He adds, “We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; […] we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us” (Baudrillard, 1988: 63). Indeed, the Western world—increasingly, the global—has found itself with a proliferation of meanings and significations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is as if the so-called crisis of nihilism (thought to be characteristic of much critique and philosophical suspicion throughout the 20th century) later on produced something of the opposite order. The mass violence of the 20th century inaugurated not a complete void of despair or meaninglessness, but instead a flood of meaning, if not an overproduction of it. Baudrillard refers to this frantic explosion of meaning/signification as “a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production […]” (Baudrillard, 1983: 7). Here, Baudrillard describes a mode of production of a different kind, not motivated by class interests or exploitation of value, but by an automated, perhaps viral, abreaction to the empty core or disenchantment of things and the world: that is to say, the degree to which things seem to lack a singular center of gravity or have lost a justifiable reference to the real world, and yet each thing that “matters” is also an attempt to get at reality as a question of accumulation (of meaning), circulation (of signs), and filling up of all interstitial spaces of communication and value. The end result is an over-abundance of signs and images of reality, something that culminates in what Baudrillard calls hyperreality—things appear more real than reality itself. The story that needs to be told is thus not about the undoubtedly deplorable “truth” or fact of explosive and warlike violence, but about a violence of another sort. In the radical digital transparency of the global scene, we (members of the demos) often have full or direct exposure to explosivity, as we saw above with the image of terror. But what still needs to be thought and problematized is implosivity or what may be called implosive violence. Implosive violence is a violence for which we do not, and perhaps will never, have much of a language (Rancière, 2007: 123). Although, not having a language for it or, rather, as we saw above, seeking to find a language to talk about it and, perhaps, to make sense of it is still sought after. This is, perhaps, what digital pictures of war/terror violence seek to capture or want to force through. Implosive violence, often digitally rendered these days, is in close contact with media technologies and representational devices and techniques because it seeks representation and meaning. This is why implosive violence insists on calling in wars (against terror, for example) and on mobilizing war machines (against terrorist others, against vague enemy figures), but wars and war machines that no longer have—to the extent that they ever had—a clearly identifiable object and subject, or a clear mission/purpose. As such, this implosive violence and its wars (the new Western/global way of war, perhaps) must remain uncertain, unclear, foggy, inwardly driven, representational, and indeed virulent. They must remain uncertain and confused even as they are digitally operative and desperately capture events/images to give the impression that meanings/significations can and will be found. Yet, as we saw above, it is not meanings exactly that must be found, but information and the endless guarantee of its immediate circulation. As information occupies the empty place of meaning, certainty, or truth, images must be instantaneously turned into appearances that search for meanings that will never be discovered because, instead, a proliferation of information-worthy facts and beliefs will take over (perhaps this is what US fake pundit and comedian Stephen Colbert famously referred to as “truthiness”). Or, as Baudrillard puts it, “free from its former enemies, humanity now has to create enemies from within, which in fact produces a wide variety of inhuman metastases” (Baudrillard, 2003). Thus, this implosive violence is destined to be a global violence since it "is the product of a system that tracks down any form of negativity and singularity, including of course death as the ultimate form of singularity. […] It is a violence that, in a sense, puts an end to violence itself and strives to establish a world where anything related to the natural must disappear […] Better than a global violence, we should call it a global virulence. This form of violence is indeed viral. It moves by contagion, produces by chain reaction, and little by little it destroys our immune systems and our capacities to resist" (2003; our italics). In a way, this global virulence is all-out and everyday war itself. It is also the Global War on Terror, a war whose virulence and ever present (virtual, potential) violence mediatizes and hyper-realizes everyday life for a lot of human bodies in the West and beyond (is that not also something that the Boston Marathon bombing smart phone representations struggled to tell us?). For Baudrillard, this is how we should apprehend the mythos of globalization (since globalization is all about virulence).

# framework

## 2AC block

#### We meet—we read a plan text. Their links to framework are predicated off the fact that we don’t have the right interpretation of USFG action, but that’s exactly what our aff critiques

#### Counter-interpretation: affirm the resolution as symbolic disruption.

#### Counter-interpretation: their interpretation sans their insistence upon meaning.

## plans

#### The United States Federal Government should increase regulation of third grade optic studies and mandate the construction of lightsabers through development of photon-oriented curricula.

#### The United States Federal Government should increase funding for primary and secondary education by providing grants to study the effects of broken glass upon Forever 21 jean shorts as a method of exploring hunting methods of striped hyenas.

## cards

#### Using the form of debate, we challenge it on the level of content by proliferating meaning and destroying the illusion—agonistic theory just legitimizes simulation

McFarlane 16 (David McFarlane, Graduate Student at Trent University, “Theory as Symbolic Exchange,” http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-13\_2/v13-2-mcfarlane.html)//meb

Contemporary western life, characterized by an infinitely ambiguous combinatory logic of signification is, for Baudrillard, contrasted with a ritual order of necessary, yet arbitrary, rules and acts demanding complete observance of their unfolding despite being essentially meaningless, without depth. Games and rituals rest on obligatory pacts (positive, arbitrary rules) whereas the universality of contemporary societies binds by virtue of abstract legal prohibitions (negative, ‘hidden truth’ of law), the consequences of which are themselves ambiguous (e.g., a lone highway driver can exceed speed limits without legal consequence). In other words, compulsion to observe law may be highly circumstantial whereas the observance of the ritual rule lacks the ambiguity of legal ramifications. This paper assesses what bearing divergent forms of writing and social organization have on Baudrillard’s development of an agonistic form of writing that aims to generate symbolic exchange from within the practice of writing and theorizing. It is argued that it became necessary for Baudrillard to enact an ambivalent and reversible metamorphosing in writing to overcome the impasse created by his rejection of critical theory as a mirror of the semiotic order he vied to radically oppose. Here, one must keep the perspective of disinterested analytic in abeyance and understand theory, and writing, as symbolically active rather than disinterested, indifferent speculation. The move toward an agonistic style embodies Baudrillard’s conceptual problematic within writing itself; simulation and symbolic exchange become active forms within the movement of this writing. Reversibility is central to both the aforementioned forms of theory and social organization (symbolically grounded), be it the reversal of the counter-gift in potlatch or the reversibility of forms that circulate in Baudrillard’s oeuvre. Baudrillard’s writing abolishes the formal distinction of form and content by activating the content (concepts of the symbolic, simulation, etc.) within the form(style) while moving into the murky terrain where simulation and the symbolic transpose; a deconstruction of the former terms is accomplished through the latter (i.e., irruption of the symbolic into the semiotic simulacrum and irruption of content into form) (Lane in Smith, 2010: 42-44). These are examples of the reversible, where ambivalent terms struggle against each other though remaining irreducible. The argument concerning the necessity for symbolic exchange becoming intertwined within Baudrillard’s writing style is substantiated by examining key factors in the movement from critical analytic to the latter period of his writing where the reversible form increasingly comes to the fore. The focus is broken down accordingly: A) What is theory? It ceases to be a production – and accumulation – of epistemic objects and becomes an obligatory process of struggle and challenge. Interrogated ontologically, it is a symbolically active, utopic metamorphosis not relegated to inert Being. Theory moves away from static concept creation toward agonistic processes stressing obligatory symbolic pacts, implicating those involved both intensely and absolutely. B) Elements of style in Baudrillard’s writing are chosen and analysed in relation to ambivalent reversibility. These include: i. a precedence of words over concepts, ii. adversarial springboard (i.e., polemics) as a way of activating symbolic theorizing on the model of the counter-gift and iii. ecstatic theoretical objects stressing symbolic excess as a reversible form. It is demonstrated how these play into a symbolic writing in continuous change and metamorphosis, irreducible to a string of isolated conceptual objects and concepts. In fine, theory as symbolic exchange provided Baudrillard with a style part and parcel of the vital illusion rather than remaining, in his judgement, caught in banal simulation.

#### The rules of the game are present to channel meaning into their interpretation or their use of the topic as an assertion of control

Baudrillard 91 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “The Gulf War Did Not Take Place” http://halliejones.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Baudrillard-The-Gulf-War-did-not-Take-Place.pdf)//meb

Empty war: it brings to mind those games in World Cup football which often had to be decided by penalties (sorry spectacle), because of the impossibility of forcing a decision. As though the players punished themselves by means of "penalties" for not having been able to play and take the match in full battle. We might as well have begun with the penalties and dispensed with the game and its sterile stand-off. So with the war: it could have begun at the end and spared us the forced spectacle of this unreal war where nothing is extreme and which, whatever the outcome, will leave behind the smell of undigested programming, and the entire world irritated as though after an unsuccessful copulation. It is a war of excesses (of means, of material. etc.), a war of shedding or purging stocks, of experimental deployment, of liquidation and firesale, along with the display of future ranges of weaponry. A war between excessive, superabundant and overequipped societies (Iraq included), committed both to waste (including human waste) and the necessity of getting rid of it. Just as the waste of time nourishes the hell of leisure, so technological wastes nourish the hell of war. Wastes which incarnate the secret violence of this society, uncoerced and non-degradable defecation. The renowned American stocks of WW II surplus, which appeared to us as luxury, have become a suffocating global burden, and war functions well within its possibilities in this role of purgative and expenditure. If the critical intellectual is in the process of disappearing, it seems by contrast that his phobia of the real and of action has been distilled throughout the sanguineous and cerebral network of our institutions. In this sense, the entire world including the military is caught up in a process of intellectualisation. See them become confused in explanations, outdo themselves in justifications and lose themselves in technical details (war drifts slowly into technological mannerism) or in the deontology of a pure electronic war without hitches: these are aesthetes speaking, postponing settlement dates into the interminable and decisions into the undecidable. Their warprocessors, their radars, their lasers and their screens render the passage to war as futile and impossible as the use of a word-processor renders futile and impossible the passage to the act of writing, because it removes from it in advance any dramatic uncertainty. The generals also exhaust their artificial intelligence in correcting their scenario, polishing their war script so much that they sometimes make errors of manipulation and lose the plot. The famous philosophical epoche has become universal, on the screens as much as on the field of battle. Should we applaud the fact that all these techniques of warprocessing culminate in the elision of the duration and the violence of war? Only eventually, for the indefinite delay of the war is itself heavy with deadly consequences in all domains. By virtue of having been anticipated in all its details and exhausted by all the scenarios, this war ends up resembling the hero of Italien des Roses (Richard Bohringer in the film by Charles Matton), who hesitates to dive from the top of a building for an hour and a half, before a crowd at first hanging on his movements, then disappointed and overcome by the suspense, exactly as we are today by the media blackmail and the illusion of war. It is as though it had taken place ten times already: why would we want it to take place again? It is the same in Italien des Roses : we know that his imaginary credit is exhausted and that he will not jump, and in the end nobody gives a damn whether he jumps or not because the real event is already left behind. This is the problem with anticipation. Is there still a chance that something which has been meticulously programmed will occur? Does a truth which has been meticulously demonstrated still have a chance of being true? When too many things point in the same direction, when the objective reasons pile up, the effect is reversed. Thus everything which points to war is ambiguous: the build-up of force, the play of tension, the concentration of weapons, even the green light from the UN. Far from reinforcing the probability of the conflict, these function as a preventative accumulation, as a substitution for and diversion from the transition to war. Virtual for five months, the war will shortly enter its terminal phase, according to the rule which says that what never began ends without having taken place. The profound indeterminacy of this war stems from the fact of its being both terminated in advance and interminable. The virtual succeeds itself – accidents aside, which could only be the irruption of the other in the field. But no-one wants to hear talk of the other. Ultimately, the undecidability of the war is grounded in the disappearance of alterity, of primitive hostility, and of the enemy. War has become a celibate machine.

# kritiks

## capitalism

#### They have to beat our framing on case before any of the K can be weighed—the system has transitioned into the realm of the hyperreal and no longer operates on the plane of material reality.

#### Capitalism has transitioned to operating on the plane of semiotics—your alt fails

Robinson 12 (Andrew Robinson, political theorist and activist, “Jean Baudrillard: The Rise of Capitalism and the Exclusion of Death” https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-2/)//meb

Symbolic exchange – or rather, its suppression – plays a central role in the emergence of capitalism. Baudrillard sees a change happening over time. Regimes based on symbolic exchange (differences are exchangeable and related) are replaced by regimes based on equivalence (everything is, or means, the same). Ceremony gives way to spectacle, immanence to transcendence. Baudrillard’s view of capitalism is derived from Marx’s analysis of value. Baudrillard accepts Marx’s view that capitalism is based on a general equivalent. Money is the general equivalent because it can be exchanged for any commodity. In turn, it expresses the value of abstract labour-time. Abstract labour-time is itself an effect of the regimenting of processes of life, so that different kinds of labour can be compared. Capitalism is derived from the autonomisation or separation of economics from the rest of life. It turns economics into the ‘reality-principle’. It is a kind of sorcery, connected in some way to the disavowed symbolic level. It subtly shifts the social world from an exchange of death with the Other to an eternal return of the Same. Capitalism functions by reducing everything to a regime based on value and the production of value. To be accepted by capital, something must contribute value. This creates an immense regime of social exchange. However, this social exchange has little in common with symbolic exchange. It ultimately depends on the mark of value itself being unexchangeable. Capital must be endlessly accumulated. States must not collapse. Capitalism thus introduces the irreversible into social life, by means of accumulation. According to Baudrillard, capitalism rests on an obsession with the abolition of death. Capitalism tries to abolish death through accumulation. It tries to ward off ambivalence (associated with death) through value (associated with life). But this is bound to fail. General equivalence – the basis of capitalism – is itself the ever-presence of death. The more the system runs from death, the more it places everyone in solitude, facing their own death. Life itself is fundamentally ambivalent. The attempt to abolish death through fixed value is itself deathly. Accumulation also spreads to other fields. The idea of progress, and linear time, comes from the accumulation of time, and of stockpiles of the past. The idea of truth comes from the accumulation of scientific knowledge. Biology rests on the separation of living and non-living. According to Baudrillard, such accumulations are now in crisis. For instance, the accumulation of the past is undermined, because historical objects now have to be concealed to be preserved – otherwise they will be destroyed by excessive consumption. Value is produced from the residue or remainder of an incomplete symbolic exchange. The repressed, market value, and sign-value all come from this remainder. To destroy the remainder would be to destroy value. Capitalist exchange is always based on negotiation, even when it is violent. The symbolic order does not know this kind of equivalential exchange or calculation. And capitalist extraction is always one-way. It amounts to a non-reversible aggression in which one act (of dominating or killing) cannot be returned by the other. It is also this regime which produces scarcity – Baudrillard here endorses [Sahlins’ argument](http://www.primitivism.com/original-affluent.htm). Capitalism produces the Freudian “death drive”, which is actually an effect of the capitalist culture of death. For Baudrillard, the limit to both Marx and Freud is that they fail to theorise the separation of the domains they study – the economy and the unconscious. It is the separation which grounds their functioning, which therefore only occurs under the regime of the code. Baudrillard also criticises theories of desire, including those of Deleuze, Foucault, Freud and Lacan. He believes desire comes into existence based on repression. It is an effect of the denial of the symbolic. Liberated energies always leave a new remainder; they do not escape the basis of the unconscious in the remainder. Baudrillard argues that indigenous groups do not claim to live naturally or by their desires – they simply claim to live in societies. This social life is an effect of the symbolic. Baudrillard therefore criticises the view that human liberation can come about through the liberation of desire. He thinks that such a liberation will keep certain elements of the repression of desire active. Baudrillard argues that the processes which operate collectively in indigenous groups are repressed into the unconscious in metropolitan societies. This leads to the autonomy of the psyche as a separate sphere. It is only after this repression has occurred that a politics of desire becomes conceivable. He professes broad agreement with the Deleuzian project of unbinding energies from fixed categories and encouraging flows and intensities. However, he is concerned that capitalism can recuperate such releases of energy, disconnecting them so they can eventually reconnect to it. Unbinding and drifting are not fatal to capitalism, because capitalism itself unbinds things, and re-binds things which are unbound. What is fatal to it is, rather, reversibility. Capitalism continues to be haunted by the forces it has repressed. Separation does not destroy the remainder. Quite the opposite. The remainder continues to exist, and gains power from its repression. This turns the double or shadow into something unquiet, vampiric, and threatening. It becomes an image of the forgotten dead. Anything which reminds us of the repressed aspects excluded from the subject is experienced as uncanny and threatening. It becomes the ‘obscene’, which is present in excess over the ‘scene’ of what is imagined.

#### Production and labor were central to the system, but because of their centrality they came to be reproduced just for the sake of themselves, creating the simulacra and the disappearance of the real

Gane 16 (Mike Gane, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Loughborough University, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” http://dl.finebook.ir/book/79/15884.pdf)//meb

If we turn to Symbolic Exchange and Death we can follow the analyses of the ideological process. Chapter 1, on capitalism and production, is perhaps a crucial analysis. It is curious in many respects. It is written in a highly rhetorical style, playful, wilfully malicious. Although the analyses of simulation, fashion, sexuality, death, are likely to be more celebrated, this first chapter in a sense is more fundamental yet the text is both assertive, dogmatic and at the same time illusive. The writing is in the main unsupported by any burden of evidence or any attempt at systematic argument, as if a highly perverse dialectical mania had grasped the writer. First of all Baudrillard presents the thesis that in order to grasp the nature of modern capitalism it must be thought of not as a mode of production but as a code dominated by the 'structural law of value'. This term is obviously developed from Marx's own law of value, but here it detaches itself from economics and becomes a mechanism which invades all cultural spheres. In other words all spheres can be analysed as the process of the political economy of the sign. Baudrillard insists in fact that the development of modern society is uneven, and like Weber argues that the process first attacks art, politics and culture and then the economy itself. The economy, after having passed through a specific phase of simulation known as the capitalist mode of production (the phase of the factory, etc.), undergoes an ironic logic since the mode of production inverts itself and begins to destroy the very separations it was built upon. Capital itself proceeds to destroy the hierarchy of base and superstructure, of production and reproduction, of labour and capital. There are two steps in the argument which must be examined. The first is the argument concerning the nature of the change of the terms within the capitalist mode of production. The second is the argument concerning the relation between the symbolic order and capitalism. The character of the former argument is perhaps best grasped as process occurring at an already advanced stage of the destruction of the natural economy of primitive symbolic exchange (the argument follows on from that presented in The Mirror of Production). For Baudrillard the primitive society has no 'mode of production', indeed perhaps industrial factory capitalism is the only 'mode of production' that has existed as such. However, once the structural law of value attacks the elements of the system the code becomes determinant, ending any order of causation between the spheres of production and consumption. Hence the historical dialectic between them comes to an end. Baudrillard produces the irony of the Althusserian version of Marx which suggested that reproduction (class struggle) was determinant in history, for Baudrillard suggests that when reproduction becomes dominant labour and production change their sense, they lose their finality, that is, they lose their rationality as purposeful work as they become reproduced for the sake of the reproduction of work itself. This idea reflects the great change that has occurred in Western societies in relation to the meaning of the term alienation. When this happens all elements in the system are affected as the proletariat is incorporated into the social order; trade unions, strikes, revolts such as May '68 lose their claim to justice and radicality. Indeed the organisations and theoreticians who mark time with insistence on the centrality of 'production' and 'labour' and those who believe in 'the use-value of their labour power the proletariat are virtually the most mystified and the least susceptible to this revolt' (p. 30 below). Baudrillard reorganises the theory of resistance and revolt from one based on internal system contradiction (Marx) to that of exclusion and excommunication (Durkheim and Mauss). The second element in the argument is the scope and role Baudrillard gives to the symbolic order within the capitalist system. It almost appears as a replacement for the notion of a social infrastructure, and on occasions Baudrillard has formulations which approach this image. It is a mistake, then, to think that Symbolic Exchange and Death is simply about the 'ideological process' of the reduction of the symbolic by the semiotic. It is also about the irruption of the symbolic within the semiotic. The challenge, the stake is, he says, a dimension 'immanent in the code' (p. 39 below). In an analysis which at first sight appears slightly facile, the terms Baudrillard uses to analyse capitalism reverse all previous conceptions. The capitalist presents the gift of work to the proletarian. Because the proletarian cannot return this gift and cannot cancel it he cannot cancel the power of the capitalist. But the position and order of the capitalist is vulnerable none the less, since Baudrillard claims nothing can evade symbolic obligation, indeed not even the system itself: terrorism, the taking of hostages, sacrificial martyrdom, are challenges to the system which pass into the symbolic order. If there is a strategy in Baudrillard's work perhaps this is where it is discussed: the fundamental challenge to the semiotic system will be in the form of a gift which it will not be able to return (pp. 3643 below).

#### You haven’t escaped the political economy because you still operate within second-order simulacra.

Baudrillard 93 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” http://dl.finebook.ir/book/79/15884.pdf)//meb

The reality principle corresponded to a certain stage of the law of value. Today the whole system is swamped by indeterminacy, and every reality is absorbed by the hyperreality of the code and simulation. The principle of simulation governs us now, rather than the outdated reality principle. We feed on those forms whose finalities have disappeared. No more ideology, only simulacra. We must therefore reconstruct the entire genealogy of the law of Value and its simulacra in order to grasp the hegemony and the enchantment of the current system. A structural revolution of value. This genealogy must cover political economy, where it will appear as a second-order simulacrum, just like all those that stake everything on the real: the real of production, the real of signification, whether conscious or unconscious. Capital no longer belongs to the order of political economy: it operates with political economy as its simulated model. The entire apparatus of the commodity law of value is absorbed and recycled in the larger apparatus of the structural law of value, thus becoming part of the third order of simulacra (see below). Political economy is thus assured a second life, an eternity, within the confines of an apparatus in which it has lost all its strict determinacy, but maintains an effective presence as a system of reference for simulation. It was exactly the same for the previous apparatus the natural law of value which the system of political economy and the market law of value also appropriated as their imaginary system of reference ('Nature'): 'nature' leads a ghostly existence as use-value at the core of exchange-value. But on the next twist of the spiral, use-value is seized as an alibi within the dominant order of the code. Each configuration of value is seized by the next in a higher order of simulacra. And each phase of value integrates the prior apparatus into its own as a phantom reference, a puppet reference, a simulated reference. A revolution separates each order from its successor: these are the only genuine revolutions. We are in the third order, which is the order no longer of the real, but of the hyperreal. It is only here that theories and practices, themselves floating and indeterminate, can reach the real and beat it to death. Contemporary revolutions are indexed on the immediately prior state of the system. They are all buttressed by a nostalgia for the resurrection of the real in all its forms, that is, as second-order simulacra: dialectics, use-value, the transparency and finality of production, the 'liberation' of the unconscious, of repressed meaning (the signifier, or the signified named 'desire'), and so on. All these liberations provide the ideal content for the system to devour in its successive revolutions, and which it brings subtly back to life as mere phantasmas of revolution. These revolutions are only transitions towards generalised manipulation. At the stage of the aleatory processes of control, even revolution becomes meaningless. The rational, referential, historical and functional machines of consciousness correspond to industrial machines. The aleatory, non-referential, transferential, indeterminate and floating machines of the unconscious respond to the aleatory machines of the code. But even the unconscious is reabsorbed by this operation, and it has long since lost its own reality principle to become an operational simulacrum. At the precise point that its psychical reality principle merges into its psychoanalytic reality principle, the unconscious, like political economy, also becomes a model of simulation. The systemic strategy is merely to invoke a number of floating values in this hyperreality. This is as true of the unconscious as it is of money and theories. Value rules according to the indiscernible order of generation by means of models, according to the infinite chains of simulation. Cybernetic operativity, the genetic code, the aleatory order of mutation, the uncertainty principle, etc., succeed determinate, objectivist science, and the dialectical view of history and consciousness. Even critical theory, along with the revolution, turns into a second-order simulacrum, as do all determinate processes. The deployment of third-order simulacra sweeps all this away, and to attempt to reinstate dialectics, 'objective' contradictions, and so on, against them would be a futile political regression. You can't fight the aleatory by imposing finalities, you can't fight against programmed and molecular dispersion with prises de conscience and dialectical sublation, you can't fight the code with political economy, nor with 'revolution'. All these outdated weapons (including those we find in first-order simulacra, in the ethics and metaphysics of man and nature, use-value, and other liberatory systems of reference) are gradually neutralised by a higher-order general system. Everything that filters into the non-finality of the space-time of the code, or that attempts to intervene in it, is disconnected from its own ends, disintegrated and absorbed. This is the well known effect of recuperation, manipulation, of circulating and recycling at every level. 'All dissent must be of a higher logical type than that to which it is opposed' (Anthony, Wilden, System and Structure [London: Tavistock, 1977], p. xxvii). Is it at least possible to find an even match to oppose third-order simulacra? Is there a theory or a practice which is subversive because it is more aleatory than the system itself, an indeterminate subversion which would be to the order of the code what the revolution was to the order of political economy? Can we fight DNA? Certainly not by means of the class struggle. Perhaps simulacra of a higher logical (or illogical)order could be invented: beyond the current third order, beyond determinacy and indeterminacy. But would they still be simulacra? Perhaps death and death alone, the reversibility of death, belongs to a higher order than the code. Only symbolic disorder can bring about an interruption in the code. Identity is untenable: it is death, since it fails to inscribe its own death. Every closed or metastable, functional or cybernetic system is shadowed by mockery and instantaneous subversion (which no longer takes the detour through long dialectical labour), because all the system's inertia acts against it. Ambivalence awaits the most advanced systems, that, like Leibniz's binary God, have deified their functional principle. The fascination they exert, because it derives from a profound denial such as we find in fetishism, can be instantaneously reversed. Hence their fragility increases in proportion to their ideal coherence. These systems, even when they are based on radical indeterminacy (the loss of meaning), fall prey, once more, to meaning. They collapse under the weight of their own monstrosity, like fossilised dinosaurs, and immediately decompose. This is the fatality of every system committed by its own logic to total perfection and therefore to a total defectiveness, to absolute infallibility and therefore irrevocable breakdown: the aim of all bound energies is their own death. This is why the only strategy is catastrophic, and not dialectical at all. Things must be pushed to the limit, where quite naturally they collapse and are inverted. At the peak of value we are closest to ambivalence, at the pinnacle of coherence we are closest to the abyss of corruption which haunts the reduplicated signs of the code. Simulation must go further than the system. Death must be played against death: a radical tautology that makes the system's own logic the ultimate weapon. The only strategy against the hyperrealist system is some form of pataphysics, 'a science of imaginary solutions'; that is, a science-fiction of the system's reversal against itself at the extreme limit of simulation, a reversible simulation in a hyperlogic of death and destruction. 1 The symbolic demands meticulous reversibility. Ex-terminate every term, abolish value in the term's revolution against itself: that is the only symbolic violence equivalent to and triumphant over the structural violence of the code. A revolutionary dialectic corresponded to the commodity law of value and its equivalents; only the scrupulous reversion of death corresponds to the code's indeterminacy and the structural law of value.2 Strictly speaking, nothing remains for us to base anything on. All that remains for us is theoretical violence speculation to the death, whose only method is the radicalisation of hypotheses. Even the code and the symbolic remain terms of simulation: it must be possible to extract them, one by one, from discourse.

## afropessimism

#### **The commodification and coding of the Other structures racist libidinal interactions**

bell hooks 92 (bell hooks, author, feminist, and social activist, “Black Looks: Race and Representation” https://aboutabicycle.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/bell-hooks-black-looks-race-and-representation.pdf)//meb

Within current debates about race and difference, mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference. The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. Cultural taboos around sexuality and desire are transgressed and made explicit as the media bombards folks with a message of difference no longer based on the white supremacist assumption that “blondes have more fun.” The “real fun” is to be had by bringing to the surface all those “nasty” unconscious fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy. In many ways it is a contemporary revival of interest in the “primitive,” with a distinctly postmodern slant. As Marianna Torgovnick argues in Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives: What is clear now is that the West’s fascination with the primitive has to do with its own crises in identity, with its own need to clearly demarcate subject and object even while flirting with other ways of experiencing the universe. Certainly from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the hope is that desires for the “primitive” or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo. Whether or not desire for contact with the Other, for connection rooted in the longing for pleasure, can act as a critical intervention challenging and subverting racist domination, inviting and enabling critical resistance, is an unrealized political possibility. Exploring how desire for the Other is expressed, manipulated, and transformed by encounters with difference and the different is a critical terrain that can indicate whether these potentially revolutionary longings are ever fulfilled. Contemporary working-class British slang playfully converges the discourse of desire, sexuality, and the Other, evoking the phrase getting “a bit of the Other” as a way to speak about sexual encounter. Fucking is the Other. Displacing the notion of Otherness from race, ethnicity, skin-color, the body emerges as a site of contestation where sexuality is the metaphoric Other that threatens to take over, consume, transform via the experience of pleasure. Desired and sought after, sexual pleasure alters the consenting subject, deconstructing notions of will, control, coercive domination. Commodity culture in the United States exploits conventional thinking about race, gender, and sexual desire by “working” both the idea that racial difference marks one as Other and the assumption that sexual agency expressed within the context of racialized sexual encounter is a conversion experience that alters one’s place and participation in contemporary cultural politics. The seductive promise of this encounter is that it will counter the terrorizing force of the status quo that makes identity fixed, static, a condition of containment and death. And that it is this willingness to transgress racial boundaries within the realm of the sexual that eradicates the fear that one must always conform to the norm to remain “safe.” Difference can seduce precisely because the mainstream imposition of sameness is a provocation that terrorizes. And as Jean Baudrillard suggests in Fatal Strategies: Provocation – unlike seduction, which allows things to come into play and appear in secret, dual and ambiguous – does not leave you free to be; it calls on you to reveal yourself as you are. It is always blackmail by identity (and thus a symbolic murder, since you are never that, except precisely by being condemned to it).

#### Perm do the aff: we make the whole system incoherent, which solves better

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Is there a theory or a practice which is subversive because it is more aleatory than the system itself, an indeterminate subversion which would be to the order of the code what the revolution was to the order of political economy? Can we fight DNA? Certainly not by means of the class struggle. Perhaps simulacra of a higher logical (or illogical)order could be invented: beyond the current third order, beyond determinacy and indeterminacy. But would they still be simulacra? Perhaps death and death alone, the reversibility of death, belongs to a higher order than the code. Only symbolic disorder can bring about an interruption in the code. Identity is untenable: it is death, since it fails to inscribe its own death. Every closed or metastable, functional or cybernetic system is shadowed by mockery and instantaneous subversion (which no longer takes the detour through long dialectical labour), because all the system's inertia acts against it. Ambivalence awaits the most advanced systems, that, like Leibniz's binary God, have deified their functional principle. The fascination they exert, because it derives from a profound denial such as we find in fetishism, can be instantaneously reversed. Hence their fragility increases in proportion to their ideal coherence. These systems, even when they are based on radical indeterminacy (the loss of meaning), fall prey, once more, to meaning. They collapse under the weight of their own monstrosity, like fossilised dinosaurs, and immediately decompose. This is the fatality of every system committed by its own logic to total perfection and therefore to a total defectiveness, to absolute infallibility and therefore irrevocable breakdown: the aim of all bound energies is their own death. This is why the only strategy is catastrophic, and not dialectical at all. Things must be pushed to the limit, where quite naturally they collapse and are inverted. At the peak of value we are closest to ambivalence, at the pinnacle of coherence we are closest to the abyss of corruption which haunts the reduplicated signs of the code. Simulation must go further than the system. Death must be played against death: a radical tautology that makes the system's own logic the ultimate weapon. The only strategy against the hyperrealist system is some form of pataphysics, 'a science of imaginary solutions'; that is, a science-fiction of the system's reversal against itself at the extreme limit of simulation, a reversible simulation in a hyperlogic of death and destruction. 1 The symbolic demands meticulous reversibility. Ex-terminate every term, abolish value in the term's revolution against itself: that is the only symbolic violence equivalent to and triumphant over the structural violence of the code. A revolutionary dialectic corresponded to the commodity law of value and its equivalents; only the scrupulous reversion of death corresponds to the code's indeterminacy and the structural law of value.2 Strictly speaking, nothing remains for us to base anything on. All that remains for us is theoretical violence speculation to the death, whose only method is the radicalisation of hypotheses. Even the code and the symbolic remain terms of simulation: it must be possible to extract them, one by one, from discourse.

#### The Symbolic Order is contingent, not a permanent and unchanging matrix of cultural meaning and symbols. they are simply wrong about the grammar of anti-Black violence being unmovable

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Thus the self-same/other distinction is necessary for the possibility of identity itself. There always has to exist an outside, which is also inside, to the extent it is designated as the impossibility from which the possibility of the existence of the subject derives its rule (Badiou 2009, 220). But although the excluded place which isn’t excluded insofar as it is necessary for the very possibility of inclusion and identity may be universal (may be considered “ontological”), its content (what fills it) – as well as the mode of this filling and its reproduction – are contingent. In other words, the meaning of the signifier of exclusion is not determined once and for all: the place of the place of exclusion, of death is itself over-determined, i.e. the very ¶ framework for deciding the other and the same, exclusion and inclusion, is nowhere engraved in ontological stone but is political and never terminally settled. Put differently, the “curvature of intersubjective space” (Critchley 2007, 61) and thus, the specific modes of the “othering” of “otherness” are nowhere decided in advance (as a certain ontological fatalism might have it) (see Wilderson 2008). The social does not have to be divided into white and black, and the meaning of these signifiers is never necessary – because they are signifiers. ¶ To be sure, colonialism institutes an ontological division, in that whites exist in a way barred to blacks – ¶ who are not. But this ontological relation is really on the side of the ontic – that is, of all contingently ¶ constructed identities, rather than the ontology of the social which refers to the ultimate unfixity, the ¶ indeterminacy or lack of the social. In this sense, then, the white man doesn’t exist, the black man doesn’t exist (Fanon ¶ 1968, 165); and neither does the colonial symbolic itself, including its most intimate structuring relations – division is constitutive of the social, not the colonial division. ¶ “Whiteness” may well be very deeply sediment in modernity itself, but respect for the “ontological difference” (see Heidegger 1962, 26; Watts 2011, 279) shows up its ontological status as ontic. It may be so deeply sedimented that it becomes difficult even to identify the very possibility of the separation of whiteness from the very possibility of order, but from this it does not follow that the “void” of “black being” functions as the ultimate substance, the transcendental signified on which all possible forms of sociality are said to rest. What gets lost here, then, is the specificity of colonialism, of its constitutive axis, its “ontological” differential. A crucial feature of the colonial symbolic is that the real is not screened off by the imaginary in the way it is under capitalism. At the place of the colonised, the symbolic and the imaginary give way because non-identity (the real of the social) is immediately inscribed in the “lived experience” (vécu) of the colonised subject. The colonised is “traversing the fantasy” (Zizek 2006a, 40–60) all the time; the void of the verb “to be” is the very content of his interpellation. The colonised is, in other words, the subject of anxiety for whom the symbolic and the ¶ imaginary never work, who is left stranded by his very interpellation. “Fixed” into “non-fixity,” he is eternally suspended between “element” and “moment”– he is where the colonial symbolic falters in the production of meaning and is thus the point of entry of the real into the texture itself of colonialism. ¶ Be this as it may, whiteness and blackness are (sustained by) determinate and contingent practices of signification; the “structuring relation” of colonialism thus itself comprises a knot of significations which, no matter how tight, can always be undone. Anti-colonial – i.e., anti-“white” – modes of struggle are not (just) “psychic” but involve the “reactivation” (or “de-sedimentation”)7 of colonial objectivity itself. No matter how sedimented (or global), colonial objectivity is ¶ not ontologically immune to antagonism. Differentiality, as Zizek insists (see Zizek 2012, chapter 11, 771 n48), immanently entails antagonism in that differentiality both makes possible the existence of any identity whatsoever and at the same time – because it is the presence of one object in another – undermines any identity ever being (fully) itself. Each element in a differential relation is the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of each other. It is this dimension of antagonism that the Master Signifier covers over transforming its outside (Other) into an element of itself, reducing it to a condition of its possibility.

## settlerism

#### The simulacral system structures violent incorporation of the Other into Western hegemonic order—the system of simulations allows cultural appropriation that is the root of their impacts

bell hooks 92 (bell hooks, author, feminist, and social activist, “Black Looks: Race and Representation” https://aboutabicycle.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/bell-hooks-black-looks-race-and-representation.pdf)//meb

The current wave of “imperialist nostalgia” (defined by Renato Rosaldo in Culture and Truth as “nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” or as “a process of yearning for what one has destroyed that is a form of mystification”) often obscures contemporary cultural strategies deployed not to mourn but to celebrate the sense of a continuum of “primitivism.” In mass culture, imperialist nostalgia takes the form of reenacting and reritualizing in different ways the imperialist, colonizing journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by the Other. This longing is rooted in the atavistic belief that the spirit of the “primitive” resides in the bodies of dark Others whose cultures, traditions, and lifestyles may indeed be irrevocably changed by imperialism, colonization, and racist domination. The desire to make contact with those bodies deemed Other, with no apparent will to dominate, assuages the guilt of the past, even takes the form of a defiant gesture where one denies accountability and historical connection. Most importantly, it establishes a contemporary narrative where the suffering imposed by structures of domination on those designated Other is deflected by an emphasis on seduction and longing where the desire is not to make the Other over in one’s image but to become the Other. Whereas mournful imperialist nostalgia constitutes the betrayed and abandoned world of the Other as an accumulation of lack and loss, contemporary longing for the “primitive” is expressed by the projection onto the Other of a sense of plenty, bounty, a field of dreams. Commenting on this strategy in “Readings in Cultural Resistance,” Hal Foster contends, “Difference is thus used productively; indeed, in a social order which seems to know no outside (and which must contrive its own transgressions to redefine its limits), difference is often fabricated in the interests of social control as well as of commodity innovation.” Masses of young people dissatisfied by U.S. imperialism, unemployment, lack of economic opportunity, afflicted by the postmodern malaise of alienation, no sense of grounding, no redemptive identity, can be manipulated by cultural strategies that offer Otherness as appeasement, particularly through commodification. The contemporary crises of identity in the west, especially as experienced by white youth, are eased when the “primitive” is recouped via a focus on diversity and pluralism which suggests the Other can provide life-sustaining alternatives. Concurrently, diverse ethnic/racial groups can also embrace this sense of specialness, that histories and experience once seen as worthy only of disdain can be looked upon with awe. Cultural appropriation of the Other assuages feelings of deprivation and lack that assault the psyches of radical white youth who choose to be disloyal to western civilization. Concurrently, marginalized groups, deemed Other, who have been ignored, rendered invisible, can be seduced by the emphasis on Otherness, by its commodification, because it offers the promise of recognition and reconciliation. When the dominant culture demands that the Other be offered as sign that progressive political change is taking place, that the American Dream can indeed be inclusive of difference, it invites a resurgence of essentialist cultural nationalism. The acknowledged Other must assume recognizable forms. Hence, it is not African American culture formed in resistance to contemporary situations that surfaces, but nostalgic evocation of a “glorious” past. And even though the focus is often on the ways that this past was “superior” to the present, this cultural narrative relies on stereotypes of the “primitive,” even as it eschews the term, to evoke a world where black people were in harmony with nature and with one another. This narrative is linked to white western conceptions of the dark Other, not to a radical questioning of those representations.

# DAs

## STEM

#### The banality and inaccuracy of science education reflects the way that simulations operate as a replacement of the real, a destruction of the referent, as opposed to its descriptor

Blades 1 (David W. Blades, Professor of Science Education and Curriculum Studies at University of Victoria, “The Simulacra of Science Education” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/42976388.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1cea938b0da0ae7403f6d54d16223470)//meb> \*edited for ableist language

Sometimes, if students are lucky, they break the tedium of writing to engage in so-called "experiments" to "prove" the concepts presented by the teacher. These activities, one might argue, at least provide students the opportunity to directly experience reality as well as gain insight into the professional practice of modern science. Baudrillard (1993/1983) warns, however, that "banality is the fatality of our modern world" (p.45) as the real slips to the hyperreal. The ~~bulimia~~ of science reaches advanced stages as student classroom experiences of science increasingly feature nice, tidy, banal experiments that have little to do with reality. In his critique of experiments in science education, Millar (1998) provides an excellent example of this banality in the classic middle years or secondary school biology laboratory exercise on digestion using dialy- sis tubing. Students fill a semi-permeable tube of plastic with a mixture of starch and glucose solutions, tie the bag shut, and leave the bag in distilled water for a length of time, often overnight. Students then test the water for the presence of starch and glucose. There is nothing experimental in this procedure; students are expected to discover glucose diffused into the water but not starch and are subsequently encouraged to relate this movement to the degree of permeability of the bag. Millar notes that this experiment is supposed to model the movement of substances in the process of digestion. The model, he argues, "provides no warrant whatsoever for accepting this account of digestion" (p.22) since, as he points out, the "practical work is not carried out on the real system we want the students to understand, but a model of it" (p.22). Even the model is questionable. Digestion involves considerable mechanical movement and intestines are not passive tubes nor are intestines tied at each end! The assimilation of substances into the bloodstream is a complex process not even remotely replicated in this banal model. The experience could be more concrete if students were allowed to handle intestines of an animal provided by the local slaughter- house or butcher. Discussions on how to test the ability of these intes- tines to absorb various substances allows students to enter the experience of actual experimentation as they contact the messy, bloody entrails of reality. Students might examine and explore how intestines, divorced from what gave them life, no longer function well, or how these intes- tines differ from their human counterparts, an invitation to authentic questioning instead of the banality of toying with tidy little plastic bags and following a prescriptive set of instructions. School science "experiments" operate, argues Gough (1998), as "theatres of representations" that demonstrate Baudrillard's point that signs become simulacra as they move from masking the absence of reality to no relation to reality whatsoever. Gough lists the many ways school science "experiments" bear no relation at all to the lived world of science (pp.72-7 1. School science is limited in scope and significance by the "individualistic, small-scale, low-tech 'bench work' to which school laboratories are suited" (P-73). 2. The valorization of the so-called scientific method in school science does not reflect the pragmatic realities scientists routinely experience. 3. The progress of science is presented as positive, tidy, and linear in schools, masking the reality that experiments are not necessarily the only way scientific knowledge develops and that there is a social-political context in the formation of scientific ideas. 4. Science education raises the exact use of science terms, such as "work," to a level of abstract correctness that bears little relation to everyday experience. A child holding a book in mid-air will experience the effort required to keep the book steady. Technically, since the book is not moving over a distance no work is completed in the scientific sense of w= f x d. Aside from strict Newtonian applications, however, it is clear to the child in the everyday sense that she or he is working! Teachers, in the sign of science education, rarely resist the urge to correct the child's language and fail to make a distinction between the roles of language in science. Gough's observations suggest that science classrooms everywhere produce a version of reality that bears no relation to the lived world of science. I was closer to science when I learned about proportions as I mixed and heated chemicals at home than when I engaged in any so- called experiments at school. Of course, there was a distinct element of danger in my home studies as there is in any experiment that by definition involves carrying out inquiries where the result is not known. Instead, children worldwide practice banal, safe, totally predictable experiments, where every aspect of what should turn out was already known by the teacher or available in the teachers' guide to the textbook. But the danger does not lie so much with opportunities for children to contact the world than our pathological determination to constantly invent the world for them. As Baudrillard (1996/1992) points out, the fatality of this absence is to live in the banal rather than search for the authentic; in science education this banality arises as we invite children to conduct experiments that have no experimentation, call it science, and so distance our children from anything like science: the perfect simula- cra.

#### **Science attempts objectivity and thus proliferates its own useless, simulated referents—the ethics of objectivity are designed to preserve the violent system that has simulated the illusion of the possibility of complete control or understanding**

Baudrillard 93 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5o2oXdmBrRYbHR5VGlWM242LVE/view)//meb

We find this again, under the rigorous sign of 'science', in Jacques Monod's Chance and Necessity [tr. Austyn Wainhouse, London: Collins, 1970]. The end of dialectical evolution. Life is now ruled by the discontinuous indeterminacy of the genetic code, by the teleonomic principle. Finality is no longer at the end, there is no more finality, nor any determinacy. Finality is there in advance, inscribed in the code. We can see that nothing has changed the order of ends has ceded its place to molecular play, as the order of signifieds has yielded to the play of infinitesimal signifiers, condensed into their aleatory commutation. All the transcendental finalities are reduced to an instrument panel. This is still to make recourse to nature however, to an inscription in a 'biological' nature; a phantasm of nature in fact, as it has always been, no longer a metaphysical sanctuary for the origin and substance, but this time, for the code. The code must have an 'objective’ basis. What better than molecules and genetics? Monod is the strict theologian of this molecular transcendence, Edgar Morin its ecstatic supporter (DNA = ADoNaï!). In each of them, however, the phantasm of the code, which is equivalent to the reality of power, is confused with the idealism of the molecule. Again we find the hallucination or illusion of a world reunited under a single principle a homogeneous substance according to the Counter-Reformation Jesuits. With Leibniz and his binary deity as their precursor, the technocrats of the biological (as well as the linguistic) sciences opt for the genetic code, for their intended programme has nothing to do with genetics, but is a social and historical programme. Biochemistry hypostatises the ideal of a social order governed by a kind of genetic code, a macromolecular calculus by the PPBS (Planning Programming Budgeting System), its operational circuits radiating over the social body. Here techno-cybernetics finds its 'natural philosophy', as Monod said. The biological and the biochemical have always exerted a fascination, ever since the beginnings of science. In Spencer's organicism (bio-sociologism) it was operative at the level of second and third order structures (following Jacob's classification in The Logic of Life [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989]), while today, in modern biochemistry, this applies to the level of fourth-order structures. Coded similarities and dissimilarities: the exact image of cyberneticised social exchange. We need only add the 'stereospecific complex' to reinject the intracellular communication that Morin will transform into a molecular Eros. Practically and historically, this means that social control by means of the end (and the more or less dialectical providence that ministers to the fulfilment of this end) is replaced with social control by means of prediction, simulation, programmed anticipation and indeterminate mutation, all governed, however, by the code. Instead of a process finalized in accordance with its ideal development, we are dealing with generative models. Instead of prophecy, we fall subject to 'inscription'. There is no radical difference between the two. Only the schemata of control change and, it has to be said, reach a fantastic degree of perfection. From a capitalist productivist society to a neo-capitalist cybernetic order, aiming this time at absolute control: the biological theory of the code has taken up arms in the service of this mutation. Far from 'indeterminate', this mutation is the outcome of an entire history where God, Man, Progress and even History have successively passed away to the advantage of the code, where the death of transcendence benefits immanence, which corresponds to a far more advanced phase of the vertiginous manipulation of social relations. In its infinite reproduction, the system puts an end to the myth of its origin and to all the referential values it has itself secreted in the course of its process. By putting an end to the myth of its origin, it puts an end to its internal contradictions (there is no longer a real or a referential to which to oppose them) and also puts an end to the myth of its end, the revolution itself. With the revolution you could still make out the outline of a victorious human and generic reference, the original potential of ~~man~~. But what if capital wiped generic ~~man~~ ~~him~~self off the map (in favour of genetic ~~man~~)? The revolution's golden age was the age of capital, where myths of the origin and the end were still in circulation. Once these myths were short-circuited (the only threat that capital had ever faced historically came from this mythical demand for rationality which pervaded it from the start) in a de facto operationality, a non-discursive operationality once it became its own myth, or rather an indeterminate, aleatory machine, something like a social genetic code capital no longer left the slightest opportunity for a determinate reversal. This is the real violence of capital. However, it remains to be seen whether this operationality is itself a myth, whether DNA is itself a myth. This effectively poses the problem of the discursive status of science once and for all. In Monod, this discourse is so candidly absolutised that it provides a perfect opportunity for posing the problem: Plato, Heraclitus, Hegel, Marx . . . : these ideological edifices, represented as a priori, were in reality a posteriori constructions designed to justify preconceived ethico-political theories. . . . For science, objectivity is the only a priori postulate of objectivity, which spares, or rather forbids it from taking part in this debate. [Chance and Necessity, p. 98] However, this postulate is itself a result of the never innocent decision to objectify the world and the 'real'. In fact, it postulates the coherence of a specific discourse, and scientificity is doubtless only the space of this discourse, never manifest as such, whose simulacrum of 'objectivity' covers over this political and strategic speech. Besides, Monod clearly expresses the arbitrariness of this discourse a little further on: It may be asked, of course, whether all the invariants, conservations and symmetries that make up the texture of scientific discourse are not fictions substituted for reality in order to obtain a workable image. . . . A logic itself founded upon a purely abstract, perhaps 'conventional', principle of identity a convention with which, however, human reason seems to be incapable of doing without. [ibid., p. 99] We couldn't put it more clearly: science itself determines its generative formula and its discourse model on the basis of a faith in a conventional order (and moreover not just any order, but the order of a total reduction). But Monod quickly glosses over this dangerous hypothesis of 'conventional' identity. A rigid basis would serve science better, an 'objective' reality for example. Physics will testify that identity is not only a postulate, but that it is in things, since there is an 'absolute identity of two atoms when they are found to be in the same quantitative state'. So, is it convention or is it objective reality? The truth is that science, like any other discourse, is organised on the basis of a conventional logic, but, like any other ideological discourse, requires a real, 'objective' reference within the processes of substance in order to justify it. If the principle of identity is in any way 'true', even if this is at the infinitesimal level of two atoms, then the entire conventional edifice of science which draws its inspiration from it is also 'true'. The hypothesis of the genetic code DNA is also true and cannot be defeated. The same goes for metaphysics. Science explains things which have been defined and formalised in advance and which subsequently conform to these explanations, that's all that 'objectivity' is. The ethics that come to sanction this objective knowledge are just systems of defence and misconstrual [méconnaissance] that aim to preserve this vicious circle. 2 As Nietzsche said: 'Down with all hypotheses that have allowed belief in a real world.'

## hegemony

#### The expansion of global American influence has only guaranteed the worldwide murder of the Real—the seductive image of the American Dream is built upon the dominance of simulation that allows global exploitation and elitism

Moser 15 (Keith Moser, Associate Professor of French at Mississippi State University, “Deconstructing Consumerist Signs in an Era of Information: The Post-Semiotic Philosophy of Michel Serres and Jean Baudrillard” http://uv7gq6an4y.scholar.serialssolutions.com/?sid=google&auinit=K&aulast=Moser&atitle=Deconstructing+Consumerist+Signs+in+an+Era+of+Information:+The+Post-Semiotic+Philosophy+of+Michel+Serres+and+Jean+Baudrillard&title=Pennsylvania+literary+journal&volume=7&issue=3&date=2015&spage=94&issn=2151-3066)

In addition to the unheralded expansion of cities that further strengthens the hyper-real, Baudrillard is concerned that the American model is the paradigm that the rest of the world desperately longs to emulate. Given that he identifies America as being in the final stages of simulation where all reality has been effaced by the endless reproduction of enticing images, the phenomenon of Americanization has already resulted in catastrophic consequenc- es. Everyone wants to experience the 'American dream' because of the force of seduction. Hence, the American way of life concretizes globalization itself. Unfortunately, this lifestyle is nothing but an ensnaring mirage or a proliferation of self-referential simulacra that have no basis in reality. Consequently, Baudrillard maintains, "Il n'y a pas pour moi de vérité de l'Amérique" (Amérique 31). Unable to resist the lure of the simulated fantasies that constantly flash across their screens, people everywhere despondently long to have what they think that every American possesses. Yet, they fail to realize that most Americans only acquire signs of contentment and fortune. If global society "continue de rêver de lui (le rêve américain)," then how much longer will it be until the destruction of meaning is complete (Amérique 28)? The seductive images that have 'murdered' reality in the United States appear to be on the verge of replacing reality for good all across the earth. For Baudrillard, this is the very real danger of Americanized globalization. The philosopher asserts that the remainder of the universe appears to be doomed to suffer the same fate as the United States. The entire world seems to be eager to tumble into the abyss of purely symbolic communication triggered by a deluge of meaningless information because of the seductive power of the American dream. In his aptly named article entitled "Americans We Never Were: Teaching American Popular Culture in the Netherlands," Jaap Kooijman highlights the Americanization of global popular culture through the lens of the philosophy of Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard. Kooijman underscores that the American dream has never been anything more than an alluring fantasy even in the United States. As Kooijman explains, "Both Eco and Baudrillard have identified American culture as a form of hyperreality [...] Baudrillard sees America as the ultimate simulacrum, no longer an artificial copy of an authentic original but an endless chain of copies referring to each other" (22). Echoing similar sentiments, Andrew Koch and Rick Elmore affirm, "Baudrillard sees the United States as the farthest along on the path to a simulated environment of symbolic exchange" (556). Given the visible influence of American culture and its simulations of a good(s) life, Kooijman, Koch, and Elmore note that Baudrillard does not think that the other nations of the world are lagging very far behind the United States. According to Baudrillard, Americanized globalization has exacerbated the problem to such an extent that we might have arrived at a crucial tipping point where the hyper-real fiction of the United States has been appropriated by all of humanity. Decrying the omnipresence of American culture and its hollow commercial codes, Baudrillard asserts, "l'Amérique est la version originale de la modernité, nous sommes la version doublée ou sous-titrée" (Amérique76). Elucidating that although the economic dominance of the United States has waned in recent years, the American 'model' has never been more pervasive. As the philosopher hypothesizes, Aujourd'hui, l'Amérique n'a plus la même hégémonie et n'exerce plus le même monopole, mais elle est en quelque sorte incontestée, et incontestable. Elle était une puissance, elle est devenue un modèle [...] Décadence politique et grandeur publicitaire. C'est la même chose pour les Etats-Unis à l'échelle planétaire [...] Il y a comme une puissance mythique et publicitaire de l'Amérique à travers le monde, égale à la polarisation publicitaire autour de crédibilité exponentielle, autoréférentielle et sans fondement véritable, qu'une société entière se stabilise sous perfusion publicitaire (Amérique 113). Baudrillard notes that America might no longer be the uncontested nexus of the global economy, but its semiotic paradigm has taught the rest of the world an important lesson during our Post-Marxist age. Exercising control over the means of transmitting information is the most effective strategy to pacify the masses. When no one is part of the "reality-based community," a revealing phrase uttered during the Bush administration, the hyper-real eclipses the real (Royrvik and Brodersen 638). Global leaders have derived inspiration from the American model where carefully regulated self-referential images have substituted themselves for reality allowing the government to maintain useful fictions that serve the interests of the integrated corporate and political elite. By generating ubiquitous, forceful visions of fame and fortune supposedly accessible to all, the informational assault launched by the 'masters' causes people to place all of their faith in the religion of consumerism. In Amérique, one of Baudrillard's most canonical works, the philosopher reveals his fears that Americanized globalization and everything that it entails is creating an integral reality. This form of what Baudrillard terms "(in)culture" and its elaborate informational networks that reflect non-communication threaten to abolish any semblance of meaning on a global scale (Amérique 13). Serres and Baudrillard assert that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the modern subject to form a stable identity outside of the code in a globalized, hyper-real world. When nothing has any real significance independent of commercial signs, are self-actualization and inner contentment even possible? In other words, both philosophers contend that the consumerist fantasies that endlessly assault us are not innocent fantasies. The hegemonic forces that have meticulously packaged and disseminated these enticing simulacra have created a universal system of exploitation with dire repercussions. Is it still possible to define oneself outside of prefabricated models intentionally designed to maximize profits for transnational entities? By searching for meaning in signs of happiness in lieu of valorizing traditional virtues such as family, friends, and community, is it still possible to live authentically? These disquieting questions incessantly haunt Serres and Baudrillard. Instead of euphorically lauding the information superhighway and the birth of the global village, should we consider the era of information to be a fast track to the utter destruction of meaning?

## nuke war

#### Trying to prevent war in the name of humanity is pointless—especially in the context of the USFG

Baudrillard 91 (Jean Baudrillard, sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, “The Gulf War Did Not Take Place” http://halliejones.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Baudrillard-The-Gulf-War-did-not-Take-Place.pdf)//meb

For the Americans, the enemy does not exist as such. Nothing personal. Your war is of no interest to me, your resistance is of no interest to me. I will destroy you when I am ready. Refusal to bargain, whereas Saddam Hussein, for his part, bargains his war by overbidding in order to fall back, attempting to force the hand by pressure and blackmail, like a hustler trying to sell his goods. The Americans understand nothing in this whole psychodrama of bargaining, they are had every time until, with the wounded pride of the Westerner, they stiffen and impose their conditions. They understand nothing of this floating duel, this passage of arms in which, for a brief moment, the honour and dishonour of each is in play. They know only their virtue, and they are proud of their virtue. If the other wants to play, to trick and to challenge, they will virtuously employ their force. They will oppose the other's traps with their character armour and their armoured tanks. For them, the time of exchange does not exist. But the other, even if he knows that he will concede, cannot do so without another form of procedure. He must be recognized as interlocutor: this is the goal of the exchange. He must be recognised as an enemy: this is the whole aim of the war. For the Americans, bargaining is cheap whereas for the others it is a matter of honour, (mutual) personal recognition, linguistic strategy (language exists, it must be honoured) and respect for time (altercation demands a rhythm, it is the price of there being an Other). The Americans take no account of these primitive subtleties. They have much to learn about symbolic exchange. By contrast, they are winners from an economic point of view. No time lost in discussion, no psychological risk in any duel with the other: it is a way of proving that time does not exist, that the other does not exist, and that all that matters is the model and mastery of the model. From a military point of view, to allow this war to endure in the way they have (instead of applying an Israeli solution and immediately exploiting the imbalance of force while short-circuiting all retaliatory effects), is a clumsy solution lacking in glory and full of perverse effects (Saddam's aura among the Arab masses). Nevertheless, in doing this, they impose a suspense, a temporal vacuum in which they present to themselves and to the entire world the spectacle of their virtual power. They will have allowed the war to endure as long as it takes, not to win but to persuade the whole world of the infallibility of their machine. The victory of the model is more important than victory on the ground. Military success consecrates the triumph of arms, but the programming success consecrates the defeat of time. War-processing, the transparency of the model in the unfolding of the war, the strategy of relentless execution of a program, the electrocution of all reaction and any live initiative, including their own: these are more important from the point of view of general deterrence (of friends and foes alike) than the final result on the ground. Clean war, white war, programmed war: more lethal than the war which sacrifices human lives. We are a long way from annihilation, holocaust and atomic apocalypse, the total war which functions as the archaic imaginary of media hysteria. On the contrary, this kind of preventative, deterrent and punitive war is a warning to everyone not to take extreme measures and inflict upon themselves what they inflict on others (the missionary complex): the rule of the game that says everyone must remain within the limits of their power and not make war by any means whatever. Power must remain virtual and exemplary, in other words, virtuous. The decisive test is the planetary apprenticeship in this regulation. Just as wealth is no longer measured by the ostentation of wealth but by the secret circulation of speculative capital, so war is not measured by being waged but by its speculative unfolding in an abstract, electronic and informational space, the same space in which capital moves. While this conjuncture does not exclude all accident (disorder in the virtual), it is nevertheless true that the probability of the irruption of those extreme measures and mutual violence which we call war is increasingly low.

# neg

## no impact

#### Even if language is violent, we can escape it—the destruction of one system will just produce another, thus we need to understand language’s utility. Our author assumes theirs

Holt 17 (Macon Holt, graduate student at the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of London, “Defanging the Violence of Language and the End of the World

Last month, Alexander Buk-Swienty made a welcome return to the pages of the Ark Review with the short but thought provoking essay [The Violence of Language and Literature](http://arkbooks.dk/the-violence-of-language-and-literature/). In the essay, he argued—from a Lacanian/Žižekian perspective—that more attention needs to be paid to the inherent violence of linguistic systems as they place limits upon the production of meaning in literature. While I do not disagree with this point, in this essay I hope to problematize this seemingly totalizing spectre of violence that haunts our daily interaction and suggest that something lies beyond this frame. I shall argue that there does exist ways in which to engage in and with language that can mitigate its violence and perhaps even escape it. However, escaping the particular violence of language is not to be confused with escaping violence in general, because escaping language’s violent confines may instead, surprisingly, bring about the end of the world. But we’ll need to take a few steps to get to that. So Much Lacan. The view described by Buk-Swienty, that language enacts violence, understands language as a system by which experience is decoded. Something happens, in reality, fiction or the imagination, and, to render this experience consciously comprehensible, it is forced into the semantic constraints of language. This limitation of concepts and experiences to particular labels is a violent act that much of our communication is built upon. And with a capacity for application in some particularly dangerous ways, by fixing meaning to conform to the imperatives of systems of power. One such system of power would be capital, which has lead commercial journalism to fix words like migrant or refugee, to the meaning; existential threat to civilization. And not just now, but regularly throughout history. That being said, I still wish to characterize language differently. Rather than see it as a way in which to decode the signal from the noise of experience, I want to suggest, with reference to the people whose ideas these actually are, that language is actually an encoded medium of transmission between subjects (both human and non-human), who then decode it in their own particular way. This still understands language as something violent but re-conceptualized as the ligatures of transmission, rather than as the backdrop on which all expression is required to take place. To decode the transmission does, indeed, require engagement with the system of language on the part of the subject but it is their own particular engagement with a general system. Their use and understanding of language is forever tied to their own experiences of things irreducible to language, as they continuously develop their particular engagement with the linguistic transmission system over time. So when it comes time to decode or encode sensation or nonlinguistic ideas into the communicative ligatures of language, it is a new unique entry into language. While there is a great deal of overlap of what characterizes these entries into language between language users, this entry is not overdetermined by the system itself. This allows for the existence of the subject in a space outside to this system of violence. Buk-Swienty builds his work out from the theorizes of Lacan and Žižek, which, while often useful, I would suggest, have a substantial flaw in this area. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject comes into being, as it were, when the organism acquires the capacity for language. This need not be spoken or written but simply any form of communication that operates semiotically; meaning using signs to stand in for something else. This can be thought of as the production of the said (even if it is not actually articulated outside the mind), which simultaneously produces the unsaid, which is what constitutes the unconscious. This split between the conscious and unconscious then, in turn, produces a subjective gap where the subject is unable to access their desires in a consciously expressible way. This results in an understanding of human psychology as inherently one based on an unresolvable lack. A lack predicated on the irresolvable rupture of the subject’s entry into language, which forces many of their experiences to remain unexpressed and inexpressible. It is this violent restriction enacted by the acquisition of linguistic thought that is often characterized as the production of the subject itself. Against this, and with Deleuze and Guattari, I would suggest that this is not the moment in which the subject is violently ripped into being but rather when elements of a preexisting subject are ossified into a self, in the psychological sense of the word. What this means is that what could be properly called a self (the qualities that let you identify yourself with; a name, an identity, a position within an apparently rational social order), is built out from the subject/organism that precedes it. The self, in psychoanalysis, is something distinct from, but connected to the creature it inhabits, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari the self is only a particular formation of what that creature could become but under the particular circumstances of the social. There is still violence here but it is not at the same moment. The violence in the Lacanian model is at the inception of the subject, whereas the violence in the Deleuzoguattarian perspective is something that happens to the subject. And what language cannot express is not not expressible by the subject, merely inaccessible to the linguistic self. This may not seem like a massive difference but it is significant because it problematizes the idea that semantic communication is inherently violent. Instead, we can give greater specificity to this notion of violence. The particular semantics that we have entered into are violent but these are situated on a particular planet with particular qualities that has given rise to particular being with particular bodies. These contingencies are common across humanity and have a far greater determining effect on the structures of thought, and its semantic expression, than we’d like to admit, and certainly far beyond our conscious comprehension. I would argue that this context has a great deal more influence on the production of language and linguistic thought than the other way round. And it is from this language, developed out of contingent actual circumstances, that our conception of the world emerges, although not the world itself. Beginning and Ending the World… In Mexico It is important to frame language within this context so we do not become too enamoured with its power and thus mistake its limitations for actual problems in reality. I take Buk-Swienty’s point that language is violent but dispute the irresolvability of the conundrum this poses. To find an illustration of this we can look to the post-Deleuzian theorist Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi. Berardi illustrates the notion the notion that subjectivity can exist outside of or transcend particular linguistic structures by examining the quasi-mythical figure of La Malinche, an Aztec woman sold by her people into slavery for the Mayans, and who would go on to use her linguistic abilities to help the Spanish in their destruction of both of these ancient civilisations. Berardi argues, that the destruction of these civilizations was not merely political (through violence and power) but substantive as it brought about the end of the world as they knew it. He argues that language appears akin to nature or reality because it is with language that we constitute the world. Thus, we rely heavily on language to move through reality. It is only through a system of signification that there can be a meaningful separation between reality and dreams, as the labels create these concepts (are you not really dreaming?) or even the distinction between a pair of scissors and screwdriver (or the knowledge of how to make such things) depends on signs. We label things with signs and then use the signs to build concepts from the action of labelling. When we use linguistic tools to converse with one another, we are able to create the concept of the world. Once we have created the world we can begin to do even more useful things (from the perspective of the biological organisms who have initiated all this). The usefulness of these things over time comes to take on the appearance of a tool for accessing reality and increasingly becomes the only space within which communication is acceptable and possible. If, for whatever reason, communication is no longer possible between those within the same semantic system, the world that this system constituted would then cease to be. Only the planet and people would remain. New structures would emerge. None of this is to say that language bears no relationship to reality, all the aforementioned useful things are in illustration its effectiveness in this regard. Instead, what needs to be taken from this repositioning of language as something with an accessible outside, is the need for a project to understand how to deploy its violence and how in doing so we construct ourselves.

## ya’ll just wrong

### nihilism

#### The concept of hyperreality is rooted in nihilism and should be rejected—it fragments revolutions and resigns all political subjects to complacency. Language is also an interpretive strategy, not a construction of reality itself—Baudrillard is wrong

King 98 (Anthony King, Professor of Government, Political Science, and Public and International Affairs, “A critique of Baudrillard’s hyperreality: towards a sociology of postmodernity” http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/019145379802400603)//meb

This article criticizes the concept of hyperreality which is central to Baudrillard’s later writings and, in doing so, intends to make a wider contribution to debates about postmodernism. In particular, I want to argue that Baudrillard’s hyperreality is an example of postmodern sociology, rather than a sociology of postmodernism. By that, I mean that the notion of hyperreality is not, in the end, a critical concept providing a means by which sociologists might analyse contemporary cultural change; rather, the notion of hyperreality is itself postmodern, demonstrating those very features of nihilism, fragmentation and doubt, ’ which it highlights as central to recent social transformations. The examination of the concept of hyperreality is intended to show that such ’postmodern sociologies’ are limited and that they can be encompassed (and dialectically superseded) by a sociology of postmodernism. However, the sociology of postmodernism which is capable of encompassing and criticizing this postmodern sociology is itself a kind of sociology which has often been taken for postmodernism. An adequate sociology of postmodernism must operate within the linguistic, hermeneutic and historicist paradigm which has often been taken as emblematic of postmodernism (Bauman, 1987: 5; Best and Kellner, 1991: 4). Since the roots of this hermeneutic turn lie in a long and eminent past which includes Hegel, Schleiemacher, Dilthey, Rickert and Weber among others, it would be strange to regard this approach to sociology as postmodern, in the sense that it is new and rejects all forms of earlier theorizing. By drawing on this linguistic and historical tradition, the discussion of hyperreality is intended to show that postmodern sociology, with its concentration of fragmentation and nihilism, is ~~delusionally~~ founded in and focused upon epistemological issues which have no relevance outside the academy. The examination of the concept of hyperreality is intended then as the focus for much wider claims about the state of postmodern theorizing and theorizing about postmodernism. The critique of hyperreality (A) The sociological inadequacy of hyperreality Baudrillard is undoubtedly correct to point to the importance of the television as a central element in contemporary culture. It is a startling development that in the last 30 years practically every individual in capitalist countries is able to witness footage of events from almost anywhere around the globe. It is also true that this footage is invariably misleading, even though it is apparently so compelling and ’realistic’. Television is only tangentially connected with the realities it seeks to portray as well as contrasting dramatically with the social experience of the viewers; we witness riots, wars and massacres as they occur from the comfort of our living-rooms. However, from these admittedly curious features, Baudrillard leaps suddenly and unjustifiably to the claim that there is no longer any reality. The television screen creates a ’false’ reality and it is in that reality that we now live. However, the television does not create a false reality either in its representation of the world or in its reception by viewers. Television coverage is determined by the cultural norms of the society to which it broadcasts and by those involved in the production of television. Thus any footage is an interpretation of the world and as such it is necessarily limited. It is certainly true that programme makers try to render this interpretation of the world as compelling as possible to attract viewers and to sustain their claims but those images are always and necessarily embedded in social discourse, which is itself related to the historic development of the society. The images are not then free-floating, mere simulacra but, on the contrary, concrete moves in a language game. They refer not so much to the reality of the situations they portray but rather to the society to which they communicate these images. Similarly the viewers of television programmes do not regard these images as empty, referenceless and fragmentary. On the contrary, just as the creation of these images was embedded in the interpretative practice of making sense of the world so do the viewers try to interpret these images in such a way that they will be able to make sense of their world. Whether the programme be a soap opera or news footage, the viewers interpret the images according to their cultural understandings (see, for instance, Fiske and Hartley, 1984; Hall, 1980; Featherstone, 1988: 220-1, 1991: 5, 11), although those understandings are under constant revision in order to make sense of new information. Thus rather than becoming the primary and prior cultural factor in contemporary society, the television is embedded in and dependent upon pre-existing and historically produced understandings and discourses.5 Furthermore, the footage does not exist above and beyond the lives of viewers but, as the briefest autobiographical consideration will reveal, the television is employed as a resource, where new interpretations derived from its footage are used in the renegotiation of social relations and understandings. Viewers discuss what they watch and make use of what they see to make sense of their own lives. The argument for the fundamentally interpretative nature of the television and, therefore, its fundamental unoriginality as a cultural form undercuts Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality at an empirical level. In short, the television just does not represent the ontological transformation of culture which he envisages. The production and consumption of the television operates in the same interpretative manner as the production and consumption of literature, theatre and, indeed, oral story-telling. All these methods of communication have to operate according to the same interpretative norms, typical of all human interaction, for the very reason that they are all primarily linguistic. Baudrillard’s failure to recognize the fundamentally interpretative nature of television suggests some deeper philosophical and, in particular, deeper epistemological shortcomings in his theories. The recognition of Baudrillard’s epistemological weakness brings us to the second, philo- sophical strand of the argument against the notion of hyperreality which will demonstrate that Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality is founded in an unsustainable Cartesianism.

#### Baudrillard asserts nihilism that assumes a universal experience of hyperreality—dialects are necessary for their theories to even work

King 98 (Anthony King, Professor of Government, Political Science, and Public and International Affairs, “A critique of Baudrillard’s hyperreality: towards a sociology of postmodernity” http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/019145379802400603)//meb

Through a critical examination of Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality, this article has attempted to make a wider contribution to contemporary debates about postmodernism. By reference to the Heideggerian linguistic turn, it has argued for the thorough inadequacy of hyperreality on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Furthermore, a hermeneutic and dialectical analysis, derived from the linguistic turn, obviates the representationalist and nihilistic aporia of Cartesian hyperreality and suggests a more fruitful approach to the study of contemporary culture than that of which epistemological postmodern sociologies are capable. It demands that we look to interpret specific social practices in their historical context, not build abstract castles in the air from asserted and exaggerated generalizations, which lead us into assertions of epistemological nihilism. Following from this, the linguistic turn shows how hyperreality and, therefore, postmodern sociologies, more generally, which posit epistemological and ontological transformations, might be dialectically superseded by a more critical sociology of postmodernism. Hyperreality is typical of epistemologically oriented postmodern sociology which demands that our society in general is characterized by the end of rules, consensus, order, discipline and knowledge. These theories are not serious but merely impose the uncritical sentiments of disillusioned intellectuals onto the social process as a whole, assuming that their own obscure doubts are widely experienced across the whole of society. 12 Not only are these intellectuals disillusioned but they are also self-deluded for they nostalgically lament the loss of modern (Cartesian) certainties, which were always untenable, even as they revel in the void which was always the other side of rationalism. Hyperreality, therefore, signifies and uncritically embodies postmodernism but it does not analyse the particular cultural forms which recent developments have taken. Despite Baudrillard’s demands for the end of dialectics (1994a: 161, 162), his own theory (and epistemological postmodernism more generally) fails for the very reason that it is not dialectical enough.

### ivory tower

#### The idea of hyperreality is a byproduct of postmodernism, not a description of it—their strategy can’t escape the academy and their claims about the world require truth claims which is a double turn with Baudrillard’s theory

King 98 (Anthony King, Professor of Government, Political Science, and Public and International Affairs, “A critique of Baudrillard’s hyperreality: towards a sociology of postmodernity” http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/019145379802400603)//meb

As Jameson (1984) has argued, the emergence of multinational, consumer (and, increasingly, post-Fordist) capitalism from the 1960s has facilitated the development of postmodern culture which opposes the restrictiveness of modern culture. In the light of the new demand for consumption, a cultural superstructure has emerged which emphasizes the indulgence of those very spheres - such as sexuality - which were deemed dangerous under the productive Protestant ethic of modernity (Lash, 1991: 42). Postmodernity is, then, above all a culture of transgression which seeks to breach the cultural boundaries and taboos of modernity and to revel in the ecstatic liminality of the once restricted. Jameson describes this postmodern transgression of the categories of modernity (which is linked to a new consumerist ethic) in his celebrated examination of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. There Jameson describes the vertiginous feelings which the individual experiences due to the curious use of space in the foyer of that hotel. Postmodern hyperspace has transcended the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organise surroundings, to map its position in the mappable world. (Jameson, 1991: 44) The foyer of the Bonaventure Hotel undermines the certainties and categories of modernist architecture. The rationality of modern architecture which strictly and functionally demarcated and divided space is replaced by buildings which deliberately disorientate individuals and ask them to question their sense of space. Postmodern architecture, then, subverts the ordered categories of modern architecture and, in that way, Jameson’s Bonaventure Hotel stands as a shining example of postmodernism and its transgression of the restrictive rational categories and boundaries of modernity. This notion of postmodernity as the transgression of the cultural categories which were a central element of modernity and intrinsically connected to the capitalist economy from the Industrial Revolution to the 1960s facilitates a dialectical supersession of Baudrillard’s concept of hyperreality for Baudrillard’s hyperreality can, in this context, begin to be seen not as a critical insight into wider postmodern processes but rather as the epistemological and intellectual aspect of those very processes. Like the boundaries which would subsequently be drawn up against sexuality, madness and the Other, Cartesian rationalism analogously drew up a rigorous bulwark against the epistemological liminality which threatened Descartes at the start of his Meditations. As I have argued, hyperreality is the moment when Descartes’ extreme doubt has returned to the academy and we once again find ourselves in the epistemological void of scepticism where we can know nothing. Baudrillard’s descent into this Cartesian void epistemologically matches the transgression of modern categories which can be witnessed in many cultural spheres l Like consumer culture, which subverts the repressive modern norms of sexuality in a demand for liberation, Baudrillard rejects the rational and certain boundaries of Cartesian ’clear and distinct ideas’ and resigns himself to the ’deep whirlpool’ of nothingness, although this transgression is for Baudrillard a moment of profound disillusion rather than liberation. It marks a moment of transgression where the categories of Truth, certainty and objectivity are transgressed in the pursuit of nihilism, which was from the outset conceived as the dangerous and liminal Other for modern rationalism. This epistemological nihilism is an example of postmodernism, in which there are no more rules and in which anything goes. Not only is this nihilism critically bankrupt, but it is possible only if the pursuit of an objective Truth is regarded as possible and desirable in the first place. A dialectical and linguistic approach could never have posited the existence of a final Truth in the first place and this approach has been similarly untroubled by fears of an epistemological void. For dialectical and linguistic sociology which situates itself consciously in a Heideggerian paradigm, linguistic reality is enough in itself - it is not final but neither is it in need of some metaphysical support. The Heideggerian tradition allows us to situate Baudrillard’s hyperreality dialectically and to find it sociologically useful, even in the light of the latter’s abject theoretical poverty.

### discussion good

#### Keeping discussions of alterity forefronted in academic spaces is key to centering marginalized voices.

Bloland 95 (Harland G. Bloland, Professor of Higher Education Administration Emeritus at the University of Miami, “Postmodernism and Higher Education” https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2943935.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A94a64cf59159d0c93e5c945ddec06bc9)//meb

If there is a transformation in higher education, what should it be? Is there a need for a set of values that transcend group values, for a vocab- ulary that will speak to all groups within the academy? Or should there be a wide open conglomeration of presumably incommensurate values, ethics, standards? Some poststructuralist thought seems to indicate that we already have this incommensurability among discourses. The destruction of the belief in eternal verities and the attenuation of the drive to search for truth mean that higher education's task may be to pay much more attention to values, what they mean, where they come from, what their function is, and how to forge new values that fit the higher education world and its mission. Because the borders of colleges and universities are becoming more permeable in the postmodern world and the great sustainers of the in- dependence of higher education, the state and governments, are becom- ing weaker, institutions need to find ways of maintaining autonomy in the face of multinational corporate resources and power, the debilitat- ing effects of the increased proliferation of active interest groups, and the encroachment of extreme local power. In the world of simulacra and the power that comes from creating images, the universities' task may be to seek and sustain a kind of au- thenticity of information and knowledge. In this it needs to create a con- sistent and useful concept of merit; it cannot rely as heavily upon the strictures of science or the rules of a broken canon. But it needs to sus- tain the value of merit and find with all the contradictions, the plural voices, the lack of a sense of progress, and the continual tension an in- terest in and pursuit of means for measuring, judging, and rewarding merit. As the boundary between higher education and the market collapses, some means for organizing and sustaining autonomous sanctu- aries, oases, or enclaves in universities should be found that do not sim- ply respond to the drive for performativity and the standards of the market. Institutions of higher education need ways to construct and sus- tain community, and community at several levels: community on the campus and community in the larger society, a commitment to citizen- ship. The emphasis upon the other, the marginal, the outsider, in postmod- ern thought needs to be kept in the foreground in higher education. Colleges and universities need to find ways of encompassing the other, of taking in marginal people and ideas. However, it should not be done in the usual liberal strategy of simply adding courses on multinational- ism, women's studies, and cultural studies. These need to be included in academia more on the basis of their own standards. But the argument here is that this inclusion does not mean that the search for and crea- tion of standards of merit is compromised. An important means for en- suring this is to follow the advice that a number of postmodern writers have offered, namely, to listen very hard and openly. As Cornell West has written, "I hope that we can overcome the virtual de facto segrega- tion in the life of the mind in this country, for we have yet actually to create contexts in which black intellectuals, brown intellectuals, red in- tellectuals, white intellectuals, feminist intellectuals, genuinely struggle with each other" [98, p. 696]

## framework

#### Baudrillard destroys agency through totalizing descriptions of the system coupled with encouragement to do nothing—refusal to engage the political allows for marco-scale violence on the level of international politics as well as national—centering the political is key

Wesling (Donald Wesling, Professor Emeritus of English Literature, “The Representational Moment in the Discourse of the Nation: Jean Baudrillard’s ‘America’” https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41273987.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae38b557e06f35191159ec8a1ad17284e)//meb

Baudrillard presents a totalizing narrative of our capture by outside forces of deceit (of course, he is not as completely captured). Everything is transformed, he says, into the hyper-real. He does have an excellent joke in his book Simulations, when he says, the real resembles itself but (to quote) "The real is no longer what it used to be" (12); still, when aid it change- ^precisely when? Thus he forecloses agency and gives the inexpensive comfort of resignation. He is not a playful destabilizer like Jacques Derrida; is not one of those whose thought might help shake up, or elude, centers of state power. (To show I am not against all things French, note the difference between Baudrillard and Derrida who said [as quoted by Christopher Norris]: "The value of truth ... is never contested or destroyed in my writings, only reinscribed. ... [I intend] to invoke rules of competence, criteria of discussion and of consensus, good faith, lucidity, rigour, criticism, and pedagogy" [45]).2 Baudrillard says the here and now is all bad news. What if, instead, we find some contradictions to work with, inside the present? For me the fact and concept of the nation, which has become a leading theme in one kind of comparative cultural studies, is a field of study rich in social contradictions. The fact and concept of the nation is something Baudrillard avoids for his whole career as a writer. His 1980s book that makes a myth of America, a book that may seem a contribution to nation-ness, is in fact a denial of the political and social contexts described by another term, United States, which he never uses. Benedict Anderson in his introduction to a recent general collection, Mapping the Nation (1996), admits that Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Durkheim, Benjamin, Freud, Levi-Strauss, Keynes, Gramsci, and Foucault "had little to say" (1) about nations and nationalism. I would not want to condemn Baudrillard for not facing an issue he explicitly chooses to avoid, but rather to use the concept of the nation (which is not nationalism) to study his denial of the physical world and the processes of historical time. If physicality and successiveness do not exist, except by virtue of the precession of simulacra, the nation is just a figment and part of our immense deception about the nature of things in time. But if the nation is a simulacrum, consequences follow. Baudrillard is an intriguing instance of a trend I deplore, the manifesto-leap to the idea or the post-national by people who hate the nation because it has to resolve itself into a messy Discriminatory power- wielding State that fights wars out of blood-lust. (I think there are other more modest accounts of nation-ness that are acceptable, and I would not throw out the fact or the notion of the nation: for arguments in this line, see Michael Billig.) The question I derive is this: is there a leading version of the post-modern that is a premature post-national? Here are two quick examples of what I mean. Christopher Clauson, writing an article in the journal New Literary History in 1994, wants to promote, and why not, the new literatures in English from places outside England and the USA, and to do this he argues that we must abandon the national paradigm. In one typical reference, he says we need to put Toni Morrison "in touch with Chinua Achebe," (71); but in his polemic, he does not begin to perform the basic cultural labor that would justify the hope for a comparison. He removes both Morrison and Achebe from contexts of contestation nearer their respective homes; and when he makes his case against national chauvinism, he fails to see that he exposes himself to the charge of linguistic chauvinism for the English language worldwide. My second example is from Pico Iyer, a footlose and rich but selfcritical travel-writer who calls himself a "transit-lounger," that is, one of the increasing crew of intellectuals who live in (or through) airports. In an article, Iyer speaks of Salman Rushdie, another transit-lounger and analyst of this condition, who (as a result of Khomeni's fatwah) became its victim: "he forgot," writes Iyer, "how the world looks to someone who is rooted" (79). Transit- loungers are different from exiles and refugees: "We end up," says Iyer, "a little like nonaligned nations, confirming out reservations at every step. We tell ourselves, self-servingly, that nationalism breeds monsters, and choose to ignore the fact that internationalism breeds them too. Ours is the culpability not of the assassin, but of the bystander who takes a snapshot of the murder" (79). For myself, I admire in Pico Iyer the rare nostalgia of the post-national for the national.

#### Preserving educational spaces as locations for speech-induced action key to solving the totality of simulacrum—discussion is key to replacing the system and salvaging reality

Norris 4 (Trevor Norris, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, “Hannah Arendt and Jean Baudrillard: pedagogy in the consumer society” http://infed.org/mobi/hannah-arendt-and-jean-baudrillard-pedagogy-in-the-consumer-society/#consumer\_society)//meb

The discussion of Baudrillard ended with a consideration of the possibility of resisting consumer society, a possibility which points towards a fundamental difference between Arendt and Baudrillard. Just as Arendt’s account of the ascent of the oikos and agora to a place of political dominance entailed the loss of reality and worldly alienation, so too in Baudrillard does the proliferation of signs entail the loss of reality. However, in contrast to the ‘totalitarian’ character of consumer society as presented by Baudrillard, which is able to absorb any form of resistance, Arendt emphasizes the possibilities which action and speech can provide. In spite of the political dominance of the oikos and agora, she still holds that action remains within our grasp: “needless to say, this does not mean that modern man has lost his capacities or is on the point of losing them…the capacity for action…is still with us.”[74] Furthermore, Arendt links action with natality, the “new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity for beginning something anew, that is, of acting.”[75] It is through action and speech that we bring newness into the world, and express the human capacity to begin. Arendt’s account of natality points towards the resilience of the human spirit: the young are a constant source of the new, through which the world is preserved from decay and decline. And yet, as Henry Giroux states, “growing up corporate has become a way of life for American youth….it is apparent in the accelerated commercialism in all aspects of everyday life, including the commercialization of public schools.”[76] The profound importance of education becomes apparent: if this wellspring of beginnings is eroded and absorbed into the endless cycle of production and consumption through the dominance of commercial discourse, it is our polis, and reality itself, which we stand to lose. Through consumption we attempt to differentiate ourselves from others and assert our identity, to mark ourselves as different and unique. Secondly, we attempt to insert ourselves into the world of human relations, to participate in our social world, and to experience ourselves as part of a larger whole. Arendt and Baudrillard reveal how these are both illusory. Through symbolization and signification, humans have always and will always endow objects with attributes that are of our own making. What happens in consumer society is that this activity is appropriated by commercial forces such that instead of seeing the world around us we see only the signs of consumption. Yet through preserving the sphere of education as a location for action, speech, and natality, we may yet bring health to our “feverish city.”

#### Baudrillard says to play the game… and, the rules that separate it from reality become necessary

Coulter 7 (Gerry Coulter, PhD in Philosophy (Sociology), “Jean Baudrillard and the Definitive Ambivalence of Gaming” http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1555412007309530)//meb

Gaming may also be, Baudrillard (1996) tells us, the only democracy we still know. Those who might have become political players in earlier times may well be the gamers of today—virtual exiles of politics circulating the networks of a muted world. Gamers are among the contemporary inhabitants of the transpolitical—“politically indifferent and undifferentiated beings” (Baudrillard, 1993c, pp. 24-25). Unlike reality, which incessantly demands we believe in it, the illusion of the game (which the gamer never really believes in) does not hold such a requirement. For Baudrillard, it is precisely because the gamer does not believe in the game that he or she enters into a more necessary relationship with the rules of the game. Here society and the law are replaced by a symbolic pact with the rules—a series of ritual obligations (Baudrillard, 1979)—that are, for Baudrillard, an order of fate. All are equal before the arbitrary rules of the game in a way we are not equal before the law in society (Baudrillard, 1996). The game is a very severe place of rules where wealth and social standing have no purchase. If games attract us, for Baudrillard (1979), the reason is clear: “Games are serious, more serious than life” (p. 133). The game is a challenge and the dark sphere inhabited by its players involves a strong passion for rules (Baudrillard, 1979). Baudrillard (1979) understands the gamer to exist in a kind of hyperfreedom where the arbitrariness of the program is exchanged for society and the law. The game is perhaps the most poetic way we have yet discovered to “rid ourselves,” he says, “of social conceptions of freedom” (Baudrillard, 2005b, p. 55). The spirit of gaming extends, for Baudrillard, back to well before the arrival of the virtual and technological gamer of today. We have long been avid devotees of games—of a kind of rules-bound uncertainty and unpredictability we enjoy in our simulated absence from society while engaged in any game (Baudrillard, 1990). For Baudrillard (2001), the rules of the game “seem to come from some other sphere, with nothing to justify them—just like chance, that eternal unjustified principle” (p. 90). Ambivalence reappears here as he considers that our submission to chance in the game is, at the same time, a way of parodying the ethics of work, value and economy (Baudrillard, 1979). The game contains the passion of illusion and appearances, and who is more passionate today than the gamer? (Baudrillard, 1990) For Baudrillard (2005a), “the fundamental passion is that of the game” (p. 149). This passion, in our transpolitical era, is replacing political passions from earlier times. Today, Baudrillard (1993a) says, even “hope bringing movements” (green or feminist) become part of the promotional machine of American and Western culture (p. 152). The cool passion of the game, an important aspect of its cool ambivalence, works to replace the former hot passions of politics or the body. When we play a game, we are impassioned, says Baudrillard, by the stakes—not necessarily a positive or negative passion but a passion just the same— the “passion of battle,” he calls it (Baudrillard, 2005a, p. 149). We play the game, we make progress through its network, we lose, and we lose again; eventually we may even win—it is the passion of this experience. In the place of liberty in today’s society, Baudrillard (1979) finds instead the game and reminds us that our very passion for games and rules parodies all ideologies of liberty.

#### Play the game as a method of acceleration

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For Baudrillard (2002a), the gamer is a traveler into our future of total immersion in virtuality—as yet a kind of techno-tourist basking in the sickly artificial light of the virtual. Here, as a visitor to what may come after the end, the gamer enters the “horizon of programmed reality” in which, for Baudrillard (2000), our human functions— emotions or sexuality—become progressively useless (p. 37). The world of the gamer is both an escape from the social and a passage into a clone of the so-called real world (Baudrillard, 2002b). In the game, we adhere to our sticky monitors (a good game “glues” us to the screen). With or without our condom-like data suits (Baudrillard, 2005b), we enter the world of the digitized and operationalized (Baudrillard, 2003), the highest stage of simulation (Baudrillard, 2005b). But with Baudrillard, it is never long before the ambivalence returns and he encourages us to wonder why, if our “real world” is so magnificent, we would seek to build its virtual double, including our own doubles to inhabit it? Baudrillard (1995) forces us to wonder if we prefer the “exile of the virtual” to the “catastrophe of the real” (p. 28). It is one of the sublime qualities of Baudrillard’s writing that he forces us to see ourselves as occupants of an uncertain world where the real hides behind appearances (Baudrillard, 1998). Ours is an existence of unceasing illusion. Against notions of an artificial paradise of “technicity and virtuality,” Baudrillard (2000) also urges us to preserve traces of our illusory world’s definitive opacity and mystery (p. 74). Before the digital and virtual, we were full-fledged citizens of a world not of the real but of appearances, behind which the real hides (Baudrillard, 2006). Our passage into the screens of virtuality is merely one step farther away from our world of appearances—already one step farther away from a world we never “really” know. So Baudrillard understands the efforts of the gamer to be a kind of experimental existence in a world that we can never actually inhabit. At some future point, our “immersion in the machinery of the virtual, the man/machine distinction may no longer exist,” but at present, the failures of the gamer to remain in the game are a hopeful sign for Baudrillard (2005b) of the insuperability of the barriers to a virtual existence (pp. 80, 192). As he wrote near the end, “It is one thing to note the vanishing of the real into the virtual; another to deny it so as to pass beyond the real and the virtual as Nietzsche passed beyond good and evil” (p. 162). To the question, “What if Baudrillard were a gamer?” the answer is Baudrillard was not a gamer and he could never be a digital gamer—they held no personal fascination for him. The only interest the cool universe of digitality held for him was as a writer (Baudrillard, 1993b). Like television, once he had broken its code, so too for games, the interest was lost (Lotringer, 2007). Baudrillard, it seems, wished to pass beyond both the real and the virtual, and his ambivalence rests on the fact that he had little interest in participating in either. Writing, of course, was another matter. The world of gaming and all forms of virtuality were, by the end, merely things he wished to pass beyond, and writing is how we get to the next horizon. Games enter Baudrillard’s writing so often because of their important role in writing about our contemporary— a period during which, Baudrillard felt, we are undertaking a grand experiment (perhaps the greatest game of all) to see if anything human can truly survive. The realm of the game is a highly artificial realm, but it is merely one such realm in our contemporary that is a time of cloning, simulation, modeling and programming, and genetic ordeals: Perhaps we may see this as a kind of adventure, a heroic test: to take the artificialization of living beings as far as possible in order to see, finally, what part of human nature survives the greatest ordeal. If we discover that not everything can be cloned, simulated, programmed, genetically and neurologically managed, then whatever survives could be truly called ‘human’: some inalienable and indestructible human quality could finally be identified. Of course, there is always the risk, in this experimental adventure, that nothing will pass the test—that the human will be permanently eradicated. (Baudrillard, 2000, pp. 15-16) And so for Baudrillard, the time of this experiment is an uncertain one. The other side of our possible eradication is that the virtual—the game—may save us from the perfect crime, of what Baudrillard (2000) calls the “extermination by technology and virtuality of all reality” (p. 55). Here Baudrillard wonders if the digital game participates merely in the ironic game of technology, of what he calls “an ironic destiny of all science and all knowledge by which the world, and the illusion of the world, are saved and perpetuated” (p. 55). Here Baudrillard was decidedly undecided as gamers and games aroused in him a definitive ambivalence. Baudrillard matched the ambivalence of games with an equal or greater ambivalence of his own. Baudrillard was a writer and the game of the writer, from Baudrillard’s (1993a) point of view, was the game of indifference and ambivalence. For Baudrillard, notions such as truth, meaning, or the real can be known only locally, as partial objects, along restricted horizons. The point of writing about a world that is enigmatic and unintelligible is not to add meaning to it but to make it even more enigmatic and more unintelligible. As he put it, Here . . . lies the task of philosophical thought: to go to the limit of hypotheses and processes, even if they are catastrophic. The only justification for thinking and writing is that it accelerates these terminal processes. Here, beyond the discourse of truth, resides the poetic and enigmatic value of thinking. For, facing a world that is unintelligible and enigmatic, our task is clear: we must make that world even more unintelligible, even more enigmatic. (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 83) The gamer is the ambivalent explorer of an age experiencing first-hand the immersion, immanence, and immediacy of the virtual. Baudrillard (2005b) wonders if the gamer may even be the cusp of a new evolutionary form: homo fractalis. If the gamer is not such a form in the long run, then he or she may be remembered simply as someone who became caught up in the obsession of our age, “the lack of distinction between the real and the virtual” (Baudrillard, 2006, p. 92). Today, few are more ambivalent about our contemporary than the gamer surrounded, as he or she is, by virtual technologies that propagate undecidability (Baudrillard, 1998). Given that none of us really knows the rules of the “game” today, indifference and ambivalence become very strategic terrains for a writer (Baudrillard, 1993a). Baudrillard was not a gamer but he shared with them a definitive ambivalence.