**Semiocapitalism AC**

**We live in a third-order simulacrum. Capitalism and mass production have separated us from the “real,” replacing it with self-referential symbols. This generates ressentiment and increases our determination to colonize and assimilate the “other.”**

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After describing a novel sociological position that regards **semiology, rather than capital, as the key component of domination** (Baudrillard [1968] 1998), **Baudrillard’s radical social theory emerges in light of considerations of consumerism, media, information and technology—all of which conspire to create what Baudrillard calls a ‘hyperreal’ society**. This is a contemporary world where all boundaries, categories and values implode into the ‘end of the social’. Baudrillard (1972) begins elaborating this theory in an article titled ‘Design and Environment or How Political Economy Escalates into Cyberblitz’ (Baudrillard, 1972, Chapter 10). In this essay, he points to the importance of ‘the passage out of a metallurgic into a semiurgic society’ (Ibid.: 185). Here, **consumer objects take on a life of their own ‘as an embodiment and functional part of a system of signs, independent of its status as a commodity**’ (Kellner, 1989: 76). He uses the German Bauhaus movement as an example to anticipate the ‘universal semantisation of the environment in which everything becomes the object of a calculus of function and signification’ (Baudrillard, 1972: 185-86). This is achieved by the synthesis ‘of form and function, beauty and utility, of art and technology’ in the design of objects that produces a functionalised universe whereby the meaning and function of **every object is determined by its place in the system**. As a result, ‘the whole environment becomes a signifier, objectified as an element of signification’ (Ibid.: 186-87). This is analogous to Derrida’s concept of ‘difference’ whereby meaning is never present ‘in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself’ (Derrida, 1965: 27). E**ssentially, objects, words and images have no direct relationship to the things in which they refer, they inherent meaning only by interacting with one another in an ongoing system of contrast. Baudrillard refers to this system as a ‘cybernetic code’,** and argues that **reality itself is shut out from this system of because the system is wholly self-referencing. This code creates ‘a functionalised, integrated and self-reproducing universe’ of meaning, controlled by simulacra and simulation**. And, like Derrida’s text, there is nothing outside of the code.In ‘The Orders of Simulacra’, **Baudrillard (1995) outlines the stages of the transition from traditional society to the contemporary society defined by simulations** (Baudrillard, 1995). First, according to Baudrillard, the feudal era had a fixed social order established by a hierarchy of obligatory signs indicating social class and rank. Here, a ‘natural law of value’ dominates the stage. **Simulacra, a representation of another image, first emerge as ‘counterfeits’ of the real**. For example, representations of class, law or value are said to be grounded in nature: art imitates life and democracy is legitimised by ‘natural rights’. Baudrillard indicates, however, that **the inherent goal of simulacra is to produce a controllable and universal system of power**. At this stage, counterfeit simulacra is working ‘only on substance and form, not yet on relations or structures’, but **its evolution will create ‘a pacified society, ground up into a deathless substance … that will guarantee an eternity of … cultural hegemony’** (Baudrillard, 1983b: 91). Next, the **second-order of simulacra appears during the industrial revolution**. Importantly, infinite reproducibility is introduced into society. For example, exact **replicas of objects are produced by assembly lines and automation**. No longer is there nostalgia for a natural order; **nature is to be dominated by production;** counterfeit simulacra are now obsolete. Most importantly, however, the infinite reproducibility of objects, augmented by the rise of capitalism, enables the emergence of the cybernetic code and contemporary society. Baudrillard claims that ‘**we are in the third-order simulacra’**, **where simulation models come to constitute the world and all referential finalities are abolished** (Ibid.: 100-01): God, Man, Nature, History, Society and others. This is because **images are only understood by reference to other images. Thus, society has moved from ‘a capitalist-productivitist society to a neo-capitalist cybernetic order’** (Ibid.: 111). As a result of this code, images no longer refer to an object; rather, they refer to another commutable image on the code. But, through models contained in common societal narrative and institutional discourse, simulations are able to produce a ‘reality effect’, which conceals the fact they are merely referring to other simulations (Bogard, 1996: 10). For example, the code continually sets up simulations of events, which test individuals and ‘[inscribe] them into the simulated order’ through a ‘process of signalisation’ (Kellner, 1989: 80). For example, every advertisement, choice of commodity, choice of entertainment, and political candidate presents a chance for a binary response of affirmation or negation. It is in this way that individuals are inserted into a dominating ‘coded system of similarities and dissimilarities, of identities and programed differences’ (Ibid.). Thus, Baudrillard’s contemporary social theory is distinguishable from previous determinist social theories that postulate powerful individuals, classes, or corporations manipulating the public for certain ends. Instead, Baudrillard suggests that social organisation is determined by individual’s responses to the pre-coded messages that are derived from simulations of economics, politics, culture or the banal decisions of everyday life (Baudrillard, 1983b: 111). Importantly for the third-order of simulacra, the binary system of the code creates a ‘deterrence model’ in which all ‘radical change is ruled out, since the very fact of an option between different political parties, [for example], acts as a deterrent against demands for radical social change’ (Kellner, 1989: 81). This is the end of society as traditionally theorised. In Symbolic Exchange and Death Baudrillard (1983c: 20) announces the end of traditional conceptions of society—the end of ‘labour, production, political economy’, and the ‘dialectic signifier/signified that permeated the accumulation of knowledge and of meaning’ (Baudrillard, 2002: 127). Baudrillard argues that **we are in a new era where media and the consumption of semiotic codes that inform images, have replaced production and political economy as the organising foundation of society**. For example, **labour is now a ‘sign among signs’** (Baudrillard, 1995b: 23), a symbol of one’s status and integration: ‘the choice of occupation, the utopia of an occupation custom-made for everyone … labour power is no longer violently bought and sold; **it is designed, it is marketed, it is merchandised. Production thus joins the consumerist system of signs’** (Baudrillard, 2002: 134). Because social reality is constituted by the ‘chess pieces’ of the signs and symbols that are mobilised through the media, **nothing is objectively determined and everything can be simulated** (Kellner, 1989: 62). **Thus, political economy is no longer the determinant that can explain social phenomena.**

#### **Without the right to strike, the affective relationship between workers and bosses is one of domination and wage slavery.**

**Gourevitch, 18** Alex Gourevitch, associate professor of political science at Brown. Cambridge University Press, 21 June 2018, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/abs/right-to-strike-a-radical-view/8B521F67E28D4FAE1967B17959620424>.

To explain why the right to strike is a right to resist oppression, I first must give an account of the relevant oppression. Oppression is the unjustifiable deprivation of freedom. Some deprivations or restrictions of freedom are justified and therefore do not count as oppression. The oppression that matters for this article is the class-based oppression of a typical liberal capitalist society. By the class-based oppression, I mean the fact that **the majority of able-bodied people find themselves forced to work for members of a relatively small group who dominate control over productive assets and who, thereby, enjoy unjustifiable control over** the activities and products of those **workers**. There are workers and then there are owners and their managers. The facts I refer to here are mostly drawn from the United States to keep a consistent description of a specific society. While there is meaningful variation across liberal capitalist nations, the basic facts of class-based oppression do not change in a way that vitiates my argument’s applicability to those countries too. Empirical analysis of each country to which the argument applies, and how it would apply, is a separate project. The first element of oppression in a class society resides in the fact that (a) there are some who are forced into the labor market while others are not and (b) those who are forced to work—workers—have to work for those who own productive resources. **Workers are forced into the labor market because they have no reasonable alternative but to find a job**.8 They cannot produce necessary goods for themselves, nor can they rely on the charity of others, nor can they count on adequate state benefits. **The only way most people can gain reliable access to necessary goods is by buying them**. The most reliable, often only, way most people have of acquiring enough money to buy those goods is through employment. That is the sense in which **they have no reasonable alternative but to find a job working for an employer**. Depending on how we measure income and wealth, about 60–80% of Americans are in this situation for most of their adult lives.9 This forcing is not symmetrical. A significant minority is not similarly forced to work for someone else, though they might do so freely. That minority has enough wealth, either inherited or accumulated or both, that they have a reasonable alternative to entering the labor market. So, this first dimension of **oppression comes** not **from** the fact that some are forced to work, but from the fact that the forcing is unequal and that asymmetry means some are forced to work for others.10 That is to say, what makes it oppressive is the wrong of unequally forcing the majority to work, for whatever purpose, while others face no such forcing at all.11 That way of organizing and **distributing coercive work obligations, and of imposing** certain kinds of forcing on workers, is an unjustifiable way of **limiting their freedom** and therefore oppressive. To fix ideas, I call this the structural element of oppression in class societies. **This structural element leads to a second, interpersonal dimension of oppression in the workplace itself. Workers are forced to join workplaces typically characterized by large swathes of uncontrolled managerial power** and authority. This oppression is interpersonal in the sense that it is power that specific individuals— **employers and their managers—have to get other specific individuals—employees—to do what they want.** We can distinguish between three overlapping forms that this interpersonal, workplace oppression takes: subordination, delegation, and dependence. Subordination: Employers have what are sometimes called “managerial prerogatives,”12 which are legislative and judicial grants of authority to owners and their managers to make decisions about investment, hiring and firing, plant location, work process, and the like.13 These powers come from judicial precedent and from the constellation of corporate, labor, contract, and property law. Managers may change working speeds and assigned tasks, the hours of work, or even force workers to spend up to an hour going through security lines after work without paying them (Integrity Staffing Solutions, Inc. v. Busk 2014). Managers may fire workers for Facebook comments, their sexual orientation, for being too sexually appealing, or for not being appealing enough (Emerson 2011; Hess 2013; Strauss 2013; Velasco 2011). Workers may be given more tasks than can be performed in the allotted time, locked in the workplace overnight, required to work in extreme heat and other physically hazardous conditions, or punitively isolated from other coworkers (Greenhouse 2009, 26–27, 49–55, 89, 111–112; Hsu 2011; JOMO 2013; Urbina 2013). Managers may pressure employees into unwanted political behavior (HertelFernandez 2015). In all of these cases, managers are exercising legally permitted prerogatives.14 The law does not require that workers have any formal say in how those powers are exercised. In fact, in nearly every liberal capitalist country, employees are defined, in law, as “subordinates.”15 This is subordination in the strict sense: workers are subject to the will of the employer.

**Furthermore, strike-breaking provides the government with a testing ground for advanced informational technologies inextricably intertwined with the automation, surveillance, and digitally-included semiotic reproduction of hyperreality. By sanctioning strikes, the Aff slows the weaponization of imagery.**

**James, 20** George Harry James, “Gaze Against the Machine: Counter-visuality and hyperreal strategies in the Hong Kong protests,” Philosophy Monthly 33 (July 2020), <https://epochemagazine.org/33/gaze-against-the-machine-counter-visuality-and-hyperreal-strategies-in-the-hong-kong-protests/>.

The shape of the recent wave of protests in Hong Kong is markedly different to the so-called Umbrella Revolution of 2014, which emerged from the anti-inequality Occupy movements of the early 2010s. As the name suggests, the strategy of Occupy protestors around the world involved maintaining a conspicuous presence in urban spaces. The familiar motifs of the movement were the tent, the mass sit-in and giant banners draped across largely static assemblies. This time round, demonstrators switched tactics and adopted an ethos inspired by local legend and Kung-Fu star, Bruce Lee: “be water, my friend.” Similarly to 2014, the protests sparked by the Extradition Bill are largely leaderless and non-hierarchical, though unlike the Umbrella Revolution, demonstrators have eschewed tactics of occupation and obstruction in favour of a reactive, spontaneous and highly fluid form of urban protest. Even in a world where rights are abused with impunity, political and economic pressure from the international community has significant influence on the fate of local protests, and Hong Kong’s tech-savvy, young protestors have remained acutely aware that media exposure plays a crucial role in their outcomes. Yet, while the eyes of China’s global trading partners may preclude the occurrence of another Tiananmen Square, the events in the region have inescapably played out against the backdrop of an agitated superpower with both the world’s largest carceral complex, and the most sophisticated surveillance network. **Clashes on the streets between activists and authorities are ultimately concerned less with capturing space, or bodies, than images and identity. In the wake of Hong Kong’s chief executive Carrie Lam introducing colonial-era ordinance laws in October 2019, to criminalise public assembly and ban face masks, the iconic seas of umbrellas first witnessed in 2014 have recently found new purpose. Initially deployed to shield the eyes of protesters from pepper spray, they now shield from the eyes of authority.** Even before the recent imposition of a draconian National Security Bill, **simply being picked out of a crowd carried the potential of ten years imprisonment, for the vague charge of ‘rioting’.** Paul Mozur writes in the New York Times of the demonstrators’ outrage as “police removed identification numbers, presumably to keep violent conduct from being reported to city leaders” while concurrently **“riot officers carried cameras on poles just behind the front lines as they fired tear gas and rubber bullets.” Complementing the familiar instruments of urban warfare with new photographic tools, the weaponisation of the image continues apace.** In the cat-and-mouse display of wily protestors eluding a high-powered police force around the city, we have distinctly seen the features of what French philosopher Gregoire Chamayou deems the “militarised manhunt” in his seminal work Drone Theory, an “unconventional form of state violence” emergent in the twenty-first century that “combines the disparate characteristics of warfare and policing without really corresponding to either.” Like the internet and other everyday staples, **manhunting as form of warfare was dreamed up in the Pentagon, in this instance, as part of the Bush administration’s so-called War on Terror following the September 11th attacks carried out by Al-Qaeda.** The “contemporary doctrine of hunting warfare,” Chamayou argues, breaks with Carl Von Clausewitz’s classical definition of warfare, for it no longer resembles a duel “of two fighters facing each other” but “a hunter advancing on a prey that flees or hides from him”; the hostile relationship now “boils down to a game of hide-and-seek.” **The prevalence of cameras in the street battles of Hong Kong illustrate Chamayou’s point that “the primary task is no longer to immobilise the enemy but to identify and locate it.”** The doctrine of manhunting represents an attempt by powerful state forces to balance out the asymmetries of modern conflict and counter the development of spontaneous, and adaptable actions by non-state actors. Chamayou insists the “strategy of militarized manhunting is essentially preventative,” a policy of “prophylactic elimination for which hunter-killer drones are the main instruments” and is “not so much a matter of responding to actual attacks but rather of preventing the development of emerging threats by early elimination of their potential agents.” This logic is evident in recent use of Hong Kong’s Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, which allows citizens to request their own data, barring broad exemptions for “the prevention or detection of crime.” **Jennifer Creery has noted in the Hong Kong Free Press that police requests to local and foreign service providers for users’ information, under the auspices of “prevention and detection,” marked a “55 per cent rise from the year before,” while the number of requests to remove user information was “more than a hundred times higher.”** Creery suggests that the latter increase “coincided with a hike in the number of complaints over doxxing,” the practice of non-consensually sharing personal information, which has been used to expose the identities of protestors, police and government bureaucrats alike. Whether overturning or enshrining privacy, the vague rationale of ‘prevention’ belongs to the realm of state-led manhunting. The political rationale, according to Chamayou, that underlies these practices is one of “social defence.” This is clear in the way that authorities have routinely framed the protests in terms of terrorism. In September 2019, police chief superintendent Chun-Chung Tse spoke of murderous protesters with “suicide tendencies” and warned of “apparent signs that hardcore violence will escalate in the near future,” concluding that “all acts are one step closer to terrorism.” This kind of future-inflected language serves the purpose of legitimating any intrusive measure deemed preventative. As the authorities employ the language of prevention, antiterrorism, and future threats, the protestors rely on face masks and umbrellas to avoid future retribution should their spontaneous actions be preserved in the permanence of footage. What the protestors flee from is not so much the immediate pain of tear gas or a rubber bullet, but the promise of a violence-to-come ingrained in each identifiable photograph. Prior to the British ‘handover’ in 1997, and its semi-autonomous designation following the end of a 99 year colonial lease, the historian Richard Hughes famously described Hong Kong as a “borrowed place on borrowed time.” The clashes on the streets over the past year have indicated the enduring presence of this uncertain, anxious futurity. **The philosopher Jean Baudrillard famously considered the challenge posed by photographic representation to the ontological reality of conflict in his controversial 1991 text The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.** Baudrillard argued through intentionally provocative prose that operation Desert Storm was best understood as a carefully scripted media event which cannot be understood outside of its visual representation; indeed, **the conflict on the ground was choreographed in real-time according to popular parameters of ‘good TV’**. Baudrillard’s take on postmodern conflict did not mean to say that real events do not occur, but that they are subjected to the concerns of aesthetics and representation: “we are no longer in a logic of the passage from the virtual to the actual but in a hyperrealist logic of the deterrence of the real by the virtual.” **This deterrence of the real by the virtual was clearly at play in August 2019 as the Chinese People’s Liberation Army posted a three-minute video on social media of ‘anti-riot drills’**. The slick propaganda video employed familiar action movie tropes, with mock confrontations set to dramatic music, aerial drone footage of amassed forces and video-game style first-person POV shots of home raids. The thinly veiled threat to the protestors was reinforced by the appearance a Hong Kong taxi and local Cantonese dialects. This belligerent simulation recalls Baudrillard’s idea that 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.” The PLA’s threatening video was precisely this virtualised, speculative unfolding of conflict. We see that the forces bent on repressing the Hong Kong protest movement operate in ‘the same space capital moves’ upon noting that it was in January 2020, at the height of the unrest prior to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, that the Hong Kong city stock exchange approved plans for a 500 million dollar initial public offering from the Chinese tech company Megvii.**

#### **The crises of global climate change, automation, and austerity require decisive action to create a counter-hegemonic reclamation of the imagination. Strikes free our minds by restructuring class relations, a necessary first step for creating the possibility of critique.**

**Negri, 14** Antonio, OG. March 2014. “Reflections on the ‘Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics.’” <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59877/reflections-on-the-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> [Bracketed for ableist language]

The Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics (MAP) opens with a broad acknowledgment of the dramatic scenario of the current crisis: Cataclysm. The denial of the future. An imminent apocalypse. But don't be afraid! There is nothing politico-theological here. Anyone attracted by that should not read this manifesto. There are also none of the shibboleths of contemporary discourse. or rather. only one: **the collapse of the planet's climate system**. But while this is important. here it is completely subordinated to industrial policies, and approachable only on the basis of a criticism of those. What is at the center of the Manifesto is '**the increasing automation in production processes, including the automation of "intellectual labor"**', which would explain the secular crisis of capitalism.1 Catastrophism? A misinterpretation of Marx's notion of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall?2 I wouldn't say that. **Here, the reality of the crisis is identified as neoliberalism's aggression against the structure of class relations that was organized in the welfare state of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries; and the cause of the crisis lies in the obstruction of productive capacities by the new forms capitalist command had to assume against the new figures of living labor. In other words, capitalism had to react to and block the political potentiality of post-Fordist labor.** This is followed by a harsh criticism of both right-wing governmental forces, and of a good part of what remains of a Left-the latter often deceived (at best) by the new and impossible hypothesis of a Keynesian resistance, unable to imagine a radical alternative. Under these conditions, **the future appears to have been cancelled by the imposition of a complete paralysis [failure] of the political imaginary**. We cannot come out of this condition spontaneously. **Only** a systematic class-based approach to the construction of a new economy, along with **a new political organization of workers, will make possible the reconstruction of hegemony** and will put proletarian hands on a possible future. There is still space for subversive knowledge! The opening of this manifesto is adequate to the communist task of today. **It represents a decided and decisive leap forward**-necessary if we want to enter the terrain of revolutionary reflection. But above all, **it gives a new 'form' to the movement**, with 'form' here meaning a constitutive apparatus that is full of potentiality, and that aims to break the repressive and hierarchical horizon of statesupported contemporary capitalism. **This is not about a reversal of the state**-form in general; rather, **it refers to potentiality against power** - biopolitics against biopower. It is under this premise that **the possibility of an emancipatory future is radically opposed to the present of capitalist dominion**. And here, we can experiment with the 'One divides into Two' formula that today constitutes the only rational premise of a subversive praxis (rather than its conclusion). Let's have a look at how the MAP theory develops. Its hypothesis is that the liberation of the potentiality of labor against the blockage determined by capitalism must happen within the evolution of capitalism itself. It is about pursuing economic growth and technological evolution (both of which are accompanied by growing social inequalities) in order to provoke a complete reversal of class relations. Within and against: the traditional refrain of Operaism returns.4 **The process of liberation can only happen by accelerating capitalist development, but-and this is important-without confusing acceleration with speed, because acceleration here has all the characteristics of an engine-apparatus, of an experimental process of discovery and creation within the space of possibilities determined by capitalism itself.** In the Manifesto, the Marxian concept of 'tendency' is coupled with a spatial analysis of the parameters of development: an insistence on the territory as 'terra', on all the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization, that was typical of Deleuze and Guattari. **The fundamental issue here is the power of cognitive labor that is** determined yet repressed by capitalism; constituted by capitalism yet **reduced within the growing algorithmic automation of dominion**; ontologically valorized (it increases the production of value), yet devalorized from the monetary and disciplinary point of view (not only within the current crisis but also throughout the entire story of the development and management of the state-form). With all due respect to those who still comically believe that revolutionary possibilities must be linked to the revival of the working class of the twentieth century, such a potentiality clarifies that we are still dealing with a class, but a different one, and one endowed with a higher power. It is the class of cognitive labor. This is the class to liberate, this is the class that has to free itself. In this way, the recovery of the Marxian and Leninist concept of tendency is complete. Any 'futurist' illusion, so to speak, has been removed, since it is class struggle that determines not only the movement of capitalism. but also the capacity to turn its highest abstraction into a solid machine for struggle. The MAP's argument is entirely based on this capacity to liberate the productive forces of cognitive labor. **We have to remove any illusion of a return to Fordist labor; we have to finally grasp the shift from the hegemony of material labor to the hegemony of immaterial labor. Therefore, considering the command of capital over technology, it is necessary to attack 'capital's increasingly retrograde approach to technology'**.

**Thus, the advocacy: I affirm the resolution as a form of radical mimicry of the system itself, one that creates the possibility of freedom from semiocapitalism. We force the government to confront the issues of hyperreality, exposing its underlying incoherence. Likewise, our use of the inherently meaningless construct of fiat exposes and implodes the operations of the code.**

**Merriam Webster defines a “strike” as:**

Merriam Webster, “Strike,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strike>

**To stop work in order to force an employer to comply with demands.**

#### **The Aff is a radical restriction of state power that forces the government to cede its authority over the minds and bodies of workers, allowing them to expose the system’s underlying absurdity through “savage,” irrational, unregulated action.**

**McLaverty-Robinson, 12** Andy McLaverty-Robinson, “Jean Baudrillard: From Revolution to Implosion,” Ceasefire Magazine (August 24, 2012), <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-baudrillard-10/>.

In analyses of labour struggles, Baudrillard suggests that **the transition from production to reproduction has thrown workers into confusion**. Strikes are difficult today because the idea of snatching back a fraction of surplus-value is thrown into doubt by the death of value. Since capital is no longer extracting surplus-value, it can leave strikes (and we might add, uprisings and protests) to fizzle out of their own accord. **As workers cease to be essential to production, unions cease to be representative. This leads to the phenomenon of the ‘savage’ strike:** wildcat and grassroots actions, often emerging from migrants, youths or un-unionised **workers** (as in May 1968). They **make unlimited demands for higher wages, or demand nothing at all. These strikes undermine the unions’ claims to represent or manage struggle, and threaten the edifice of the system.** The unions tend to be mobilised to channel or defuse such movements. Baudrillard thinks the process of undermining parties and unions as representatives is ultimately for the best, but it has costs in terms of a loss of clarity. **Instead of demands, workers become able to directly exercise power, striking for no reason at all. Baudrillard sees migrant workers as particularly subversive. They have recently been extracted from ‘non-productivist’ traditions, usually by force. In turn, they destructure productivist morality. Their distance from western ideology gives them an ability to critique it.** Baudrillard sees them as an internal colony, imported by the system. He also thinks industrial discipline – which is of recent origin even in the west – is starting to break down. Baudrillard also discusses the growing tendencies towards reaction among certain sectors of workers. I would argue that there has been a vicious reaction from the old included groups who were happy with exploitation and representation. They resent their own loss of power, which they blame on the excluded for refusing to be represented. Baudrillard sees this phenomenon in terms of the inclusion of workers. They become reactionary when they are no longer struggling against their own dehumanisation. He also argues that deterrence functions against workers because their power is so great. **It is now possible for workers to shut down the system fairly easily. For instance, electricians can shut down a national economy by flicking a few switches. Precisely because the stakes are so great, so catastrophic, the power of workers is never used – just as the nuclear bomb is never used by states.** I think we should add here that this capability, which is not limited to workers (a lot of nodes and hubs are vulnerable to disruption), is difficult to use because of a generalised dependence on the system. It would only be effectively usable if the rebelling force had its own sources of resources outside the system – if it was not also shutting itself down. Furthermore, **people would need a total psychological rejection of the system to be prepared to use such total power.** Both of these kinds of preparedness are generally lacking today, and are preventing the most effective means from being used.

#### **Crépon, 19 elaborates:**

MARC CRÉPON; The Right to Strike and Legal War in Walter Benjamin’s “Toward the Critique of Violence”; CRITICAL TIMES 2:2; August 2019

First, **is it legitimate to present the strike as a form of violence**? Who has a vested interest in such a representation? In other words, how can we trace a clear and unequivocal demarcation between violence and nonviolence? Are we not always bound to find residues of violence, even in those actions that we would be tempted to consider nonviolent? The second line of questioning is just as important and is rooted in the distinction established by Georges Sorel, in his Reflections on Violence, between the “political strike” and the “proletarian general strike,” to which Benja­ min dedicates a set of complementary analyses in §13 of his essay. Here, again, we are faced with a question of limits**. What is at stake is the possibility for a certain type of strike (the proletarian general strike) to exceed the limits of the right to strike— turning, in other words, the right to strike against the law itself. The phenomenon is that of an autoimmune process, in which the right to strike that is meant to protect the law against the possible violence of class struggles is transformed into a means for the destruction of the law**. The difference between the two types of strikes is nevertheless introduced with a condition: “**The validity of this statement, however, is not unrestricted because it is not unconditional**,” notes Benjamin in §7. We would be mistaken in believing that the right to strike is granted and guaranteed unconditionally. Rather, it is structurally subjected to a conflict of interpretations, those of the workers, on the one hand, and of the state on the other.

**Only our strategy of radical mimicry of the system itself can ensure its death.**

**Pawlett, 13** William Pawlett, Senior Lecturer in the School of Law, Social Sciences and Communication at the University of Wolverhampton, in Ashgate Publishing, in 2013 ["Violence society and radical theory: Bataille, Baudrillard and contemporary society", https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288148526\_Violence\_society\_and\_radical\_theory\_Bataille\_Baudrillard\_and\_contemporary\_society, pg. 33-35, 1-5-2019]

Symbolic Exchange and Death begins with a remarkably strident and politically radical preface: it declares that symbolic exchange is the only effective means of challenging or defying the capitalist system at a fundamental level. **The capitalist system,** for Baudrillard, **is** a vast and insidious system of control, **adept at neutralising critique and political contestation**. Critique may be neutralised by suppression or mis-representation, but increasingly **critique is assimilated as commodity** and as information/data through electronic solicitude. Taking its place within the general information overload, critical thought becomes just another link on the home page of the sort of person who ‘likes’ critical thought, one of your endless options on a Kindle or something you are made to read on an unpopular module during a university degree. That is, critical thought does not succeed in challenging the capitalist system; **the cheap and abundant availability of works of critical thought, on Amazon for example, not only provides profits to a tax-dodging mega-corporation, it also demonstrates (or rather, simulates) the openness, tolerance and freedoms** of the consumer capitalist system. How does symbolic exchange embody a greater or more successful defiance? Taking up Mauss’s notion of gift exchange as a concept “more radical than Marx’s or Freud’s”, Baudrillard insists that symbolic exchange does not merely describe the traditional practices of certain archaic cultures but is also “taking place here and now” (Baudrillard 1993a: 1). According to Baudrillard, **symbolic exchange “haunts” capitalist social relations**, it is present in them (in the sign – the medium of exchange) a**nd it “mocks” these structural significations “in the form of their own death”.** To understand what Baudrillard might mean by this it is important to stress that symbolic exchange is not a concept to be deployed as critique, symbolic exchange is, in itself, the practice of defiance; it is the living reversal of the system’s order. Symbolic exchanges, in Baudrillard’s sense, are the practice or act of reversal of the system’s priorities and values and so, in this sense, spell death for the system: not ‘real’ but symbolic death and **symbolic death is more fundamental and humiliating than ‘real’ death. It is the enormity and reach of the system that makes it so vulnerable, like a much larger opponent being thrown by the momentum of their own weight in martial arts. The system is eminently vulnerable because it is built upon the sense of its own invulnerability, and** specifically on its sense of irreversibility: the **irreversibility of rationality, of progress, of (Western) dominance, the irreversibility of technological advancement.** Given these conditions, according to Baudrillard, even a small or “infinitesimal” injection of reversibility can threaten the entire edifice; **the system has no defences against symbolic reversion while it is more than capable of neutralising a frontal attack.** Such reversions, the reversion of all the system’s ‘gifts’ include: the reversion of power in the sudden, unanticipated defiant acts of the apparently weak; the reversion of technological supremacy in the breakdown or computer virus; the reversion of rationality in the experience of the irreducible irrationality of rationality; the reversion **of official meanings and sense into nonsense and mockery**; the reversion of control in catastrophic failures. The effect of symbolic reversibility then consists in sudden, catastrophic reversals suffered by power and by the powerful which reveal, perhaps momentarily, the system’s deep vulnerability. Baudrillard’s position on symbolic exchange is not to be confused with the strategies of the Situationists, though he remained sympathetic towards this movement with which he was involved in the 1960s (Baudrillard 2004a: 15-20). An egg or custard flan thrown in the face of someone powerful and captured by the same media channels which the powerful usually dominate, can be far more effective in countering power than an unwieldy political statement. However, if the Situationists sought meaningful spaces for self-assertion in the gaps, lapses and dead zones of the capitalist system, Baudrillard’s approach is quite distinct. It seeks the setting in motion of a chain reaction or a chain failure through the rippling effects of symbolic humiliation by counter-gift or potlatch. The counter-gift may well be more effective when it is immediate, unplanned, or more specifically when it is not the result of subjective desires and considered beliefs – which can generally be accommodated by the system through simulation. One example might be the sudden, unexpected haranguing of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher by an elderly lady in 1983. Yet, this example does not really capture the sudden escalation that is involved in placing one’s life and death as a stake against the system. The tragic suicide in December 2012 of a nurse, Jacintha Saldanha, who worked at the private hospital in London favoured by the British royal family and was tricked into revealing information about a royal by two ‘journalists’ working for a Australian radio show, captures something of this fatal escalation. She had been humiliated by the journalists, yet her suicide vastly escalated the stakes and re-directed the humiliation back at the journalists, the media and wider society, generating a truly devastating, ‘potlatching’ humiliation of the journalists responsible (who seemed to crumble inwards), it further weakened the reputation of the so-called ‘free’ press and also brought to a close the British royal family’s ‘bounce’ in popularity after the royal wedding, jubilee and the London Olympics. Each of these powerful interests suffered an immediate reversion of their standing, a symbolic death ; and although the British media partially succeeded in limiting these symbolic effects to the designated sacrificial scapegoats consisting of the two journalists, the fundamental nature of the sacrificial or symbolic sphere became, temporarily, brutally obvious. In a sense we could say that the system cannot suffer a ‘real’ death in any case, not only because it is not a discrete, finite organism but because, in Baudrillard’s terminology, it is already dead, **it has no genuine life or vitality and is kept alive only by its life support systems of simulation**. The vampiric nature of capitalism was, of course, already a prominent feature of the Marxist critique (Marx Capital Vol. 1). For Baudrillard, the capitalist system does not only draw the life-blood of its exploited workers, it condemns its citizen-consumers to a life-less survival, a living-on in a state of humiliation and dependence, a ‘life’ that is shaped by the system, a life that is made to seem a gift of the system. Though suicide is expressly forbidden by both religious and secular law, that is the system exerts ownership over our death as well as our life, the point of biological termination does represent the absolute limit of the system’s control. Given these conditions **the only fundamental strategy of defiance, for Baudrillard, is to reverse this humiliation, to refuse the ‘gifts’ and imprecations, to reverse this derisory life through a symbolic death hurled back at the system.** This may take the form of the reversal of the poisonous gifts of consumer goods and information **through** a greater counter-gift of **“hyper-conformity”: the absorbing of anything and everything the system gives while refusing the proper use of these ‘gifts’.** One example given by Baudrillard is obesity, the indiscriminate absorption of food to a degree that becomes a social problem; this involves a (literally) internal revolt against the cult of physical fitness and the body beautiful, a rejection of the injunction to compulsory sexuality and sexual enjoyment (Baudrillard 1990b: 27-34). A further example is the reversal and cancellation of the overload of information through its spontaneous “poetic dispersal” into paradox and ever greater uncertainty: only in the correct dosage does information aid understanding, in excess it creates an absolute uncertainty. **These forms of internal reversal reveal the ambivalence hidden within the system**. It is not ‘real’ (or biological) death, nor ‘real’ violence, which has the power to challenge the system, it is death as symbolic form which is excluded from the system, and it is the symbolic death through the reversion of its systems which may be re-introduced into the system to subversive and fatal effect. According to Baudrillard, symbolic exchange is experienced “as a demand forever blocked by the law of value” and embodies “an intoxicating revolt”. This intoxication is always present so it does suggest a radically different pattern of social relations, which for Baudrillard would be “based on the extermination of values” (Baudrillard 1993a: 1). But could this extermination of all controlling values ever exist beyond clearly circumscribed ritual occasions, such as those described by Mauss (1990)? It seems that for both Bataille and Baudrillard the answer must be negative, there can only ever be a dynamic alternation or a fundamental duality and, Baudrillard suggests, all social formations except Western modernity have implicitly understood this. This issue is re-visited in more detail in Chapter 2. For Baudrillard “the principle of reversibility (the counter-gift) must be imposed against all the economistic, psychologistic and structuralist interpretations” (1993a: 1-2) and he adopts a very Bataillean formulation when he declares that symbolic exchange is “a functional principle sovereignly outside and antagonistic to our economic reality principle” (1993a: 2). Baudrillard comes close to a definition of symbolic exchange with the following:The symbolic is neither a concept, an agency, a category, nor a ‘structure’, but an act of exchange and a social relation which puts an end to the real, which resolves the real, and, at the same, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary. This initiatory act is the reverse of our reality principle … the symbolic is what puts an end to the disjunctive code and to separated terms … in the symbolic operation the two terms lose their reality (Baudrillard 1993a: 133).

#### **If we fail to act, the impacts of hyperreality are immense, as semiocapitalism’s control over subjectivity is the root cause of all violence. Current systems of power create oppression and overcoding of the subject, which makes the aff a priori question.**

#### **Guattari, 96** Felix Guattari 1996 “Semiological Subjection, Semiotic Enslavement” in “The Guattari Reader” edited by Gary Genosko, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, pg 143-145

**The normatized agents of production are set in motion before the transformation of each individual into a speaker-listener** capable of adopting a linguistic comportment compatible with the modes of competence that assign to one a particular position in society and in production. **The components of semiotic enslavement constitute, in reality, the fundamental tools that permit[s] the dominant classes their assurance of power over the agents of production.** The "miracle" of **capitalism** is that it **manages to direct language**, as it is spoken, as it is taught, as it is televised, as it dreams, etc., **in such a way that it remains perfectly adapted to its own evolution.** Furthermore, this operation always appears to be self -evident: the syntagms of power, its presuppositions, its threats, i t s modes of intimidation, of seduction and of submission, are conveyed at an unconscious level, a little like the "clandestine" images that advertisers insert into a film. If there is an urgency that compels a febrile search for a new model of the unconscious, such a phenomenon must be accounted for! **Reject the idea that the syntactic markers of capitalist languages express the fundamental requirements of the human condition; consider these markers**, on the contrary, **to be the result of a field of semiological transformations established by a system of power less and less tolerant of modes of intrinsic coding.** These seemingly harmless moves singularly exceed the traditional scope of linguistics and semiotics! The totality of machines, be they social, technical , desiring, etc ., can no longer escape from the overcoding of the signifying machines of the State. In fact, the signifying power of national languages and the multi­ form power of States and of the network of collective assemblages tend to coincide. **The molecular links of expression substitute for the ancient segmentary structures ofthe socius to constitute a homogeneous plane of content that conveys at the same time the categorical imperative of the Kantian moral law, the "necessities" of class conscience, the demands of custom and the repressive habits of the majoritarian consensus, and, on top of this, the persecuting themes of the ambient super-ego.** It is by the exhaustion of this plane that the intensities of desire detach from their ancient territories and receive their subject-object polarities. **Mediatized and controlled, they become social need, demand, necessity and submission. They exist no longer except to the degree that their expression resonates with mass-mediatized significations.** Or they withdraw into themselves, translate themselves, that is to say, renounce their character of nomadic flux. There is no doubt that the threat of a seizure of power by a decoded flux exists prior to capitalism and already in the most "primitive" societies (in this regard it is appropriate to distinguish, amongst these latter, between what Pierre Clastres called societies with a State and societies without a State, as they do not share the same attitude to the "defense" against an eventual accumulation of power in a State appara­ tus5). There is no doubt that ancient societies were already traversed, strictly speaking, by the capitalist flows that they were trying so hard to master! But one must admit that a series of causes, circumstances, and accidents peculiar to the Middle Ages and the Western "Renaissance" resulted in the social structures losing definitively a certain type of control of the decoded flows and engaging in a kind of generalized Baroque style - economic, political, religious, aesthetic, scientific, etc. leading to capitalist societies in the proper sense. **The semiotic and machinic enslavement of desiring flows and the semiological subjection on which capitalist societies rest are established in reaction to an uncontrollable dispersion of territorialized codes. They are the correlatives of the installation of new types of divisions between the sexes, the generations, the divisions of labor, the relations of social segmentarities, etc. A new use of languages, signs, and icons leads to a state of affairs in which** the least effect of meaning - **even the most intimate, the most unconscious - falls under the control of social hierarchies. Capitalist powers never cease "rethinking"** in detail each significative relation, differentiating and specifying each semiological "allocation" **During the course of an apprenticeship in language, a child will be called upon, for example, to model its first infinitive intensives in such a way as to put them into the service of pragmatic predicatives and fundamental deictic strategies of power (encodings of hierarchical position, role permutability, sexual division, etc.).** "Becoming sexed-body" will be fixed in its relation with "becoming social-body" by the regime of pronominality and the genres which axiomatize the subjective positions of feminine alienation. Despite appearances, in a pragmatic capitalist field the differ­ ent social categories of an identical linguistic community men, women, children, the elderly, people in rural areas , immigrants, etc. - do not speak the same language. National languages, those which are spoken at the Academie francaise or on television, are metalanguages. **Their "distance" in relation to the languages of the land, the arbitrary forcefulness of their overcoding, are the guarantors of their efficiency and, paradoxically, of their degree of interiorization.** This semiological economy of power and its implications for modes of generation, of the transformation of syntactic components, lexicals, morpho-phonological and prosodic elements of language, is the foundation for even the pragmatic fields of enunciation, which Oswald Ducrot designated as the "polemical value" (in the etymological sense) of language.

**Thus, the Role of the Ballot is to vote for the debater who best disengages from the hyperreal. Traditional models of debate centered around utility, death-related impact calculus, and reason require securitizing ourselves against the other and the threat of scarcity, thereby reinforcing semiocapitalist logic and systems of power.**

**Winnubst, 06** Shannon Winnubst, professor of Women’s and gender studies at Ohio State University, Queering Freedom, pg. 183

For Bataille, the servility to utility is displayed particularly in the temporality of such a world—the temporality of anticipation. Returning again to the role of the tool, he writes, In **efficacious activity man becomes the equivalent of a tool, which produces; he is like the thing the tool is, being itself a product**. The implication of these facts is quite clear: the tool’s meaning is given by the future, in what the tool will produce, in the future utilization of the product: like the tool, he who serves—who works—has the value of that which will be later, not of that which is. (1988–91, 2:218) **The reduction of our lives to the order of utility forces us to project ourselves endlessly into the future**. Bataille writes of this as our anguished state, caused by this anticipation “that must be called anticipation of oneself. For he must apprehend himself in the future, through the anticipated results of his action” (1988–91, 2:218). **This is why advanced capitalism and phallicized whiteness must ground themselves in a denial of death: death precludes the arrival of this future.** It cuts us off from ourselves, severing us from the future self that is always our real and true self. Resisting the existential turn, however, **Bataille refuses to read this denial of death as an ontological condition of humanity**. For Bataille, **this is a historical and economic denial, one in which only a culture grounded in the anticipation of the future must participate. He frames it primarily as a problem of the intellect. In the reduction of the world to the order of utility, we have reduced our lives and experiences to the order of instrumental reason**. This order necessarily operates in a sequential temporality, facing forward toward the time when the results will be achieved, the questions solved, the theorems proved—and also when political domination will be ended and ethical an- guish quieted. As Bataille credits Hegel for seeing, “knowledge is never given to us except by unfolding in time” (1988–91, 2:202). It never appears to us except, finally, “as the result of a calculated effort, an operation useful to some end” (1988–91, 2:202)—and its utility, as we have seen, only drives it forward toward some future utility, endlessly. **There are always new and future objects of thought to conquer and domesticate**. Within this order of reason, death presents the cessation of the very practice of knowledge itself. Severing us from the future objects of thought and from our future selves, “death prevents man from attaining himself” (1988–91, 2:218). As Bataille explains, “the fear of death appears linked from the start to the projection of oneself into a future time, which [is] an effect of the positing of oneself as a thing” (1988–91, 2:218). **The fear of death derives from the subordination to the order of utility and its dominant form of the intellect, instrumental reason.** While death is unarguably a part of the human condition, for Bataille the fear of death is a historically habituated response, one that grounds cultures of advanced capitalism and phallicized whiteness. In those frames of late modernity, **death introduces an ontological scarcity into the very human condition: it represents finitude, the ultimate limit. We must distance ourselves from such threats, and we do so most often by projecting them onto sexualized, racialized, and classed bodies.** But for Bataille, **servility to the order of knowledge is as unnecessary as servility to the order of utility**. To die humanly, he argues, is to accept “the subordination of the thing” (1988– 91, 2:219), which places us in the schema that separates our present self from the future, desired, anticipated self: “to die humanly is to have of the future being, of the one who matters most in our eyes, the senseless idea that he is not” (1988–91, 2:219). But **if we are not trapped in the endless anticipation of our future self as the index of meaning in our lives**, we may not be anguished by this cessation: “**If we live sovereignly, the representation of death is impossible, for the present is not subject to the demands of the future”** (1988–91, 2:219). **To live sovereignly is not to escape death, which is ontologically impossible. But it is to refuse the fear, and subsequent attempts at disavowal, of death as the ontological condition that defines humanity.** Rather than trying to transgress this ultimate limit and prohibition, the sovereign [person] man “cannot die fleeing. He [it] cannot let the threat of death deliver him over to the horror of a desperate yet impossible flight” (1988–91, 2:219). Living in a temporal mode in which “anticipation would dissolve into NOTHING” (1988–91, 2: 208), the sovereign man [person] “lives and dies like an animal” (1988–91, 2:219). He lives and dies without the anxiety invoked by the forever unknown and forever encroaching anticipation of the future. As Bataille encourages us elsewhere, “Think of the voracity of animals, as against the composure of a cook” (1988–91, 2:83).