# Star Trek AC

[brackets for clarification]

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#### Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship *Enterprise*. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds. To seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before!

(Star Trek, Original 60's Series Star Trek Intro and Credits)

#### September 8th, 1966, the first episode of Star Trek airs on live TV in the US, piggybacking off the public fervor of the ongoing Space Race, offering a vision of a utopian techno-communist society in space.

Gittlitz 17 [A. M. Gittlitz is a writer from Brooklyn who specializes in counterculture and radical politics, The New York Times, Red Century, “‘Make It So’: ‘Star Trek’ and Its Debt to Revolutionary Socialism” July 24th, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/24/opinion/make-it-so-star-trek-and-its-debt-to-revolutionary-socialism.html>]/lm

H. G. Wells’s foundational work of political science fiction, “The Time Machine,” predicted a future in which a small utopia of sprightly elites is kept running by a subclass that lives below the ground and is reduced to bestial violence. This prediction, carried to a horrifically logical extent, represented the intense wealth disparity of the Victorian England in which Wells wrote the novel. Judging from the major political narratives of the fictions of our era, films like “The Hunger Games,” “Elysium” and “Snowpiercer,” the certainty of a future rendered increasingly barbarous by class division remains essentially the same.

But this was not always the case. In 1920, Wells met Vladimir Lenin, a fellow world-building visionary who planned “the inauguration of an age of limitless experiment” to rebuild and industrialize his country from ruination by years of war, abolishing class society in the process. Wells was impressed by the pragmatic revolutionary and his planned “utopia of electricians.”

If Wells had been less skeptical of Communism and joined the party, he wouldn’t have been the first sci-fi or futurist thinker to do so. Alexander Bogdanov, an early political rival of Lenin’s, wrote “Red Star,” a utopian novel about a Communist colony on Mars where everything was held in common and life spans were greatly extended through the use of parabiosis, the mutual sharing of blood. Along with Anatoly Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky, Bogdanov proposed a program of “God Building,” which would replace the rituals and myths of the Orthodox Church through creation of an atheistic religion.

For his part, Gorky was a fan of the Cosmism of Nikolai Fyodorov and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, a scientific and mystical philosophy proposing space exploration and human immortality. When Lenin died four years after meeting with Wells, the futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky’s line “Lenin Lived, Lenin Lives, Lenin Will Live Forever!” became not only a state slogan, but also a scientific goal. These Biocosmist-Immortalists, as they were known, believed that socialist scientists, freed from the constraints of the capitalist profit motive, would discover how to abolish death and bring back their comrades. Lenin’s corpse remains preserved for the occasion.

Bogdanov died in the course of his blood-sharing experiments, and other futurist dreams were sidelined by the industrial and militarist priorities that led up to World War II. In the postwar period, however, scientists inspired by Cosmism launched Sputnik. The satellite’s faint blinking in the night sky signaled an era of immense human potential to escape all limitations natural and political, with the equal probability of destroying everything in a matter of hours.

Feeding on this tension, science fiction and futurism entered their “golden age” by the 1950s and ’60s, both predicting the bright future that would replace the Cold War. Technological advances would automate society; the necessity of work would fade away. Industrial wealth would be distributed as a universal basic income, and an age of leisure and vitality would follow. Humans would continue to voyage into space, creating off-Earth colonies and perhaps making new, extraterrestrial friends in the process. In a rare 1966 collaboration across the Iron Curtain, the astronomer Carl Sagan co-wrote “Intelligent Life in the Universe” with Iosif Shklovosky. This work of astrobiological optimism proposed that humans attempt to contact their galactic neighbors.

Such views were less fringe and more influential than you might think. Beginning in 1966, the plot of “Star Trek” closely followed Posadas’s propositions. After a nuclear third world war (which Posadas also believed would lead to socialist revolution), Vulcan aliens visit Earth, welcoming them into a galactic federation and delivering replicator technology that would abolish scarcity. Humans soon unify as a species, formally abolishing money and all hierarchies of race, gender and class.

“A lot has changed in the past 300 years,” Captain Picard explains to a cryogenically unfrozen businessman from the 20th century in an episode of a later “Star Trek” franchise, “The Next Generation.” “People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things. We’ve eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We’ve grown out of our infancy.”

For all its continued popularity, such optimism was unusual in the genre. The new wave of sci-fi in the late ’60s, typified by J. G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick in the United States and by the Strugatsky brothers and Stanislaw Lem in the East, presented narratives that undercut this theme of humans’ saving themselves through their own rationality.

The grand proposals of the ’60s futurists also faded away, as the Fordist period of postwar economic growth abruptly about-faced. Instead of automation and guaranteed income, workers got austerity and deregulation. The Marxist theorist Franco Berardi described this period as one in which an inherent optimism for the future, implied by socialism and progressivism, faded into the “no future” nihilism of neoliberalism and Thatcherite economics, which insisted that “there is no alternative.”

The fall of the Soviet Union cemented th[e]is “end of history,” in Francis Fukuyama’s phrase, and signaled a return to late-capitalist dystopian narratives of the future, like that of “The Time Machine.” Two of the most popular sci-fi films of the ’90s were “Terminator 2” and “The Matrix,” which both showcased a world in which capital had triumphed and its machinery would not liberate mankind, but govern it. The recent success of “The Road,” “The Handmaid’s Tale” and “The Walking Dead” similarly predict violent futures where only small underground resistance movements struggle to keep the dying flame of humanity alight.

Released the same year as “Star Trek: First Contact” — and grossing three times as much — “Independence Day” told a story directly opposed to Posadism, in which those who gather to greet the aliens and protest military engagement with them are the first to be incinerated by the extraterrestrials’ directed-energy weapons. (In Wells’s 1897 vision of alien invasion, “The War of the Worlds,” the white flag-waving welcoming party of humans is similarly dispatched.)

The grotesque work of 1970s white supremacist speculative fiction, “The Camp of the Saints” by Jean Raspail — recently referenced by the White House strategist Steve Bannon — has a similar story line. A fleet of refugee ships appears off the coast of France, asking for safe harbor, but it soon becomes apparent that the ship is a Trojan horse. Its admission triggers an invasion of Europe and the United States.

The recent rise of right-wing populism indicates a widening crack in the neoliberal consensus of ideological centrism. From this breach, past visions of the future are once again pouring out. Peter Thiel, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg feel empowered to propose science fiction premises, like space colonization and post-scarcity economics, as solutions to actual social problems. Absent, however, are the mass social movements of the 20th century calling for the democratization of social wealth and politics. While rapid changes in the social order that are the dream of Silicon Valley’s disruptors are acquiring an aura of inevitability, a world absent of intense poverty and bigoted hostility feels unimaginable.

Shortly after World War II, Wells became so convinced of humanity’s doom, without a world revolution, that he revised the last chapter of “A Short History of the World” to include the extinction of mankind. Today we are left with a similar fatalism, allowing the eliminiationist suggestions of the far right to argue, in effect, for a walling-off of the world along lines of class, nationality and race, even if this might condemn millions to death.

If humanity in the 21st century is to be rescued from its tailspin descent into the abyss, we must recall the choice offered by the alien visitor from the 1951 sci-fi film classic “The Day the Earth Stood Still.”

“Join us and live in peace,” Klaatu said, “or pursue your present course and face obliteration.”

I think of it as science fiction’s useful paraphrasing of Rosa Luxemburg’s revolutionary ultimatum: “socialism or barbarism.”

#### October 13th, 2021, Captain Kirk and Jeff Bezos go to Space – in the age of the billionaire space race, we see private appropriation extend beyond reality itself, appropriating the Sci-Fi of Star Trek – Beam me up, Bezos!

Anthony 21 [Ted Anthony, Ted Anthony, director of new storytelling and newsroom innovation at The Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990 and watching “Star Trek” since 1969, Orlando Sentinel, “As William Shatner heads toward the stars, visions of space collide” October 12th, 2021, [https://www.orlandosentinel.com/space/os-bz-william-shatner -space-blue-origin-visions-of-space-20211012-xrxgvgowrzad7f2e5rifln7wsy-story.html]/](https://www.orlandosentinel.com/space/os-bz-william-shatner%20-space-blue-origin-visions-of-space-20211012-xrxgvgowrzad7f2e5rifln7wsy-story.html%5d/) lm

“Risk is our business,” James T. Kirk [once said.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqI-PdZ2U_o) “That’s what this starship is all about. That’s why we’re aboard her.”

More than a half-century later, the performer who breathed life into the fabled Enterprise captain is, at age 90, making that kind of risk his own business and [heading toward the stars](https://apnews.com/article/william-shatner-star-trek-blue-origin-space-jeff-bezos-e10877d624a4cc0be9385585c2647cdd) under dramatically different circumstances than his fictional counterpart. And in doing so, William Shatner is causing worlds to collide, or at least permitting parallel universes to coexist — the utopian spacefaring vision of “Star Trek” and the evolving, increasingly commercial spot that “space” holds in the American psyche.

When [Shatner](https://www.seattlepi.com/ae/tv/article/Shatner-the-inimitable-conquering-new-frontiers-1275869.php) boards Jeff Bezos’ Blue Origin NS-18 in Texas at around dawn Wednesday, his one small step into the craft creates one of the ultimate crossover stories of our era.

It’s about space and exploration, sure, and certainly about capitalism and billionaires and questions of economic equity. But it’s also about popular culture and marketing and entertainment and nostalgia and hope and Manifest Destiny and, and, and … well, you get the idea.

It will be a complex blend of human dreams superimposed upon technology and hope, braggadocio and cash, and the notion that space travel elevates us — all orchestrated by a company under criticism for what some call the decidedly un-utopian, tech-bro ways that it operates.

Is all that and “Star Trek” a good fit?

THE WORLD OF `STAR TREK’

Since its 1966 premiere with one of the most diverse casts TV had ever seen, “Trek” has grown from Gene Roddenberry’s fever dream of a “‘Wagon Train’ to the stars” into an intricate transmedia universe full of subtleties and traditions and rules.

Among them: Human beings avoid killing each other. Money is generally outdated, as are hunger and poverty. Greed is aberrant. Noninterference in other cultures is the most sacred principle of all. And within the United Federation of Planets, the spacefaring United Nations of “Star Trek,” exploration, not domination, is the coin of the realm. In short, unlike a lot of humanity right now.

That 1966-69 original series used allegory to evade network censors and tell stories about racism and xenophobia and even the Vietnam War. How could they get away with all that? Because the adventures of Kirk’s Enterprise took place against a backdrop of 23rd-century space travel — something directly relevant to the world as well, given that humans [first set foot on the moon](https://www.newschannel10.com/story/10749277/space-is-the-final-frontier-all-it-used-to-be/?outputType=amp) 47 days after the original series’ final episode.

Over the next half century, backed by a vocal fan base, “Star Trek” roared back for more and, in the process, led the way in cementing space travel as an ideal canvas for relevant storytelling.

Even as NASA’s Apollo era ebbed into the space shuttle program (where [an early craft](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/40-years-ago-space-shuttle-enterprise-rolls-to-the-pad) was named “Enterprise”) and eventually into uncertainty, “Trek” remained one of the culture’s central vehicles for a spacefaring future.

In all that varying storytelling, though, one constant remained: the notion that human space travel would become a vector of ethics and goodness that elevated the galaxy rather than plundered it.

THE PROFITABLE FRONTIER

Which brings us to companies like Blue Origin, Elon Musk’s SpaceX and Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic — endeavors that build their brands not upon countries but corporations.

They offer the culture a late-stage capitalism variation on the theme — a narrative that space travel isn’t just for scientists and diplomats but for you and me, too. If, that is, you and me happen to have a few hundred thousand dollars or more of walking-around money on hand.

“The United States always has had private people working for the public purpose,” says [Ravi S. Rajan,](https://directory.calarts.edu/administration-offices/ravi-s-rajan) president of the California Institute for the Arts and a “Trek” fan since childhood. “But how much is done privately and how much is done publicly, that changes.”

Many have impugned the billionaire space moguls’ actions, including the [secretary-general of the United Nations,](https://apnews.com/article/united-nations-general-assembly-technology-lifestyle-antonio-guterres-richard-branson-3179653c716a2e6a703815f1df80d0e9) and the troubles of Blue Origin’s [corporate culture](https://apnews.com/article/science-business-lifestyle-elon-musk-jeff-bezos-ccb58b2b24f43b1820f18496c19bc1a9) are [well-documented](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/10/11/blue-origin-jeff-bezos-delays-toxic-workplace/) of late.

But the motives of the Amazon founder himself remain unclear. It is evident, though, that the popular culture of space travel has influenced him deeply.

Bezos, who tells a story of exploring space to help ensure Earth’s continued prosperity, is a longtime “Trek” fan. He made [a cameo as an alien Starfleet official](https://www.geekwire.com/2016/jeff-bezos-alien-star-trek-beyond-amazon/) in the 2016 movie “Star Trek Beyond.” And according to [biographer Brad Stone,](https://www.amazon.com/Everything-Store-Jeff-Bezos-Amazon/dp/0316219282/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=%22the+everything+store%22&qid=1633978436&sr=8-3) Bezos even fleetingly considered calling Amazon “[Makeitso.com](http://makeitso.com/),” after Capt. Jean-Luc Picard’s favorite command in “Star Trek: The Next Generation.”

“The whole ethos of `Star Trek’ showed people who were different-looking, with different skills, working together. We are in the opening moments of something like that,” says [Richard B. Cooper,](https://www.spacefoundation.org/human/richard-b-cooper/) vice president of the Space Foundation, a nonprofit that advocates for the global space industry. “People can look at this environment and say, `Hey — I belong there, too.’”

Prohibitive costs aside (and that’s a big aside), Cooper has a point. Though the likes of Shatner may not be “regular people,” the shift from the dominance of the test pilot and the scientist tracks with the populism of our era, where — it must be said — the exactitude of science is being called into question as never before. And as Cooper points out, “it gives people hope. And if there’s one thing the world’s in short supply of, it’s that essential payload.”

That kind of storyline — hope, heroism, competitive dominance and an unerring sense of competence that can at times overlap with testosterone — could be one key reason why the commercial space outfits are thriving. At a moment when NASA and nation-focused space travel lacks a compelling Hollywood narrative, the entrepreneurs and their marketers step right in.

“American dominance in space, nobody cares about it. It’s Bezos who says, `We can’t go on living like this. We have to save the planet,’” says [Mary-Jane Rubenstein,](https://mrubenstein.faculty.wesleyan.edu/) a professor of religion and science in society at Wesleyan University. What results, she says, is “a kinder, gentler colonialism” in which humans take to orbit under premises that seem justifiable but require closer scrutiny.

“It’s the billionaires who have the utopian visions,” says Rubenstein, author of the upcoming book “Astrotopia: The Dangerous Religion of the Corporate Space Race.”

“The states can’t muster them,” she says. “They have no story.”

LAUNCHING SHATNER

We live in an era where the fictional and the real have an intricate relationship, and sometimes it’s [are] hard to separate them. Something like this, a collision of dreams and real-life ambition and achievement, couldn’t have a more effective ambassador than the outsized personality that is William Shatner.

“I was there last week rehearsing, whatever they call it,” Shatner told Anderson Cooper.

“Training I think is what they call it,” Cooper said, to which Shatner responded: “I think[s] of it as rehearsal.”

And there it is again — the storyline, compelling as ever, stealing oxygen from other important questions. Should we even be colonizing space? Don’t we have enough going on here at home to worry about? Aren’t there people with problems more pressing than this who could use the cash?

And what if we encounter life that’s not life as we know it, and harm it out of obliviousness or greed? It’s not as if that hasn’t happened countless times here on the ground, in the land that put a man on the moon but still grapples with a history brimming with horrors from slave markets to smallpox blankets. These are only some of the questions that will ascend and descend with Shatner on Wednesday.

Is it a stunt? Sure. Is it a genius marketing ploy? Absolutely. Is it cynical and self-aggrandizing and designed solely to make more money and grab more attention for the world’s richest man? You’re going to have to decide that one yourself. In the meantime, consider the autobiographical song called [“Real”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsKfZ3wvLkE) that Shatner recorded in 2004 with country singer Brad Paisley.

“I’d love to help the world and all its problems. But I’m an entertainer, and that’s all,” he says in it. “So the next time there’s an asteroid or a natural disaster, I’m flattered that you thought of me — but I’m not the one to call.”

Turns out, he is — this time. But next time? In the future of the final frontier and the culture that has grown up around it — in this unusual realm where risk IS the business — that’s eventually going to have to be addressed.

#### Art imitates life, and life imitates art. But what happens when this cycle has repeated for so long, that you can no longer tell the difference between the two?

#### Welcome to hyperreality, where the symbolic no longer stands in for the Real as a copy, but instead stands on its own as a copy of a copy. The market operates through the exchange of signs and symbols, overwhelming the subject in the digital matrix of data, making truth inaccessible and information dissuasive. Thus, the ROTB is to deconstruct the hyperreal.

Shapiro 17 [Alan, transdisciplinary thinker who studied science-technology at MIT and philosophy-history-literature at Cornell University. He is the author of “Star Trek: Technologies of Disappearance” (Berlin: AVINUS Verlag, 2004), a leading work in science fiction studies and on the conception of futuristic technoscience. He is the editor and translator of “The Technological Herbarium” by Gianna Maria Gatti (Berlin: AVINUS Verlag, 2010), a major study of art and technology. His book “Software of the Future: The Model Precedes the Real” was published by the Walther König Verlag art books publisher of Cologne, Germany in 2014. At his website “Alan N. Shapiro, Technologist and Futurist” (www.alan-shapiro.com), he has already published more than 250 articles (by himself and others). He is recognised as one of the leading experts on the philosophy and cultural theory of Jean Baudrillard. He is currently working on a book of essays for an Italian book publisher. 01/05/2017. “Baudrillard and Trump: Simulation and Object-Orientation, Not True and False,” <http://www.alan-shapiro.com/baudrillard-and-trump-simulation-and-object-orientation-not-true-and-false-by-alan-n-shapiro/>] / lm

In other words, Trump is the candidate of the era of simulation. Invoking “the truth” against him does not work as a strategy. Trump is already more advanced than the discourse of truth. We are in a hyper-reality where there is no more truth and no more falsehood. Carl “The Truth” Williams, a former heavyweight boxing champion of the world, passed away in April 2013.

Alan Cholodenko comments: If hyper-reality was born for Baudrillard during or just after the Second World War, then there have already been several simulation-Presidents: JFK the first televisual President, Reagan the Hollywood actor and first TV show host (of the General Electric Theatre)-President. Trump takes his place in this lineage. He is the second TV show host (of The Apprentice)-President, the first live show, reality TV show CEO host become live show, reality TV show CEO host-President of the live show, reality TV show America, Inc.)

The mistake of the multitudes of journalists and editorialists like the Washington Post’s Greg Sargent is to not understand that the system of “truth and lies” is not some eternal, ahistorical or “scientifically objective” reality. It is an historically constructed cultural discourse or arrangement tied to an epoch which is finite in time. As Foucault might say, the concern with “true” and “false” is an epistème – an epistemological a priori, an expression of a specific power-knowledge constellation within an era – whose time has come and gone. The insistent belief in “truth and lies” is also embedded in the Plato-initiated “metaphysics” of the “human subject,” the subject-centered worldview, the sovereign (democratic or scientific) subject who “knows” and can therefore judge and determine when “knowledge” or a “fact” has been betrayed.

In the new epistemological system beyond “truth and lies” to which Trump is finely attuned, of which he is the master, and which liberals do not get, the object itself is the hot thing. The spotlight is on objects (conceptual not physical), and they are a relationship, an association which knows nothing of whether they are real or fake. They transcend and straddle true and false. “Things have found a way of avoiding a dialectics of meaning that was beginning to bore them: by proliferating indefinitely, increasing their potential, outbidding themselves in an ascension to the limit, an obscenity that henceforth becomes their immanent finality and senseless reason.” (Baudrillard, Fatal Strategies; p.7) Trump will change what he says on any given topic from day to day, or on any given Sunday. The liberal media will “prove him wrong” with evidence, but this demonstration will have an effect exactly the opposite than that intended upon and for the “silent majority” of half of Americans for whom they are the liars. When did this happen (when was the “Canetti point”)? Impossible to say. To know the point of origin of that would be to overstate the claims of knowledge, to violate the methodological recursivity of our awareness of being lost within the culture of simulation (as Baudrillard has taught us in his fascinating lengthy discussions of the “Canetti point,” and as Gerry Coulter has taught us, for example, in his essay on America).

When Trump said that thousands of Muslims were celebrating on rooftops in Jersey City, New Jersey on 9/11, he was right. 100% right, as he later tweeted. Within the epistemology (theory of knowledge) of the humanist-democratic subject and of truth, the alleged rooftop event of course “did not take place.” Yet in the hyper-modernist epistemology, the rhetorical and emotional power of the words invoked and the mental images evoked by Trump (the advent of hyper-imagination) carry the weight and dynamic force of the image-immersed beyond-chimerical “object” of those evil Muslim celebrators. Probably Trump saw on TV in September 2001 some cynical celebrations in the Palestinian territories. The clandestine wormhole connection between physically remote points in space is plausibly extant. In the culture of virtual images, it is perfectly OK to transpose the bin Laden-sympathetic revelers from one geographical location to another, the hyper-space of Trump’s creative memory mingled with the hyper-dimensional expanding televisual space on the interior of the flatscreen.

Fantasy is possible in a world that is still real. A fantasy could be said to be not true, some sort of illusion (in the non-Baudrillardian meaning of this word) or deception. But when images are everywhere, and they are universally exchangeable with each other, the made-up mental images become hyper-real. Which now (literally) means (hyper-means) more real than real. Meaning becomes hyper-meaning.

Would not the ubiquity of video documentation and recording devices of every kind increase the availability of truth? Whipping the cam around, looking amazing from every angle? No, the effect is just the opposite. When documentation and recording are everywhere, then they are nowhere. They cease to exist in any meaningful sense. They serve no purpose whatsoever anymore. They are pure technology fetish in the bad sense, decoupled through their excess from what they were supposed to enhance or invent. As a hybrid radical-leftist-and-mainstreamer, I do believe that there is a good side to surveillance, a deterrence of crime. But if surveillance is everywhere, then this good side no longer functions. This is the same paradoxical logic that is operative for all virtual and digital media technologies. Yes, all of these wonderful new things are available to us, but we omitted the step of thinking carefully about the appropriate measure of their application. We forgot to humanly judge this. Hybrid posthumanist and humanist. We never took seriously the great thought of Albert Camus, that in almost every area, we need to have a sense of limits (as Dominick LaCapra pointed out). Academic referentiality – which Baudrillard was opposed to – is like this too. If you overdo it, become obsessed with footnotes, then you enter into the twilight zone of hyper-referentiality and then the whole business does not function anymore. You do it because you have to do it and the original purpose is lost.

The “proof” (ha ha!) is now upon us that Baudrillard was right all along. We are now fully in the era of simulation and telemorphosis, of the New Truth of the omnipresent image (both picture-image and word-image – the multi-media of the screen having transformed written words from texts into images). The New Truth is not a lie – that would be too easy and the claim is retrograde. The New Truth institutes its own hyper-reality, which is at present our only reality. The only way to contest simulation and the New Truth would be a strategy or perspective of “taking the side of objects” (see, for example, my most recent IJBS essay, for an elaboration of this). We would have to get to know the codes which underlie and instantiate simulation and reverse them. Reversibility of the code comes from “objects” within the code which want more objecthood. Until we can start to do that, to paraphrase David Cronenberg’s Videodrome: LONG LIVE THE NEW TRUTH!

#### The launch of the richest man in the world and the protagonist of Star Trek encapsulates the world of the hyperreal. Sci-Fi becomes Reality, and thus the boundary between them is destroyed, annihilating all meaning in the universe.

Baudrillard 81 [Jean Baudrillard, Baudrillard was a French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist. He is best known for his analyses of media, contemporary culture, and technological communication, as well as his formulation of concepts such as simulation and hyperreality, “Simulacra and Simulation”]/ lm

simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image; simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production - a Promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the Utopias related to this order of simulacra); simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game - total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control. To the first category belongs the imaginary of the Utopia. To the second corresponds science fiction, strictly speaking. To the third corresponds - is there an imaginary that might correspond to this order? The most likely answer is that the good old imaginary of science fiction is dead and that something else is in the process of emerging (not only in fiction but in theory as well). The same wavering and indeterminate fate puts an end to science fiction - but also to theory, as specific genres. There is no real, there is no imaginary except at a certain distance. What happens when this distance, including that between the real and the imaginary, tends to abolish itself, to be reabsorbed on behalf of the model? Well, from one order of simulacra to another, the tendency is certainly toward the reabsorption of this distance, of this gap that leaves room for an ideal or critical projection. This projection is maximized in the Utopian, in which a transcendent sphere, a radically different universe takes form (the romantic dream is still the individualized form of Utopia, in which transcendence is outlined in depth, even in unconscious structures, but in any case the dissociation from the real world is maximized, the island of Utopia stands opposed to the continent of the real). This projection is greatly reduced in science fiction: it is most often nothing other than an unbounded projection of the real world of production, but it is not qualitatively different from it. Mechanical or energetic extensions, speed, and power increase to the nth power, but the schemas and the scenarios are those of mechanics, metallurgy, etc. Projected hypostasis of the robot. (To the limited universe of the preindustrial era, Utopia opposed an ideal, alternative universe. To the potentially infinite universe of production, science fiction adds the multiplication of its own possibilities.) This projection is totally reabsorbed in the implosive era of models. The models no longer constitute either transcendence or projection, they no longer constitute the imaginary in relation to the real, they are themselves an anticipation of the real, and thus leave no room for any sort of fictional anticipation - they are immanent, and thus leave no room for any kind of imaginary transcendence. The field opened is that of simulation in the cybernetic sense, that is, of the manipulation of these models at every level (scenarios, the setting up of simulated situations, etc.) but then nothing distinguishes this operation from the operation itself and the gestation of the real: there is no more fiction. Reality could go beyond fiction: that was the surest sign of the possibility of an ever- increasing imaginary. But the real cannot surpass the model - it is nothing but its alibi. The imaginary was the alibi of the real, in a world dominated by the reality principle. Today, it is the real that has become the alibi of the model, in a world controlled by the principle of simulation. And, paradoxically, it is the real that has become our true Utopia - but a Utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible, that can only be dreamt of as one would dream of a lost object. Perhaps science fiction from the cybernetic and hyperreal era can only exhaust itself, in its artificial resurrection of "historical" worlds, can only try to reconstruct in vitro, down to the smallest details, the perimeters of a prior world, the events, the people, the ideologies of the past, emptied of meaning, of their original process, but hallucinatory with retrospective truth. Thus in Simulacra by Philip K. Dick, the war of Secession. Gigantic hologram in three dimensions, in which fiction will never again be a mirror held toward the future, but a desperate rehallucination of the past. We can no longer imagine any other universe: the grace of transcendence was taken away from us in that respect too. Classical science fiction was that of an expanding universe, besides, it forged its path in the narratives of spatial exploration, counterparts to the more terrestrial forms of exploration and colonization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is no relationship of cause and effect there: it is not because terrestrial space today is virtually coded, mapped, registered, saturated, has thus in a sense closed up again in universalizing itself - a universal market, not only of merchandise, but of values, signs, models, leaving no room for the imaginary - it is not exactly because of this that the exploratory universe (technical, mental, cosmic) of science fiction has also ceased to function. But the two are narrowly linked, and they are two versions of the same general process of implosion that follows the gigantic process of explosion and expansion characteristic of past centuries. When a system reaches its own limits and becomes saturated, a reversal is produced - something else takes place, in the imaginary as well. Until now we have always had a reserve of the imaginary - now the coefficient of reality is proportional to the reserve of the imaginary that gives it its specific weight. This is also true of geographic and spatial exploration: when there is no longer any virgin territory, and thus one available to the imaginary, when the map covers the whole territory, something like the principle of reality disappears. In this way, the conquest of space constitutes an irreversible crossing toward the loss of the terrestrial referential. There is a hemorrhaging of reality as an internal coherence of a limited universe, once the limits of this universe recede into infinity. The conquest of space that follows that of the planet is equal to derealizing (dematerializing) human space, or to transferring it into a hyperreal of simulation.Witness this two-bedroom/kitchen/shower put into orbit, raised to a spatial power (one could say) with the most recent lunar module. The every-dayness of the terrestrial habitat itself elevated to the rank of cosmic value, hypostatized in space - the satellization of the real in the transcendence of space - it is the end of metaphysics, the end of the phantasm, the end of science fiction - the era of hyper-reality begins. From then onward, something must change: the projection, the extrapolation, the sort of pantographic excess that constituted the charm of science fiction are all impossible. It is no longer possible to fabricate the unreal from the real, the imaginary from the givens of the real. The process will, rather, be the opposite: it will be to put decentered situations, models of simulation in place and to contrive to give them the feeling of the real, of the banal, of lived experience, to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because it has disappeared from our life. Hallucination of the real, of lived experience, of the quotidian, but reconstituted, sometimes down to disquietingly strange details, reconstituted as an animal or vegetal reserve, brought to light with a transparent precision, but without substance, derealized in advance, hyperrealized. In this way, science fiction would no longer be a romantic expansion with all the freedom and naivete that the charm of discovery gave it, but, quite the contrary, it would evolve implosively in the very image of our current conception of the universe, attempting to revitalize, reactualize, requotidianize fragments of simulation, fragments of this universal simulation that have become for us the so-called real world. Where would the works be that would meet, here and now, this situational inversion, this situational reversion? Obviously the short stories of Philip K. Dick "gravitate" in this space, if one can use that word (but that is precisely what one can't really do any more, because this new universe is "antigravitational," or if it still gravitates, it is around the hole of the real, around the hole of the imaginary). One does not see an alternative cosmos, a cosmic folklore or exoticism, or a galactic prowess there - one is from the start in a total simulation, without origin, immanent, without a past, without a future, a diffusion of all coordinates (mental, temporal, spatial, signaletic) - it is not about a parallel universe, a double universe, or even a possible universe - neither possible, impossible, neither real nor unreal: hyperreal - it is a universe of simulation, which is something else altogether. And not because Dick speaks specifically of simulacra - science fiction has always done so, but it played on the double, on doubling or redoubling, either artificial or imaginary, whereas here the double has disappeared, there is no longer a double, one is always already in the other world, which is no longer an other, without a mirror, a projection, or a Utopia that can reflect it - simulation is insuperable, unsurpassable, dull and flat, without exteriority - we will no longer even pass through to "the other side of mirror," that was still the golden age of transcendence. Perhaps a still more convincing example would be that of Ballard and of his evolution from the first very "phantasmagoric" short stories, poetic, dreamlike, disorienting, up to Crash, which is without a doubt (more than IGH or Concrete Island) the current model of this science fiction that is no longer one. Crash is our world, nothing in it is "invented": everything in it is hyper-functional, both the circulation and the accident, technique and death, sex and photographic lens, everything in it is like a giant, synchronous, simulated machine: that is to say the acceleration of our own models, of all models that surround us, blended and hyperoperational in the void. This is what distinguishes Crash from almost all science fiction, which mostly still revolves around the old (mechanical and mechanistic) couple function/ dysfunction, which it projects into the future along the same lines of force and the same finalities that are those of the "normal" universe. Fiction in that universe might surpass reality (or the opposite: that is more subtle) but it still plays by the same rules. In Crash, there is neither fiction nor reality anymore - hyper- reality abolishes both. It is there that our contemporary science fiction, if there is one, exists. "Jack Barron or Eternity", some passages from "Everyone to Zanzibar". In fact, science fiction in this sense is no longer anywhere, and it is everywhere, in the circulation of models, here and now, in the very principle of the surrounding simulation. It can emerge in its crude state, from the inertia itself of the operational world. What writer of science fiction would have "imagined" (but precisely it can no longer be "imagined") this "reality" of East German factories - simulacra, factories that reemploy all the unemployed to fill all the roles and all the posts of the traditional production process but that don't produce anything, whose activity is consumed in a game of orders, of competition, of writing, of bookkeeping, between one factory and another, inside a vast network? All material production is redoubled in the void (one of these simulacra factories even "really" failed, putting its own unemployed out of work a second time). That is simulation: not that the factories are fake, but precisely that they are real, hyperreal, and that because of this they return all "real" production, that of "serious" factories, to the same hyperreality. What is fascinating here is not the opposition between real factories and fake factories, but on the contrary the lack of distinction between the two, the fact that all the rest of production has no greater referent or deeper finality than this "simulacra!" business. It is this hyperreal indifference that constitutes the real "science-fictional" quality of this episode. And one can see that it is not necessary to invent it: it is there, emerging from a world without secrets, without depth.

#### Space capitalism entrenches us in the simulation by eliminating space as an object of postcapitalist imagination through the appropriation of both the real and the fictional, ceiling the fate of trillions of workers to labor in orbital factories.

Pearson 18 [Jordan Pearson, Vice, Motherboard tech by vice, “American Capitalism Is Suffocating the Endless Possibilities of Space,” May 10th 2018, [https://www.vice.com/en/article/59qmva/jeff-bezos-space-capitalism-outer-space-treaty]/](https://www.vice.com/en/article/59qmva/jeff-bezos-space-capitalism-outer-space-treaty%5d/) lm

The stars have always appeared to us effervescent with possibility, like we’re all looking up at the bubbles from the bottom of a champagne glass every night. Fiction set in outer space is not just filled with alien landscapes and creatures, but new ways of living; stargazing has always been an exercise in world-building.

The possibilities of world-building in space are what the [Outer Space Treaty of 1967](http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/outerspacetreaty.html) represented when it was signed by over 90 countries during the first international space race. The international agreement, which is still in force today, states that space exploration “shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, and shall be the province of all [hu]mankind." It also states that signatories including the US shall be guided by the “principle of cooperation and mutual assistance.”

This treaty, clearly open to interpretation, was a springboard for efforts by developing nations to forge a new society free of Earth’s gravitational pull, and potentially free of American-led capitalism—as it turns out, both are hard to escape. A 1970s push to clarify the treaty's terms and make outer space and its resources “the common heritage of [hu]mankind” was [seen in the US as an attempt to bring socialist principles into space](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/space-industry-extraction-levine) (it was) and it was crushed. The lesson: world-building outside of the realm of science fiction is corralled—often terminally—by powerful interests.

Now, whatever possibility the Outer Space Treaty once represented for new ways of life to emerge on other planets is fading away. In late April, [as The Outline noted](https://theoutline.com/post/4469/outer-space-treaty-commerce-free-enterprise-bill-spacex-blue-origin-boeing-lockheed-martin), the US House of Representatives [passed the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act](https://science.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-approves-american-space-commerce-free-enterprise-act). The Act [states that its purpose is to](https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2809/text) “ensure that the United States remains the world leader in commercial space activities” and says that the US government will interpret its international obligations “in a manner that minimizes regulations and limitations” o[f]n private space companies. Moreover, it states that the government “shall not presume” that the Outer Space Treaty applies to private companies, allowing even more wiggle room.  
And if there were any lingering doubt about the Act’s intent, it further states: “Outer space shall not be considered a global commons."

This declaration is a powerful form of world-building—the same kind of world-building that Cecil Rhodes, the British imperialist who founded Rhodesia and one of history’s most twisted grotesques, was doing [when he sighed](https://books.google.com/books?id=zLrKGGxBKjAC&q=annex+the+planets#v=onepage&q=%22expansion%20is%20everything%2C%22%20said%20cecil%20rhodes&f=false), “I would annex the planets if I could.” Rhodes sought to [remake a whole people in the image](https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cecil-john-rhodes) of the white industrialist, and so it was only natural that he do the same with the heavens—if he could.  
Star Trek’s collectivist Federation, sparkling and joyous [Afrofuturist visions](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/pgkxkv/george-clinton-explains-the-future), the anarchism of [Ursula K. Le Guin](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/vvbxqd/ursula-le-guin-future-of-the-left)’s The Dispossessed—all of these possibilities seem to buckle under the weight of unshackled industry forging a society for itself and its class interests with the help of the government. If you listen to the people who stand to benefit most from the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act, like Amazon and Blue Origin founder Jeff Bezos, American capitalism in space will have its own benefits.

Bezos also said that humanity will have “unlimited, for all practical purposes, resources and solar power and so on.” This doesn't mean that everyone will have equal access to these resources, like those gleaned from asteroid mining, or that they are really unlimited. Oil is also often [said by those with vested interests](https://science.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-approves-american-space-commerce-free-enterprise-act) to be a practically unlimited resource—last month [President Donald Trump tweeted](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-20/trump-s-claim-of-oil-all-over-the-place-isn-t-true-anymore) that there are “record amounts of oil all over the place.” And yet untold human suffering and deprivation stems from the extraction, production, and consumption of oil and oil products, and the distribution of profits from these activities. And there is no equal access; everybody knows only those at the top can afford to use as much gas as they please on their boats, planes, and so on.

And what will life look like for the trillion humans living in the solar system, many (if not most) under the yoke of American capitalism? It will look a lot like it does now, which is to say it will be a life of work while wealth flows up to an interstellar elite.

And if this vision expands beyond our solar system? Trillions of humans; one thousand gray planets, one thousand petty plutocracies, a universe of misery.

#### The impact is a fate worse than death – trillions of workers condemned to labor as part of the capitalist machine, meaningless life in the isolation of outer space.

Baudrillard 76 [Jean; “Symbolic Exchange and Death”; Sage Publications; French Sociologist and Philosopher; 1976;]/ lm

Other societies have known multiple stakes: over birth and kinship, the soul and the body, the true and the false, reality and appearance. Political econ- omy has reduced them to just one: production. But then the stakes were large, the violence extreme and hopes too high. Today this is over. The system has rid production of all real stakes. A more radical truth is dawning, however, and the system’s victory allows us to glimpse this fundamental stake. It is even retrospectively becoming possible to analyse the whole of political economy as having nothing to do with production, as having stakes of life and death. A symbolic stake. Every stake is symbolic. There have only ever been symbolic stakes. This dimension is etched everywhere into the structural law of value, every- where immanent in the code. Labour power is instituted on death. A [hu]man must die to become labour power. He converts this death into a wage. But the economic violence capital inflicted on him in the equivalence of the wage and labour power is nothing next to the symbolic violence inflicted on him by his definition as a productive force. Faking this equivalence is nothing next to the equiva- lence, qua signs, of wages and death. The very possibility of quantitative equivalence presupposes death. The equivalence of wages and labour power presupposes the death of the worker, while that of any commodity and any other presupposes the symbolic extermination of objects. Death makes the calculation of equivalence, and regulation by indifference, possible in general. This death is not violent and physical, it is the indifferent consumption of life and death, the mutual neutralisation of life and death survival, or death deferred. Labour is slow death. This is generally understood in the sense of phys- ical exhaustion. But it must be understood in another sense. Labour is not opposed, like a sort of death, to the ‘fulfilment of life’, which is the idealist view; labour is opposed as a slow death to a violent death. That is the symbolic reality. Labour is opposed as deferred death to the immediate death of sacrifice. Against every pious and ‘revolutionary’ view of the ‘labour (or culture) is the opposite of life’ type, we must maintain that the only alternative to labour is not free time, or non-labour, it is sacrifice. All this becomes clear in the genealogy of the slave. First, the prisoner of war is purely and simply put to death (one does him an honour in this way). Then he is ‘spared’ [épargné] and conserved [conservé] ( servus), under the category of spoils of war and a prestige good: he becomes a slave and passes into sumptuary domesticity. It is only later that he passes into servile labour. However, he is no longer a ‘labourer’, since labour only appears in the phase of the serf or the emancipated slave, finally relieved of the mortgage of being put to death. Why is he freed? Precisely in order to work. Labour therefore everywhere draws its inspiration from deferred death. It comes from deferred death. Slow or violent, immediate or deferred, the scansion of death is decisive: it is what radically distinguishes two types of organisation, the economic and the sacrificial. We live irreversibly in the first of these, which has inexorably taken root in the différance of death. The scenario has never changed. Whoever works has not been put to death, he is refused this honour. And labour is first of all the sign of being judged worthy only of life. Does capital exploit the workers to death? Paradoxically, the worst it inflicts on them is refusing them death. It is by deferring their death that they are made into slaves and condemned to the indefinite abjection of a life of labour. The substance of labour and exploitation is indifferent in this symbolic relation. The power of the master always primarily derives from this sus- pension of death. Power is therefore never, contrary to what we might imagine, the power of putting to death, but exactly the opposite, that of allowing to live – a life that the slave lacks the power to give. The master confiscates the death of the other while retaining the right to risk his own. The slave is refused this, and is condemned to a life without return, and therefore without possible expiation. By removing death, the master removes the slave from the circulation of symbolic goods. This is the violence the master does to the slave, condemning [t]h[e]im to labour power. There lies the secret of power (in the dialectic of the master and the slave, Hegel also derives the domination of the master from the deferred threat of death hanging over the slave). Labour, production and exploitation would only be one of the possible avatars of this power structure, which is a structure of death. This changes every revolutionary perspective on the abolition of power. If power is death deferred, it will not be removed insofar as the suspension of this death will not be removed. And if power, of which this is always and everywhere the definition, resides in the act of giving without being given, it is clear that the power the master has to unilaterally grant life will only be abolished if this life can be given to him – in a non-deferred death. There is no other alternative; you will never abolish this power by staying alive, since there will have been no reversal of what has been given.

#### Thus, I affirm that the appropriation of Star Trek by Jeff Bezos is unjust – Star Trek is the ultimate metaphor for the hyperreal, as each reboot represented a copy of a copy, but the launch of William Shatner represents the final break where Reality and Sci-Fi collide – my reading of Star Trek produces a glitch in the matrix of hyperreality.

(I can clarify anything in cross)

Shapiro 10 [Alan N. Shapiro (born 23 April 1956 in [Brooklyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn), [New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_(state))) is an [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [science fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction) and [media theorist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_theory). He is a lecturer and essayist in the fields of [science fiction studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_studies), [media theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_theory), [posthumanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posthumanism), [French philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_philosophy), [creative coding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_coding), technological art, [sociology of culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_culture), social choreography, software theory, [robotics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robotics), [artificial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence), and futuristic and transdisciplinary design, Hypermodernism, Hyperreality, Posthumanism, “[Home](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/) [Datenschutz](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/datenschutz/) [About](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/about/) [Impressum](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/impressum/) [Baudrillard and Trek-nology (Or Everything I Know I Learned From Watching Star Trek and Reading Jean Baudrillard), by Alan N. Shapiro](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/baudrillard-and-trek-nology-or-everything-i-know-i-learned-from-watching-star-trek-and-reading-jean-baudrillard/)” October 10th, 2010, [http://www.alan-shapiro.com/baudrillard-and-trek-nology-or-everything-i-know-i-learned-from-watching-star-trek-and-reading-jean-baudrillard/]/](http://www.alan-shapiro.com/baudrillard-and-trek-nology-or-everything-i-know-i-learned-from-watching-star-trek-and-reading-jean-baudrillard/%5d/) lm

We should be greatly mistaken were we to view science fiction as an escape from everyday reality: on the contrary, it is an extrapolation from the irrational tendencies of that reality through the free exercise of narrative invention.2

I. Introduction

It was my childhood in New York in the late 1960s. As a good Jew, I was supposed to acquire a Jewish education. But instead I loved Star Trek. Everything I know I learned from watching Star Trek. Among other things, I learned to love science. This made me a good American. So I went to the elite technology university. But I didn’t like the complicity of science with the Vietnam War that existed there. So I dropped out. I was radicalized. I then went to the elite humanities university. But the American radical thinkers were all Marxists. Then I read Jean Baudrillard’s book The Mirror of Production. I grasped that Marx was not radical enough.3 Everything I know I learned from reading Baudrillard. Later I tried to practice a compromise between technology and the humanities known as sociology. Then I read Baudrillard’s book In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities. There he says that sociologists, just like marketing executives and politicians, want to socialize the masses. But the masses resist by going silent and “playing dead.”4 They disappear into over-consumption and fandom.

The disappearing act of today is techno-culture, or more precisely, Star Trek. Star Trek is the most prevalent “icon” of techno-culture. Physicists, engineers, computer programmers, graphic artists, and media practitioners are its adamant fans. But the Star Trek industry neutralizes Star Trek‘s original creativity. It programs an automatic system of endless simulated differences, to ensure that viewers will never be able to see any true other. That is why I read Star Trek against Star Trek. Through doubling and decentering, I parodistically map Baudrillard’s system of thought onto Star Trek.5 On two levels, there is an uncanny resemblance between Baudrillard and Star Trek. First, there is an exact correspondence between Baudrillard’s keywords and the principles of “The Original Series” Star Trek episodes: radical uncertainty, recognition of otherness, accident and surprise of technology, symbolic exchange, the dual relationship. Second, there are the pataphysical science fiction technologies: the transporter, warp speed, time travel, the Holodeck. These Trek-nologies are based on quantum physics uncertainty and chaos theory complexity. By applying pressure at both ends – Star Trek as literature, Star Trek as wily technologies – there is a double-strategy of adding a little “critical theory” real and speaking only in this “fatal theory” futuristic language. Now please follow me to explore strange new worlds in outer space. Let us consider a few Star Trek episodes and technologies up close, starting with virtual reality.

II. Treknology

The Holodeck is the most famous virtual reality system, created in the 1990s for the series Star Trek: The Next Generation. But this post-television technology merely brings to fruition total visual information and leads to the end of aesthetic illusion. By contrast, the invention of virtual reality in the original Star Trek episodes of the 1960s artistically embodies Baudrillard’s principles of radical uncertainty, the vital illusion, and the surprise of technology.

In the episode “Shore Leave,” Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy enter the virtual reality system of the Amusement Park Planet by chance and without knowing what it is. They encounter mysterious and enchanting physical appearances from their daydreams which play on the tension between real and imaginary. At the beginning of the episode, McCoy leads an away team scouting a planet with no apparent life-forms. He is alone for just a moment when a four-foot tall white rabbit appears, then disappears again into a deep hole in the ground. Dumbfounded, the Doctor motions towards the hole when Alice (from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland) appears and asks if he has seen a large white rabbit come along. At the same time, Kirk sees an old schoolmate named Finnegan whom he owes a day of reckoning. Kirk runs after Finnegan. When he at last catches up with him, it occurs to Kirk that he has no idea how Finnegan has gotten here. Captain’s Log, Stardate 3025.8: “We are seeing things that cannot possibly exist, yet they are undeniably real.”

The episode “A Taste of Armageddon” is a perfect parallel to Baudrillard’s thesis in The Gulf War Did Not Take Place that “we are no longer in an Aristotelean logic of passage from the virtual to the actual, but in a hyperreal logic of deterrence of the real by the virtual.”6 The explanation of Anan-Seven of the Planetary Division of Control to Captain Kirk is interrupted by an air raid siren. “Vendikar is attacking.” A Council chamber wall slides open to reveal a War Room, filled with mainframe computers and illuminated graphs. Anan tells Kirk that a vicious onslaught has just been carried out by the ruthless adversary. A half-million people were killed. In spite of all the talk of annihilation, scans by Yeoman Tamura’s tricorder indicate no bomb blasts or radiation disturbances anywhere on the planet. The War of the Worlds is waged entirely by computer simulation. After a cyberwar program determines which inhabitants have been terminated in a given virtual explosion, “deaths are registered.” The designated victims have twenty-four hours to report to a disintegration machine. As in America’s wars, those who actually die are the Data Trash ejected by the war video game.7 These shadow-people furnish the necessary dose of reality-effect. The hyperreal simulation of war is above all a method of domination of Western citizens by their states and institutional elites, embedded in the power system of the virtual spaces of the media. America is a simulacral power engaged in the simulacrum of war, using the Other as a convenient alibi for its perfect crime.

To practice a radical “after sociology” “after Baudrillard,” we must bring together critical theory and fatal theory. As Rex Butler says in his indispensable book Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real, we must devise a way of writing about a system that follows its internal logic to the end, adds nothing to it, yet inverts it entirely. This écriture is totally specific to each system examined.8 In the case of Star Trek, we must unify Star Trek as literature and Star Trek as wily technologies. Later, in the context of the most famous Trek-nology – the transporter, I demonstrate how these two analyses come together. Before getting into the implications of “beam me up Scotty,” I want to briefly discuss two other Trek-nologies: time travel and warp speed. The latter is the Star Trek synonym for faster-than-light speed.

III. Real (Pata)physics

A surprising amount of theoretical physics research is directed towards establishing the scientific prerequisites for time travel. As defined by Alfred Jarry, whom Baudrillard often cites with good humor, pataphysics is the painstaking elaboration of imaginary scientific solutions, expressed in persuasive language.9 “Exotic theories” about the workability of time travel are today furiously debated in serious physics journals. About fifteen new scholarly papers a year are published on the subject.10

…

IV. Evil Protects Us

…

The necessary accident of the duplicate Kirk turns a questioning spotlight on the “essence” or punctum of the transporter, which is the absolutist phantasmagoria of total knowledge of a person captured in a digital pattern image or quantum physics snapshot of their subatomic particles. It is the dream of a human being understandable entirely through her information, identical to herself, and leading a completely knowable existence. As Baudrillard writes:

Evil protects us from the worst-case scenario… We are traditionally sensitive to the threat which the ‘forces of Evil’ pose for the Good, whereas it is the threat posed by the forces of Good which is the fateful threat to the world of the future. …We are on course for the perfect crime, perpetrated by Good and in the name of Good, for the implacable perfection of the technical, artificial universe which will see the accomplishment of all our desires, of a world unified by the elimination of all anti-bodies. This is our negentropic phantasm of total information. That all matter should become energy and all energy information. …That all genes should be operational…11

V. Conclusion

…

Baudrillard admonished the Simulationist and Appropriationist artists of the 1980s (Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine and Peter Halley), who sought legitimacy for their works by making reference to his writings on simulation, simulacra, and the end of the real.12 But the referent has “long ago” been substituted by the sign. “If you take Baudrillard seriously,” he told them, then “you must forget Baudrillard.”13 Academic attempts at “applying deconstruction” have also seemed notoriously contrived. By identifying Star Trek as a “media precognition” of Baudrillard (as Stefan Höltgen commented earlier at this symposium); and by writing about “what I love”; via a mutual anagrammatizing that finally renders Baudrillard and Star Trek indistinguishable; and through performing the illusion, joy, poetics, irony, disappearance and Trojan horse strategies outlined in Baudrillard’s essay “Radical Thought,” I have engaged in an experiment to cross over from French theory to American hyper-reality.14 I hope I have avoided the missteps of the Simulationist artists in my effort to contribute to an understanding of the emergence of the “Baudrillard turn.”