#### The modern University is a house of mirrors, a banal and lifeless institution devoted to the endless circulation of representations, reflected with an objective indulgence and a perverse desire for illumination. Modern academia is grounded in the tyranny of transparency, a drive towards total omniscience as everything must be held to the light, studied, analyzed, brought under the aegis of meaning and reality. This is a profoundly violent and militaristic quest that has as its condition the eradication of all radical alterity, as the research we produce becomes grease for the wheels of capital, targets for the bomb, and the very means for cybernetic control by media technologies. Be wary of the injunction towards compulsory optimism and hope – this space is incapable of salvation. We must instead shatter the mirrors altogether.

**Hoofd 17 (Ingrid, really bad academic, probably intentional. “Higher Education and Technological Acceleration: The Disintegration of University Teaching and Research. Chapter 1, Pages 28-33, 2017) // IES**

Like Lyotard, Virilio suggests in the second chapter of The Vision Machine that there is a dialectical relationship between the arts (or narrative) and the sciences, and that both are involved in a kind of interplay as long as they presuppose their fundamental context of “prime ignorance” and the necessity of unknowability or of the mythical for research. Likewise, since “for the human eye the essential is invisible” so that “since everything is an illusion, it follows that scientific theory, like art, is merely a way of manipulating illusions” (1994, 23). The moment that scientific research or philosophical enquiry gets caught up in a totalisation of knowledge via the near-perfect mechanisation of vision or a postulation of the total objectivity of ‘reality,’ this dialectical play between the arts and the sciences gets eroded and even rendered near impossible. With this ongoing “depersonalization of the thing observed but also of the observer,” we thus enter the era of what Virilio calls “the paradoxical logic” of the image, in which near-total illumination, while presenting itself as a democratisation, in fact signals the end of public representation in all its radical diversity (1994, 30 and 63). Virilio further illustrates the functioning of this paradoxical logic in the third chapter, stating that “omnivoyance, Western Europe’s totalitarian ambition, may here appear as the formation of a whole image by repressing the invisible” (1994, 33**). Everything and everyone now must be subjected to the violence of illumination**, and nothing is sacred anymore. Interestingly, Virilio suggests that famous philosophers like Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes, all admitted to a sensation of fear or terror in relation to their “obsession with the un-said going hand-in-glove with a totalitarian desire for clarification” (1994, 34). Virilio terms the new media technologies’ propensity for instilling terror by falsely propagating progress as modern society’s “Medusa Syndrome,” first unleashed in the nineteenth century on the lower classes and the colonised peoples, and now coming to hit home in the location where it was first conceptualised: academia (1994, 42). What we therefore live today, both inside and outside the university walls proper, is according to Virilio the “technological outcome of that merciless more light of revolutionary terror” (1994, 44). I suggest that we indeed notice here the fundamental relationship between **academia’s role in incessant capitalistic productivity and its twin companions of hope and fear by way of a new ‘tyranny of transparency**.’ The compulsion for the **performance of intellectual optimism and hope incessantly functions to cover over the fear and sense of terror that the neo-liberalisation of the university** via new media technologies has subjected their staff (and of course many other groups in contemporary society) to. This is also to stress again that any solution to this situation can and should not lie in ‘protecting’ or walling off the university’s functioning from this onslaught of neo-liberalisation, as this would not only temporarily protect merely the intellectual classes from this economic logic, but would also disregard the ways in which **the university has always been involved in the acceleration of this onslaught that was first unleashed on the dispossessed classes by way of their ‘total illumination’** (via census-taking, the statistical social sciences, and finally the hooking up to pervasive electronic databases and predictive algorithms). Once again, protecting some kind of ‘freedom for basic research and from quantification’ only for those within the university in the fashion Zielinski and Dittrich propose would be profoundly disingenuous and disloyal to those already long-dispossessed groups. The penultimate chapter of Virilio’s book, itself titled “The Vision Machine” as if now signalling the crux of its analysis, deals with the state of scientific and philosophical enquiry in our current era that is saturated with the technologies of seeing and discerning of all kinds. The chapter presents the reader with a distinct change of style as well: while the previous chapters were more in a classically descriptive style, this fifth chapter contains more of the rapid-fire effect of all caps and quasi-conclusive statements. I take this to be significant in terms of the style emulating the ‘logistics of perception’ today in which the reader, researcher, or spectator is ‘bombarded’ with techno-scientific propaganda, but also as a style that seeks to forego the dominant mode of philosophical reasoning by putting the poetic element of modern writing technologies back into play. While one may be tempted to assume that Virilio still abides by the logic of theoretical representation paralleling ‘reality,’ especially via his phenomenological descriptions of the supposed essence of human sensibility and morality, this fifth chapter nonetheless arguably engages in a much more speculative poetics. I read Virilio’s fifth chapter as an illustration of how the unknowable aspect necessary for any type of knowing does perforce return in the assumptions, concepts, and axioms of modern science and philosophy, as it is in these that **the auto-immunity of the university project shows itself despite (and because of) its totalitarian and omniscient ambitions**. Virilio is therefore, I suggest, illustrating how hope and despair—just like control and accident, as well as the visible and the invisible—are always fundamentally immanent to one another. It is perhaps due to the fact that Virilio’s works mirror our own terror that they are unpleasant texts for some; but their main use, I propose, is precisely because it largely abandons the ‘compulsory optimism’ that so much academic writing today suffers from. University research that seeks and even arrogantly claims total understanding and visibility, notably in the sciences via its ‘vision machines’ and the uncoupling of those sciences from its ideational and religious foundations, must therefore have fallen prey to a profound scientific and moral blindness. Digital technologies for Virilio therefore create a “sightless vision,” in which the exceeding cutting-off from the subject’s mnemonic capacities in turn creates an obsession in modern society with “fore-seeing” or prediction via computerised quantification (1994, 61). It is such ‘foreseeing’ that seeks to **close off the possibility of the unknown returning in the near future, while paradoxically also producing more unknowability**. A provocative illustration is Virilio’s postulate that the return or metamorphosis of the unknowable aspect via the transformation of Newtonian physics to quantum physics took place via Einstein’s theory of relativity. I offer this example also as a precursor to some of my own examples later on in this book of social science’s auto-immunity. In short, Virilio notes that Einstein’s idea of relativity emerges precisely at the moment when the militaristic proliferation of vision machines and virtual images generated both deception and confusion about the status of the real as such, and can hence be pinpointed as a distinctive moment of the deconstruction of science by itself. In this moment, as quantum theory likewise admits, it becomes impossible to say with certainty whether the change, pattern, or energy observed is “observed energy or observation energy,” and this conundrum will indeed only become more profound in the sciences at large as they ‘progress’ (1994, 73). This conundrum, I concur with Virilio, thus signals the fact that subject and object have always existed in a dialectical relationship, in which it is finally the object which contains an amount of agency, intention, and trickery that thinkers like Descartes sought to banish via a conception of a God that would not mess with the senses. The very attempt in physics to **erase uncertainty via the accumulation of knowledge that both follows and generates its fundamental theories therefore eventually only exacerbates uncertainty**. It is therefore the “automation of perception that is threatening our understanding,” and as a collateral of **the totalitarian quest that underlies this threat comes also the increasingly discriminatory effects of such automations** (1994, 75). As a note on the side, it is this logic that Baudrillard in his work terms ‘the uncertainty principle,’ and it is my intention in this book to show how this principle—the contemporary exacerbation of auto-immunity in a university which can be grasped as both an allegory and functional description of the vision machine—returns in a variety of pedagogical, managerial, and theoretical goings-on and even in its activist ideals of seemingly disparate institutional instances in the East and the West. Since the obscuring logic of digital technologies relies on a repression of the necessarily unknowable aspect of all meaningful experience, such a dissociation can, according to Virilio, nonetheless be **challenged by unearthing its militaristic, Enlightenment-based, and Christian grounds**. This also implies, as I proposed earlier, that the blasphemy or corruption was present in the university project from its inception. This in turn means that the obscuring function of any technique of rational and empirical analysis is constitutive of its own supposedly ‘objective’ claims. One may again wonder to what extent Virilio is toying with us by, for instance, providing objective historical ‘stages’ and ‘descriptions’ of all perceptual technologies—as Baudrillard also tends to do—by thus finally presenting academic writing and teaching as full of ruses. Perhaps The Vision Machine, and with it the institution that is its near-perfect embodiment, is finally an intellectual scam, designed to force this undecidability around the status of its truth upon us readers? Either way, with his critical analysis, which seeks to shed light on the ‘dark’ aspect of contemporary technologies and their influence on thought and seeks to unearth its precedents, Virilio has nonetheless one foot firmly placed in the Christian and Enlightenment project, even if the other foot is playing on the borders of meaningful academic analysis and argument. It is such a historical unearthing that all of Virilio’s books relentlessly present us with, and which offers a slightly different strategy from Baudrillard’s writing (even if their conceptual premises are much the same) which is rather one of ridicule of this project. I therefore argue that **Baudrillard provides a necessary addendum** to Virilio’s still patently serious and moralistic descriptions, since the former has abandoned the realm of traditional critical analysis in favour of a thought that considers reality to be the fundamental illusion vis-à-vis which it can posit its own imaginative and preposterous illusions. The constitutive blindness of the sciences (as well as critical theory) for Baudrillard resides in the fact that, for instance, **social research indeed constitutes an object (like ‘society’) that is a simulation from the onset**. In other words, Baudrillard’s work helps us to push Virilio’s argument of unknowability to its logical conclusion. All that modern media, rendering transparent ‘society’ by foregrounding their own increasing ubiquity, then eventually do, is prove that **all representation is in fact fabrication**. Baudrillard therefore in turn suggests for instance in The Perfect Crime that it is always possible to put the dialectic between the arts and sciences back into play once one radically considers the role of thought (or concepts, theories, abstractions) as no longer requiring accuracy, objectivity, or realism—its compulsion to imbue the world with the optimism of a progressive ideology. This more “**radical” thought ceases to assume itself identical to the world, and abandons the teleological Enlightenment project in favour of what Baudrillard calls a “fatal strategy**” (2004, 104). It is for this reason, namely that thought would eventually circle back to the conclusion that it is singular and dialectical (and not representational), that Baudrillard exclaims in The Perfect Crime: “Thinkers, one more effort!” (2004, 97). What this may mean for my analysis of the university today, I will for now, in the spirit of Baudrillard’s enigmatic provocation, leave undecided until the concluding chapter. What I take with me for the moment into the following chapters is that Virilio allows us to keep an eye on the immoral treatment of **academia’s ‘outside’—its militaristic politics of transparency**—while Baudrillard allows us to challenge **academia’s delusions ‘inside’—its ill-gotten claims to universalism by way of its scientific and theoretical traditions**. We have come a long way via these four remarkable critical humanists to what constitutes the central tension and problem of the contemporary university—a problem that extends far beyond simplistic indictments of the sole evil of its neo-liberalisation. For now, I would like to conclude that the current university and its new forms of violence are an outflow of ‘outdated’—because **complicit—humanist ideals and goals whose internal tensions and contradictions have become usurped and accelerated by neoliberal capitalism** and its machinery of perception and acceleration. This state of affairs consists of what the book will from now on provisionally call ‘**speed-elitism**,’ which term serves to indicate the **intensification and the displacement of Eurocentrism** discussed above via all kinds of self-targeting ‘vision machines.’ The concepts of speed-elitism and the vision machine will hence be used as shorthands to mobilise this book’s radical perspective, itself also paying heed to a yet more ‘originary responsibility,’ to draw out the near-blindness and the morally as well as logically contradictory research claims and pedagogical modes that emerge from the contemporary university. University research and teaching has become the victim of its own idealised vision machine. Of course, each subsequent epoch of the university, in each different geographical and economical context, **is bound to exemplify such injustices** in ways that remain partly characteristic to its unique history and context. The book nonetheless claims that especially today in the neo-liberal West, in highly developed South America, and in post-colonial Southeast Asia, from which it will take its more concrete examples in Chaps. 2 , 3 , and 4 around actual research and pedagogy, the problem of the university indeed consists of the acceleration of its unfinishable ideals by way of **an enmeshment with the technologies of calculation, vision, and prediction**. This is also to say that it does not make sense these days anymore to see for instance the Asian developments around higher education as necessarily antagonistic or subversive of the accelerated version of Eurocentrism that is pervasive today; rather, speed-elitism, as the book will show in the next three chapters, has also usurped or transformed the supposed difference between the West and Asia. But the book will eventually also display a seemingly paradoxical optimism that **a university falling prey to its own fatal forces will mark the opening up to a radically different future for global society at large**, in which the ideal and instantiation of total transparency shall eventually be seen as one of the most serious yet ultimately misguided end goals ever to be chased by so many followers across so many centuries and countries. And after all then, since this book is faithfully chasing the definitive rendering transparent of the contemporary university, who can tell whether the book’s claim about the equivalence between accelerated vision machines, society at large, and the university is not itself—to rephrase Virilio—partaking in a fatal exacerbation of the confusion between the ‘observed pattern’ and the ‘pattern of observation?’

The construction of serious games fosters repetition of dominant models of education, forcing a presumption of neutrality and perpetuating a culture of academic militarism that keeps students in-line with the cultural order.   
Hoofd’07, Ingrid M. Hoofd, National University of Singapore, “The Neoliberal Consolidation of Play and Speed: Ethical Issues in Serious Gaming” in “CRITICAL LITERACY: Theories and Practices Volume 1: 2, December 2007,” p. 6-14, 2007 Serious games are a fascinating next stage in the continuous exploitation of digital media technologies over the last decades for training, learning, and education. As formal education and training always involves the transmission and repetition of certain culturally and socially specific sets of skills and moral values, it would be of paramount importance to ensure that developments within the serious gaming industry are in step with the effects of the good intentions of nurturing people within a social framework that emphasises a fair, culturally diverse, and blooming society. In this light, it is interesting that from the very advent of the information society, digital technologies have been depicted as central to the development of a more just and equal society by harbouring the promise of bridging gaps between classes, races, and genders locally as well as globally. Driven by the vision of this utopian potential of new technologies, the education industry and larger policy organisations have been exploring the pedagogical possibilities of these technologies both in- and outside the traditional classroom for the last twenty-five years. Indeed, the implementation of increasingly more sophisticated and technologically mediated methods and tools for learning and education, takes as its starting point the techno-utopian assumption that (new) interactive technologies themselves are the primary harbingers of a fair and blooming society through facilitating (student) empowerment. This paper takes issue with this widespread techno-utopian perspective by seeking to shed light on the larger ethical implications of serious gaming. It will do so through foregrounding the relationship between global injustices, and the aesthetic properties and discourses of serious gaming. So while reframing serious games themselves in a new ethical perspective constitutes the main objective of this paper, it is equally important to situate serious games within a larger political discourse on the teaching of new skills. Firstly then, policy papers and academic studies on serious games all display an assumption of the inherent neutrality of gaming technologies, as if these technologies were mere tools equally suitable for all. What also becomes apparent in the language used in these studies and proposals, is how this instrumentalist vision of gaming technologies for learning goes hand in hand with a particular neo-liberal assumption of what constitutes a fit individual, and by extension of what the hallmarks of a ‘healthy’ society may be. For instance, in the European Union study “Serious Gaming – a fundamental building block to drive the knowledge work society” by Manuel Oliveira on the merits of serious games for education, justification runs along the lines of gaming ‘encouraging risk-taking and a winning attitude’ and creating a ‘performance-oriented individual.’ Similarly, Michael Guerena from the US Orange County Department of Education proposes in one of the Department’s web-casts that serious games instil “twenty-first century skills” like risk-taking, adaptability, self-direction, interactive communication, and ‘planning and managing for results’ in the students through the “channelling of fun.” Likewise, the UK-based Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association last year published their white paper Unlimited learning - Computer and video games in the learning landscape, in which they argue that serious games will “create an engaged, knowledgeable, critical and enthusiastic citizenry” whose “work practices will be geared towards networked communication and distributed collaboration” (49). Concerns around the ethical implications of serious games regarding their entanglements with larger social (gendered, classed, and raced) inequalities have until now largely been coined in terms of game content or representation. In a recent case in Singapore, the government’s proposition of using the RPG Granado Espada in secondary school history classes was followed by an outcry from various local academics condemning the stereotypical characters and simplistic representation of medieval Europe in the game. Likewise, various authors have critiqued current serious games not only because of simplistic representation of characters and surroundings, but especially because simulations generally tend to oversimplify complex social problems and situations. Gibson, Aldrich, and Prensky’s Games and Simulations in Online Learning (vi - xiv) for instance discuss these demerits of serious games. While such a critical analysis of how game content contributes to the reproduction of dominant discourses is definitely helpful, I would argue that the aesthetics of serious games involve much more than mere content. Instead, this paper will argue that the formal quest for instantaneity that research around digital media has displayed through the development of interactive technologies for education is already itself by no means a neutral affair. This is because the discourses that inform this quest and that accompany this search for instantaneity arguably enforce the hegemony of a militaristic, masculinist, humanist, and of what I will call a ‘speed-elitist’ individual. Moreover, I suggest that the propensity of current games to have sexist or racist content, is merely symptomatic of gaming technology’s larger problematic in terms of the aesthetic of instantaneity. In short, (serious) computer **games** have become archives of the discursive and actual violence carried out in the name of the utopia of technological progress and instantaneity under neo-liberal globalisation. This archival function is possible exactly because cybernetic technologies promise the containment and control of such supposedly accidental violence, while in fact exacerbating these forms of violence. This leads me to conclude that such violence is in fact structural to new serious gaming technologies, rather than accidental. I will elaborate this hypothesis by looking at various theorists who seek to understand this structural imperative of new technologies, and their relationship to the neo-liberalisation of learning and education. In turn, I will look at how this problematic structural logic informs the two popular serious games Real Lives and Global Warming Interactive. Secondly, the advent of serious gaming interestingly runs parallel with the contemporary dissemination and virtualisation of traditional learning institutions into cyberspace. While the existence of learning tools in other areas of society besides actual learning institutions has been a fact since the advent of schools, the shift of methods of learning into online and digital tools is symptomatic of the decentralisation of power from ‘old’ educational institutions and its usurpation into instantaneous neo-liberal modes of production. I am summarising the work of Bill Readings on the university here, because it sheds light on the shift in education tout court towards virtualisation, and its relationship to the ‘new hegemony of instantaneity.’ In The University in Ruins, Readings argues that the shift from the state-run university of reason and culture to the present-day global knowledge enterprise must mean that the centre of power in effect has shifted elsewhere. More important, says Readings, is that the function of the new ‘university of excellence,’ one that successfully transforms it into yet another trans-national corporation, relies on the fantasy that the university is still that transcendental university of culture in service of the state and its citizens. So the invocation of the fantasy of an ‘originary’ university of reason and progress, that produces unbiased knowledge for the good of all, facilitates the doubling of the production of information into other spaces outside the university walls proper. While Readings surely discusses only higher education institutions in The University in Ruins, I would argue that the logic of a shifting centre of power from the state into the technocratic networks and nodes of speed operates quite similarly in the case of primary, secondary, and other types of formal education. Indeed, the current virtualisation of learning and the emphasis on lifelong learning marks a dispersal of traditional learning institutions into online spaces. This dispersal works increasingly in service of the ‘speed-elite’ rather than simply in service of the nation-state. The heralding of serious games for education can therefore be read as a symptom of the intensified reach of the imperatives of neo-liberal globalisation, in which consumption enters the lives of locally bound as well as more mobile cosmopolitan citizens of all ages through harping on the technological possibility of the confusion of production and play. Through the imperative of play then, production increasingly and diffusely colonises all niche times and -spaces of neo-liberal society. In other words, (the emphasis on) play allows not only a potential increase in production and consumption through the citizen-consumer after her or his formal education of ‘skills’, but starkly intensifies flows of production and consumption already at the very moment of learning. While such an integration of play and production is generally understood within the framework of the neo-liberal demand for the circulation of pleasure, it is useful here to widen the scope from understanding the learner as a mere consumer of pleasure into the larger set of problematic interpellations that marks subjugation in contemporary society. Intriguingly, a host of research has emerged over the past years pointing towards the intricate relationship between subjugation, military research objectives, and videogame development. Such research suggests an intimate connection between the C3I logic and humanist militaristic utopias of transcendence, which incriminates interactive technologies as inherently favouring culturally particular notions of personhood. In the case of computer- and video-games for entertainment, researchers have argued that the aesthetic properties of gaming technologies give rise to so-called ‘militarised masculinity.’ In “Designing Militarized Masculinity,” Stephen Kline, Nick DyerWitheford, and Greig de Peuter argue for instance that interactive games open up very specific subject positions that “mobilize fantasies of instrumental domination” (255). This specific mobilisation that video-games invoke, is not only due to the remediation of violent television- and film- content, but also due to the intimate connection between gaming- and military industries which grant these technologies their particular cybernetic aesthetic properties (see also Herz 1997). This element of militarisation partly informs my concept of ‘speed-elitism.’ I extrapolate the idea of ‘speed-elitism’ largely from the works of John Armitage on the discursive and technocratic machinery underlying current neo-liberal capitalism. In “Dromoeconomics: Towards a Political Economy of Speed,” Armitage and Phil Graham suggest that due to the capitalist need for the production of excess, there is a strong relationship between the forces of exchange and production, and the logic of speed. In line with Virilio’s argument in Speed and Politics, they argue that various formerly the less connected social areas of war, communication, entertainment, and trade, are now intimately though obliquely connected. This is because all these forces mutually enforce one another through the technological usurpation and control of space (and territory), and through the compression and regulation of time. Eventually, Armitage and Graham suggest that “circulation has become an essential process of capitalism, an end in itself” (118) and therefore any form of cultural production increasingly finds itself tied-up in this logic. So neo-liberal capitalism is a system within which the most intimate and fundamental aspects of human social life – in particular, forms of communication and play – get to be formally subsumed under capital. In “Resisting the Neoliberal Discourse of Technology,” Armitage elaborates on this theme of circulation by pointing out that the current mode of late-capitalism relies on the continuous extension and validation of the infrastructure and the neutral or optimistic discourses of the new information technologies. Discourses that typically get repeated – like in the policy papers – in favour of the emerging speed-elite are those of connection, empowerment and progress, which often go hand in hand with the celebration of highly mediated spaces for action and communication. Such discourses however suppress the violent colonial and patriarchal history of those technological spaces and the subsequent unevenness brought about by and occurring within these spaces. I would claim that Armitage’s assessment of accelerated circulation, and the way new technologies make play complicit in the techno-utopian endeavour of speed, is crucial for understanding the larger ethical issues surrounding serious games. It is helpful at this point to look at Paul Virilio’s and Jacques Derrida’s work because this helps us understand the complicity of the aesthetics of interactive and visually oriented gaming technologies in speed-elitism. In “Cyberwar, God, and Television,” Paul Virilio talks about the simulation industry’s function of “exposing [one] to the accident in order not to be exposed to it” (322). What is according to him ‘accidented’ through the virtualisation of accidents and violence, for instance in video-games, is reality itself. This ‘accident of reality’ that virtuality brings about, argues Virilio, is due to the fact that simulation technologies fragment space through their property of instantaneous connection with previously far-away places. The hallmark of this fragmentation is therefore that it brings about an intensification of forms of in- and exclusion through actual disconnection. Eventually, there will be “two realities: the actual and the virtual” (323), and I would claim that consequently the privileged speed-elite will be able to live in the illusion of engaging with social reality that the virtual grants, at the cost of the (s)lower classes who will suffer the social and ecological effects of the accidents of virtualisation. The illusion of mastery for Virilio consists in the sense of the “incorporation of the world within oneself” that “real time technologies permit” (328) due to their militaristic compulsion that seeks to “reduce the world to the point where one could possess it” (329). I maintain that these statements spell out exactly the function and logic of serious gaming. Virilio elaborates the idea of the ‘museum of accidents’ later in his infamously apocalyptic “The Museum of Accidents.” His evaluation of certain visual simulation technologies as ‘museums of accidents’ and in particular in how these accidents involve the increasing stratification of individuals within a new global imperative of speed, resonates well with Jacques Derrida’s work on the ‘archiving’ properties of new technologies and their implications. In Monolingualism of the Other, or The Prosthesis of Origin, Derrida parallels the concept and the technique of memory and archiving with these new technologies. He argues that the tragedy of the disappearance of various cultures calls forward a desire in the R&D community – like teachers and developers of serious games – to prevent this from happening by using the immense possibilities of presentday archiving technologies. However, he cautions that this scientific quest to rescue through archiving languages and cultures from going extinct due to ongoing globalisation processes, once more presupposes that cultures and peoples are pre-given static entities, or simple identities, that can then be simply ‘stored’. Moreover, it falsely presupposes that archiving technologies are neutral tools, as well as that the ideology behind this archiving desire is a universal or neutral one. But since the very technicity of archiving is one that is already entangled with the same dominant culture that archives, the necessary translation or recognition of materials fit for archiving will have as its logical parameters this dominant culture. This kind of messianistic desire, as much as the quest for understanding the other (or rather, the claim that one does empathise with and understand the other), is therefore actually a violent, neocolonialist, and possessive sort of encapsulation. Similarly, the well-intended pedagogical aim to ‘salvage otherness’ from the tragedy of disappearance under globalisation works completely in accordance with that very tragedy. One could compare this well-intended encapsulation for instance with the anthropological display of artefacts of certain cultures in Western museums. It may be far more important to save actual humans than to salvage, understand, and store their perceived culture or language, and Derrida warns that the choice for one generally does not imply a choice for the other. This ‘virtual empathy’ that new simulation technologies endow, which sadly works in accordance with the ‘structural accident’ of disenfranchisement under neoliberal globalisation, is indeed present in the aesthetic of many serious games currently available. The widely praised and sympathetic game Real Lives is a good example of this. The pedagogical objective of Real Lives, as its website declares, is to “learn how people really live in other countries.” The producers maintain that Real Lives is an “empathy-building world” which will grant the students an “appreciation of their own culture and the cultures of other peoples.” The game opens with assigning a character who just got born at any place in the world to the player. Since the attribution of the character is based on actual statistical possibilities of place of birth and economic status, the character has a high propensity of being born poor in countries like India, Mexico, or in other highly populated places. During the course of the game, the player can take actions like deciding to go to school or staying home to help her/his parents, which hobbies to take up, what job to take, and so forth. The game time takes one-year leaps in which the player can see the outcome of outside events, like disease or floods, and of his or her own actions. The software shows a map of the character’s birth region and its statistics, like population density, gross annual income, currency, health standards, and etcetera. The character is also assigned traits, like happiness, athleticism, musicality, health, and so on. While the player’s actions definitely influence the health and economic status of the played character and her family, the potentially interesting part of the game lies in the fact that events and situations that are ostensibly beyond the player’s control influence the outcomes. Such a game structure potentially endows the student with a sense that simple meritocratic discourses are flawed. However, what is also obvious in Real Lives, is that the attribution based on statistical facts may very easily lead to a simplistic view of a country and its inhabitants. While India for instance surely has many poor people and girls often are not allowed to go to school, to have the student chance time and again on these representations can easily lead to the repetition of stereotypes and a failure to grasp the complexity of Indian society. More serious however is the formal technological mode of objectification and its distancing effects that the game generates. This objectification resides in how the ‘clean’ interface – the ‘flight simulator’ like visual layout on the screen with the overview of categories and character attributes, the major actions and events in the character’s life induced at the stroke of a few keys – in reality grants the player a sense of control by engaging with a machine programmed in such a way that it appears to let the student identify with and act out his or her empathy vis-à- vis a ‘real’ child in need. This discursive confusion of reality and virtuality is for instance also present in the web-game Darfur Is Dying, in which the player and virtual character get confused through the problematic claim that you can “start your experience (as a refugee)” and that it offers a “glimpse of what it is like” (emphases mine) to be a refugee. At the same time, the actual children in need on the ground disappear from the player’s radar, turning them into a distant and vague large group of ‘others’ who are effectively beyond the student’s reach of immediate responsibility. As Virilio suggests, the time spend through engaging in virtual empathy eclipses the ‘real accidents’ from the student’s view and experience. What is more, Real Lives eclipses the larger social and economical relationships between the material production and consumption of such virtual engagement and the continuous exploitation and ‘museumising’ of peoples on the brink of (social, economical, and environmental) accident, disenfranchisement, and even death. While relatively well-off youth may indulge in turning other peoples’ distress into a ‘fun’ educational game, such indulgence is precisely based on a neo-liberal structure that exploits the environment, especially of the poor, and allows for the outsourcing and feminisation of ever cheaper third-world labour. As Derrida proposed, the archiving into visual technologies of certain cultures and peoples threatened with extinction does not at all imply saving these actual people and their cultures – in fact, it may very well do exactly the opposite. Long-term minor attitudinal changes in the student notwithstanding, the disconnecting properties of the new cybernetic technologies of speed that Real Lives is part of therefore displace the effect of the producer’s and student’s good intentions and empathy into an instantaneous technocratic violence that effectively ‘plays with lives.’ Another telling example of this displacement of well-intended interactive play is the environmental game Global Warming Interactive – CO2Fx. This web-based game, funded by the United States National Science Foundation and developed by a group of people from various American consultancies and educational organisations, aims at teaching the student about the kinds of decision making involved in global warming. The game invariably starts with a map of the country of Brazil in the 1960s, and gives statistics about the carbon emission, air temperature, and general welfare of the population. The player can then control government budget expenditures for science, agriculture, social services, and development initiatives, after which the system jumps ten years into the future, generating results based on these expenditures. The game eventually ends by showing the relative increase in temperature in the virtual year of 2060, warning the player that more international cooperation is required to really tackle global warming. The major issue with Global Warming Interactive is once more that it completely obscures the relationship between the computing technology itself that allows the CO2Fx simulation, and global warming. A telling moment of this dissimulation is when the game urges the player to “switch off the television!” because television uses quite a bit of energy, while the energy consumption of the infrastructure, mode of production, student consumption, and tools that sustain the game itself is being blissfully ignored. Armitage’s claim that increasingly modes of thought, learning, and exchange are formally subsumed under capital through the new technological infrastructure certainly rings true here. The game is also a stark simplification of how government decisions affect a complex issue like climate change, and is fraught with problematic and often techno-utopian assumptions about how to tackle the climate change problem. A good example of this assumption is the recurring recommendation throughout the game to the player to spend more money on scientific research, as this expenditure supposedly promises to solve or alleviate the warming problem. The speed-elitist, humanist, and techno-utopian discourses that permeate American academia and consultancy firms are clearly reflected in Global Warming Interactive, leaving the student inculcated with a currently dominant belief system that lies precisely at the base of environmental pollution and economical disenfranchisement that urges certain groups of poor people in a country like Brazil to survive on environmentally unfriendly business solutions, like slash-burning the forests. One is also left to wonder why the game uses the country of Brazil in the first place, and not the United States – arguably the largest global polluter today. There is indeed a problematic (neo)colonialist undertone to the current one-country version of Global Warming Interactive. Extending the content of the game, as the developers seeks to do, by including more countries in the simulation, would not alleviate this problem, but would simply concur with the actual contemporary shift from previous colonialist social hierarchies into speed-elitist hierarchies. But more seriously, giving the player simulated government omnipotence through the Virilian ‘museumisation’ of the economical and social structures underlying global warming in that ‘other’ country of Brazil, grants a the player an illusion of mastering and of dealing constructively with the major ‘accident’ of climate change and its impact on the (s)lower classes while actually fuelling it. Meanwhile, player or student empathy is displaced into instantaneous networks of ever increasing neo-liberal circulation and production. Scholars like David Leonard in “’Live in your world, play in ours?’: Race, video games, and consuming the other” and Lisa Nakamura in “Race in/for Cyberspace” have in the past argued that many entertainment games contain elements of racial and gendered stereotyping allowing the gamer to engage him or herself on the basis of what Nakamura calls ‘identity tourism’ and Leonard calls ‘blackface.’ These problematic modes of (dis)identification allow the user not only to enter the game via dominant modes of representation, but also entail a form of ‘safely experiencing the other’ through cybernetic technologies, where the (imagined) other effectively becomes consumed through the high-tech prosthesis of the self. Neither Nakamura nor Leonard however elaborate how and why this element of a ‘safe prosthesis’ appears to be a central aesthetic of gaming technologies. After all, much media content suffers from stereotypical representation, and one could argue in line with Derrida’s Monolingualism of the Other that media are always prostheses to the self. I would argue that what is specific about serious gaming technologies that emerges from my interpretations of Derrida’s, Armitage’s, and Virilio’s assessments is the illusion of control by the self that these technologies facilitate, due to their element of interactive instantaneity. It is the new technologies’ aesthetic properties themselves – rather than simply a narrative and its repetition of dominant ideologies – that grant a ‘fantasy of connection, wholeness, and mastery’ through interactivity as if it was an immediate and transparent property of the gaming subject. What is therefore at work in serious games like Real Lives and Global Warming Interactive is a form of double objectification. The illusion of constructive engagement with a pressing social issue through these seemingly ‘clean’ and ‘neutral’ technologies, combined with the distancing effect brought about by these technologies from their actual (social and environmental) implications, make the gamer complicit in the neo-liberal endeavour that paradoxically precisely leads to contemporary speed-elitist disenfranchisement. In short, interactive technologies like serious games bring about a displacement of good intentions through claims of technological progress and empowerment for all. So despite (or perhaps because of) the good intentions of game designers and publishers, these games then in fact exhibit the doubling of the colonialist logic that inspired humanist narratives of progress. This doubling runs parallel to the virtualisation of learning that is taking place under neo-liberal globalisation and its speed-elitist modes of intensified in- and exclusion this shift incurs. These games can therefore, in line with Virilio’s argument, be understood as attempts at (eventually unsuccessfully) containing the accident of the real and its social repercussions brought about by these technologies of speed. To conclude, the development of serious games is implicated in what Derrida in Monolingualism refers to as a ‘disappearance’ of those cultures, idioms, and ways of being that do not conform to these tightening particular hegemonic structures of acceleration. ‘Healthy’ personhood becomes singularly understood through a restrictive and stratifying emphasis on mediated learning as more pleasurable, as well as on humanistic character traits like creativity, activity, risktaking, mediated empathy, mobility, and competitiveness, as the rhetoric in policy papers and optimistic studies also shows. Such particular valorisations are problematic because they recreate a meritocratic, masculinist, militaristic, and speed-elitist hierarchy between economically as well as otherwise diverse groups and communities within a global community which understands individuals solely in terms of active and productive citizenship. In line with this, serious games themselves can in their very form be understood as Virilian ‘museums of accident.’ This means that the virtualisation of social engagement and sense of social and environmental ‘accident control’ that these games call forward is obliquely yet intrinsically related to new modes of ‘accidenting’ material reality. This potentially disenfranchises those who are not (positively) addressed within these properties of subject-formation, and leads to increasing levels of stress and competitiveness in individuals and students as it becomes progressively more imperative for individual survival to conform to the demands of the speed-elite. Without doubt, this paper has analysed only a few serious games currently available and surely more analyses need to be conducted. I suggest nonetheless that since the problematic of speed, which gives rise to double objectification, is structurally present in all visual interactive technologies, it is by default at work in all serious games. As I suggested at the start, the pedagogical and ethical enterprise of serious gaming is therefore serious indeed, as its aesthetic properties become increasingly implicated in precisely the opposite of what serious gaming promises to help make possible – the fair, culturally diverse, and blooming society that we all want.

#### Charity Cannibalism is a voter—absent it, the west would collapse out of shame

**Baudrillard 94.** Jean, The illusion of the End, Page 66-70

We have long denounced the capitalistic, economic exploitation of the poverty of the 'other half of the world' [['autre monde]. **We must today denounce the moral and sentimental exploitation of that poverty - charity cannibalism being worse than oppressive violence.** **The extraction and humanitarian reprocessing of a destitution which has become the equivalent of oil deposits and gold mines.** **The extortion of the spectacle of poverty and, at the same time, of our charitable condescension: a worldwide appreciated surplus of fine sentiments and bad conscience**. We should, in fact, see this not as the extraction of raw materials, but as a waste-reprocessing enterprise. Their destitution and our bad conscience are, in effect, all part of the waste-products of history- the main thing is to recycle them to produce a new energy source. We have here an escalation in the psychological balance of terror. World capitalist oppression is now merely the vehicle and alibi for this other, much more ferocious, form of moral predation. One might almost say, contrary to the Marxist analysis, that **material exploitation is only there to extract that spiritual raw material that is the misery of peoples, which serves as psychological nourishment for the rich countries and media nourishment for our daily lives.** The 'Fourth World' (we are no longer dealing with a 'developing' Third World) is once again beleaguered, this time as a catastrophe-bearing stratum. The West is whitewashed in the reprocessing of the rest of the world as waste and residue. And **the white world repents and seeks absolution** - it, too, the waste-product of its own history. The South is a natural producer of raw materials, the latest of which is **catastrophe**. The North, for its part, specializes in the reprocessing of raw materials and hence also in **the reprocessing of catastrophe.** **Bloodsucking protection, humanitarian interference, Medecins sans frontieres, international solidarity,** etc. The last phase of colonialism: **the New Sentimental Order is merely the latest form of the New World Order. Other people's destitution becomes our adventure playground**. Thus, the humanitarian offensive aimed at the Kurds - a show of repentance on the part of the Western powers after allowing Saddam Hussein to crush them - is in reality merely the second phase of the war, a phase in which charitable intervention finishes off the work of extermination. We are the consumers of the ever delightful spectacle of poverty and catastrophe, and of the moving spectacle of our own efforts to alleviate it (which, in fact, merely function to secure the conditions of reproduction of the catastrophe market); there, at least, in the order of moral profits, the Marxist analysis is wholly applicable: we see to it that extreme poverty is reproduced as a symbolic deposit, as a fuel essential to the moral and sentimental equilibrium of the West. In our defence, it might be said that this extreme poverty was largely of our own making and it is therefore normal that we should profit by it. There can be no finer proof that the distress of the rest of the world is at the root of Western power and that the spectacle of that distress is its crowning glory than the inauguration, on the roof of the Arche de la Defense, with a sumptuous buffet laid on by the Fondation des Droits de l'homme, of an exhibition of the finest photos of world poverty. Should we be surprised that spaces are set aside in the Arche d' Alliance. for universal suffering hallowed by caviar and champagne? Just as the economic crisis of the West will not be complete so long as it can still exploit the resources of the rest of the world, **so the symbolic crisis will be complete only when it is no longer able to feed on the other half's human and natural catastrophes** (Eastern Europe, **the Gulf,** the Kurds, Bangladesh, etc.). **We need this drug, which serves us as an aphrodisiac and hallucinogen.** And the poor countries are the best suppliers - as, indeed, they are of other drugs. We provide them, through our media, with the means to exploit this paradoxical resource, just as we give them the means to exhaust their natural resources with our technologies. Our whole culture lives off this catastrophic cannibalism, relayed in cynical mode by the news media, and carried forward in moral mode by our humanitarian aid, which is a way of encouraging it and ensuring its continuity, just as economic aid is a strategy for perpetuating under-development. Up to now, **the financial sacrifice has been compensated a hundredfold by the moral gain.** But when the catastrophe market itself reaches crisis point, in accordance with the implacable logic of the market, when distress becomes scarce or the marginal returns on it fall from overexploitation, when we run out of disasters from elsewhere or when they can no longer be traded like coffee or other commodities, **the West will be forced to produce its own catastrophe** for itself, in order to meet its need for spectacle and that voracious appetite for symbols which characterizes it even more than its voracious appetite for food. It will reach the point where **it devours itself**. When we have finished sucking out the destiny of others, we shall have to invent one for ourselves. The Great Crash, the symbolic crash, will come in the end from us Westerners, but only when we are no longer able to feed on the hallucinogenic misery which comes to us from the other half of the world. Yet they do not seem keen to give up their monopoly. The Middle East, Bangladesh, black Africa and Latin America are really going flat out in the distress and catastrophe stakes, and thus in providing symbolic nourishment for the rich world. They might be said to be overdoing it: heaping earthquakes, floods, famines and ecological disasters one upon another, and finding the means to massacre each other most of the time. The 'disaster show' goes on without any let-up and our sacrificial debt to them far exceeds their economic debt. The misery with which they generously overwhelm us is something we shall never be able to repay. The sacrifices we offer in return are laughable (a tornado or two, a few tiny holocausts on the roads, the odd financial sacrifice) and, moreover, by some infernal logic, these work out as much greater gains for us, whereas our kindnesses have merely added to the natural catastrophes another one immeasurably worse: the demographic catastrophe, a veritable epidemic which we deplore each day in pictures. In short, there is such distortion between North and South, to the symbolic advantage of the South (a hundred thousand Iraqi dead against casualties numbered in tens on our side: in every case we are the losers), that one day everything will break down. **One day, the West will break down if we are not soon washed clean of this shame,** **if an international congress of the poor countries does not very quickly decide to share out this symbolic privilege of misery and catastrophe**. It is of course normal, since we refuse to allow the spread of nuclear weapons, that they should refuse to allow the spread of the catastrophe weapon. But it is not right that they should exert that monopoly indefinitely. In any case, the under-developed are only so by comparison with the Western system and its presumed success. In the light of its assumed failure, they are not under-developed at all. They are only so in terms of a dominant evolutionism which has always been the worst of colonial ideologies. The argument here is that there is a line of objective progress and everyone is supposed to pass through its various stages (we find the same eyewash with regard to the evolution of species and in that evolutionism which unilaterally sanctions the superiority of the human race). In the light of current upheavals, which put an end to any idea of history as a linear process, there are no longer either developed or under-developed peoples. Thus, to encourage hope of evolution - albeit by revolution - among the poor and to doom them, in keeping with the objective illusion of progress, to technological salvation is a criminal absurdity. In actual fact, it is their good fortune to be able to escape from evolution just at the point when we no longer know where it is leading. In any case, a majority of these peoples, including those of Eastern Europe, do not seem keen to enter this evolutionist modernity, and their weight in the balance is certainly no small factor in the West's repudiation of its own history, of its own utopias and its own modernity. It might be said that the routes of violence, historical or otherwise, are being turned around and that the viruses now pass from South to North, there being every chance that, five hundred years after America was conquered, 1992 and the end of the century will mark the comeback of the defeated and the sudden reversal of that modernity. The sense of pride is no longer on the side of wealth but of poverty, of those who - fortunately for them - have nothing to repent, and may indeed glory in being privileged in terms of catastrophes. Admittedly, this is a privilege they could hardly renounce, even if they wished to, but **natural disasters merely reinforce the sense of guilt felt towards them by the wealthy** – by those whom God visibly scorns since he no longer even strikes them down. One day it will be the Whites themselves who will give up their whiteness. It is a good bet that repentance will reach its highest pitch with the five-hundredth anniversary of the conquest of the Americas. We are going to have to lift the curse of the defeated - but symbolically victorious - peoples, which is insinuating itself five hundred years later, by way of repentance, into the heart of the white race. No solution has been found to the dramatic situation of the under-developed, and none will be found since their drama has now been overtaken by that of the overdeveloped, of the rich nations. The psychodrama of congestion, saturation, super abundance, neurosis and the breaking of blood vessels which haunts us - the drama of the excess of means over ends – calls more urgently for attention than that of penury, lack and poverty**. That is where the most imminent danger of catastrophe resides, in the societies which have run out of emptiness**. Artificial catastrophes, like the beneficial aspects of civilization, progress much more quickly than natural ones. The underdeveloped are still at the primary stage of the natural, unforeseeable catastrophe. **We are already at the second stage, that of the manufactured catastrophe - imminent and foreseeable - and we shall soon be at that of the pre-programmed catastrophe, the catastrophe of the third kind, deliberate and experimental.** And, paradoxically, it is our pursuit of the means for averting natural catastrophe - the unpredictable form of destiny - which will take us there. **Because it is unable to escape it, humanity will pretend to be the author of its destiny. Because it cannot accept being confronted with an end which is uncertain or governed by fate, it will prefer to stage its own death as a species.**

#### To make the world mean something, the will to reality, is the generative point of violence. The attempt to sublimate the Evil of irrationality and mystery terminates in its opposite. We are gorged with meaning and it is killing us. The attempt to enclose the globe within semiotic reality begets implosive violence against all singularities. The communicative form of information devours its own content. The amassing of facts and evidence – and especially truth – only makes the world more unreal.

**Artrip and Debrix 14.** Ryan E. Artrip, Doctoral Student, ASPECT, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and Francois Debrix, professor of political science at Virginia Polytechnical Institute, “The Digital Fog of War: Baudrillard and the Violence of Representation,” Volume 11, Number 2 (May, 2014)

Such an expectation about the ontological “location” of the objects, subjects, stakes, and processes of today’s virulent war is generative of another expectation: that of **the so-called self-evident violence of war** and, by extension, of anything that socially and politically is said to matter for and about the demos (since virulent/virtual war is an all-encompassing, or all-swarming, “geopolitical reality”). In other words, what **the so-called objects and subjects** of today’s virtual/virulent war **expect “their” war to represent** is what **ensures a disposition towards violence** (a violence of “the global,” perhaps, as Baudrillard intimates) that may well be **the result of attempts at securing a will to meaning**, a will **to make sense of things**, and a **will to be of political objects and subjects** that today takes place or, rather, is **intensified in virtual and digital modalities of representation and mediation**. Part of the critical stake of this essay is to **“locate” the violence/virulence of contemporary warfare** not just in its **empirical geopolitical “events,”** but rather **in the representational domain** inside which those so-called events are expected to make sense, that is to say, in the always already **preemptively belligerent and aggressive realm of representation** (where **the challenge is to produce and impose meaning at all costs**). II. The Fog of War The claim about a certain quality of reality or even realism to new digital informational or communicative technologies has played a formative role in the global staging of several recent social and political conflicts. In both the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements of 2011, for example, digital technologies were celebrated for their real-time capacity and their subversive (democratic) potentials. The virtue of reporting “from the ground” of the event itself was championed as a matter of authenticity. There was a common sense that “truth” would finally be able to speak from its “real” source (the demos itself?). Not only is there a prevalent uncritical (even if sometimes well-intentioned) faith in new media and their digital technologies today, but, more importantly, there is often an impulse of liberation. Yet, **this impulse is stifled by its faith in representation**. The **hope for openness, transparency, immediacy**, and indeed **liberation is so tethered to the real** (and to **the will to reality**) that it ends up being **negative** or, at least, **self-defeating**. It often becomes evident that the so-called democratic uses of new media technologies—particularly in terms of reporting violent war events or conflicts of allegedly great concern/importance to the global demos—are, far from producing a clearer picture of an objective event, contributing to an ever thickening fog of meaning and truth. These new media technologies in and of themselves are not the object of our critique here. Moreover, we are not interested in “clearing the fog” of the real or war. Again, our critical intervention in this essay has more to do with **deploying perspectives** that may **expose the violent dispositions** of the **contemporary mythos of war** (and **revealing the complicit role** of the digitalized demos in the **intensification of this mythos**) than with **attempting to clear** the way for **a different ethos** about everyday reality, digitalized media, and the prevalence of warfare in political representations. In fact, part of our argument is also to suggest that **the various cultural, political, and ethical mechanisms that seek to clear the fog of the real (and war) often end up reproducing it**. The **lure to criticize and debunk reality** often **requires** that **another real**, **another certainty**, **another dominant meaning**, or indeed **another democratic necessity be established** through the **same means and techniques**, and media, that had to be challenged in the first place (thus, the **simulacrum continues to proliferate** its **reality-effects**). Behind the widespread “global” celebration of digitalized technologies for their newly found representational capabilities and accuracies, there lies the idea that, perhaps following a collective disgust with the dealings of Western media outlets as more or less uncritical props for the social/economic/ethical status quo in the past several decades, disseminated and “democratized” media technologies can de-mystify the world, lift its aura in a way, or perhaps “dig deeper” into the “truth” than, say, what the media networks involved in reporting news (including war news) in the 1980s and 1990’s (the famous CNN effect) ever could do. Because these technologies are far more in real-time than news networks, they are also generally thought to be able to evade oppressive/repressive censorship of particular corporate/class/state/ideology interests. But even more than escaping filters, digital representations today are often thought to be able to **eliminate all of the ambiguities** born of time. Thus, we (members of the public/demos) **want to believe that mediation can be removed**. And we want to subscribe to the view that any distortion occurring between an event and its perception/memory, or between the “actual” and its account, **can evaporate**. By reducing to the virtually infinitesimal or invisible the filter/screen between the image that represents and the real that is and, furthermore, by **placing the productive responsibilities** for the **image** into **the hands of the user** (literally into the digits), the digital establishes itself as something capable of **demolishing the “malicious” surface of appearances** to reveal a meaningful density of truth through the quasi-immediate interface. **This is the dream of immediacy rediscovered and perhaps finally realized.** At a most basic level of analysis, the risk involved in pointing to this desire for mediatized or digitalized immediacy would be to u**ndermine the visual evidence of the violent/virulent occurrence** of the omnipresence of war. For example, could we have deployed a critique of the US military’s and the US government’s use of torture in the War on Terror were it not for the seemingly unfiltered “shock and awe” of the Abu Ghraib photos? Again, from the point of view of the ethos of virtual/virulent war, the lure of digitalized immediacy has its uses (and, possibly, benefits, too, even for the demos). But, from the perspective of war’s mythos, it must be said that **the “truth” about war and war operations cannot be fully revealed** because **representation**, no matter how immediate or seemingly unmediated, always **works by imposing some meaning onto things/events** that are **made visible/representable**. Consider the role played by digital media in the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013. Within a matter of minutes of the blasts, even before the smoke could clear the scene, images and videos of terror taken from spectators’ mobile devices circulated through cyberspace. Everything was seemingly captured in that instant. The horror that drew so many people to capture images through their smart phones seems to speak on its own; it needs no commentary, no meaning to be given to it. In fact, it appears to have no mediation, no appropriation or narrativizing, no contextualizing either. That is precisely why smart phones are so apt at giving us such images, such representations, such “pure” meanings about things. Especially, such a horrifying violence, it is said, needs no commentary, no sense to be made of it. An immeasurable violence is done to the violated when one tries to make sense of the senseless (Agamben, 1999). Yet, as Baudrillard had already pointed out in his remarks on the Gulf War, “**everything which is turned into information becomes the object of endless speculation, the site of total uncertainty**. We are left with the symptomatic reading on our screens of the effects of the war, or the effects of discourse about the war, or completely speculative strategic evaluations” (Baudrillard, 1995: 41). In their digital representation, images of war and images of terror are **dissolved into their own information**. Information (what the image/event wants to tell us, to reveal, allegedly) already **infiltrates the tweeted or texted image/scene** (of horror, of war) with **an urgency of signification and meaning**. Images of horror cannot make sense, perhaps must not be made sense of, and yet **they somehow beg for meaning**, for circulation, or for propagation, in the hope that they may reveal something to someone. Thus, the digitalized mediation of the image, even in its instantaneity, still takes place. Images—or whatever event might have been “caught”—must **succumb to a will to information**, to **a will to meaning**, even if it is **falsely affirmed** that what is **digitally rendered needs no commentary**. Put differently, **the image levels the** event it represents by **entering into a mass/global indifferent exchange**, into a **virulent global (representational) circulation** that **murders singularity** or, indeed, the moment of trauma (on this question of the erasure of trauma, see Debrix, 2008: 4-5; Edkins, 2003: 37-38). The **enigmatic singularity of the event**—which, for Baudrillard, was once a precondition for any sort of historical transition—gives way to an **endlessness of representation**, **whether such representation appears to have a clear ethical or political purpose/signification or not**. It is in this always operative tendency of **rendered appearances to yield meaning** (even if their meaning is to be information-worthy), not in the image or event itself, that we situate the conditions of possibility and reproducibility for the **ever-thickening representational fog and for the violence/virulence of images**, or better yet, of **appearances**. **To make war** or, as the case may be, the terror event **mean something**—even in some of the most immediate reactions often designed to evoke injustice or, indeed, **incomprehension**—is the **generative point of violence**, the **source of representation** as a **virulent/virtual code** and mode of signification. Baudrillard writes, “**Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible**.” He adds, “**We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; […] we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us**” (Baudrillard, 1988: 63). Indeed, the Western world—increasingly, the global—has found itself with a proliferation of meanings and significations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is as if the so-called crisis of nihilism (thought to be characteristic of much critique and philosophical suspicion throughout the 20th century) **later on produced something of the opposite order**. The mass violence of the 20th century inaugurated not a complete void of despair or meaninglessness, but instead **a flood of meaning, if not an overproduction of it**. Baudrillard refers to this **frantic explosion of meaning/signification** as “**a panic-stricken production of the real** and the **referential**, above and parallel to **the panic of material production** […]” (Baudrillard, 1983: 7). Here, Baudrillard describes a mode of production of a different kind, not motivated by class interests or exploitation of value, but by an automated, perhaps viral, abreaction to the empty core or disenchantment of things and the world: that is to say, the degree to which things seem to lack a singular center of gravity or have lost a justifiable reference to the real world, and yet each thing that “matters” is also an attempt to get at reality as a question of accumulation (of meaning), circulation (of signs), and filling up of all interstitial spaces of communication and value. **The end result is an over-abundance of signs and images of reality**, something that culminates in what Baudrillard calls **hyperreality**—**things appear more real than reality itself**.

#### We reject the resolution: the appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust.

#### We must adopt a radical mimicry of current forms of expression in order to accelerate them from within, like stuffing a water balloon with rocks until it pops.

**Pawlett 14.** William Pawlett, senior lecturer in media, communications, and cultural studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK, “Society At War With Itself,” International Journal of Baudrillard Studies, Volume 11, Number 2 (May, 2014)

It all depends on **the ground we choose to fight on** … most often … we choose to fight on ground where we are **beaten before we begin** (Baudrillard 2001: 119). This paper examines Baudrillard’s assertion, made in later works includingImpossible Exchange (2001), The Intelligence of Evil (2005) and Pyres of Autumn(2006), that individuals, society and indeed the global system, are internally and irreconcilably divided, that **modernity is ‘at odds with itself’** (Baudrillard 2006: 1). In his view dissent, **rejection and insurrection emerge from within, not from external challenges such as alternative ideologies or competing worldviews, but from within bodies, within borders, inside programmes**. For Baudrillard much of the violence, hatred and discomfort visible around the globe can be understood as a **latent but fundamental ‘silent insurrection’** against the **global integrating system** and its many pressures, demands and humiliations (2001: 106). This is anendogenic or intra-genic rejection, it emanates from within the system, from within individuals, even from within language, electronic systems and bodily cells, erupting as **abreaction, metastasis and sudden reversal**.[2](http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-11_2/v11-2-pawlett.html#ft-endnote2) For Baudrillard then, despite the many simulations of external threat and enmity – radical Islam currently being the best example – **the most dangerous threat lies within**: ‘society faces a far harder test than any external threat: that of **its own absence, its loss of reality’** (2006: 1). The global order, conventionally labelled “capitalist”, is **neutralising its values and structures**, its ideologies disappear, its principles are sacrificed. **Even the sense of “reality” produced by the abstract sign and by simulation models begin to disappear** (2005: 67-73; 2009: 10-15). The goal is ‘integral reality’, a limitless operational project geared towards the total transcription of the world into virtuality: **‘everything is realised and technically materialised without reference to any principle or final purpose’** (2005: 18). Yet there is **an internal war or “backlash**” taking place between integralist violence which seeks ultimate control by eliminating all otherness, and **duality**. **Duality**, for Baudrillard, **is “indestructible” and is manifest as the inevitable or destined re-emergence of otherness: of death, Evil, ambivalence, the ghosts of symbolic exchange, the accursed share within the system**. **The integrating system then suffers a ‘dissent working away at it from inside**. **It is the global violence immanent in the world-system itself which, from within, sets the purest form of symbolic challenge against it’** (2005: 22). This is a war or conflict that does not end, the outcome of which cannot be predicted or programmed. **It is a war that is quite different from the disappearance of war into simulated non-events, such as occurred with the Gulf wars** (Baudrillard 1995). Indeed, Baudrillard suggests, **the deterrence** of world wars, and of nuclear wars, **does not result in peace, but in a viral proliferation of conflicts, a fractalisation of war and conflict into everyday, local, and ubiquitous terror** (1993b: 27). This paper will examine Baudrillard’s position on internal rejection through two closely related themes:   and duality. Complicity, and the closely related term collusion, are themselves dual in Baudrillard’s sense. That is, complicity or collusion express **an internal division or ‘duality’** which is **not a simple opposition of terms**. As is so often the case, Baudrillard’s position builds on his much earlier studies: Requiem For the Media (orig. 1972, in Baudrillard 1981: 164-184) had already argued that the dominance of the abstract sign and of simulation models meant that **any critique of the system made through the channels of semiotic abstraction were automatically re-absorbed into the system**. **Any meaningful challenge must invent its own, alternative medium – such as the silk-screen printings, hand-painted notices and graffiti of May 1968 – or it will lapse into an ineffectual complicity with the system it seeks to challenge** (Baudrillard 1981: 176). In his later work, Baudrillard’s emphasis on duality and complicity is extended much further, taking on global, anthropological and even cosmological dimensions, and increasingly complicity and collusion are seen as dual, as encompassing both acceptance and a subtle defiance. This paper examines the dual nature of complicity and collusion. It considers the influence of La Boetie’s notorious Essay on Voluntary Servitude on Baudrillard, seeking to draw out what is distinctive in Baudrillard’s position. The second section turns to the notion of duality, examining Good and Evil and Baudrillard’s assertion that attempts to eliminate duality merely revive or re-active it. Complicity implies a complexity of relations, and, specifically, **the condition of being an accomplice to those in power**. To be an accomplice is to **assist in the committing of a crime**. If the crime is murder, the term accomplice implies one who plans, reflects, calculates – but does not strike the lethal blow. The crime which is of particular interest to Baudrillard is, of course, **the perfect crime: the elimination of otherness, of ambivalence, of duality, even of “reality” and of the abstract representational sign which enables a sense of “reality**” (Baudrillard 1996). The **global, integral, carnivalising and cannibalising system**, which might **loosely still be called capitalist**, is **at war against radical otherness or duality; yet**, for Baudrillard, as **duality lies at its heart**, locked within its foundations, it is **indestructible** and emerges through **attempts to eliminate it**. **If the system has been largely successful at eliminating external threats, it finds itself in an even worse situation: it is at war with itself.** II. Complicity **Complicity is a particularly slippery term**. In the 1980s Baudrillard’s thought, mistakenly assumed to be “Postmodernist”, was argued to be **complicit with capitalism**, largely because it **questioned** the ability of **dominant strands of Marxism and feminism** to significantly challenge the capitalist system (Callinicos 1989; Norris 1992). At the same time, Baudrillard was alleging that the work of supposedly radical theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (1984 orig. 1972) and Lyotard (1993 orig. 1974) was, with their emphasis on desire as productive and liberatory force, **complicit with the mechanisms of advanced consumer capitalism** (Baudrillard 1987: 17-20). So which branch of contemporary theory is most complicit with capitalism? Liberals, humanists and environmentalists who see their clothes stolen by mainstream politicians? Marxists and Communists who by refusing to update their thinking provide a slow moving target for right-wing snipers? Post- Modernists and Post-Structuralists who attack Enlightenment thought but refuse to speak of the human subject and so have “thrown the baby out with the bath water”? Network and complexity theory which flattens all phenomena and experience to a position on a grid, producing a very complex simplification? **The list could go on but it is a question that cannot be answered because all critical theories are complicit with the system they critique**. They **fight on a terrain** already **demarcated** by their **opponents**, a terrain on which they are **beaten before they begin**, one where the most compelling argument can always be **dismissed as doom-mongering or irresponsible** intellectualism. This includes **Baudrillard’s own critical thinking**, as he **readily acknowledges** (Baudrillard 2009a: 39). Further, and **even more damaging to the project of critique**, in a hegemonic or integral order the system **solicits critique and it criticises itself**, so **displacing** and **making redundant the laborious attempts** at **academic critique**. The latter continue, even proliferate, but **with decreasing impact**. So, what does Baudrillard mean by complicity with the global order? Baudrillard’s concern is primarily with **complicity at the level of the form** of the (capitalist) system, not at the level of belief, consent or allegiance to particular contents of capitalist life (consumer products, plurality of ‘lifestyles’, a degree of ‘tolerance’ etc.). Complicity is often seen, by critics of capitalism, as acceptance of consumerism and its myriad choices and lifestyles, but this is a reductive level of analysis from Baudrillard’s perspective. By complicity or collusion Baudrillard means, on the one hand, **the very widespread willingness to surrender or give up beliefs, passions and “symbolic defences**” (2010: 24), and on the other – as the dual form – **an equally widespread ability to find a space of defiance through the play of complicity, collusion, hyperconformity and indifference** (1983: 41-8). That is, while many of us (in the relatively affluent West) share in the profanating, denigrating and “carnivalising” of all values, embracing indifference, shrugging “whatever”, we do so with very little commitment to the system, rejoicing inwardly when it suffers reversals: **we operate in a dual mode**. While such **attitudes of indifference** may seem to accept that there is no meaningful alternative to capitalism: an attitude that has been called **‘capitalist nihilism’** (Davis in Milbank and Zizek, 2009) **and ‘capitalist realism’** (Fisher 2008), Baudrillard’s notions of **“integral reality”,** **duality** and **complicity** may have **significant advantages** over those approaches. Unlike thinkers who remain **anchored to critical thinking** defined by **determinate negation**, Baudrillard’s approach **emphasises ambivalence**, **reversal** and both **personal and collective modes of rejection** more **subtle** than those envisioned by the **increasingly exhausted mechanisms of critique**. The **critique of consumer capitalism** – **the consumption of junk food, junk entertainment and junk information** – is now integral to the system; the critique of finance capitalism – banker’s bonuses, corporate tax avoidance – is integral to the system, yet it fails to bring about meaningful or determinate social transformation. Indeed, such critiques may do **no more than provide the system** with a **fleeting sense of “reality**” – **real issues**, **real problems to deal with** – around which the system can **reproduce its simulacra**, perhaps to **reassure us that “something is being done”**, **“measures are being put into place”** etc. “Reality” cannot be dialectically negated by critical concepts when both ‘reality’ and the critical concept disappear together, **their fates clearly tied to each other** (Baudrillard 2009b: 10-12). There is a sense then in which **the production of critique is in complicity with the system**, the unravel-able proliferation and excess of critical accounts of the system has the effect of protecting the system. Complicity consists in a sharing of the denigration of all values, all institutions, all ideas, all beliefs: so long as we believe in nothing – at least not passionately – then the system has us, at least superficially. For example, in recent decades we have seen the denigration of religious faiths – or their reduction to ‘cultural identity’ and ‘world heritage’ objects; the denigration of public services and welfare provision accompanied by their marketisation; the denigration of the poor, the young, immigrants and the unemployed. Yet this is not only the denigration of the powerless or disenfranchised, there is also the widespread denigration of those seen as powerful: politicians, corporations, celebrities. For Baudrillard, it is **quite inadequate** to focus only on **the power of global neo-liberal policies** such as marketisation in these processes of denigration. This is where Baudrillard’s position departs decisively from anti-globalists and from neo-Communists such as Negri, Zizek, and Badiou. Global power has **deliberately sacrificed its values and ideologies**, it **presents no position**, it **takes no stand**, it **undermines even the illusion that “free markets” function and has made “capital” virtual**; become orbital it is removed from a terrestrial, geo-political or subjective space. These are **protective measures enabling power to become (almost) hegemonic** (Baudrillard 2009a: 33-56; 2010: 35-40). Baudrillard often emphasises **the fragility and the vulnerability** to **reversal of the “powerful”** and the distinction between powerful and powerless is **radically questioned in his work**. So what is this global power? Where is it? The answer, of course, is that **it is everywhere and it is in everyone**. We have not liberated ourselves from slavery, but, Baudrillard contends, **internalised the masters**: ‘[e]verthing changes with **the emancipation of the slave** and the **internalisation of the master by the emancipated slave’** (2009a: 33). **We tyrannise ourselves**, for example by demanding that we **maximise our opportunities, fulfill our potential**. This is **a deeper level of slavery** – and **complicity** – than **any previous historical system could inflict** (Baudrillard 1975; 2009a: 33). Yet **duality always re-emerges**, Baudrillard insists: indifference is dual, complicity is dual. **Carnivalisation** and **cannibalisation** are themselves **dual**: the global system **absorbs all otherness** in a **‘forced conversion to modernity’** (2010: 5), **reproducing otherness** within the **carnival of marketable “difference**”, yet **cannibalisation emerges as a reversion** and **derailing of this process**. The world adopts Western models: economic, cultural, religious – or it appears to. Hidden within this complicity with the West, there is, Baudrillard suggests, **a deeper sense of derision and rejection**. The allegiance to Western models is **superficial**; it is **a form of mimicry or hyperconformity** that involves a **ritual-like exorcism of the hegemonic system**. Further, such **mimicry reveals the superficiality of Western cultural and economic models**: this is not only a superficial acceptance, but **an acceptance of superficiality**. Western values **are already parodic**, and, in being accepted, they are **subject to further parody** as they circulate around the globe (2010: 4-11). The West has **deregulated and devalued itself** and demands that the rest of the world follows: "It is **everything by which a human being retains some value** in his own eyes that we (the West) are **deliberately sacrificing** … [o]ur truth is always to be sought in **unveiling**, **de-sublimation, reductive analysis** …[n]othing is true if it is not **desacralised, objectivised, shorn of its aura, dragged** on to the stage" (Baudrillard 2010: 23). Western desacrilisation amounts to a powerful challenge to the rest of the world, a potlatch: desacralise in return or perish! But who has the power? Who is the victor? **There isn’t one**, according to Baudrillard. Of the global order, Baudrillard writes: ‘**We are its hostages** – **victims and accomplices** at one and **the same time** – immersed in the **same global monopoly of the networks**. A monopoly which, moreover – and this is the supreme ruse of hegemony – no one holds any longer’ (2010: 40). There is **no Master**, **no sovereign** because **all the structures and dictates** of power have been **internalised**, this is **the complicity we all share with global order**, yet it is **a dual complicity**: an **over-eager acceptance** goes hand-in-hand with **a deep and growing rejection**. Baudrillard’s discussions of power, servitude and complicity make frequent reference to Estienne La Boetie’s essay on voluntary servitude, completed around 1554. The fundamental political question for La Boetie is: ‘how can it happen that a vast number of individuals, of towns, cities and nations can allow one man to tyrannise them, a man who has no power except the power they themselves give him, who could do them no harm were they not willing to suffer harm’ (La Boetie 1988: 38). It seems people do not want to be free, do not want to wield power or determine their own fates: ‘it is the people who enslave themselves’ (La Boetie 1988: 41). People in general are the accomplices of the powerful and the tyrannical, some profit directly through wealth, property, favour – ‘the little tyrants beneath the principal one’ (1988: 64), but many do not, why do they not rebel? Baudrillard takes up La Boetie’s emphasis on servitude being enforced and maintained from within, rather than from without. Yet, there are also major divergences. La Boetie deplores the “common people” for accepting the narcotising pleasures of drinking, gambling and sexual promiscuity, while Baudrillard rejects such elitism and celebrates the masses abilities to strategically defy those who would manipulate them through perverse but lethally effective practices such as silence, radical indifference, hyperconformity – dual modes of complicity and rejection (Baudrillard 1983: 1-61). Though La Boetie’s essay prefigures the development of the concept of hegemony, he never doubts that voluntary servitude is unnatural, a product of malign custom that is in contradiction with the true nature of human beings which is to enjoy a God-given freedom. Baudrillard, by contrast, examines voluntary servitude as a strategy of the refusal of power, a refusal of the snares of self and identity, as strategy of freedom from the tyranny of the will and the fiction of self-determination (Baudrillard 2001: 51-7). For Baudrillard the “declination” or refusal of will disarms those who seek to exert power through influencing or guiding peoples’ choices and feelings towards particular ends. It also allows for a symbolic space, a space of vital distance or removal, a space in which to act, or even act-out (of) a character (Baudrillard 2001: 72-3). This is a space where radical otherness may be encountered, a sense of shared destiny which is a manifestation of the dual form at the level of individual existence (Baudrillard 2001: 79). It could certainly be argued that modern subjects are confronted by a far more subtle and pervasive system of control than were the subjects discussed in La Boetie’s analysis. In theorising the nature of modern controls Baudrillard develops suggestive themes from La Boetie’s work. Speaking of slavery in the Assyrian empire, where, apparently, kings would not appear in public, La Boetie argues, ‘**the fact that they did not know who their master was, and hardly knew whether they had one at all, made them all the more willing to be slaves’** (1988: 60). Whatever its historical provenance, this strategy of power is, it seems, **generalised in modernity**; particularly after the shift away from Fordist mass production it has become **increasingly hard to detect** who **the masters actually are**. While workers are persecuted by middle managers, supervisors, team leaders, project co-ordinators who are the masters of this universe? Who are the true beneficiaries? Rather than **trying to identify a global neo-liberal elite**, as do many proponents of anti-capitalist theory, Baudrillard suggests that the situation we confront is so grave because “we” (those in the West in relatively privileged positions) have usurped the position of masters; **we have become the slave masters of ourselves, tyrannising every detail of our own lives: trying to work harder, trying for promotion or simply trying to avoid redundanc**y. We are **all the accomplices of a trans-capitalist, trans-economic exploitation**. **We are all tyrants**: a billion tiny tyrants servicing a system of elimination. But this is **not** to say that **Baudrillard ignores power differentials altogether**: ‘it is, indeed, those who **submit themselves most mercilessly** to their own decisions who **fill the greater part of the authoritarian ranks**, alleging sacrifice on their parts to impose **even greater sacrifices** on others’ (2001: 60-1). **We all impose such violence on ourselves and on others as part of our daily routines**, hence Baudrillard’s injunction to refuse power: **‘Power itself must be abolished – and not solely because of a refusal to be dominated, which is at the heart of all traditional struggles – but also, just as violently, in the refusal to dominate’** (2009a: 47). Yet, even on the theme of systemic violence and elimination, Baudrillard differs sharply from neo-communist theory, while retaining a position of defiance. Systemic eliminationism should not be conceived in individual or subjective terms, despite good points made in recent studies of work and education under neo-liberalism, such as Cederström and Fleming’s Dead Man Working (2012). At a formal level, **neo-liberal eliminationism** does not merely eliminate jobs and also lives (for example in the recent textile factory fires in Bangladesh), it **eliminates meaning, symbolic space and thought**. And **it eliminates not by termination but by “ex-termination**”. That is, by **transcribing the world into integral reality**, the system produces **a single, meaning-depleted, virtual space which encourages participation, engagement and campaigning**, on condition that these are produced as part and parcel of an integrated void where **“[t]he real no longer has any force as sign, and signs no longer have any force of meaning”** (Baudrillard 2001: 4). Most of the developed world has been **conferred the right to blog and to tweet** as they please and they are indebted to the system in a way which far exceeds the paying of a small tribute or rent to Microsoft or Apple (Zizek 2010: 233). The symbolic debt imposed by the modern world and its technologies is of a metaphysical or cosmological order. **Through it we take leave of this world Baudrillard suggests, we become extra-terrestrials. We will recognise no Other, no singularity, no debt to anyone because we attempt to cancel everything out in an integral, technological system that has no outsides because it was, in a sense, created from the outside**.

#### Any communicative forum which seeks the creation of meaning sustains a project of speed elitism that maintains subjects as the academic bourgeois – only challenging the form of the construction of thought offers a means to destroy the system

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This chapter then has demonstrated that today, social scientists and humanists who want to mobilise communication tools for social change fi nd themselves increasingly in a double-bind, even if they increasingly do not recognise this bind as such. The tension between the imperative of communication and dissemination that is at the base of all academic professions, has segued, via a particular discourse of ‘dialogue,’ ‘horizontality,’ and ‘self-transformation’ in the 1970s, to the mechanised ‘interactivity’ that heralds in the era of new and social media in the 1990s. Thesediscourses and practices all build on a fundamentally mistaken notion of communication as the transmission of meaning, and as such of the ‘improvement’ of community. In the performance of the academic profession and legitimation via this misguided notion of communication, the relative ‘other’ of the communicative subject is misinterpreted as the radical ‘other’; in other words, the desires for ever newer media tools are wrongly taken for desires that are outside or resist the continuing march of neo-liberal globalisation. This contemporary form of economic acceleration of such communication (and its theories and practices of ‘harnessing’ it for social ‘change’) hence paradoxically entails a certain problematic inertia or non-change in favour of contemporary nodes of power and privilege. In the fi nal analysis, the problem also with Edu-Factory , Facoltà di Fuga, Investigacció, Universidad Nómada, Ricercatori Precari, and Glocal Research Space is that these projects entail a very specifi c form of subjugation with dire consequences for the slower and less technogenic classes. This does not at all mean that the above projects are utterly misguided or deluded; rather, my point is that the very quest for justice and democracy that all these projects and practices—and indeed this very book— dutifully perform inhabits an aporetic structure that allows capitalism to accelerate the imagery that is wrapped up in this quest. And our quest for justice must then also question the particularly accelerated form this quest takes today. It is here that we most strongly notice the auto-immunity of the contemporary university, as it succumbs exceedingly to its own quest for transparency. The limits of this logic show up especially in Baudrillard’s “The Implosion of Meaning in the Media” and “The Final Solution” in The Vital Illusion in which the effects of such a circular logic and its relationship to the rhetoric of transcendence fi gures prominently. Initially, one could think that Baudrillard’s assessment confi rms my analytical suspicion regarding activist-research projects. In “The Implosion,” Baudrillard starts from the premise that the increase of information in our media- saturated society results in a loss of meaning because it “exhausts itself in the act of staging communication.” New media technologies exacerbate the subject’s fantasy of transparent communication, while increasingly what are communicated are mere copies of the same, a “recycling in the negative of the traditional institution” (1994, 80) New technologies are simply the materialisation of that fantasy of communication, and the “lure” (1994, 81) of such a technocratic system resides in the requirement of active political engagement to uphold that fantasy. This translates in a call to subjectivise oneself—to be vocal, participate, and to“play the […] liberating claim of subjecthood” (1994, 85). The result of the intensifying circular logic of this system, he says, is that meaning not only implodes in the media, but also that the social implodes in the masses—the construction of a “hyperreal” (1994, 81). Against the claim of Glocal Research Space that such praxes of alliance are “without an object” (2003, 19), this does not mean at all that objectifi cation does not take place. Instead, and in line with Baudrillard’s argument, the urge to subjectivise oneself and the objectifi cation of the individual go hand in hand under speed-elitism—the double-bind that locks the individual fi rmly into her or his technocratic conditions. Indeed, the argument in “Activist Research” that “research [should be] like an effective procedure [which is] in itself already a result” (2003, 19) describes the conditions of Readings’ ‘university of excellence’ where any research activity, thanks to technological instantaneity, translates immediately into the capitalist result of increased information fl ow (Readings 1996, 22). Active subjects and their others become the cybernetic objects of such a system of information fl ow. The insistence in “Activist Research” on free, travelling, and nomadic research simply makes sure that this logic of increased fl ow is repeated. Because of this desire for increased fl ow and connection, activist-research projects are paradoxically highly exclusivist in advocating the discourses and tools of the speed elite. The problem with projects like Edu-Factory or the productive cross-over of activism and academia is therefore not only that their political counter-information means just more information (and loss of meaning) as well as more capitalist production, but that it puts its faith in precisely those technologies and fantasies of control, communication, and of ‘being political’ that underlie the current logic of overproduction. But where do we go from here? And why write a book that amounts to much of the same? Obviously, more can and should be said about the concurrent acceleration of capital by means of humanist thought and politics—after all, this chapter and even this entire book are themselves also symptoms of the current university’s neo-liberal-humanist mandate that demands that thought be productive . If humanism today has mostly mutated into speed- elitism, then the Janusfaced affi rmation of acceleration certainly also promises a change beyond neo-liberalism. The fi nal chapter of this book will seek to exacerbate, without nostalgia and with much gusto, this imminent fatality of the university by returning to the complexities set up in Chap. 1 and by exploding the impossibilities described in Chaps. 2 , 3 , and 4