## Thesis

#### The modern University is devoted to the endless circulation of representations. Modern academia is grounded in the tyranny of transparency, a drive towards total omniscience as everything must be held to the light, studied, analyzed, co-opted. The research they create for the resolution is fundamentally complicit in this – the production of objective knowledge surrounding the private management of outer space only strengthens informational governance.

**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?’

#### Their attempt to make the world mean something is the generative point of violence in the contemporary world—everything must be made known. Everything. The meanings and content of what we read are stripped and turned into fuel for the fire.

**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 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