## 1AC

#### **The University is a house of mirrors, a banal machine fueled by the system of transparency. All that is radically Other must be coded, and presented as semiotic targets for the cybernetic web of militarism. If there is any hope to avoid the capture – the mirrors must be shattered.**

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 https://www.google.com/books/edition/Higher\_Education\_and\_Technological\_Accel/Y5xxDQAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0) // IES rc // gordo

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 system causes global implosive violence as a method of creating meaning for its own existence – Contemporary political solutions are illusory and reinforce self-serving issues that maintain the simulacra of the University.

Artrip and Debrix 14 [Ryan Artrip, doctoral candidate in ASPECT at Virginia Tech, and François Debrix, Director of ASPECT and Professor of Political Science at Virginia Tech, “The Digital Fog of War: Baudrillard and the Violence of Representation” https://baudrillardstudies.ubishops.ca/the-digital-fog-of-war-baudrillard-and-the-violence-of-representation/] BBro

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

#### Accumulation of signs and signifiers produces a litany of suffering via poverty, securitization, fear, etc. – our impact infinitely outweighs and turns any of theirs

**Robinson ’16** (William; 2016; professor of sociology, global studies and Latin American studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara; Truthout; “Sadistic Capitalism: Six Urgent Matters for Humanity in Global Crisis”; <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35596-sadistic-capitalism-six-urgent-matters-for-humanity-in-global-crisis>)

In these mean streets of **globalized capitalism in crisis**, it has become profitable to **turn poverty** and inequality into a tourist attraction. The South African Emoya Luxury Hotel and Spa company has made a glamorized spectacle of it. The resort recently advertised an opportunity for tourists to stay "in our unique Shanty Town ... and experience traditional township living within a safe private game reserve environment." A cluster of simulated shanties outside of Bloemfontein that the company has constructed "is ideal for team building, braais, bachelors [parties], theme parties and an experience of a lifetime," read the ad. The luxury accommodations, made to appear from the outside as shacks, featured paraffin lamps, candles, a battery-operated radio, an outside toilet, a drum and fireplace for cooking, as well as under-floor heating, air conditioning and wireless internet access. A well-dressed, young white couple is pictured embracing in a field with the corrugated tin shanties in the background. The only thing missing in this fantasy world of sanitized space and glamorized poverty was the people themselves living in poverty. **Escalating inequalities** fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation. The "luxury shanty town" in South Africa is a fitting metaphor for global capitalism as a whole. Faced with a **stagnant global economy**, elites have managed to turn **war**, **structural violence** and **inequality** into opportunities for capital, pleasure and entertainment. It is hard not to conclude that unchecked capitalism has become what I term "sadistic capitalism," in which the suffering and deprivation generated by capitalism become a **source of aesthetic pleasure**, leisure and entertainment for others. I recently had the opportunity to travel through several countries in Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia and throughout North America. I was on sabbatical to research what the global crisis looks like on the ground around the world. Everywhere I went, social polarization and political tensions have reached **explosive dimensions**. Where is the crisis headed, what are the possible outcomes and what does it tell us about global capitalism and resistance? This crisis is not like earlier structural crises of world capitalism, such as in the 1930s or 1970s. This one is **fast becoming systemic**. The crisis of humanity shares aspects of earlier structural crises of world capitalism, but there are six novel, interrelated dimensions to the current moment that I highlight here, in broad strokes, as the "big picture" context in which countries and peoples around the world are experiencing a **descent into chaos** and uncertainty. 1) The level of **global** social polarization and **inequality is unprecedented** in the face of out-of-control, over-accumulated capital. In January 2016, the development agency Oxfam published a follow-up to its report on global inequality that had been released the previous year. According to the new report, now just **62 billionaires** -- down from 80 identified by the agency in its January 2015 report -- control as much wealth as one half of the world's population, and the **top 1% owns more wealth** than the other 99% combined. Beyond the transnational capitalist class and the upper echelons of the global power bloc, the richest 20 percent of humanity owns some **95 percent of the world's wealth**, while the bottom 80 percent has to make do with **just 5 percent**. This 20-80 divide of global society into haves and the have-nots is the **new global social** **apartheid**. It is evident not just between rich and poor countries, but within each country, North and South, with the rise of new affluent high-consumption sectors alongside the **downward mobility**, "precariatization," destabilization and **expulsion of majorities**. Escalating inequalities fuel capitalism's chronic problem of over-accumulation: The transnational capitalist class **cannot find productive outlets** to unload the enormous amounts of surplus it has accumulated, leading to **stagnation in the world economy**. The signs ofan **impending depression** are everywhere. The front page of the February 20 issue of The Economist read, "The World Economy: Out of Ammo?" Extreme levels of social polarization present a challenge to dominant groups. They strive to purchase the loyalty of that 20 percent, while at the same time dividing the 80 percent, **co-opting** some **into a hegemonic bloc** and **repressing the rest**. Alongside the spread of frightening **new systems of social control** and repression is heightened dissemination through the culture industries and corporate marketing strategies that **depoliticize through consumerist fantasies** and the manipulation of desire. As "Trumpism" in the United States so well illustrates, another strategy of co-optation is the **manipulation of fear** and insecurity among the downwardly mobile so that social anxiety is channeled toward **scapegoated communities**. This psychosocial mechanism of displacing mass anxieties is not new, but it appears to be increasing around the world in the face of the **structural destabilization** of capitalist globalization. Scapegoated communities are under siege, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar, the Muslim minority in India, the Kurds in Turkey, southern African immigrants in South Africa, and Syrian and Iraqi refugees and other immigrants in Europe. As with its 20th century predecessor, 21st century fascism **hinges on** such manipulation of **social anxiety** at a time of acute capitalist crisis. Extreme inequality **requires extreme violence** and repression that lend to projects of **21st century fascism**. 2) The system is **fast reaching** the **ecological limits** to its reproduction. We have reached several tipping points in what environmental scientists refer to as **nine** crucial "**planetary boundaries**." We have already exceeded these boundaries in three areas -- **climate change**, the **nitrogen cycle** and **diversity loss**. There have been five previous mass extinctions in earth's history. While all these were due to natural causes, for the first time ever, human conduct is intersecting with and **fundamentally altering the earth** system. We have entered what Paul Crutzen, the Dutch environmental scientist and Nobel Prize winner, termed the Anthropocene -- a new age in which humans have **transformed** up to half of **the world's surface**. We are altering the composition of the atmosphere and acidifying the oceans at a rate that **undermines the conditions for life**. The ecological dimensions of global crisis cannot be understated. "We are deciding, without quite meaning to, which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will forever be closed," observes Elizabeth Kolbert in her best seller, The Sixth Extinction. "**No** other **creature has ever managed this** ... The Sixth Extinction will continue to **determine the course of life** long after everything people have written and painted and built has been ground into dust." Capitalism cannot be held solely responsible. The human-nature contradiction has deep roots in civilization itself. The ancient Sumerian empires, for example, collapsed after the population over-salinated their crop soil. The Mayan city-state network collapsed about AD 900 due to deforestation. And the former Soviet Union wrecked havoc on the environment. However, given capital's implacable impulse to accumulate profit and its accelerated **commodification of nature**, it is difficult to imagine that the environmental catastrophe can be resolved within the capitalist system. "**Green capitalism" appears** as **an oxymoron**, as sadistic capitalism's attempt to turn the ecological crisis into a profit-making opportunity, along with the conversion of poverty into a tourist attraction. 3) The sheer magnitude of the means of violence is unprecedented, as is the **concentrated control over** the means of global communications and **the production** and circulation **of knowledge**, symbols and images. We have seen the spread of frightening new systems of social control and repression that have brought us into the **panoptical surveillance society** and the **age of thought control**. This real-life Orwellian world is in a sense more perturbing than that described by George Orwell in his iconic novel 1984. In that fictional world, people were compelled to give their obedience to the state ("Big Brother") in exchange for a quiet existence with guarantees of employment, housing and other social necessities. Now, however, the corporate and political powers that be **force obedience** even as the means of survival are denied to the vast majority. Global apartheid involves the creation of "green zones" that are cordoned off in each locale around the world where **elites are insulated** through new systems of spatial reorganization, social control and policing. "Green zone" refers to the nearly impenetrable area in central Baghdad that US occupation forces established in the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The command center of the occupation and select Iraqi elite inside that green zone were protected from the violence and chaos that engulfed the country. Urban areas around the world are now green zoned through **gentrification**, **gated communities**, surveillance systems, and state and **private violence**. Inside the world's green zones, privileged strata avail themselves of **privatized social services**, consumption and entertainment. They can work and communicate through internet and satellite sealed off under the protection of armies of soldiers, police and private security forces. Green zoning takes on distinct forms in each locality. In Palestine, I witnessed such zoning in the form of Israeli military checkpoints, Jewish settler-only roads and the apartheid wall. In Mexico City, the most exclusive residential areas in the upscale Santa Fe District are **accessible only by helicopter** and private gated roads. In Johannesburg, a surreal drive through the exclusive Sandton City area reveals **rows of mansions** that appear as military compounds, **with** **private armed towers** and electrical and barbed-wire fences. In Cairo, I toured satellite cities ringing the impoverished center and inner suburbs where the country's elite could **live out their** aspirations and **fantasies**. They sport gated residential complexes with spotless green lawns, private leisure and shopping centers and English-language international schools under the protection of military checkpoints and private security police. In other cities, green zoning is subtler but no less effective. In Los Angeles, where I live, the freeway system now has an **express lane reserved for** those that can pay **an exorbitant toll**. On this lane, the privileged **speed by**, while the rest remain one lane over, stuck in the city's notorious bumper-to-bumper traffic -- or even worse, in notoriously underfunded and underdeveloped public transportation, where it may take half a day to get to and from work. There is no barrier separating this express lane from the others. However, a near-invisible closed surveillance system monitors every movement. If a vehicle without authorization shifts into the exclusive lane, it is **instantly recorded by** this **surveillance** system and a **heavy fine is imposed** on the driver, under threat of impoundment, while freeway police patrols are ubiquitous. Outside of the global green zones, **warfare** and **police containment** have become normalized and sanitized for those not directly at the receiving end of armed aggression. "Militainment" -- portraying and even **glamorizing war and violence** as entertaining spectacles through Hollywood films and television police shows, computer games and corporate "news" channels -- may be the epitome of sadistic capitalism. It desensitizes, bringing about complacency and indifference. In between the green zones and outright warfare are **prison industrial complexes**, **immigrant** and refugee **repression** and control systems, the criminalization of outcast communities and **capitalist schooling**. The omnipresent media and cultural apparatuses of the corporate economy, in particular, aim to **colonize the mind** -- to undermine the ability to think critically and outside the dominant worldview. A neofascist culture emerges through **militarism**, extreme **masculinization**, racism and **racist mobilizations** against scapegoats. 4) We are reaching limits to the extensive expansion of capitalism. Capitalism is like riding a bicycle: When you stop pedaling the bicycle, you fall over. If the capitalist system stops expanding outward, it enters crisis and **faces collapse**. In each earlier structural crisis, the system went through a new round of extensive expansion -- from waves of colonial conquest in earlier centuries, to the integration in the late 20th and early 21st centuries of the former socialist countries, China, India and other areas that had been marginally outside the system. There are **no longer** any **new territories** to integrate into world capitalism. Meanwhile, the privatization of education, health care, utilities, basic services and public land are turning those spaces in global society that were outside of capital's control into "spaces of capital." Even poverty has been turned into a commodity. **What is there left to commodify?** Where can the system now expand? With the limits to expansion comes a **turn toward militarized accumulation** -- **making wars** of endless destruction and reconstruction and expanding the militarization of social and political institutions so as to continue to **generate new opportunities** for accumulation in the face of stagnation. 5) There is the rise of a vast surplus population inhabiting a "**planet of slums**," alienated from the productive economy, thrown into the margins and subject to these sophisticated systems of social control and destruction. Global capitalism has **no** direct **use for surplus humanity**. But indirectly, it holds wages down everywhere and makes new systems of **21st century slavery** possible. These systems include prison labor, the forced recruitment of miners at gunpoint by warlords contracted by global corporations to dig up valuable minerals in the Congo, sweatshops and exploited immigrant communities (including the rising tide of immigrant female caregivers for affluent populations). Furthermore, the global working class is experiencing accelerated "**precariatization**." The "new precariat" refers to the proletariat that faces capital under today's unstable and precarious labor relations -- informalization, casualization, part-time, temp, immigrant and contract labor. As communities are uprooted everywhere, there is a **rising** reserve **army of immigrant labor**. The global working class is becoming divided into citizen and immigrant workers. The latter are particularly attractive to transnational capital, as the lack of citizenship rights makes them particularly vulnerable, and therefore, exploitable. The challenge for dominant groups is **how to** **contain the real** and potential **rebellion** of surplus humanity, the immigrant workforce and the precariat. How can they contain the explosive contradictions of this system? The 21st century megacities become the **battlegrounds between mass resistance** movements **and** the new systems of **mass repression**. Some populations in these cities (and also in abandoned countryside) are at risk of **genocide**, such as those in Gaza, zones in Somalia and Congo, and swaths of Iraq and Syria. 6) There is a disjuncture between a globalizing economy and a nation-state-based system of political authority. Transnational state apparatuses are incipient and do **not wield enough power** and authority **to** organize and **stabilize the system**, much less to impose regulations on runaway transnational capital. In the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, for instance, the governments of the G-8 and G-20 were **unable to impose transnational regulation** on the global financial system, despite a series of emergency summits to discuss such regulation. Elites historically have attempted to resolve the problems of over-accumulation by state policies that can regulate the anarchy of the market. However, in recent decades, transnational capital has **broken free from** the **constraints** imposed by the nation-state. The more "enlightened" elite representatives of the transnational capitalist class are now clamoring for transnational mechanisms of regulation that would allow the global ruling class to reign in the **anarchy of the system** in the interests of saving global capitalism from itself and from **radical challenges from below**. At the same time, the division of the world into some 200 competing nation-states is not the most propitious of circumstances for the global working class. Victories in popular struggles from below in any one country or region can (and often do) become diverted and even undone by the structural power of transnational capital and the direct political and military domination that this structural power affords the dominant groups. In Greece, for instance, the leftist Syriza party came to power in 2015 on the heels of militant worker struggles and a mass uprising. But the party abandoned its radical program as a result of the enormous pressure exerted on it from the European Central Bank and private international creditors. The Systemic Critique of Global Capitalism A growing number of transnational elites themselves now recognize that any resolution to the global crisis must involve redistribution downward of income. However, in the viewpoint of those from below, a neo-Keynesian redistribution within the prevailing corporate power structure is **not enough**. What is required is a redistribution of power downward and **transformation toward a system** in which social need trumps private profit. A **global rebellion** against the transnational capitalist class has spread since the financial collapse of 2008. Wherever one looks, there is **popular**, **grassroots** and leftist **struggle**, and the rise of **new cultures of resistance**: the Arab Spring; the resurgence of leftist politics in Greece, Spain and elsewhere in Europe; the tenacious resistance of Mexican social movements following the Ayotzinapa massacre of 2014; the favela uprising in Brazil against the government's World Cup and Olympic expulsion policies; the student strikes in Chile; the remarkable surge in the Chinese workers' movement; the shack dwellers and other poor people's campaigns in South Africa; Occupy Wall Street, the immigrant rights movement, Black Lives Matter, fast food workers' struggle and the mobilization around the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign in the United States. This global revolt is spread unevenly and faces many challenges. A number of these struggles, moreover, have suffered setbacks, such as the Greek working-class movement and, tragically, the Arab Spring. What type of a transformation is viable, and how do we achieve it? How we interpret the global crisis is itself a matter of vital importance as politics polarize worldwide between a neofascist and a popular response. The systemic critique of global capitalism must **strive to influence**, from this vantage point, **the discourse and practice of movements** for a more just distribution of wealth and power. **Our survival** may depend on it.

#### Thus, affirm instead the mystery that comes with radical Otherness. Focus on combatting the signs of the system that filter its form, not its content. For a chance at victory, even signs must burn.

Pawlett 13. William Pawlett, senior lecturer in media, communications, and cultural studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK, Violence, Society and Radical Theory: Bataille, Baudrillard and Contemporary Society, pg. 133 https://www.google.com/books/edition/Violence\_Society\_and\_Radical\_Theory/G76XCwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

In For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign (1981, orig. 1972) Baudrillard began to describe various codes of meaning (or signification) as integrated by what he called “the code” (le code, la grille, le Code du signes, la matrice). By “the code” Baudrillard intended not particular codes of meaning (English, French, Morse) or particular modes of the interpretation of meaning (dominant, resistant, plural) but rather the condition of possibility of coding. For an effective critique of the consumer society to be made, Baudrillard suggests, we must focus analysis on the form of the Code, not its contents or representations which are, of course, extraordinarily open, malleable and diverse. The Code as form is preconscious, or, in Baudrillard’s terminology, has the effect of “precession”; that is, as grid or network it precedes individual experience, perception and choice. The medium of this grid is the abstract, arbitrary sign. Signs, visual and linguistic, are the medium of coding, of the ordered exchange between coded elements. Composed to two sets of inter-locking relations, the sign-referent and signifier-signified, the sign is the universal form constructing the oppositions of subject and object, of real and representation, of self and other: the building blocks of ‘reality’ itself. The ordered exchange of signs produces identity and difference: every ‘thing’ is semiotic; every ‘thing’ is a ‘thing’ because it is not some other ‘thing’. Signs produce social meanings and values on a scale or grid whereby all points can be measured and compared. To clarify, it is not that every ‘thing’ can be converted into sign form, it is rather that the very process of transcription or coding produces ‘things’ within a scheme of identities and differences. Though the Code encompasses every ‘thing’ it cannot process symbolic exchange, seduction, the ambivalence (or becoming) of life which consist not ‘things’ with identity but of volatile relations, always “in transit” or metamorphosis. The Code then does not merely express particular aspects of the consumer capitalist system such as media, fashion or advertising: it is far more fundamental. At the fundamental level the Code is what prevents symbolic exchange by breaking its cycles or by seizing and diverting its potential. Symbolic exchange now occurs or rather “effracts” only when the Code and its value systems are annulled, reversed or suspended. Symbolic exchange traverses all oppositions, challenging fixed or stable positions or power relations. Baudrillard’s major example of symbolic exchange is, of course, the gift and counter-gift discussed in Chapter 2. To reiterate, the meaning of the gift never settles into fixity or identity, it is not structured by a logic of difference, its meaning can be transformed at any moment in the on-going relation or “pact” between parties – indeed this relation is of the gift and the gift is of this relation: relation and gift flourish together, and die together. Baudrillard defines the Code as a “generalised metaphysics” synthesising social values, social production and social identities, and this system ends any sense of the social as dynamic, symbolic form. The Code enacts an “obligatory registration of individuals on the scale of status” (1981: 68), producing a “hierarchy of differential signs” which, crucially, “constitutes the fundamental, decisive form of social control – more so than acquiescence to ideological norms” (ibid.). It makes no difference whether we, as individuals, endorse the consumer capitalist system or not, since we are all positioned by the Code, and are positioned through it by others: the game of ideological critique takes place within the terms set by the Code. The Code breaks, blocks and bars ambivalence producing the structure of difference – the play of identity and difference characterised by oppositions such as true/false, good/evil, self/other, black/white, male/female. The standard dimensions of consumer status positioning flow from this source: rich/poor, young/ old, fat/thin, attractive/unattractive. While structural or dialectical oppositions are characteristic of the first and second orders of simulacra, in the third order the Code simulates choice, difference and diversity through binary “modulation” by allowing the privileged terms of its oppositions to switch, fuse or “implode” (1983: 95-110). For example ‘fat’, ‘poor’ and ‘old’ can be beautiful too – if only within the confines of fashion, cosmetics advertising or pop music video. The Code operates in “total indifference” to content; everything is permitted in sign form; that is as “simulation”. The Code also performs a pacifying effect on society: the once clear-cut, structural divisions such as class and status are made less visible by registering all people as individual consumers on a single, universal scale. Everyone becomes a consumer, though some, of course, consume far more than others. As universal form the status of consumer confers a kind of democratic flattening of social relations, but an illusory one. If class conflict was, to some extent, pacified, Baudrillard does not contend that society as a whole is pacified; indeed other forms of violence and dissent emerge and cannot be deterred. Baudrillard wrote of the emergence of new “anomalous” forms of violence, less intelligible, less structured, post-dialectical or implosive (Baudrillard 1998a: 174-85; 1994: 71-2)). He refers to the Watts riots of 1965 as an example of new violent rejections of the consumer system. Later, Baudrillard proposed the term “disembodied hate” or simply “the hate” to express aspects of this process (1996a: 142-7). The Code then is a principle of integration producing everything and everyone as a position on the scale of social value . With the last vestiges of symbolic orders around the world being eliminated by neo-liberal economic globalisation how is the Code to be challenged or defied? 3 Departing from the form but not the intent of Marxist theory, Baudrillard argued that the apparent distinction between use value and economic exchange value is produced as a “code effect”. In other words, use value is a simulatory form produced by the capitalist system as justification and grounding for its trading of economic exchange values (1981: 130-42). For Baudrillard the illusion of use value, like the illusion of signified meanings and the illusion of the stable solid reality of the referent, are produced by the Code as structural groundings, shoring up the unstable ‘reality’ of signs and preventing the emergence of ambivalence (1981: 156 n.9). To challenge, defy or breach the Code then it is not sufficient to ‘return’ to use value. Indeed such strategies, shared by some Marxists, environmentalists and anti-globalisation movements actually feed the capitalist system: the market’s semiotic assimilation of environmentalism as the ‘green’ brand choice is an obvious example. But if Marxist theory fails to engage with and challenge the system of signs, so too, for Baudrillard, do many Structuralist, Poststructuralist and Postmodernist theorists of desire, difference and liberation. To defy the system it is never sufficient to ‘play with signs’, that is, to play with plural, ‘different’ or multiple identity positions. Here we encounter Baudrillard’s total rejection of what would later be called ‘identity politics’ and also a central misunderstanding of his position on signs. 4 For Baudrillard to play with signs – signs of consumption and status, signs of gender, sexuality or ethnicity is simply to operate within the Code . It is an unconscious or unwitting complicity with the Code’s logic of the multiplication of status positions; it is, in a sense, to assist it in the production of ‘diversity’ and ‘choice’. It is deeply ironic that some of Baudrillard’s critics have claimed that Baudrillard himself merely ‘played with signs’ and that he advocated a playing with signs. Yet Baudrillard is clear, in order to oppose the system “[e]ven signs must burn” (1981: 163). In his controversial work Seduction (orig. 1979) Baudrillard draws an important distinction between the “ludique” meaning playing the game of signs, playing with signification (to enhance one’s status position or to assert one’s identity through its ‘difference’), and “mise enjeux” meaning to put signs at stake, to challenging them or annul them through symbolic exchange (1990: 15778). 5 For Baudrillard signs play with us, despite us, against us; any radical defiance must be a defiance of signs and their codings. Unfortunately, the distinction between ‘playing with signs’ – playing with their decoding and recoding, and defying the sign system has not penetrated the mainstream of Media and Cultural Studies. Eco’s influential notion of “semiotic guerrilla warfare” (Eco 1995) and Hall’s even more influential notion of “resistant decoding” place their faith in the ability of the sovereign, rational consumer to negotiate mediated meanings. For them the citizen-consumer confronts media content as the subject confronts the object. Hall does not consider that much media content is now ‘pre-encoded’ in an ersatz ‘oppositional’ form which renders the moment of ‘oppositional decoding’ merely one of conformity or ironic recognition (see Hall et al. 2002: 128-38). In other words, the terms for ‘resistant’ readings can be pre-set as positions within the Code. Critique is rendered uncertain, even meaningless by coded assimilation because the system sells us the signs of opposition as willingly as it sells us the signs of conformity; it sells signs of inclusion and empowerment as eagerly as it sells signs of affluence and exclusion. Can we even tell them apart? In which category would we place the phenomenon of Sex and the City , for example? 6 Today, millions of people manage, archive and share signs of their designated identity through social media platforms, in Baudrillard’s terms holding themselves hostage to the system of signs. The realm of symbolic exchange or seduction does not come about when individuals ‘play with signs’ but when (signs of) individuality, identity, will and agency are annulled through an encounter with radical otherness. Radical otherness, or radical alterity, for Baudrillard, refers to otherness not ‘difference’, that is otherness beyond representation, beyond coding – including ‘oppositional’ or assertive de/re-codings. A system of “total constraint” the Code does not merely produce identity but also difference, diversity and hybridity: indeed each of these now describe marketing strategies. Of course, the system does not seek to promote passivity or apathy among consumers but quite the contrary: to thrive and expand the system requires active, discriminating, engaged consumers, jostling for position, competing for advancement. The Code exists “to better prime the aspiration towards the higher level” (1981: 60), delivering diversity and choice at the level of signs or content (the goods that we choose to eat, the products and services that we choose to wear, watch, download) and it requires in return … nothing much at all – merely that we understand ourselves as consumers . The aim of the system is to make ‘the consumer’ the universal form of humanity yet within this form an almost infinite variety of differential contents or positions are possible; homogenisation and diversification become indistinguishable. Since ‘humanity’, for Baudrillard, as for Nietzsche, is already constituted as a universal form by the Enlightenment (1993a: 50) this task is close to completion, though the final completion, the “perfect crime” against Otherness will never, according to Baudrillard, come to pass (Baudrillard 1996a). 7 As a term the Code largely disappeared from Baudrillard’s writings after Simulacra and Simulation (1994). Are we to take it that the Code is still operational in the “fourth order” or is it defunct? We can answer this question by recalling two important points. Firstly, Baudrillard did not contend that the pacification and control effected by the Code would be total (quite the reverse, see Baudrillard 1996a: 142-9; 1998a: 174-85), only that the Code aimed at total constraint. Baudrillard’s most developed example, the masses, let us recall, are not so passive and docile that they are manipulated by the system; rather, they withdraw into silence or practice a hyper-conformity without belief in, or commitment to, the integrated system of values. In other words, they refuse to be the active, discriminating, reflective consumers that the system requires. Baudrillard writes “We form a mass, living most of the time in panic or haphazardly ( aleatoire ) above and beyond any meaning” (1983: 15), the masses are clearly not only the poor and marginal, they are “us, you and everyone” ( nous, vous, tout le monde ) (1983: 46; 2005b: 51). This ‘we’ is not a rhetorical device used to assert a faux value consensus; rather it suggests a buried, banished commonality, a commonality of nothing except a shared rejection of systemic control. Everyone, as posited by the Code, is mass ; both inside and, at the same time, beyond the Code: mass, yet singularity. Secondly, in the late 1980s when Baudrillard proposed a fourth order, a fractal stage with “no point of reference”, where “value radiates in all directions” as a “haphazard proliferation” (Baudrillard 1993b: 11) he was clear that the previous orders continue to function alongside the fourth order. In other words, there are still dialectical tensions operating, associated with the second order, and the Code of the third order also flourishes. Indeed what is most distinctive about the fourth order is that: things continue to function long after their ideas have disappeared, and they do so in total indifference to their content. The paradoxical fact is that they function even better under these circumstances (Baudrillard 1993b: 6). The idea or principle of the Code then is dead, but it functions even more effectively than ever, it becomes virtual, it produces “integral reality” as the complete and final replacement for the world as symbolic form (Baudrillard 2005a: 17-24). The Code, simulation and virtuality become so dominant, so global, that overt forms of resistance or counter-systemic violence are absorbed within it. Countersystemic violence might be given a (safe) place to play out through the media and entertainment industries, or it might be neutralised by the system offering a simulated, commodified version of what protesters and dissenters demand – this was how the sexual revolution was neutralised, according to Baudrillard. However, new forms of violence emerge from within saturated, controlling and dissuasive systems, intra-genic forms which, Baudrillard suggests, seem to be “secreted” by the system itself as it reaches a bloated, excessive or “hypertelic” state. “The hate” is one example of such intra-genic violence. Racism, Indifference and “the Hate” The whole art of politics today is to whip up popular indifference (Baudrillard, Cool Memories II , 1996b: 16) What then is the relationship between the Code and violence and hatred? The Code both pacifies and produces hate; indeed it produces hatred through pacification. While consumer capitalism has, to some extent, achieved a pacifying effect on ‘structural’ hatred such as the racism of skin colour, the system generates new hatreds and new violence that cannot be ‘treated’ by socialisation, education and information. On racism specifically Baudrillard argues: Logically, it [racism] should have declined with the advance of Enlightenment and democracy. Yet the more hybrid our cultures become, and the more the theoretical and genetic bases of racism crumble away, the stronger it grows. But this is because we are dealing here with a mental object, with an artificial construction based on an erosion of the singularity of cultures and entry into the fetishistic system of difference. So long as there is otherness, strangeness and the (possibly violent) dual relation – as we see in anthropological accounts up to the eighteenth century and into the colonial period – there was no racism properly so-called … all forms of sexist, racist, ethnic or cultural discrimination arise out of the same profound disaffection and out of a collective mourning for a dead otherness, set against a background of general indifference (Baudrillard 199a6: 132). If the systemic violence of difference is ameliorated, at least in the world of signs and in what people are prepared to state openly, the post-dialectical violence of indifference seems to grow in intensity. The violence of in-difference or “the hate” is like an antibiotic resistant virus, a hospital ‘superbug’: it cannot be treated by the standard measures because the over-use of those very measures helped to produced it (Baudrillard 1996a: 142-7; 2005a: 141-55). The Code’s vast edifice of signs – “the fetishistic system of difference” – diversifies and assimilates producing ‘positive’ representations at the same time as the divide, both economic and cultural, between rich and poor deepens and ramifies. The edifice of signs actually “deters”, prevents or displaces the possibility of genuine social progress by delivering “simulated” social progress: signs of equality, signs of inclusion, signs of empowerment. Baudrillard’s contends that this “indifferent” society is based on the expulsion of all forms of “radical otherness”: foreignness, death, madness, negativity, ‘evil’, even the radical otherness of language is dismantled by linguistics and informationalisation. Such societies are, broadly, ‘tolerant’ but this means simply that there is a widespread indifference to the other. So long as the other conforms to the agenda set by liberal capitalism – a life reduced to usefulness, productivity, and distinctive regimes of consumption – that is, so long as the other remains fundamentally the same , the other is tolerated. Difference is tolerated so long as it remains within the identity/difference binary opposition, difference being plotted from the standards of sameness and identity. In a sense, difference and indifference become indistinguishable: minorities are tolerated in their difference when they can offer certain superficial differences within the consumer system: different food, different music, different clothes, different ‘culture’. Indeed ‘culture’ is increasingly understood as the inessential markings of certain groups: it is commonplace to hear talk of club culture, organisational culture, gay culture and these generally refer to nothing more than the current styles of speech, aesthetic preferences and consumption practices of these groups. The society of indifference generates a new and insidious form of racism. The “indifferent society” is not one where ‘anything goes’ or where there are no systemic exclusions, quite the reverse: “the whole movement of an indifferent society ends in victimhood and hatred” (Baudrillard 1996a: 131). What he calls the “negative passion of indifference” involves a “hysterical and speculative resurrection of the other” (1996: 131). This artificial other is “idealised by hatred”, by condescension or pity – the other becomes fetish. Racism is desperately seeking the other in the form of evil to be combated. The humanitarian seeks the other just as desperately in the form of victims to aid … [.] The scapegoat is no longer the person you hound, but the one whose lot you lament. But he is still a scapegoat and he is still the same person (Baudrillard 1996: 132). Hatred is secreted by the modern, liberal, indifferent reconstruction of the Other as other. This “negotiable other” is promoted, even celebrated but only through a compulsory registration on a single scale of identity/difference, a scale by which the other is assimilated, measured and judged. Indeed, for Baudrillard, this compulsory registration constitutes “a subtler form of extermination” than structural racism (1993b: 133). The other – the lower case, similar, yet marginally different other – is scapegoated by humanitarianism in search of an object of pity, by politicians seeking opportunities for televised performances of contrition, by the media seeking sensational and calamitous tales. But this is not simply misjudged charity, well-meaning but ineffective, the fetishising of the other serves a deeper purpose. Western power brokers urgently require an injection of reality, of real reality to shore up their public relations campaigns, their regimes of simulation, and the other as victim can be made to provide precisely this. Western politicians and corporations seek to “import their force and the energy of their misfortune” (Baudrillard 1996a: 134). The disastrous other of the ‘third world’ provides useful cover for the operation of neo-liberal and neo-conservative economic, cultural and military policies which maintain the third world in its disastrous, but to them, usefully disastrous condition. “The hate”, as Baudrillard figures it, cannot be broken down and understood through the structural or binary oppositions of self and other, black and white, inside and outside.

#### The system welcomes critiques of content, the only things preventing its slow collapse. With no external reference points, all that remains is the vacuity of the system. Our hyperconformity to form but not content destroys the system from within, accelerating its demise.

**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) https://baudrillardstudies.ubishops.ca/society-at-war-with-itself/

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.**

#### Debate’s form of communication is meaningless and is dying - more facts and information only make the world more unreal. The Role of the Ballot is to decide the ethicality of debate’s communicative form.

Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and simulation. University of Michigan press, 1994. Pg 79-81 (former Professor of Media Philosophy at The European Graduate School) http://teaching.thenoiseofthestreet.net/dms259sp13/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/baudrillard.pdf //Elmer

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