# Binghamton Round 2 Aff v New School BL

## 1ac – speed elitism

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**Hoofd 10** (Ingrid M. Hoofd, Assistant Professor in the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore (NUS). The accelerated university: Activist academic alliances and the simulation of thought, ephemera, Feb 2010, 2010 ephemera 10(1): 7-24)

Although Facoltà di Fuga and Ricercatori Precari do not ally themselves explicitly with the alter-globalist movement, their call against neo-liberalism and for online thinking and research in service of the struggles of ‘the oppressed and marginalised’ makes them quite suitable for creating such alliances. This call for ‘knowledge in service of the oppressed’ is more explicitly present in Investigacció (Research), which was set up in order to combine the agendas of social movement activists with those of university researchers. In their flyer for their first international meeting on ‘Social Movements and Activist Research’ in 2004 in Spain, Investigacció likewise aptly accuses the neo-liberal privatisation of knowledge as the main cause for current social exclusion. Knowledge, in their view, instead should be produced from the ‘focal point of activist research’ which should entail the ‘actual subjectivities of research from and for social movements’, instead of from those who reside within the privileged space of academia (Investigacció, 2005: 1). The meeting is hopefully envisioned to be a ‘space of encounter and self-formation’ which ‘self-constitute[s] as a-disciplinary so that we can overcome the fictitious distinctions common to academicism’ (2005: 2). Knowledge will thus, according to Investigacció, be generated ‘from our own subjectivities (in contrast to aiming for scientific ‘objectivity’) without limitations or hierarchies’ (2005: 3). But far from an ‘a-disciplinary self-constitution’ that supposedly overcomes any fictitious distinction, Investigacció for one relies heavily on the common fictitious distinction between activism and academia to validate their praxis. By contrasting their initiative to the false objectivity of academicism, they **validate their own knowledge production** by **claiming to be in the margins** as opposed to **the ‘ivory tower’**, as if the latter is a stable area from which one can detach oneself from the outside world and hence **objectively analyse**. Also, **one could wonder to what extent one is actually speaking from the margins when one has the time, technologies, spaces and connections to organise an event** like Investigacció. The desire to generate knowledge from **‘one’s own subjectivity, without limitations’** (2005: 3**) is analogous to the mythical humanist narrative of breaking with and improving upon previous knowledge – a form of knowledge-innovation that the academic institution is also infused with.** The university of excellence as well as its doublings into projects like Investigacció are therefore an effect of its repetitions (with a difference) into the neo-liberal mythical space of progress and acceleration. The creation of more and more ‘spaces and mechanisms of production, exchange and collective reflection’ (2005: 3) is indeed precisely what late-capitalism seeks to forge, as long as such reflection generates an intensification of production. **The idea that subjectivities from social movements are in any way less produced by neo-liberal globalisation is highly problematic**. In fact, such an idea suggests a **rather positivist notion of the subject** – similar to that supposedly objective academic individual Investigacció seeks to dethrone. Investigacció then somewhat nostalgically narrates a subject untainted by power structures and technologies. In fact, the Investigaccióinitiative displays how the subject of activist research empowers her- or himself throughrecreating the fictitious distinction between activism and academia. S/he does so by reproducing this opposition, which in turn co-creates and accelerates these ‘new spaces’ – spaces that were created with the goal of facilitating global capitalism and its speed-elite, and that allow for the perfection of military power through technologies of surveillance. The call for participants to become active and productive in co-organising the international event – of course, without any monetary remuneration – is also much present in Investigacció’s rhetoric. They suggest that participants should engage with one another not only at the meeting, but especially through the online spaces Investigacció has created for the purpose of generating **activist research**. ‘**Take action!’ says their flyer**, ‘[...] **make it so the conference is yours**!’ This seductive appeal to the subject-individual as the centre of creative production is very common to neo-liberal consumerism and its emphasis on cybernetic interactivity. But it is also false in that it gives the participants a sense of control over Investigacció that they actually do not have – eventually, the main organisers (have already) set the agenda and handed out the stakes. In short, the organisers fail to situate themselves by pretending everyone is on the same level of privilege – for example, not requiring monetary compensation – in this project, and this failure is strangely an effect of their attempt at reviving a more democratic academic structure. Information Initially, one could think that Baudrillard’s assessment **confirms my analytical suspicion regarding activist-research projects**. In ‘The Implosion’, Baudrillard starts from the premise that the **increase of information** in our media-saturated society **results in a loss of meaning** because it ‘**exhausts itself** in the act of **staging communication’**. New media technologies **exacerbate the subject’s fantasy of transparent communication**, while increasingly what are communicated are mere copies of the same, a ‘recycling in the negative of the traditional institution’ (Baudrillard, 1994: 80). New technologies are simply the **materialisation of that fantasy of communication**, and the ‘**lure’** (1994: 81) of such a **technocratic system** resides in the requirement of **active political engagement to uphold that fantasy**. **This translates in a call to subjectivise oneself** – **to be vocal, participate, and to ‘play the [...] liberating claim of subjecthood’** (1994: 85). The result of the intensifying circular logic of this system, he says, is that meaning not only implodes in the media, but also that **the social implodes in the masses** – the construction of a ‘hyperreal’ (1994: 81). Contra the claim of Glocal Research Space that such praxes of alliance are ‘without an object’ (Glocal Research Space, 2003: 19), this does not mean that objectification does not take place at all. Instead, and in line with Baudrillard’s argument, the urge to subjectivise oneself and the objectification of the individual go hand in hand under speed-elitism – a double bind that locks the individual firmly into her or his technocratic conditions. Indeed, the argument in ‘Activist Research’ that ‘research [should be] like an effective procedure [which is] in itself already a result’ (2003: 19) describes the conditions of Readings’ ‘university of excellence’ where any research activity, thanks to technological instantaneity, translates immediately into the capitalist result of increased information flow (Readings, 1996: 22). **Active subjects and their others become the cybernetic objects of such a system of information flow**. The insistence in ‘Activist Research’ on free, travelling and nomadic research simply makes sure that this logic of increased flow is repeated. Because of this desire for increased flow and connection, **activist-research projects are paradoxically highly exclusivist in advocating the discourses and tools of the speed-elite**. The problem with projects like Edu-Factory or the **productive cross-over of activism and academia** is therefore not only that **their political counter-information means just more information** (**and loss of meaning**) **as well as more capitalist production**, but that **it puts its faith in precisely those technologies and fantasies of control, communication and of ‘being political’ that underlie the current logic of overproduction.** It is at this point that John Armitage and Joanne Roberts in ‘Chronotopia’ contend that such a **‘cyclical repetition’** (Armitage and Roberts, 2002: 52) is **particularly dangerous** because the fantasy of control remains exactly that, a **fantasy**. At the same time, this increasingly forceful repetition **can only eventually give way to ‘the accident’ because chronotopian speed-spaces are fundamentally and exponentially unstable**. Armitage and Roberts’ idea of ‘cyclical repetition’ through chronotopianism does thus not mean an exact repetition of the speed-elite’s quest for mastery – instead, I would argue that it is this **immanent quality of difference in repetition**, of the ‘**essential drifting due to [a technology’s] iterative structure** cut off from […] consciousness as the authority of the last analysis’ as Derrida calls it in ‘Signature Event Context’ (Derrida, 1982: 316) **that allows for the accident or true event to appear**. The difference through technologically sped-up repetition appears then perhaps as a potential, but only precisely as a growing potential that cannot be willed – in this sense, it will be an unanticipated event indeed. One could then speak of an intensification of politics in what is perhaps too hastily called the neo-liberal university, opening up unexpected spaces for critique in the face of its neo-liberalisation, which in turn points to **the fundamental instability of its enterprise**. Activist-research projects add to this intensification by virtue of their **techno-acceleration**. This intensification of politics is **no ground for univocal celebration**, since it remains also the hallmark of the neo-liberal mode of production of knowledge through the new tele-technologies as excellent, regardless of its critical content. The current university’s instability mirrors and aggravates the volatility of a capitalism marked by non-sustainability, a growing feminisation of poverty, the rise of a new global upper class, and **highly mediated illusions of cybernetic mastery**. **This nonetheless also opens up new forms of thought, if only appearing as ‘accidents’**. Derrida hints at this, but also at the university’s elusiveness, in ‘Mochlos, or: the Conflict of the Faculties’, when he claims that he ‘would almost call [the university] the child of an inseparable couple, metaphysics and technology’ (Derrida, 1993: 5, emphasis mine). Almost, but never quite – **here then emerges the possibility of truly subversive change**. But **this change will not be brought about by the mere content of the critique, but by the way it pushes acceleration to the point of systemic disintegration or implosion**. In Fatal Strategies, **Baudrillard calls this the ‘fatal strategy’ that contemporary theory must adopt: a sort of conceptual suicide attack which aims at pulling the rug out from under the speed-elitist mobilisation of semiotic oppositions, and which shows the paradox behind any attempt at structural predictions.** In ‘The Final Solution’, Baudrillard relates this intensification of the humanist obsession with dialectics, mastery, and transparency – the quest for immortality that is at the basis of techno-scientific research – to **destruction and the death drive** through the metaphor of and actual research around cloning, which strangely resonates well with Derrida’s investigation of the tele-technological archive in Archive Fever. **I read Baudrillard’s ‘Final Solution’ here as a metaphor for the duplication (cloning) of thought into virtual spaces outside the university walls proper**. If contemporary research seeks to make human cloning possible, argues Baudrillard, then **this endeavour is equivalent to cancer**: after all, cancer is simply automatic cloning, a deadly form of multiplication. It is of interest here to note that the possibility of creating an army of clones has likewise **garnered much military interest**, just **as academia today more and more serves military ends**. As the logic of cloning as automatic multiplication is typical of all current technological and humanist advancements, **the exacerbation of this logic can only mean more promise and death**. At this point my argument mirrors **the apocalyptic tone of the activist-research projects**. In the final analysis, the problem with Edu-Factory, Facoltà di Fuga, Investigacció, Universidad Nómada, Ricercatori Precari, and Glocal Research Space is that these projects entail a very specific form of subjugation with dire consequences for the slower and less techno-genic classes. Techno-scientific progress entails a regress into immortality, epitomised by a nostalgia typical of the current socio-technical situation, for when we were ‘undivided’ (Baudrillard, 2000: 6). I contend that Baudrillard refers not only to the lifeless stage before humans became sexed life forms, but also makes an allusion to psycho-analytic readings of the ‘subject divided in language’ and its nostalgia for wholeness and transparent communication. **The desire for immortality, like archive fever, is therefore the same as the Freudian death drive, and we ourselves ultimately become the object of our technologies of scrutiny and nostalgia**. **The humanist quest of totally transparency of oneself and of the world to oneself that grounds the idea of the modern techno-scientific university, is ultimately an attempt at (self-)destruction, or in any case an attempted destruction of (one’s) radical difference [alterity]. The urgent political question**, which Stiegler problematically avoided in Disorientation, then becomes: which selves are and will become caught up in the delusion of total self-transparency and self-justification, and which selves will be destroyed? And how may we conceive of **an ‘ethic of intellectual inquiry or aesthetic contemplation’** that **‘resists the imperatives of speed’**, as Jon Cook likewise wonders in ‘The Techno-University and the Future of Knowledge’ (Cook, 1999: 323)? It is of particular importance to note here that **the very inception of this question and its possible analysis, like the conception of the speed-elite, is itself again a performative repetition of the grounding myth of the university of independent truth, justice and reason**. Therefore, in carrying forward the humanist promise, this analysis is itself bound up in the intensification of the logic of acceleration and destruction, and that is then also equally tenuous. This complicity of thought in the violence of acceleration itself in turn quickens the machine of the humanist promise, and can only manifest itself in the prediction of a coming apocalypse – whether it concerns a narrative of the death of thought and the university, or of a technological acceleration engendering the Freudian death drive. **We are then simply the next target in the technological realisation of complete** γνωθι σαυτον (**know thyself) – or so it seems. Because after all, a clone is never an exact copy, as Baudrillard very well knows; and therefore, the extent to which activist-research projects hopefully invite alterity can thankfully not yet be thought.**

**Antitrust advocacy isn’t progressive and never will be – it can only serve to eliminate the possibility for a truly radical activism as it pigeonholes us into modes of neoliberal production that capitulate to violent modes of communication**

**Hoofd 12** (Ingrid M. Hoofd, Assistant Professor in the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore (NUS). November 2012, Ambiguities of Activism: Alter-Globalism and the Imperatives of Speed, pp 11-15)

The enmeshment of ideas of economic progress with humanist notions of justice has today resulted in an obsession, also among activists, with the tools of progress and justice. This means that the problem peculiar to our era that makes contemporary left-wing activism an increasingly daunting undertaking are the current technological arrangements. I even go as far as to suggest that new technologies as we know them today exacerbate and intensify all of the above problems already present in activism, and even introduce new complications. The general insight that resistance can be complicit in forms of oppression, that alliances can be ambiguous, and that activisms and forms of emancipation may entail a ‘dirty politics’, are after all in themselves nothing new— a case in point being, for instance, the role of the rhetoric of liberation under colonialism or American imperialism. What is new is how the current technological state of affairs results in a situation where alter-globalist activism has increasingly no choice but to accelerate neo-liberal production if it wants to keep responding to the humanist call. The dominant discourses of technologies, and in particular the fantasies of ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment’ that the new technologies promise under neo-liberalism, coincide increasingly with the humanist fantasy of progressing towards liberation. By contesting the commonplace idea in alter-globalist activisms that technologies are neutral or progressive tools, ready to be appropriated by all, we can start drawing out how media, transportation, and communication technologies aggravate the conundrum left-wing activism finds itself in, and how this aggravation in turn feeds capitalist over-production and consumption. Rejecting the assumption of new and social media as neutral has thankfully started to inform some recent research on activism, but often still fails to debate the role of the media beyond issues of access.10 Even Evgeny Morozov’s recent The Net Delusion, while providing some welcome criticism on democratic cyber-utopianism, still conceptualises the Internet as at base a volatile ‘empty’ space to be filled by the strongest force. Morozov hence blames the forces of profit and surveillance for overpowering the Net’s capacity for ‘freedom.’ But he fails to see how this simplistic division, just as his rather muscular online performance of opposition against cyber-utopianist Jeffrey Juris— about whom more in Chapter 2— just as much contributes to this technologic of acceleration. I will address the contemporary expressions of the humanist assumptions and particularities of new media technologies, besides the compulsive encapsulation of the other, from an angle reminiscent of Paul Virilio’s Speed and Politics. I suggest that unearthing how new technologies are related to the reproduction of neo-liberal globalisation through activism lies firstly in acknowledging its technique and aesthetics of acceleration. 11 The current model of capitalism, which terms of production serve largely the ‘speed-elite,’ relies mainly on continuously extending and legitimising both the infrastructure and the neo-liberal discourse of the new information technologies. Capitalism has always done such structural crisis management by speeding up technological innovation, and thereby harnessing spaces and futures for economical growth and wealth accumulation for elite groups. Discourses that in turn typically get repeated in favour of the emerging speed-elite are those of connection, liberation, multiplicity, and overcoming boundaries. 12 Such discourses, which often build on technical spaces for action and communication between allied groups and corporations in order to formalise their repeatability, as well as on a rendition of the current condition as a stage beyond modernism, suppress not only the violent colonial and patriarchal history of those technological spaces and the subsequent unevenness of any such alliance. More severely, they foster an unacknowledged violent sort of unity of struggles and ways of being through the consumerist myths of allowing for differences and multiplicities, as we saw, for instance, with Jordan. The speed-elitist subject, who is an exponent of the Eurocentric humanist subject and is often prevalent in many forms of activism, can only handle radical difference by incorporating it in a grand humanist scheme of liberation. Such ‘tension management’ propagates the supposed neutrality or positivity of new technologies and the democratic ideal, but actually reconstructs and intensifies inequalities by virtue of a stratifying encapsulation. The result in alter-globalist activisms and in radical thought dealing with issues of disenfranchisement under globalisation is that those who are identified as the ‘really oppressed groups’ become the imaginary allies par excellence. These ideal allies become in turn the vehicles for the extension of the tools and discourses that facilitate this new speed-elite. Speed-elitist global society is organised around the physical materialisation of a desire for speed by way of modern technologies. This desire for speed is fundamentally related to the humanist utopia, because it is the subject’s desire for emancipatory transcendence that revels in the logic of acceleration and its usurpation of space. In ‘Chronotopia,’ John Armitage and Joanne Roberts, for instance, recognise a ‘chronotopianism’—the imagination of acceleration as segueing into a transcendental utopia just as Eucken may have envisioned— in the discourses of those who expand their businesses in order to generate ‘opportunities’ for others. Such neo-liberal discourses rely on fantasies of sped-up change through mediated connection and activity. But whereas managers and techno-happy intellectuals present this desire for connection as resulting in an open and creative space, its mode of production becomes exclusionary and violent. This is because it subjugates individuals under the hegemonic culture of spatial disengagement and meritocracy. This logic of speed, and no longer simply ‘the West,’ then makes up the current ideological centre. The emphasis in speed-culture on constant change and creative action, which in turn leads to an accelerated production of information and technologies, is exactly the discourse through which neo-liberal capitalism expands today. This discourse is not merely the prerogative of corporate folk, but also highly present in alter-globalist activism and its emphasis on ‘social change.’ Speed-elitist discourses, I suggest, are just as much and perhaps even more present in intellectual and activist circles that try to imagine a unifying solution or equality for all through this techno-logic. One can namely identify in these often pro-technological and politicised activist arguments the implicit desire for an elimination of noise: the purging of any worldview that does not invest in this quest for social change. Ian Angus, for instance, in Primal Scenes of Communication likewise identifies in this purging of noise the fundamental aesthetic of neo-liberal globalisation, but he does not realise that this analysis points to a profound problem in alter-globalist activism. Quests for equality through the imagined positivity of technologies urge activists to work towards apparent laudable goals of ‘access for all’ or ‘breaching the digital divide.’ However, the overproduction that is the result of such endeavours facilitates the increasing investment into newer technological innovations. The money earned from the acts of ‘including people’ is used to accelerate the speed-elite even more and to disengage those who cannot keep up. 13 Speed-elitism is a downright dystopia when a multiplication of connection and a sense of being in the realm of new ideas enrich a happy few, yet result in an ongoing disconnection from this realm as well as a general impoverishment of habitations for many. It becomes imperative for individuals and groups to somehow plug into the subjugation that this imaginary provides, but such displays of empowerment cannot and should not be read as successful contestations or subversions as Angus does. 14 The understanding of the activist quest as engendered and thwarted by speed-elitism sheds much-needed light on the contemporary conundrums and complicities of alter-globalist activism in neo-liberalism that have emerged from Eucken’s philosophy. Activisms and the academic (social) sciences provide constant pressure and means for creative change, alliance, and knowledge production just like the speed-elite wants them to. Furthermore, the imperialistic need for the elimination of noise that exists in accordance with speed-elitism typically results in a demand to remove (online) borders and boundaries. In spotting the discourse of acceleration in multinational corporations as well as in activist and liberal-intellectual groups, we can ascertain how these seemingly disparate groups are implicated in the same dangerous fantasy that remains unaware of its entanglements in increasingly violent conditions of possibility. Moreover, the repetition and acceleration of the increasingly desperate suppression and setting to work of humanist ideals through activist and corporate crisis management is particularly dangerous because the fantasy of crisis control remains exactly that: a fantasy. So this increasingly forceful repetition can only eventually give way to ecological and humanitarian accidents, because speed-spaces are fundamentally and exponentially unstable. I would like to stress here that the repetition and acceleration through speed-elitism that activism complies with can never bring about an exact copying of the speed-elite’s neo-liberal structures. It is the quality of difference in repetition, of the ‘essential drifting due to [a technology’s] iterative structure cut off from . . . consciousness as the authority of the last analysis,’ as Jacques Derrida— about whom more later— would have it in ‘Signature Event Context’ (316), that allows for accidents and for real social change to appear. The difference through technologically sped-up repetition appears then as a potential or promise, but only as a growing potential or outcome that cannot be ‘willed,’ neither by corporations, nor by activists.15 It seems that a displacement of the subject-as-agent is implied for activism. The utopian fantasy in the alter-globalist activisms of a subject transgressing borders also sits eerily well with the rather Christian self-construction of many academics and activists as ‘saviours of marginality’—Enlightenment and Christianity indeed having been strange bedfellows ever since European colonisation. The border-crossing faculties of new technologies in activist practice and thought appear much in step with American cyberhappy discourses on technologies, which makes one wonder how new or radical these practices really are. In fact, the rhetoric of radicality serves, I suggest, as a conjuring trick to pretend a break with industrial modernity and its ills. But actually, this trick makes one dangerously unaware how much of these modernist discourses and their material spread are repeated with such activist thought and practice. Activism thus regularly dissimulates the repetition of modernist ideals and ills, which is also why it makes more sense to talk of hyper-modernity rather than post-modernity as Jordan did. 16 The influence of the media technologies on activism, quite contrary to what most academic literature on activism claims, is then one of increasing social entrenchment and division rather than of connection and liberation. What is more, new technologies have an increasingly displacing force to them because they produce ever more the fantasy or presumption of identity as something that is stably tied to a situation or location. This fantasy is an archaic one, and hence appears ever more as the grounding fantasy for self-determination. The usurpation of space by the speed of the new technologies therefore causes place or situation to become spectralised due to technology’s factual impossibility of effecting humanist transcendence. Techno-economic power therefore not only carries global decisions, but new technologies are a main cause of the revival and entrenchment of archaic and modernist universalisms and essentialisms. A case in point here is the profound nostalgia for some lost ‘nature’ that suffuses much climate-change activism, in which ‘nature’ appears as a spectre from the past reprimanding us in the present. The rise of religious fundamentalism and nationalism provides also two clear examples. In the final analysis, the material enforceability of justice 17 through new technologies enhances consecutively and exponentially the liberal and neoliberal discourses and their exclusions that already reside at their base. As the temporal lapse of reproduction between socio-technological structures decreases towards near instantaneity, and incompatible or ‘weaker’ languages, cultures, and ways of being disappear, speed-elitism will become near-totalising. The structural accidents of such a totalisation are exactly those of the global feminisation of poverty, the condemnation of the slower classes to disenfranchisement, and the growing number of homeless or stateless people. 18 It will bring about a decrease in ecological and cultural diversity as well as a dwindling of sustainable production. The issue of ecological justice with its profound acceleration of the tension between the ‘real’ and the theoretical model of climate change therefore is a prime example of the extreme instability of speed-elitism. With these words in mind, I understand what is called ‘the information revolution’ as a form of hyper-industrialisation, renewed through a sophisticated and technologically enhanced appearance. This does not mean that new media technologies cannot or should not be used as tools for resistance or subversion— in fact, they can very much be used for that, since our humanist responsibility increasingly works through the mobilisation of the technical realm. But such subversion is extremely limited because it suggests a repetition of neo-liberal logic embedded in the technological object and its discourses as well. I suggest that is therefore the accelerated repetition of the suppression of the humanist aporia and its violent patriarchal and colonial history that we are producing and enhancing in our alter-globalist activisms, through our beliefs, affiliations, and technologies, as much as ‘it’ in a sense produces ‘us’ and our arguments. And all this in order to keep the beautiful humanist dream of ultimate freedom, truth, democracy, and equality for all alive. But if it is already the case that our arguments are thoroughly wrapped up in speed, then how may rethinking the problem of activism, as this book sets out to do, help at all? What is to be done, if such academic activity repeats the belief in action through activism and its tools? To understand this and this book’s strategy better, we need presently to mobilise this humanist aporia differently.

**The attempt to enclose the globe within bordered semiotic reality begets implosive violence against all singularities – the amassing of facts and evidence – and especially truth – only makes the world more unreal – any politics which does not confront first the problem of visibility condemns us to global death, pain, and suffering**

**Artrip & 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” <http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-11_2/v11-2-debrix.html>]

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 implosivityor 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).

**The binary structure of communication forms the building blocks for the whole system of reality itself, pre-coding ideological resistance into its very core. Counter-violence is solicited by the system while revolutionary content becomes a false flag, achieving its goals in media spectacle, assuaging the surface demands of protest. In order to challenge the system, we must begin with the level of form, the Code, not its representational contents. Absent poetic nullification of the code all attempts at resistance remain binary and terribly banal. We must challenge the semiotic medium through which the condition of political thought is filtered.**

**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,” p. 23-25)

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.2 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). 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**.8 **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**" that **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 hate **does not emanate** from a **recognisable position**: a self, an ideology, a discourse or a culture, nor does it emerge from the ideology or culture of the other. The verb 'to hate', like the self or ego has been liberated and become autonomous: uprooted it **flows and seeps** **crossing any boundary**, any limit (Baudrillard 2005c: 141). The hate is **networked**, it travels at the speed of information, it has not one object or target but **all and any**; because it is not, primarily, hatred of something or someone, it is not reflective or critical nor does it propose alternatives. Having no definite object, goal or purpose, no programme or ideology, the hate is a particularly intractable and corrosive form of hatred.

**Thus, you should vote affirmative to accelerate debate through our subtle mimicry of its form – perform the trick of fatal theory, engendering an accident in this infrastructure that brings about the possibility of an event. An aff ballot is an endorsement of the 1ac’s poetic, speculative research method that takes problem in visibility through rendering it visible – our refusal of the will to knowledge beyond the point of speculation clones the form of debate forcing the university to implode from within as it violates its own rules.**

**Hoofd 17** (Ingrid M. Hoofd is an Assistant Professor in the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests are issues of representation, feminist and critical theories, philosophy of technology, and information ethics. “Higher Education and Technological Acceleration: The Disintegration of University Teaching and Research”)

The fundamental **instability of the university via its ‘self-deconstruction’** therefore also opens up new forms of thought and imaginative opportunities, if only for now appearing as disastrous yet perhaps fortuitous ‘accidents.’ Derrida in fact hints at this, but also at the university’s elusiveness, in “Mochlos, or: the Confl ict of the Faculties,” when he claims that he “would almost call [the university] the child of an inseparable couple, metaphysics and technology” (1993, 5; emphasis mine). Almost, but never quite—here then emerges the possibility of **truly subversive change**—in the **paradoxical gap** prised open between the machinery of transparency and its exceedingly stealthy theoretical, administrative, and methodological operations. This change however will then **not be brought about by the mere content of the critique, but by the way it disastrously pushes acceleration to the point of systemic disintegration or implosion**. In Fatal Strategies, Baudrillard calls this the **“fatal strategy”** that contemporary theory must adopt: a sort of **conceptual suicide attack which aims at pulling the rug out under the speed-elitist mobilisation of** a host of **problematic semiotic oppositions**, which also will illustrate the fundamental paradox behind any attempt at structural predictions. In another one of his ‘fatal’ book-chapters titled “The Final Solution,” Baudrillard relates this intensification of the humanist **obsession with dialectics, mastery, and transparency**—the quest for immortality that is at the basis of techno-scientific research—to destruction and the death drive through the metaphor of and actual research around cloning, which strangely resonates well with Derrida’s investigation of the tele-technological archive in Archive Fever. I read Baudrillard’s “Final Solution” at this stage also as a metaphor for the duplication **(cloning) of thought into virtual spaces** outside the university walls proper, without such a cloning ever succeeding to force its **compulsory optimism** on everyone and everything. If contemporary research seeks to make possible human cloning, argues Baudrillard, then this endeavour is equivalent to cancer: after all, cancer is simply **automatic cloning, a deadly form of multiplication**. It is of interest here to note that the possibility of creating an army of clones has likewise garnered much military interest, just as academia today more and more serves military ends. As the logic of cloning as automatic multiplication is typical of all current technological and humanist advancements, the **exacerbation of this logic can only mean more promise and death, or** perhaps **even promise through death**. Techno-scientifi c progress entails a regress into immortality, epitomised by a nostalgia typical of the current socio- technical situation, for when we were “undivided” (2000, 6). At this point such an argument in fact problematically mirrors the apocalyptic tone of, for instance, the activist-research projects as well as of Heidegger’s arguments. But I contend that Baudrillard refers not only to the lifeless stage before humans became sexed life forms, but also makes an allusion to psychoanalytic readings of the ‘subject divided in language’ and its **nostalgia for wholeness and transparent communication**. The **desire for immortality**, like archive fever, is therefore the same as the Freudian **death drive**, and we ourselves ultimately become the **object of our technologies of scrutiny and nostalgia**. The **humanist quest for total transparency of oneself** and of the world to oneself that grounds the idea of the modern techno-scientific university is therefore ultimately an attempt at (self-)destruction, or in any case an attempted **destruction of (one’s) radical difference** that needs to run its course. The urgent political question which Bernard Stiegler, for instance, as I showed in a previous chapter, problematically avoided in Disorientation , then becomes: which selves are and will become caught up in the **delusion of total self-transparency** and self-justification, and which selves will be destroyed? And how may we conceive of an “ethic of intellectual inquiry or aesthetic contemplation” that “**resist**s **the imperatives of speed**,” as Jon Cook likewise wonders in “The Techno-University and the Future of Knowledge” (1999, 323)? It is of particular importance to note here that the very inception of this question and its possible analysis, like the conception of the speed-elite mounted by this book, is itself again a **performative repetition** of the grounding myth of the university of independent truth, justice, and reason. Therefore, in carrying forward the humanist promise, this analysis is itself bound up in the **intensification of the logic of acceleration** and destruction, but is then also equally tenuous. This **complicity of thought in the violence of acceleration** itself in turn **quickens the machine of the humanist promise**, and can only manifest itself in the prediction of a **coming apocalypse**—whether it concerns a narrative of the death of thought and the university, or of a technological acceleration engendering the Freudian death drive. We academics are then simply the next target in the **technological realisation of complete** γνωθι σαυτον (‘**know thyself’**)—or so it seems . Because after all, **a clone is never an exact copy**, as Baudrillard very well knows; and therefore, the extent to which all the teaching and research projects discussed in this book hopefully invite alterity can thankfully **not yet be thought**. The work of Virilio is therefore helpful because it abandons the ‘compulsory optimism’ of standard academic rhetoric for a more **fragile optimism that seeks to affirm the fundamental unknowability** or sacredness that makes knowledge possible in the fi rst place. In this sense, Virilio and Baudrillard urge us, as Derrida described it, to ‘take a more originary responsibility’ in light of the current negative fallout of the aporetic ideals of the academic institution. And as I hinted at in Chap. 1, every form of idealism indeed eventually will be or needs to be subjected to its own critique, and perhaps eventually even needs to succumb to it. As much as the practices of these theories, centres, organisations, and left-wing academics are the outflow of a **logic of increased visibility and transparency**, they also render into visible form the **perverse logic of ‘incorporating’ and ‘connecting’** **everything** and everyone, which, for instance, some of the theorists that argue for ‘bottom-up learning’ outlined as a virtue, in an exceedingly staged **visual profusion of relative otherness**. Since academic productivity and activism find themselves wholly aligned with the perverse ideals of the university, raising its stakes would therefore not lie in the familiar recanting of ‘freedom,’ ‘empowerment,’ or ‘democracy,’ but in the **reinsertion of the (inter-)subjective and ‘noisy’ element** in all its teaching and research practices. This would entail an emphasis on the necessary respect for that ‘**unknown quantity’** that is **inherent in all meaningful learning** and interaction, a newfound acknowledgement of the magical aspects of the universe as foundational for all appreciation of it. As Virilio stresses in his second chapter of The Vision Machine, “**the presupposition of not-knowing** and especially not-seeing … **restores to every research project its fundamental context of prime ignorance**” so that we “need to admit that for the human eye the essential is invisible” (1994, 23). Baudrillard echoes Virilio’s insight in “The Theorem of the Accursed Share” by emphasising that indeed “Anything that purges the accursed share signs its own death warrant” (1990, 121). Perhaps the biggest mistake in the modern founding of the university then was the **denial and attempted erasure of the** religious or **spiritual aspect of the university**, so that, instead of being a vision machine, a ‘more originary responsibility’ would consist of letting it become a ‘humility machine’ in the spirit of its pre-Enlightenment ethics? In any case, the acknowledgement of the profound tension at the basis of the university and the ways it has intensified itself to such an extent today that more and more academics are starting to become disillusioned or confused about their calling, perhaps provides us usefully with the **return of that “fatalism” and “magic worldview**” that especially Freire so eagerly sought to eradicate. We may therefore want to welcome the **upsetting force of such a fatal attitude towards the ideal of ‘communication as community’** as the true antidote, or perhaps even the quintessential shadow, which has always secretly accompanied the university’s quest for total communication and transparency. The possibility of radicality via communication and its functionalist theories may then fi nally and surprisingly lie in its unexpected outcomes, both positive and negative. I will be ‘keeping the faith’ together with all these projects and academics then, since also owing to all these theories and projects, **the future may be more radically open** than ever before, as long as we seriously entertain the possibility that in **moving beyond the attempted erasure of fatality and unknowability by the compulsorily optimistic academic performance** lies the potential of that ‘more **originary’ responsibility**. One of the consequences of bringing back **fatality** and fatalism means to acknowledge that the **representational ideal of scientific and philosophical theory**—the fantasy that it not only must ‘describe’ reality as closely as possible, but also that such a description is possible or desirable at all— must be **abandoned in favour of a speculative poetics**. Likewise critical theory, which tradition this book has productively mobilised, after all falls, according to Baudrillard, in The Perfect Crime victim to the thwarted ideals of **omniscience and transparent communication**. As I noted in Chap. 3, it is for this reason that Genosko in “The Drama of Theory” rightly parallels the problem of theory with the problem of political theatre, suggesting that what Baudrillard proposes is not replicating the impotent attempts of a theatre seeking to convince by way of documentary realism, but of a ‘**reversed’ theatre in which** “**the object will have its revenge on Western metaphysics**” (1994, 295). Genosko in turn helpfully refers to Baudrillard’s usage of the metaphor of the ‘crystal,’ which I concur can be read as an idealisation of the perfectly transparent object and the ideal crystalline universe seemingly represented in scientifi c description, but just as much as a ‘crystal ball’ into which one “gazes in order to arouse a myriad of sensations”—not the least that sensation of uncertainty as well as an ambivalence concerning the fact that one is being **seduced by that object** (1994, 296). William Bogard usefully points out in “Baudrillard, Time, and the End,” that seduction indeed precisely consists of “the overcoming of defences (of ‘immunity’)” (1994, 333). Baudrillard also follows this logic of a ‘revenge of the crystal’ when he stresses in an interview with Nicholas Zurbrugg in Baudrillard Live on the possibilities of a renewed theoretical radicalism, that Perhaps **the only thing one can do is to destabilize** and provoke **the world around us**. We shouldn’t presume to produce positive solutions … one needs to make a kind of **detour through the strategy of the worst scenario**. **It’s not a question of ideas—there are already too many ideas!** (1993, 170–171; italics in original) To conclude then, to **let the auto-immune disease run its course** therefore would entail fi rstly seeing the university, from its very inception, for the **ridiculous scam** that it is: a marvellously absurd outgrowth of the **delusional ideals of Enlightenment humanism**. However, this also means that any representational theoretical critique like this one is just as much a scam of the authority of theoretical analysis, in which possibly, as Lyotard suggested, truth and technique have collapsed into one another. So this book, by partaking in the same ideals of visibility while exposing the problem of the contemporary university to scrutiny and visibility, suggests that we follow a strategy of **‘fatal’ consciousness-raising** in order **to** hopefully **plant the seeds of future radical events** regarding academia. An example here might be a staff and student exodus from the university’s current imperative, which would signify a notable **collapse** of **its prime beliefs towards a more mystical thinking** in the hard sciences and in the humanities. Perhaps **we should simply let the university bleed to death** for now. **Only** such **a**n apparent **‘solution’ that seeks not solve anything at all or make any predictions**, while seemingly absurd, may mean the hoped for **death of the** contemporary **university and its revival as a radically different entity**. This book must therefore fi nally **remain speculative and opaque**, and mount this fi nal chapter as a polemical provocation that does not seek to pre-programme what the next stage of the university should look like or which ideals need to be chanted, as doing so would itself fall prey to the problematic and ultimately **managerialist claim of transparent (fore)knowledge and** true **emancipation**. This book, in all its philosophical and analytical exposition, after all cannot even with certainty claim that it has represented the reality of the contemporary university in any kind of self-assured manner, or that it does not sneakily mix up the ‘observed pattern’ and the ‘pattern of observation.’ So is this book itself not simply just as much partaking in the delusion that the university always has been? To paraphrase Derrida once again: the university, truly, what an idea! Time perhaps to lay that cursed institution to rest for now and put down that alluring crystal ball, so that we all may rest too.

**Our resistance of the will to reality will not find truth as there was never a truth to be found – communication is on the brink of implosion, there are no changes we can make, we can only ever let the system collapse**

**Artrip and Debrix 18** (Ryan E. Atrip. Teaches in Philosophy and Political Science at Guilford College and Elon University. Francoix Debrix. Director of the ASPECT program and Professor of Political Science at Virginia Tech. (2018). The viral mediation of terror: ISIS, image, implosion. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 35:1, 74-88, DOI:10.1080/15295036.2017.1393099)

A crucial feature of the contemporary media system (and its accompanying global circulation of images) is oversaturation. This oversaturation of media is characterized by so-called **viral patterns of production, dissemination, and consumption of content**, often achieved through globally networked digital platforms. Enabled by a seemingly exponential growth of networks and by ever-widened thresholds of social connectivity, digital technologies have ushered in an unprecedented intensity of information production. Today’s global mediascape is perhaps best defined by its immeasurable volume of communicative activity, constituted by an interminable accumulation/circulation of representational images (thus, it may be more apt to call it a global media circuitry). In order to theorize the relevance of the accumulative/circulatory effects of representation taking place throughout contemporary media processes, we turn to Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulation. According to Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, images have a tendency to “exceed” their original or intended function to represent, reflect, or describe some facet of reality. Images eventually overtake, overwhelm, and erase the possibility of originality or referential certainty. For Baudrillard (1983b), this takes place over the course of four “successive phases of the image” (p. 11). The first stage corresponds to the representational function of the image in its most ideal form. It describes a moment in the development of western thought—less likely an actual historical moment than one retroactively imposed on or assumed by western thought itself—whereby any reality can be perfectly reflected by an image. A second stage emerges as a response or opposition to the notion of representational faithfulness. It introduces the possibility of representational malfunction (often deployed intentionally), and it relates to what Baudrillard (1993) refers to in Symbolic Exchange and Death as “the counterfeit,” something that, Baudrillard claims, is “the dominant schema in the ‘classical period’” (p. 50). With the counterfeit, the image does not accurately represent anymore but rather “masks or perverts a basic reality” (Baudrillard, 1983b, p. 11). Representation gives way to distortion. Or, to put it somewhat differently, representation as distortion can now mislead, hide, cheat, dissimulate, or facilitate the production (and valuation) of lies and untruths (or counter-realities). In a third stage, Baudrillard (1983b) theorizes that the image now “masks the absence of a basic reality” (p. 11). The third stage marks a radical break from the first and second stages, and from representation in general. Representation becomes more or less a ruse or a lure; it can no longer be trusted (it cannot even be trusted to spread lies or falsehoods). In the third stage, the image’s “true” function is neither to reflect nor to distort, but rather to mask the impossibility of representation. Baudrillard (1996) conceptualizes that a crater has been left in the wake of a reality whose referentiality/representability has been “murdered” by the image itself, by the lure of representation, and by the desire to over-signify by way of the image. This third stage is marked by an over or hyperactive global (re)production of images and meanings in a panic mode eager to restore reality/referentiality at all costs. The demands that the real always be meaningful are everywhere in excess. “There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. […] there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production,” writes Baudrillard (1983b, pp. 12– 13). A panic-driven sense of reality’s radical absence **generates a crisis about the capacity of verifiable truth and representable meaning**. Still, according to this (il)logic, it is not enough to say that the absence of the real creates a void of meaning and truth inside which the entirety of western thought and its belief-systems disappear. Frantically, this void also stimulates and simulates reproductive effects driven by disappointment (that the real is no more) but also by desire (that the quest for the real produce more and more reality). Thus, this stage of “representation” or of reality-production also inevitably turns toward proliferation and saturation of all the signs that can stand for the real itself. The less reality is present, the more its signs, as substitutes for the real, proliferate. As Baudrillard (2005) puts it: “We live in terror both of the excess of meaning and of total meaninglessness” (p. 134). Demands on reality to be exponentially re-enacted, displayed, and proliferated (the new modalities of representation in this third phase) **further deepen the absence of the real**. Demands for evermore meaning (everything must make sense, be meaningful) exacerbate a general loss of certainty. Meaning, too, is about the exponential production and display of signs, signs that stand for what is meaningful. As Baudrillard (1988) writes, “Everywhere one seeks to produce meaning, to make the world signify, to render it visible. We are not, however, in danger of lacking meaning; quite to the contrary, we are gorged with meaning and it is killing us” (p. 63). Lastly, Baudrillard (1983b) arrives at a fourth stage of the image/simulation. Here, the image, indebted to the effects of absence-proliferation resulting from the third stage, “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (p. 11). This stage of the image relates to a phase of the “real” in which the effects of representation (or what formerly could be called representation) can now be conceptualized as a series of independent operations. Images now circulate and reproduce in more or less complete abstraction from the demands of referentiality. In effect, the “real” has been hollowed out by its own representations (as we saw in the third stage). Nothing is left of the real but its simulacra, its sign-images that circulate and are exchanged indiscriminately throughout a global mediascape. At this stage, when we point to a “real” object in the world, we actually point to a hyper-mediation of the object and of its sign-function, often to manifold images, void of originality by virtue of having been hyper-circulated. The mediation of reality has led to the disappearance of the real and representation, and we find instead a hallucinatory complex of “hyperreality” whereby things appear and in fact are “more real than the real” (Baudrillard, 1983a, p. 99). Baudrillard’s diagnosis about representation, reality, and their fateful (hyper)- mediation is reflected through many of the operations of contemporary media, particularly those that involve the proliferation and saturation of inputs and outputs in the global circuitry. The immeasurable volume of hyper-produced digital contents seems to have **overwhelmed the global circuits of communication**, representation, **and meaning/signification**. The globalized world is faced with an irreducible complexity of interdependent transmissions, exchanges, and always expanding and morphing communication channels occurring between a multitude of networked actors/actants, interests, and media across the shifting realms of speculative finance, statecraft, international intelligence, the management of political processes, journalism, news-reporting/making, publishing, academia, or “scientific” expertise, and everyday consumer practices, on and on, ad nauseam. There occurs a widespread hyper-generation, hyper-distribution, and hyper-signification of causality and connectivity that, in turn, become virtually indistinguishable categories, excreted by digitally mediated social exchange, and often emerging as a series of signs or symptoms of the boundless growth of an implosive global system. As the system grows, all meanings, certainties, and truth-claims implode. Within this implosive global system, mediation of the true and the real may remain operative, but only according to a logic of functional contradiction. Indeed, the promise of certainty is continually (re)produced concomitantly with its disappointment or deferral. This is perhaps the fateful or fatal strategic extension of the culture industry’s logic of domination and libidinal exploitation that had once been outlined by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002). As Horkheimer and Adorno put it, [t]he culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises. The promissory note of pleasure issued by plot and packaging is indefinitely prolonged: the promise, which actually comprises the entire show, disdainfully intimates that there is nothing more to come, that the diner must be satisfied with reading the menu. (p. 111) Today, however, the operationalization of promise-disappointment functions beyond the strategic scope of consumer marketing and the culture industry. The mediatized subject is constantly hit by a barrage of direct and indirect promissory notes about various forms and versions of certainty, security, and truth emanating from multiple news media pundits, commentators, ideologues, technocrats, politicians, community activists, and fellow “digizens.” Increasingly, the reality of power (social, political, economic, etc.) is being **scrambled by a hyper-real overproduction of conflicting “truths”** and “untruths,” “reals” and “unreals,” “facts” and “alternative facts,” or “news” and “fake news” that exacerbate the implosion of ideologically incoherent and semantically fragmented images purporting to represent some sort of social/ political/economic reality (Artrip & Debrix, 2014). Put differently, in seeking to diagnose and represent the true and the real, media today often produce a series of “undecidable symptoms, and an assortment of vague and contradictory diagnoses” (Baudrillard, 1995, p. 48). Even mainstream news commentaries today echo a vaguely postmodern concern that we have somehow entered a dangerous “post-truth” era of mediated social and political reality (Davies, 2016; Flood, 2016). One widespread sentiment in response to this “posttruth crisis” is to fetishize “fact-checking” technologies and related epistemic media/ truth policing practices. This sentiment commonly implores that countermeasures be taken in response to “fake news” proliferation. Yet, the machineries that produce and disseminate the true and the untrue **are one and the same**. Both involve the same conditions of reproduction, the same thirst for reality, and the same system of operationalized promise/disappointment. The imperative to “fact-check” suggests that media need to fight against a threat to their own legitimacy and against the endangerment of truth. But journalists and pundits who tout “fact-checking” as some panacean form of political/social resistance appear to do so in complete ignorance or denial of the hyper-real effects of today’s global media. They fail to see that, in the words of Baudrillard (2005), “[t]he excess of information engenders **undecidability of facts and confusion of minds**. […] The excess of transparency engenders terror” (p. 193). The ethos/pathos of “factchecking” assumes that the immediacy of truth is still possible, or that media can or must remain neutral conduits for the transmission of reality. Thus, the fetishization of “fact-checking” does not care to address (or cannot make itself address) the more difficult situation, but one that is arguably at the root of the so-called post-truth condition: truth is **always already mediated**. Truth is always already vulnerable to the challenges of “alternative” forms of reality assessment and representation. The viral form of today’s media simultaneously demands and prohibits a hegemonic instantiation of truth. Perhaps this simultaneous and contradictory demand for and prohibition of epistemological hegemony has always been a central feature of liberal democracies and their quests for truth. The devout faith in the “marketplace of ideas” in (neo)liberal democratic designs—rooted in the virtues of transparency, freedom, and competition—promises that (like the infamous invisible hand of the market, perhaps) it will eventually always be able to sort out fact from fiction. But the radical equivalency and universal fungibility of all ideas make it such that each attempt to instantiate a hegemonic truth tends only to **energize an oppositional or contradictory attempt**. In the domain of news and political media, the user-subject’s search for truth resembles a shell game, the plight of which is perhaps nowhere more evident than with Counselor to President Trump Kellyanne Conway’s insistence on “alternative facts” in opposition to the seemingly more measured, documented, quantitative, and conventional facts reported about public attendance at Trump’s presidential inauguration (Bradner, 2017). The new U.S. executive’s blatant disregard for referential reality, made evident by the continual torrent of images, signs, and contradictory truth-claims disseminated from the state apparatus (or via the president’s Twitter account), reflects a stage of simulation in which the lie operates as a self-sustaining simulacrum. The lie is no longer a “counterfeit” (as it was in Baudrillard’s second phase of the image), but rather a free-floating signifier. The lie no longer antagonizes truth or the real. Rather, the lie makes sense only in relation to other lies that do not even care anymore to appear truthful. The lie mirrors the hyper-real condition and operations of media because it functions according to a framework of “truth” that assumes **no weight about reality**, assigns no inherent value to the real, and makes no referential claims. There is no certainty left when it comes to truths and lies. What is left is an unending play of symptoms emanating from the oversaturation (an oversaturation of images, signs, statements, and “realities,” once again) of an undifferentiated global system. Everything becomes uncertain (Baudrillard might say that it is indifferent), reduced to the universally fungible mode of information/news. As Baudrillard (1995) intimated, “everything which is turned into information becomes the object of endless speculation” (p. 41).