# Risk AC

## 1AC – Risk

#### Hi, Ho, Lock and load, *(Hi, Ho, Lock and load,)[[1]](#footnote-1)* The engines are running, we're ready to roll *(The engines are running, we're ready to roll)* Kill the enemy take control, *(Kill the enemy take control,)* So early, so early, so early in the morning *(Hey! Hey! Woo!, So early, so early, so early in the morning)*

#### Let’s play risk! The game of diplomacy, conflict, and conquest. We’ll take turns to choose territories to occupy and fortify with our troops and roll dice to see how effective our soldiers will be in battle. The goal of course is to occupy every territory and eliminate all the opposition.

**Hoofd’07,**|Ingrid M. Hoofd, National University of Singapore, “The Neoliberal Consolidation of Play and Speed: Ethical Issues in Serious Gaming” in “CRITICAL LITERACY: Theories and Practices Volume 1: 2, December 2007,” p. 6-14, 2007|KZaidi // recut ahs emi

**Serious games** are a fascinating next stage in the continuous exploitation of digital media technologies over the last decades for training, learning, and education. As formal education and training **always involves the transmission and repetition of certain culturally and socially specific sets of skills** and moral values, it would be of paramount importance to ensure that developments within the serious gaming industry are in step **with the effects of the good intentions of nurturing people within a social framework that emphasises a fair, culturally diverse, and blooming society.** In this light, it is interesting that from the very advent of the information society, **digital technologies have been depicted as central to the development of a more just and equal society by harbouring the promise of bridging gaps between classes, races, and genders locally as well as globally.** Driven by the vision of this utopian potential of new technologies, the education industry and larger policy organisations have been exploring the pedagogical possibilities of these technologies both in- and outside the traditional classroom for the last twenty-five years. Indeed, the implementation of increasingly more sophisticated and technologically mediated methods and tools for learning and **education, takes as its starting point the techno-utopian assumption that (new) interactive technologies themselves are the primary harbingers of a fair and blooming society** through facilitating (student) empowerment. This paper takes issue with this widespread techno-utopian perspective by seeking to shed light on the larger ethical implications of serious gaming. It will do so through foregrounding the relationship between global injustices, and the aesthetic properties and discourses of serious gaming. So while reframing serious games themselves in a new ethical perspective constitutes the main objective of this paper, it is equally important to situate serious games within a larger political discourse on the teaching of new skills. Firstly then, **policy papers and academic studies on serious games all display an assumption of the inherent neutrality of gaming technologies, as if these technologies were mere tools equally suitable for all.** What also becomes apparent in the language used in these studies and proposals, is how **this instrumentalist vision of gaming technologies for learning goes hand in hand with a particular neo-liberal assumption of what constitutes a fit individual**, and by extension of what the hallmarks of a ‘healthy’ society may be. For instance, in the European Union study “Serious Gaming – a fundamental building block to drive the knowledge work society” by Manuel Oliveira on the merits of serious games for education, justification runs along the lines of gaming ‘encouraging risk-taking and a winning attitude’ and creating a ‘performance-oriented individual.’ Similarly, Michael Guerena from the US Orange County Department of Education proposes in one of the Department’s web-casts that serious games instil “twenty-first century skills” like risk-taking, adaptability, self-direction, interactive communication, and ‘planning and managing for results’ in the students through the “channelling of fun.” Likewise, the UK-based Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association last year published their white paper Unlimited learning - Computer and video games in the learning landscape, in which they argue that serious games will “create an engaged, knowledgeable, critical and enthusiastic citizenry” whose “work practices will be geared towards networked communication and distributed collaboration” (49). Concerns around the ethical implications of serious games regarding their entanglements with larger social (gendered, classed, and raced) inequalities have until now largely been coined in terms of game content or representation. In a recent case in Singapore, the government’s proposition of using the RPG Granado Espada in secondary school history classes was followed by an outcry from various local academics condemning the stereotypical characters and simplistic representation of medieval Europe in the game. Likewise, various authors have critiqued current serious games not only because of simplistic representation of characters and surroundings, but especially because simulations generally tend to oversimplify complex social problems and situations. Gibson, Aldrich, and Prensky’s Games and Simulations in Online Learning (vi - xiv) for instance discuss these demerits of serious games. While such a critical analysis of how game content contributes to the reproduction of dominant discourses is definitely helpful, I would argue that the aesthetics of serious games involve much more than mere content. Instead, this paper will argue that the formal quest for instantaneity that research around digital media has displayed through the development of interactive **technologies for education is already itself by no means a neutral affair. This is because the discourses** that inform this quest and that accompany this search **for instantaneity** arguably **enforce the hegemony of a militaristic, masculinist, humanist, and of what I will call a ‘speed-elitist’ individual.** Moreover, I suggest that the propensity of current games to have sexist or racist content, is merely symptomatic of gaming technology’s larger problematic in terms of the aesthetic of instantaneity. In short, (serious) computer **games have become archives of the discursive and actual violence carried out in the name of the utopia of technological progress and instantaneity under neo-liberal globalisation.** This archival function is possible exactly because cybernetic technologies promise the containment and control of such supposedly accidental violence, while in fact exacerbating these forms of violence. This leads me to conclude that **such violence is in fact structural to new serious gaming technologies**, rather than accidental. I will elaborate this hypothesis by looking at various theorists who seek to understand this structural imperative of new technologies, and their relationship to the neo-liberalisation of learning and education. In turn, I will look at how this problematic structural logic informs the two popular serious games Real Lives and Global Warming Interactive. Secondly, the advent of serious gaming interestingly runs parallel with the contemporary dissemination and virtualisation of traditional learning institutions into cyberspace. While the existence of learning tools in other areas of society besides actual learning institutions has been a fact since the advent of schools, **the shift of methods of learning** in**to online and digital tools is symptomatic of the decentralisation of power from ‘old’ educational institutions and its usurpation into instantaneous neo-liberal modes of production.** I am summarising the work of Bill Readings on the university here, because it sheds light on the shift in education tout court towards virtualisation, and its relationship to the ‘new hegemony of instantaneity.’ In The University in Ruins, Readings argues that the shift from the state-run university of reason and culture to the present-day global knowledge enterprise **must mean that the centre of power in effect has shifted elsewhere.** More important, says Readings, is that **the function of the new ‘university of excellence,’ one that successfully transforms it into yet another trans-national corporation, relies on the fantasy that the university is still that transcendental university of culture in service of the state and its citizens**. So the invocation of the fantasy of an ‘originary’ university of reason and progress, that produces unbiased knowledge for the good of all, facilitates the doubling of the production of information into other spaces outside the university walls proper. While Readings surely discusses only higher education institutions in The University in Ruins, I would argue that the logic of a shifting centre of power from the state into the technocratic networks and nodes of speed operates quite similarly in the case of primary, secondary, and other types of formal education. Indeed, **the current virtualisation of learning and the emphasis on lifelong learning marks a dispersal of traditional learning institutions into online spaces.** This dispersal **works increasingly in service of the ‘speed-elite’** rather than simply in service of the nation-state. The heralding of serious games for education can therefore be read as a symptom of the intensified reach of the imperatives of neo-liberal globalisation, in which consumption enters the lives of locally bound as well as more mobile cosmopolitan citizens of all ages through harping on the technological possibility of the confusion of production and play. Through the imperative of play then, **production increasingly and diffusely colonises all niche times and -spaces of neo-liberal society.** In other words, (the emphasis on) play allows not only a potential increase in production and consumption through the citizen-consumer after her or his formal education of ‘skills’, but starkly intensifies flows of production and consumption already at the very moment of learning. While such an integration of play and production is generally understood within the framework of the neo-liberal demand for the circulation of pleasure, it is useful here to widen the scope from understanding the learner as a mere consumer of pleasure into the larger set of problematic interpellations that marks subjugation in contemporary society. Intriguingly, a host of research has emerged over the past years pointing towards the intricate relationship between subjugation, military research objectives, and videogame development. Such research suggests an intimate connection between the C3I logic and **humanist militaristic utopias of transcendence, which incriminates interactive technologies as inherently favouring culturally particular notions of personhood.** In the case of computer- and video-games for entertainment, researchers have argued that the aesthetic properties of gaming technologies **give rise to so-called ‘militarised masculinity.’** In “Designing Militarized Masculinity,” Stephen Kline, Nick DyerWitheford, and Greig de Peuter argue for instance that interactive games open up very specific subject positions that “**mobilize fantasies of instrumental domination**” (255). This specific mobilisation that video-games invoke, is not only due to the remediation of violent television- and film- content, but also due to the intimate connection between gaming- and military industries which grant these technologies their particular cybernetic aesthetic properties (see also Herz 1997). This element of militarisation partly informs my concept of ‘speed-elitism.’ I extrapolate the idea of ‘speed-elitism’ largely from the works of John Armitage on the discursive and technocratic machinery underlying current neo-liberal capitalism. In “Dromoeconomics: Towards a Political Economy of Speed,” Armitage and Phil Graham suggest that **due to the capitalist need for the production of excess, there is a strong relationship between the forces of exchange and production, and the logic of speed.** In line with Virilio’s argument in Speed and Politics, they argue that various formerly the less connected social areas of **war, communication, entertainment, and trade, are now intimately though obliquely connected. This is because all these forces mutually enforce one another through the technological usurpation and control of space** (and territory), and through the compression and regulation of time. Eventually, Armitage and Graham suggest that “circulation has become an essential process of capitalism, an end in itself” (118) and therefore any form of cultural production increasingly finds itself tied-up in this logic. So neo-liberal capitalism is a system within which the most intimate and fundamental aspects of human social life – in particular, forms of **communication and play – get to be formally subsumed under capital.** In “Resisting the Neoliberal Discourse of Technology,” Armitage elaborates on this theme of circulation by pointing out that the current mode of late-**capitalism relies on the continuous extension and validation of the infrastructure and the neutral or optimistic discourses of the new information technologies. Discourses that typically get repeated – like in the policy papers – in favour of the emerging speed-elite are those of connection, empowerment and progress, which often go hand in hand with the celebration of highly mediated spaces for action and communication. Such discourses however suppress the violent colonial and patriarchal history of those technological spaces and the subsequent unevenness brought about by and occurring within these spaces.** I would claim that Armitage’s assessment of accelerated circulation, and the way new technologies make play complicit in the techno-utopian endeavour of speed, is crucial for understanding the larger ethical issues surrounding serious games. It is helpful at this point to look at Paul Virilio’s and Jacques Derrida’s work because this helps us understand the complicity of the aesthetics of interactive and visually oriented gaming technologies in speed-elitism.

#### Abrams on the hill, *(Abrams on the hill,)* Tank commander's ready to kill *(Tank commander's ready to kill)* Give the order "Fire at will", (*Give the order "Fire at will",)* So early, so early, so early in the morning *(Hey! Hey! Woo!, So early, so early, so early in the morning)*

#### It’s time to rally the troops! We want YOU! As my recruiter from high school once told me – *Enlist today to find a mosaic of virtues, loyalty, and build an indomitable spirit. You’ll be the embodiment of sacrifice, not just a solder but a guardian of liberty, justice, and the American dream. In the theatre of war, you’ll be the thunder that echoes through the valleys of conflict, fueled by the desire to conquer and subjugate. Answer the call to arms and let the world witness the unstoppable force of the US military.*

#### Sniper on the ground, *(Sniper on the ground,)* Moving by without a sound, *(Moving by without a sound,)* Locks and loads a single round, *(Locks and loads a single round,)* So early, so early, so early in the morning *(Hey! Hey! Woo!, So early, so early, so early in the morning)* Now that I’ve got a spritely group of new recruits, I’ll go first – I’ll dispatch my best operatives to the WANA region – the Fertile crescent! Where resources are abundant and information is critical. Nothing goes on without my troops there to collect some intelligence!

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

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

#### Apaches in the sky, *(Apaches in the sky,)* F-16s go zooming by, *(F-16s go zooming by,)* The enemy is about to die, *(The enemy is about to die,)* So early, so early, so early in the morning *(Hey! Hey! Woo!, So early, so early, so early in the morning)*

#### You’re up! It doesn’t matter what countries you choose, we will fight all the same – let the war for the world commence!

#### Öberg 14, Öberg, D. (2014) Baudrillard and war, International Journal of Baudrillard Studies. Available at: https://baudrillardstudies.ubishops.ca/baudrillard-and-war/ (Accessed: 23 February 2024). //Scopa

As many have noted Baudrillard is first and foremost a ‘critic’ (Ranciere 2006, Grace 2000: 1). To Baudrillard **it is not so much a theory of war that is lacking but a proper critique of war’s ontology**. So what does his critique imply? Arguably he was well ahead of his time with regards to understanding how war related to advertisement, mass media, and the television. More than three decades before Ignatieff wrote about ‘virtual wars’, Baudrillard had already noticed how **the virtual leaked into the real with regards to the Vietnam War**. For example, in 1967 he claimed that the **TV images of the war takes us away from human reality** (and classical conceptions of war) **towards a world of advertising** (2001: 42). This was a time when, for Baudrillard, as for Marxism in general, war was mostly seen as an integrated part of the capitalist system (1975: 145 and 1998b: 55, 57, 121). In the beginning of the 1970’s, particularly after the book The Mirror of Production and his definitive break with Marxism, Baudrillard’s view on war changed. So what does this change imply? It might be easy to associate his thinking on war with what took place (or did not take place) in the Gulf in 1991, but to Baudrillard this was merely a symptom of other more complex underlying logics. Perhaps we might say that the most intriguing aspect about the Gulf War was not its build up, conduct, or media-coverage, but what this illustrated about war as such.3 He starts his essay ‘The Gulf War will not take place’, written before ‘the war started’ by stating that: ‘(f)rom the beginning we knew that this war would never happen’ (Baudrillard 1995: 23). **It is therefore not a matter of whether the US starts bombing en masse or not (after a build-up phase of seven months) but something quite different: the Gulf War is about the ontological status of war itself** (Baudrillard 1995: 32). Therefore, the impact of his thinking on war goes well beyond the Gulf. To grasp these logics we need to go back to his writings on the Cold War and particularly the notion of deterrence. Long before the Gulf War, Baudrillard had already identified deterrence as a key factor to understanding war. As he argues, **ever since the end of World War II – when politics was still dependent on the distinction between war and peace – the world had been taken hostage to the logic of deterrence**. This means that he sees **deterrence**, not as simply dictating behavior (through for example coercion or intimidation, as in Schelling 1966) but as something which **makes the underlying principles of reality disappear**. While traditional theory around military strategy would think of deterrence as something to manage through bargaining or rational behavior, Baudrillard sees it as **something which puts an end to the possibility of military strategy** and has severe consequences for our understanding of events, history, and politics: **Deterrence precludes war** – the archaic violence of expanding systems. Deterrence itself is **the neutral, implosive violence of metastable systems** or systems in involution. **There is no longer a subject of deterrence, nor an adversary nor a strategy – it is a planetary structure of the annihilation of stakes** (Baudrillard, 1994a: 32-33, my emphasis)…/…**Everywhere where irreversible apparatuses of control are elaborated, everywhere where the notion of security becomes omnipotent, everywhere where the norm replaces the old arsenal of laws and violence** (including war), it is the system of deterrence that grows, and around it grows the historical, social, and political desert. **A gigantic involution that makes every conflict, every finality, every confrontation contract in proportion to this blackmail that interrupts, neutralizes, freezes them all. No longer can any revolt, any story be deployed according to its own logic because it risks annihilation**. No strategy is possible any longer, and escalation is only a puerile game given over to the military. **The political stake is dead, only simulacra of conflicts and carefully circumscribed stakes remain** (Ibid.: 33-34). The consequences for war’s being are therefore severe. These consequences are perhaps best illustrated ‘in reality’ through the way the excess of high-tech weapon systems, so characteristic for the Cold War, participate in making war lose its character (Baudrillard 1989). **During the Cold War countries like the US and the Soviet Union had enough nuclear warheads to destroy the human civilization many times over. With the introduction of intercontinental ballistic missiles** (increasing range and effect) **and atomic submarines** (giving second strike capability), **nuclear warfare reached a ‘hyperefficiency’ which also made it useless for waging war**. Baudrillard sees **this uselessness as part of a larger social context which indicates a: ‘disgust for a world that is growing, accumulating, sprawling, sliding into hypertrophy, a world that cannot manage to give birth’** (Baudrillard 1989: 31). The Cold war thereby helps to produce a ‘stillborn’ world with an excess of memories, archives, documentation, sophisticated weapon-systems, plans, programs, and decisions that does not lead to either wars or events (1989: 31). Therefore **any war that is being waged as real is always circumscribed by the overkill-capacity of nuclear war, in turn becoming less and less warlike and more and more a simulation of war**. As Baudrillard concludes in Cool Memories V: **‘(w)ar is impossible, and yet it takes place. But the fact that it takes place in no way detracts from its impossibility. The system is absurd and yet it functions. But the fact that it functions in no way detracts from its absurdity’** (2006b: 25). War has become absurd, but no less deadly for that matter. To Baudrillard the notion of war has therefore entered into a definitive crisis, best illustrated by how deterrence erases political stakes and supplant them with virtual stakes precluding events of war. The end of the Cold War does not put an end to deterrence but rather continues through new means such as drug wars, debt wars, or soft wars (1996: 87): The powerful of this world are gathered in Rome to sign a treaty ‘that puts a final end to the Cold War’. In fact they do not know they are starting a new war, of which they are the first victims: they remained parked on the tarmac, surrounded by armoured cars, barbed wire and helicopters – the whole panoply of this new cold war, the cold war of armed security, of perpetual deterrence and faceless terrorism (2006b: 45-46). Much of Baudrillard’s writings on war after the end of the Cold war grapple with these ‘new characteristics of war’ and its relation to history, politics, events, media, or economy (see for example Baudrillard 1995: 24-26, 65-68). If seen through the prism of real and virtual war we can appreciate the difference between Baudrillard’s account and Marxism. As stated in the previous part Marxism tends to consider war an integrated part of the capitalist system. Baudrillard on the other hand illustrates how **war is the victim of a separation in kind as it is turned into an object without use-value but with simulation-value** (1990:56) something which became all the more obvious during the build up for the war in Iraq 2003 and the WMD debate which was used as a rationale for invasion. If we accept that real war has disintegrated and lost its principles under the virtual catastrophe of total nuclear and orbital war (Baudrillard 1993: 29; 2002b: 21-22) – we are forced to reconsider what a theory of war implies: Traditional theorists of war must be…at a loss before the explosion of their object of study. For, paradoxically, it isn’t the bomb which has exploded, but the war-object, which has exploded into two separate parts – a total, virtual war in orbit and multiple real wars on the ground. The two have neither the same dimensions nor the same rules…(2002b: 22-23). Hence, to Baudrillard, war consists of two inseparable but incompatible forms with two kinds of logic. Moreover, through this virtual, simulated version of war, the ‘real’ war (just like ‘real’ production or ‘real’ economy) is also dislocated (Baudrillard 1993: 31, 1994a). **The referent changes from being one of battles between armies to one of the simulation of this battle**. Uncertainty seeps into war (‘is this really a war?’) and what used to be at stake in a war of violence (such as conquest or domination) are no longer the underlying principles of war’s ontology. **This uncertainty spawns wars of ‘pure speculation’ waged as advertisement campaigns** (Baudrillard 1995: 28-29). III. Symbolism, simulation, and war-processing In The Gulf War did not take place Baudrillard explicitly states that his take on the war relates to ‘deterrence and the indefinite virtuality of war’ (1995: 49). This helps us appreciate the way in which **the rules of the game have changed and something new and uncanny has emerged: incidents and events without meaning** (Baudrillard 2000: 47-48). To think “war” after the Gulf is, in Rex Butler’s words, to ‘speak against…simulation when there is nothing to which to compare it, when there is nothing outside of it or when that outside can only be imagined in its terms’ (Butler 1999: 24).4 It is within this context we can understand how the Gulf War, ‘a war stripped bare of everything that makes it a war’ (1995: 64) illustrates a change in the ontology of war. Let us look into Baudrillard’s argument on the Gulf War to see precisely what it lacks. William Merrin categorizes Baudrillard’s discussion of the Gulf War as three particular critiques: its lack of symbolic encounter (between friend and enemy), the simulated aspect of war, and war as processing and modelling (Merrin 2005: 83-84). The first aspect goes back to war being considered (in the classic, Clausewitzian sense) as an encounter between two opposing forces. To Baudrillard, this conception of war as a symbolic act is lost in the Gulf. Rather, **the US wages war as if it is a business strategy, in a detached manner: ‘(t)his is the rule of the American way of life: nothing personal!** And they make war in the same manner: pragmatically and not symbolically’ (Baudrillard 1995:39). And **this is equally true for the war in the media: ’(t)he Americans fought the same war in respect of world opinion – via the media, censorship, CNN, etc – as they fought on the battlefield** (Baudrillard 1994b: 63). They thereby miss the insight that traditionally war is a symbolic exchange between two counterparts that have a relationship (and might hate each other but still need each other). **Instead the US wages a clean, surgical, mathematical, punctual and efficient war. A war in which the Other is denied his status as the Other as the United States refused to engage in a relationship or even recognize its enemy**. This in turn humiliates and eliminates instead of creating an antagonistic relation (Baudrillard 1995: 40, 44, see also Behnke 2004, Holmqvist 2013b). Baudrillard’s point here is not so much that a war with symbolic aspects is better or more preferable than one without. The point is rather that the American way of waging it changes the underlying parameters for what war is and does. Therefore, it is not only that ‘the Gulf War did not take place’ in the sense that a classical war wasn’t waged. The two opponents (the US-coalition and Iraq) also viewed war differently – so that there was in a sense a war over the definition of war. This became obvious in 2001, when the Twin Towers were attacked through an event that the US could not anticipate, understand or properly respond to. The second aspect, the shift from real to virtual, has already been discussed to some extent in the previous part. So what is meant when one claims that the Gulf War was a ‘virtual war’? Paul Patton, James Der Derian and others have outlined various ways in which the virtual is being associated with how the military employ electronic technology and communication devices. The Gulf War displayed new kinds of virtual technology which not so much displaced actual war as it became an integral part of it. Training through simulators is one example of such a ‘virtualization’ which helps blurring the boundaries between the real and the simulated (Patton 1997: 124-126, Der Derian 2001: 116-117). Baudrillard discuss this with a focus on ‘new media’ such as real-time TV, CNN-effects, high-speed information. Arguably, it is helpful to understand his argument about the Gulf War not as a simple shift from something ‘real’ to something ‘virtual’. Rather, it should be thought of as an overwhelming (to use a term by William Bogard 1994: 319) implosion where the virtual in many ways appropriates the real and becomes ‘more real than the real’. This occurs in the same way as notions like the symbolic are appropriated by the semiotic (as outlined particularly in the ‘early-Baudrillard’) or illusion is appropriated by the transparency of simulation and modelling (as outlined particularly in the ‘later-Baudrillard’). Seen in this way it is possible to think virtual war, not in terms of a shift from one state to the next (as in Ignatieff), but rather as an implosion which severely challenges how we think social reality, as it saturates war with ambivalence and lack of distinction. **War becomes reversible as it might mean anything and everything, evident in notions like (Orwell’s) ‘war is peace’ but also as a general implosion which affects the relationship between war and television, technology, advertisement, social media, and the economy. This implosion is by no means limited to a particular space (such as the Gulf) or a particular time (such as 1991) but is rather marked by a lack of distinction which also affects other things**. For example in its relation to cinema, evident in how Baudrillard argues that the motion picture Apocalypse Now and the war in Vietnam were ‘cut from the same cloth’, and that the film is as much part of the war, as war is part of the film (1994a: 60). Or, by drawing upon Francois de Bernard, that **the Iraq war is not so much ‘like a film’ but rather is a film: ‘with a script, a scenario that has been implemented without diversion’** evident in how ‘operational war becomes a gigantic special effect, cinema becomes the paradigm of war, and we imagine the “real” war as if it was only a mirror of its filmic being’ (Baudrillard 2007a: 119). Perhaps we might say that if the Iraq war was a motion picture, Ibrahim Al-Marashi played the lead. In an astonishing auto-biographical piece **Al-Marashi** (2014, this special issue) **outlines how his doctoral research on Iraq’s history was plagiarized and used as a security dossier by the UK government in order to justify the 2003 Iraq War**. The simulations of war appropriated him as a mediated persona which seriously affected not only his career but any prospect of having a ‘normal’ life. Untangling these webs of simulation Al-Marashi concludes that not only the 1991 Gulf War but also the 2003 Iraq War did not take place. Both Michał Kłosiński and Alan Shapiro’s articles in this special issue also deal explicitly with the war in the Gulf. The first mentioned asks what it means that particular wars “take, or do not take place” or whether war has, or can find, “a proper place”. He illustrates how Baudrillard plays with the notion of place in order to challenge its degeneration and displace it while **“the place of war” is dissolving in favor of a global war** (see part three in this introduction). Shapiro on the other hand contextualizes Baudrillard’s thinking on the Gulf War and makes a rare comparison with Albert Camus’ thought on the Algerian war. Shapiro argues that there are several overlaps between the thinkers regarding war suggesting that they might be well worth reading in relation to and against each other. The third point Baudrillard raises is how the (non-)events in the Gulf turns war into ‘war-processing’ (2005a: 30, 2008: 128). This term indicates how **warfare drifts into rationalization and technicalization and becomes a force directed, not against adversaries, but abstract operations** (Baudrillard 1995: 34, 45). In ‘war-processing’, **warfare has been supplanted for the model of warfare. This turns war into a replica of its own simulated modelling, devoid of passions and contingency: a war we no longer believe in as it has become purely operational** (Baudrillard 1994b: 16, 58; 1995: 61, 73, 77). Baudrillard argues: ‘**for the Gulf War computers, there were no others, no Iraqis, no enemies** (not even any Americans, in the end); **the whole thing was played out in a closed circuit on the basis of calculation’** (Baudrillard 2002b: 162) with the result that ‘war itself is indefinitely postponed [since] it has to be tested first in all its possible consequences’ (Baudrillard 1990: 172). And we might add, in an era in which the military constantly strives to make warfare more comprehensive, networks more seamless and combined, targeting more efficient and effects-based, the notion of ‘war-processing’ might have particular relevance (see Nordin and Öberg, 2013). In conclusion, what might we say about war after its implosion into other modes? With regards to the Gulf the result is a war which becomes its own simulation (Baudrillard 1994b: 60, 65). Baudrillard’s infamous critique of Disneyland as being ‘a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real’ (1994a: 13) is therefore helpful in order to understand the impact of the Gulf War. **Just as Disneyland is there to mask that the rest of America is in fact a Disneyland, the Gulf War helps to obscure that it is war as such which has disappeared**. And, let us give Baudrillard the last word on this as he relates the two: **(D)o you know how General Schwarzkopf, architect of the US Gulf War strategy, celebrated his “victory”? With a gigantic party at Disneyworld. Such revellings in the mecca of the imagination were surely a worthy conclusion to that virtual war**…They are even rebuilding an exact replica of Disneyland Los Angeles at Disneyworld in Orlando. Like a kind of second-level attraction, a simulacrum raised to the second power. This is the same job as CNN did on the Gulf War – the prototype of the event which did not take place because it took place in real time, in the instantaneity of CNN. **Today, Disney might well restage the Gulf War as a global attraction**. Christmas at Eurodisney was celebrated with the Red Army choirs. Everything is possible, everything can be recycled in the polymorphous world of the virtual (Baudrillard 2002b: 151). IV. Fractal war and global policing Up to now we have seen that Baudrillard’s critique illustrates how the Cold War, due to nuclear arms and deterrence, the changing role of media and IT, and high-tech weaponry force war to split into a real and a virtual mode. One important example of this is the way the Gulf War, waged as a business or advertising campaign, enables simulated models and technological processing to appropriate war’s being. The end of the Cold War therefore signifies how particular aspects of deterrence continue through other means and in so doing give rise to new effects. To Baudrillard, **one of the most important effects is a constant policing of singularities, events, or any kind of potential political subversion**. Baudrillard first identified this tendency in the Vietnam War (see below) but a more recent example which is equally relevant is the alleged shift from ‘enemy centric’ to ‘population centric’ counter-insurgency (see Kilcullen 2007). This illustrates an overlap between his thought and recent discussions on policing in critical War Studies. **This discussion has engaged with the way war and policing intersects in contemporary Western interventions**. It particularly focuses on understanding **war as ordering, othering, and spatializing logics which force the distinction between war and policing to break down** (Holmqvist 2014 and Bachmann et.al. 2014). So what is Baudrillard’s take on war as policing in relation to this particular debate? Baudrillard identified the Vietnam War as a means to violently reshape the social (a “generative” aspect of war which has also been debated in critical War Studies, see Barkawi and Brighton 2011). To him the Vietnam War was interesting first and foremost in how it masked both a peaceful coexistence between two blocks (East and West) and how it aimed to liquidate ‘savage’ and archaic societal structures. He argues that the war took place as long as there was a wild subversive element to the uprising (illustrated by the Viet Cong). But as soon as Vietnam as a country ‘showed’ the world that it was no longer unpredictable, the war ended (Baudrillard 1994a: 36-37). Therefore, the war in Vietnam masks not only the status quo of the Cold war but also the fact that: **(B)ehind this simulacrum of fighting to the death and of ruthless global stakes, the two adversaries are fundamentally in solidarity against something else, unnamed, never spoken, but whose objective outcome in war, with the equal complicity of the two adversaries, is total liquidation**. Tribal, communitarian, precapitalist structures, **every form of exchange, of language, of symbolic organization, that is what must be abolished, that is the object of murder in war – and war itself, in its immense, spectacular death apparatus, is nothing but the medium of this process of the terrorist rationalization of the social** – the murder on which sociality will be founded, whatever its allegiance, Communist or capitalist. Total complicity, or division of labor between two adversaries…for the very end of reshaping and domesticating social relations (Baudrillard 1994a: 37, my emphasis). Baudrillard therefore reads **the Vietnam War as one illustration of a kind of global policing which not so much revolved around the two adversaries opposing each other but rather on the way in which deterrence enabled liquidating, reshaping, and domesticating social relations**. This is also evident in the Gulf War as the aim there was to ‘impose a general consensus by deterrence’ (Baudrillard 1995: 83) which is no longer the bipolar deterrence of the Cold War but a monopolistic deterrence ‘under the aegis of American power’ (Ibid.: 84). **Such a policing through war works as a way to eradicate the possibility of subversion in everyday life** and thereby police not only the Gulf but also the heart of Europe (Ibid.: 52). **More than anything this is a matter of policing the simulation of democratic consensus as consensus**. A matter which Baudrillard ominously invokes as a continuation of war through a violent conditioning of the social: **‘…(T)omorrow there will be nothing but the virtual violence of consensus, the simultaneity in real time of the global consensus: this will happen tomorrow and it will be the beginning of a world with no tomorrow**’ (Ibid.: 84). And here we might pause and ask, **are the Russian wars in Chechnya or Georgia, the second Israeli war in Lebanon or interventions in Gaza, the interventions in Afghanistan (2001-) and Libya in 2011, not possible to see in terms of such policing? This would indicate a breakdown of the distinction of peace and war in which the same police-style violence is evident in both** (Baudrillard,1998a: 17). But also, it would indicate that these are wars which aim to police the simulacrum of liberal order itself. If seen in this way we might appreciate how Baudrillard outlines a type of policing which goes towards the spatial through controlling a population and an area (linking it to the debate on policing in critical War Studies). But, more importantly, **Baudrillards critique of war as policing points to the way interventions attempt to (1) police the past by whitewashing events so as to justify them retrospectively and (2) police the future through policing the consensus**. Baudrillard reads the **invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan as having 9/11 as focal point and thereby becoming what he calls ‘rituals of exorcism’ which tries to justify the event and the trauma of the past. But also in the sense that interventions aim to police the future through a systematic reprogramming and neutralization of not only possible crimes (or subversive movements) but of every possible future friction that might challenge the order of things** (2005a: 118-119; 2007a: 114, 118). If war continues through policing, one of its “side effects” – Abu Ghraib – also, perhaps, suggests that “war as policing” necessarily gives rise to “war as incarceration”. Andreja Zevnik’s ‘War Porn: an image of perversion and desire in modern warfare’ (2014, this special issue) picks up on Baudrillard’s analysis of Abu Ghraib and the images of torture which became overexposed in the media around 2005. She engages with Baudrillard’s essay ‘War Porn’ (2005b: 205-209) by looking at the way underlying ideologies and logics make such simulations possible, as well as help to reproduce them. By coupling notions of porn and obscenity with the Lacanian notions of law and perversion, the article illustrates how war’s violence has a tendency to perpetuate its own principle. And indeed, if we follow Baudrillard’s diagnosis, it is precisely as a mirror and an allergy to the violence perpetuated by this ‘unbearable power’ (Baudrillard, 2002a: 18, 5) that events like 9/11 occur. **Terrorism would thereby be a virus caused by the sickness of globalism, indicating a type of war: ‘no longer between peoples, states, systems, and ideologies, but rather, of the human species against itself** (Interview with Baudrillard in Der Speigel 2004). Baudrillard argues: With each succeeding war we have always moved close to a single world order. Today that world order, which has virtually reached its end, finds itself grappling, in all the current convulsions, with the antagonistic forces spread throughout the global dimension itself. A fractal war of all cells, of all singularities, rebelling in the form of antibodies. A clash so elusive that the idea of war has to be rescued from time to time by spectacular set-pieces like the Gulf War (Baudrillard 2003: 63, my emphasis).5 The suggestion that contemporary wars function as masquerades to obscure the fractal war against a “globalist” world order might be the most overtly political aspect of Baudrillard’s thought on war. If the appropriation of the real through the virtual indicated a shift in Baudrillard’s thinking from war as a derivative of the capitalist system (the Marxist view) to war as its own simulation (as outlined in part II of this introduction), this would indicate that this simulation hides a war which ‘haunts every world order, all hegemonic domination…for it is the world, the globe itself which resists globalization’ (Baudrillard 2002a: 12).6 Several articles in this special issue engage with this fractalization of war. William Pawlett (2014, this special issue) provides a reading of Baudrillard’s position on complicity and collusion particularly in relation to the notion of (and as a means to defy) hegemonic domination. Samuel Strehle (2014, this special issue) argues for a War Studies that take the undecidability of thinking (and the challenge to theory that this implies) as its founding principle, and in the epilogue Gerry Coulter (2014, this special issue) discusses Baudrillard’s war against cultural homogenization and sameness. Arguably Pawlett, Strehle, and Coulter all elucidate aspects of how to think ‘fractal war’ in relation to global policing of events and singularities. Moreover, Astrid Nordin (2014, this special issue) further investigates the implications of Baudrillard’s challenge as she inquiries into whether his thought might be extended to understanding the wars of “Others”. Engaging with China’s participation in the global “war on terror”, particularly the way contemporary Chinese rhetoric places itself as a (peaceful) alternative to the West and represents itself through war in relation to its neighbors, Nordin shows convincingly that there is no respite from our problems in the thought of ‘the Other’. Following Nordin and Coulter we realize that dividing lines between self and other do not run between the West and China, but rather in relation to the fractal particles at war in each and every one of us. As the texts illustrate, regardless of whether we agree with, or oppose Baudrillard’s critique against western globalism, it is important to notice (Coulter 2014, this special issue) that this critique is not a matter of simple ‘anti-Americanism’. William Merrin argues that Baudrillard in his challenge sets his eyes on a wider target: the entire Western semiotic culture (2005: 106). However, as Nordin convincingly shows this target might be less ‘Western’ than Baudrillard would acknowledge. Baudrillard is often read as being ‘neither for, nor against’ war, as his writing tends to question the possibility of reality rather than how it is conceived (Baudrillard 1995: 58, 67, see also Shapiro 2014 in this special issue). But perhaps **we can find, in his notion of ‘fractal war’, a ‘deeper No’, not to war as such but to the virtual ordering of past, present and future consensus which contemporary war obscure**: ‘(t)his no, which comes from the depths, should not be understood as a work of negation or of critical thought. **It is simply the response of defiance against a hegemonic principle descending indifferently from a great height for the consent of the people’** (Baudrillard, 2006a). Where does this ‘no’ take us with regards to war? Perhaps we might say (with the risk of oversimplifying) that war, despite its disappearance as symbolic act due to virtualization and processing, returns as a radical challenge. This would be a war which has little or nothing to do with Clausewitzs’ “war as a continuation by other means” (or the Foucauldian reversal of this) but rather **refers to a duel between a systematic and technocratic globalist challenge** (often exemplified by, but never reducible to, Western interventions) **and a radical refusal of this expanded as resistance and counter-violence**. This duel should not be confused with a clash between the West and Islam but is rather one which potentially involves us all (Baudrillard 2010: 68-70): **a duel beyond the end of war where the past, present and future of events and singularities are constantly at stake**.

Stand up and fight privates! Never give up! Never give in! Age wrinkles the body, quitting wrinkles the soul! You may be gaining territory but I’ll die before I admit defeat!

Bishop 09, Ryan Bishop, Professor of Global Arts and Politics, Co-Director of the Winchester Centre for Global Futures in Art Design & Media, Director of Research and Doctoral Research within Winchester School of Art at the University of Southampton, *Baudrillard Now: Current Perspectives in Baudrillard Studies* Edited by Ryan Bishop Polity Press 2009, pg. 64-70 //ScopaAlthough death is pivotal to many whose work falls within the domain of critical theory, Baudrillard’s work, perhaps more so than others’, articulates, embodies, and enacts the role of Death within theoretical writing and its relation to the political. **Death**, and especially the death drive in Freud according to Baudrillard, **does not provide any space for the operation of dialectical co-option or reclamation**. And it is this trait, **Death’s absolute imperviousness to the dialectic, that makes it radical, intractable, usable** (Symbolic Exchange and Death, 151). Such is the position that Baudrillard himself assumes within analyses of media, simulation, the subject, the object, politics, war, economics, culture, the event, theory itself, and thought. In relation to systems, the Death that Baudrillard wishes to address functions in a two-fold manner: it is what waits at “the term of the system” – at its end – and it is “the symbolic extermination that stalks the system itself” (Symbolic Exchange of Death, 5). Therefore **Death is both internal to the system and its “operational logic” and “a radical-finality” outside it**. Only Death operates both within and without the system (5). As such it carries the mark of perfection (completion of the system’s operation and project) and the defectiveness inherently lurking within it. Death is ambiguity and paradox made manifest, and is both the system’s realization and its impediment. Death resists modeling, the simulation. **Its lack of predictability and the difficulty in controlling it, in fact, resides at the center of the various systems, policies, and logics that drive the Cold War. Death is the event without compare and which must be elided at all costs**. Under the patriotic yet threatening **rubrics of security, safety, “our way of life,” etc**., the entire elaborate apparatus of the Cold War **was erected and launched, while also continuing with intensified reverberations into the present – all to ward off Death** on a scale hitherto the domain of Nature or the gods. Following a lead from the poet Octavio Paz and sounding like an interlocutor of Paul Virilio’s, Baudrillard discusses Death, therefore, in terms of the accident (Symbolic Exchange and Death, 160–6). For as Paz contends, modern science and technology, including medicine, have converted epidemics and natural catastrophes into explainable and controllable phenomena. **The rational order can explain and contain anything that threatens it**, as can Integral Reality (for which the rational order is another metonym, as is the global). As such, Death becomes an accident to be contained and controlled, explained and predicted. **If Death equals an accident, and accidents threaten the rational order, Baudrillard argues, then Death-as-accident also threatens political sovereignty and power**, “hence the police presence at the scenes of catastrophe” (161). Death is the disruption that destabilizes all that has been ordered and made stable. At the height of the Cold War as an historical phenomenon, the major powers relied heavily on a rational order that both players acknowledged (at least between themselves) to be operational. This led to the enforced and heavily armed stalemate of MAD, and with it arrived the horrific spectacle of the nuclear accident, or the computer accident. **The accidental launch of the impossible exchange of missiles would be, in rote pronouncements of certitude, “the only way” these rational and sane nations would fire nuclear weapons**: hence the many examples of cultural representations of accidental nuclear war that filled popular media (invoking worlds synonymous to the one portrayed as the simulated wasteland in The Island). **The import of simulation in containing Death on a global scale can be seen in the supposed rational containment of both the opposition and oneself.** The simulated scenarios **of both war games and accidental launches, the modeling of events,** become a **kind of** necromantic **or** occult means of controlling unleashed forces and foretelling possible futures in order to prevent the accident (or the event) – to prevent Death itself. The thought processes, or mental make-up, required to plan and design large-scale modeling meant to pre-empt accidents are themselves a kind of technology of thinking, and this mental technicity comprises an important element in the construction of Integral Reality. Simulation requires faith not in its own verisimilitude but in its capacity to change events, even Death. The US embodies this kind of faith and has from the Cold War to the present, which, as such, becomes a target for many satiric novelists. One particularly influenced by Baudrillard’s ideas about simulation is Don DeLillo, whose novel White Noise reads like a primer on the French theorist’s writings. One motif in the novel is a company called SIMUVAC, which stands for “simulated evacuation.” The company stages fake evacuations for a variety of emergencies, including nuclear events, complete with a theatrical or cinematic set of special effects: uniforms, sound effects, smells, and blood (if required). The firm turns up several times in the novel but makes its first, and most satirically poignant, appearance during an actual emergency. In perfect Baudrillardian fashion, the company, which operates solely with and for simulation, uses a live emergency to practice (or simulate) its own simulated emergencies, which is the commodity it packages and sells to various government agencies. The protagonist of the novel asks a SIMUVAC employee, in the midst of the actual crisis, to evaluate their rehearsal. The SIMUVAC operative replies in darkly comedic fashion: The insertion curve isn’t as smooth as we would like. There’s a probability excess. Plus which we don’t have our victims laid out where we we’d want them if this was an actual simulation. In other words we’re forced to take our victims where we find them. We didn’t get a jump on computer traffic. Suddenly it just spilled out, three-dimensionally, all over the landscape. You have to make allowances for the fact that everything we see tonight is real. There’s a lot of polishing to do. But that’s what this exercise is all about. (DeLillo, 1985: 139). The passage contains beautiful parodic examples of the vagaries that language suffers at the hands of bureaucrats, with nonsense phrases passing as technical jargon, including “insertion curve” and “probability excess,” as well as the delightfully oxymoronic “actual simulation.” But beyond this parody, DeLillo evokes the technicity of thought deeply embedded in Cold War America, the same technicity that Baudrillard works through at multiple levels, to reveal the deep investment in the power and control afforded by simulation. The desirable element of simulation is, in fact, control, such as with body placement, which is something actual disasters arrange without care or consultation with the modelers. When the SIMUVAC employee claims that things are in need of “polishing” because “everything we see tonight is real,” we witness the retreat into the comfortable delusion afforded by simulation despite its no-nonsense claims to hard-nosed pragmatism – “that’s what this exercise is all about,” he asserts. SIMUVAC, as a company, markets readiness, the capacity to make a community alert and prepared, but can only deliver on this promise as long as everything remains contained in the model. (And if events do not remain neatly in the model, then the company can use the “accident” to better refine their simulation and techniques.) The same is true of governments, and this is the fear of the accident – and the fear the accident manifests – that Baudrillard (pace Paz) analyzes. **Every sector of Integral Reality lives in fear of events because they can “spill out, three-dimensionally, all over the landscape,” no longer in control of the system**. All that various institutions, systems, and technologies promise to contain refuses to be contained. Such is the revenge of the object, about which Baudrillard writes, and the intractability of that which lies outside the systems of transparency and integration. Death stalks the protective simulating enterprises from inside and out. Baudrillard as a stylist of considerable skill and a rhetorician well-steeped in the rhetorical tradition similarly mobilizes his writing itself as Death in relation to the systems operative within academic discourse. From the late 1960s on, his writings and books have deviated rather widely from the conventions of sociological or philosophical genres and academic writing by reaching into the humanistic essay tradition (long since abandoned) and combining it with the most current of pressing issues. What constitutes a standard argument within the humanities and qualitative social sciences, what passes for knowledge and knowledge formation and construction, depends heavily on the adherence of a given work to these conventions. Baudrillard’s textual Deaths provide “fatal strategies” intended to stave off the actual death of thought that can result from routinized, by-the-number, knowledge formation. The aphoristic style, borrowed most directly from Nietzsche, works in a nonlinear fashion that nonetheless makes consistent and sustained arguments across his books as well as within them. Baudrillard teases an idea, settles on a problematic, and pulls at its various permutations, checking how it might work from one context to another. As a result, his writing can be simultaneously readable and enjoyable while also being difficult and frustrating. Like his friend Virilio, he does not develop his argument in a full or linear fashion, instead allowing for fragments, tangents, and hyperbole to carry thought off course and place readers in a textual space that is comfortable (especially if they have read nineteenthcentury philosophers) and discomfiting at the same time. To this end, he resurrects outmoded philosophical discourse while at the same time adding to it a late modernist poetic sensibility. The latter quality emerges most obviously in his deployment of terms as talismans of the moment of writing as well as terrain themselves for inquiry: the strategic deployment of labels and phrases intended to make us pay attention to their elasticity and formidable ability to fascinate, illuminate, and instantiate a stability of unstable phenomena. Baudrillard is always contemporary, his thoughts being solidly grounded in the present, and his terminology is always embedded in the current moment. He relies on older essayistic forms to structure his thoughts and musings, which often appear as thoughts and musings, i.e. slightly inchoate and coming into focus through the act of writing. The processual quality of his style injects Death as that which cannot be represented adequately into the deathly regimes of academic language meted out by rote adherence to genre-driven formulae within academic discursive practices. In an important sense, Baudrillard posits that Death is the salvation of theory while also arguing for the salvation that is Death. With the nuclear sword of Damocles dangling over our heads **ever since the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki,** we have slipped into a constant state of imminent global death **that no longer seems like death, so swift and horrible will it be that it outstrips our imagination**. “If the bomb drops,” he writes in America, “we shall neither have the time to die nor any awareness of dying” (42). Echoing the neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Ernst Becker, Baudrillard argues that Death ostensibly has been removed from our horizon in the American Era, and we, those who follow in America’s global footsteps, have moved easily and subtly into a state of daily ease and material comfort, buffeted and protected by a staggering array of tele-technologies, opto-electronics, and international ballistic missiles all meant to keep Death at bay and survival at the forefront. **Lost in this heady combination of technological, intellectual, and economic materiel mounted for sheer survival, of course, is life (43). Only that which is alive can die, and our cocooned embrace of globalization, which in turn cocoons and embraces us, leaves us with an existence** that recalls the prescient horror films of George Romero begun early in the Cold War: an existence like that of zombies, neither alive nor dead, but frantically and brainlessly consuming all in sight. Baudrillard rescues Death from its purgatorial condition of “the not alive” or mere survival. And in order to do so, he takes his cue from the masses who are the targets of this weaponry and way of life, the enactors of this ethos of bland avoidance and unthinking consumption. Their wholesale passivity to the apparatus of survival – from nuclear bunkers to Star Wars – emerges from a weariness of having been ceaselessly confronted with apocalyptic visions since the first nuclear explosions in New Mexico and Japan, and they “defend themselves with a lack of imagination” (America, 44). **“The masses’ silent indifference to nuclear pathos (whether it comes from the nuclear powers or from antinuclear campaigners) is therefore a great sign of hope,”** he asserts, “and a political fact of great import” (44). To understand Death as immanent within the system and without it, as immanent within bios and zoe and without it, is to resist the simulation of Death that hovers over our heads in the Cold War and the War on Terror. The salvation of Death, which is also the salvation of Baudrillard’s writing, thought, and analyses, provides us with the means of getting this specific brutal excess back into our collective frame of reference, not for the sake of nihilism, but to resist the nihilism built into all the projects of utter completion and realization that have rendered politics, the subject, the object, thought, and theory as simulation.

#### **Well, my dreams of world domination have been obliterated - enjoy reveling in your conquest of my pathetic armies and fractured strategy. I'll be fuming over the betrayal of the dice and cruelty of the game. Just know, it's not over. Vengeance will be swift and victory will be mine! Whatever, it's just a game...right?**

#### **Pawlett 13,** (Dr. William Pawlett, Senior Lecturer, University of Wolverhampton, *Violence, society and radical theory: Bataille, Baudrillard, and contemporary society*, Classical and contemporary social theory, 2013, Ashgate Publishing, p. 33-35) Symbolic Exchange and Death begins with a remarkably strident and politically radical preface: it declares that symbolic exchange is **the only effective means** of challenging or defying the capitalist system at a fundamental level. The capitalist system, for Baudrillard, is a vast and insidious system of control, adept at neutralising critique and political contestation. Critique may be neutralised by suppression or mis-representation, but increasingly **critique is assimilated as commodity** and as information/data through electronic solicitude. Taking its place within the general information overload, critical thought becomes just another link on the home page of the sort of person who ‘likes’ critical thought, one of your endless options on a Kindle or something you are made to read on an unpopular module during a university degree. That is, critical thought does not succeed in challenging the capitalist system; the cheap and abundant availability of works of critical thought, on Amazon for example, not only provides profits to a tax-dodging mega-corporation, it also demonstrates (or rather, simulates) the openness, tolerance and freedoms of the consumer capitalist system. How does symbolic exchange embody a greater or more successful defiance? Taking up Mauss’s notion of gift exchange as a concept “more radical than Marx’s or Freud’s”, Baudrillard insists that symbolic exchange does not merely describe the traditional practices of certain archaic cultures but is also “taking place here and now” (Baudrillard 1993a: 1). According to Baudrillard, symbolic exchange “haunts” capitalist social relations, it is present in them (in the sign – the medium of exchange) and it **“mocks” these structural significations** “in the form of their own death”. To understand what Baudrillard might mean by this it is important to stress that symbolic exchange is not a concept to be deployed as critique, symbolic exchange is, in itself, the practice of defiance; it is the **living reversal** of the system’s order. Symbolic exchanges, in Baudrillard’s sense, are the practice or act of reversal of the system’s priorities and values and so, in this sense, **spell death for the system**: not ‘real’ but symbolic death and symbolic death is **more fundamental and humiliating than ‘real’ death**. It is the enormity and reach of the system that makes it so vulnerable, like a much larger opponent being thrown by the momentum of their own weight in martial arts. The system is eminently vulnerable because it is **built upon the sense of its own invulnerability**, and specifically on its sense of irreversibility: the irreversibility of rationality, of progress, of (Western) dominance, the irreversibility of technological advancement. Given these conditions, according to Baudrillard, even a small or “infinitesimal” injection of reversibility can **threaten the entire edifice**; the system has **no defences** against symbolic reversion while it is more than capable of neutralising a frontal attack. Such reversions, the reversion of all the system’s ‘gifts’ include: the reversion of power in the sudden, unanticipated defiant acts of the apparently weak; the reversion of technological supremacy in the breakdown or computer virus; the reversion of rationality in the experience of **the irreducible irrationality of rationality**; the reversion of official meanings and sense into nonsense and mockery; the reversion of control in catastrophic failures. The effect of symbolic reversibility then consists in sudden, catastrophic reversals suffered by power and by the powerful which reveal, perhaps momentarily, the system’s deep vulnerability. Baudrillard’s position on symbolic exchange is not to be confused with the strategies of the Situationists, though he remained sympathetic towards this movement with which he was involved in the 1960s (Baudrillard 2004a: 15-20). An egg or custard flan thrown in the face of someone powerful and captured by the same media channels which the powerful usually dominate, can be far more effective in countering power than an unwieldy political statement. However, if the Situationists sought meaningful spaces for self-assertion in the gaps, lapses and dead zones of the capitalist system, Baudrillard’s approach is quite distinct. It seeks the setting in motion of a chain reaction or **a chain failure through the rippling effects of symbolic humiliation** by counter-gift or potlatch. The counter-gift may well be more effective when it is immediate, unplanned, or more specifically when it is not the result of subjective desires and considered beliefs – which can generally be accommodated by the system through simulation. One example might be the sudden, unexpected haranguing of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher by an elderly lady in 1983. Yet, this example does not really capture the sudden escalation that is involved in placing one’s life and death as a stake against the system. The tragic suicide in December 2012 of a nurse, Jacintha Saldanha, who worked at the private hospital in London favoured by the British royal family and was tricked into revealing information about a royal by two ‘journalists’ working for a Australian radio show, captures something of this fatal escalation. She had been humiliated by the journalists, yet her suicide vastly escalated the stakes and re-directed the humiliation back at the journalists, the media and wider society, generating a truly devastating, ‘potlatching’ humiliation of the journalists responsible (who seemed to crumble inwards), it further weakened the reputation of the so-called ‘free’ press and also brought to a close the British royal family’s ‘bounce’ in popularity after the royal wedding, jubilee and the London Olympics. Each of these powerful interests suffered an **immediate reversion** of their standing, a symbolic death ; and although the British media partially succeeded in limiting these symbolic effects to the designated sacrificial scapegoats consisting of the two journalists, the fundamental nature of the sacrificial or symbolic sphere became, temporarily, brutally obvious. In a sense we could say that the system cannot suffer a ‘real’ death in any case, not only because it is not a discrete, finite organism but because, in Baudrillard’s terminology, it is already dead, it has no genuine life or vitality and is kept alive **only by its life support systems of simulation**. The vampiric nature of capitalism was, of course, already a prominent feature of the Marxist critique (Marx Capital Vol. 1). For Baudrillard, the capitalist system does not only draw the life-blood of its exploited workers, it condemns its citizen-consumers to a life-less survival, a living-on in a state of **humiliation and dependence**, a ‘life’ that is shaped by the system, a life that is made to seem a gift of the system. Though suicide is expressly forbidden by both religious and secular law, that is the system exerts ownership over our death as well as our life, the point of biological termination does represent the absolute limit of the system’s control. Given these conditions the only fundamental strategy of defiance, for Baudrillard, is to reverse this humiliation, to refuse the ‘gifts’ and imprecations, to reverse this derisory life through **a symbolic death hurled back at the system**. This may take the form of the reversal of the poisonous gifts of consumer goods and information through a greater counter-gift of “hyper-conformity”: the absorbing of anything and everything the system gives while refusing the proper use of these ‘gifts’. One example given by Baudrillard is obesity, the indiscriminate absorption of food to a degree that becomes a social problem; this involves a (literally) internal revolt against the cult of physical fitness and the body beautiful, a rejection of the injunction to compulsory sexuality and sexual enjoyment (Baudrillard 1990b: 27-34). A further example is the **reversal and cancellation** of the overload of information through its **spontaneous “poetic dispersal” into paradox and ever greater uncertainty**: only in the correct dosage does information aid understanding, in excess it creates an **absolute uncertainty**. These forms of internal reversal **reveal the ambivalence hidden within the system**. It is **not** ‘real’ (or biological) death, nor ‘real’ violence, which has the power to challenge the system, it is death as symbolic form which is excluded from the system, and it is the symbolic death through the reversion of its systems which may be re-introduced into the system to subversive and fatal effect. According to Baudrillard, symbolic exchange is experienced “as a demand forever blocked by the law of value” and embodies “an intoxicating revolt”. This intoxication is always present so it does suggest a radically different pattern of social relations, which for Baudrillard would be “**based on the extermination of values**” (Baudrillard 1993a: 1). But could this extermination of all controlling values ever exist beyond clearly circumscribed ritual occasions, such as those described by Mauss (1990)? It seems that for both Bataille and Baudrillard the answer must be negative, there can only ever be a dynamic alternation or a fundamental duality and, Baudrillard suggests, all social formations except Western modernity have implicitly understood this. This issue is re-visited in more detail in Chapter 2. For Baudrillard “the principle of reversibility (the counter-gift) must be imposed against all the economistic, psychologistic and structuralist interpretations” (1993a: 1-2) and he adopts a very Bataillean formulation when he declares that symbolic exchange is “a functional principle sovereignly **outside and antagonistic to** our economic reality principle” (1993a: 2). Baudrillard comes close to a definition of symbolic exchange with the following:The symbolic is neither a concept, an agency, a category, nor a ‘structure’, **but an act of exchange and a social relation which puts an end to the real**, which resolves the real, and, at the same, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary. This initiatory act is the reverse of our reality principle … the symbolic is what puts an end to the disjunctive code and to separated terms … in the symbolic operation the two terms **lose their reality** (Baudrillard 1993a: 133).

1. https://genius.com/Johnathan-micheal-flemming-hi-ho-lock-and-load-military-cadence-lyrics [↑](#footnote-ref-1)