

# FLACK ATTACK

Flack Attack is a magazine coming out of The Port, a community-driven space inside the online 3D world Second Life. The magazine is produced at the Flack Attack Wiki and at open editorial meetings at The Port. Each finished issue will be distributed as PDF and print-on-demand. We invite you to contribute! The wiki is open to all, and invites contributions in the form of articles, images, alterations, comments, etc. If you want to know more about the magazine issue currently in production, please visit [www.flackattack.org](http://www.flackattack.org).

Issue#1: Flack Attack on Autonomy



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## GAMES OF EMPIRE: A TRANSVERSAL MEDIA INQUIRY

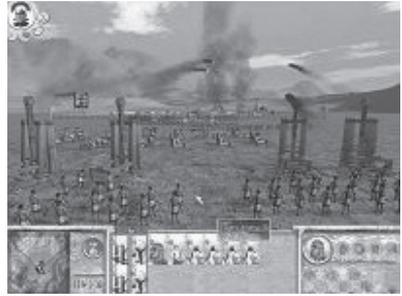
Greig de Peuter & Nick Dyer-Witheford  
From Flack Attack

### Introduction: Rome Redux

The legions advance towards the barbarian horde; flaming arrows arc across the sky; chariots wheel and charge; towering elephants plunge into the fray, trampling enemies under foot. This is the virtual world of *Rome: Total War*, one of the most successful of recent computer games, where players direct the emergence of the first global civilization in lavish battles involving thousands of digital soldiers. Governing a map whose pixel territory runs from Hadrian's Wall to the sands of Persia, the player must complete various tactical scenarios which are integrated with a higher strategic level involving the management of diplomatic, religious, and economic factors (how are your slave management skills?).



Rome: Total War



Rome's standing on the best-seller list is doubtless largely due to its gameplay qualities. But we suspect Rome—and the many other imperial-themed titles currently on the market—also resonates with game players and publishers because, despite an apparently distant historical setting, it has massive contemporary relevance. At a time when the perils of worldwide dominance are debated from Washington to Beijing, when the troops of a military superpower deploy from blazing helicopters against opponents on battlefields near the site of ancient Babylon, and when talk of 'imperial adventure' is revived, the saga of Rome's rise—and, perhaps, the hindsight knowledge that it eventually fell—does not seem so remote at all. Both in its timely allusion to, and its distraction from, the actualities of contemporary military-economic power, *Rome: Total War* takes us to the heart of this paper: the interaction between virtual games and

global empires. Our inquiry (which we are pursuing at greater length in a work-in-progress) is guided by a cluster of inter-related concepts about capitalism, media, militarization, subjectivity, and subversion that allows us to situate digital play as a component of both planetary hyper-capitalism and insurgencies against it. This paper begins with a brief introduction to the current of thought that furnishes us with this conceptual toolkit. We go on to provide a synopsis of our argument that video and computer games are the exemplary media of networked global capitalism, a site of digital life where the operations of, and contestation over, biopower is in play, virtually and actually, in a high-stakes game.

## **Transversal Media Studies**

Our inquiry into games of empire puts in play concepts from ‘transversal media studies.’ We coin this term—from metal provided by Félix Guattari (1984 1989) and Gilles Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and recently refined by Gerald Raunig (2002)—to designate what we consider a significant constellation in contemporary theory. This configuration, emergent since the mid-1990s (Bosma 1999), is now generating vibrant academic, activist, and artistic practices, but remains, so far, unnamed. In this current we find theorists such as Franco Berardi (Bifo) (1994 2005), Jodi Dean (2004), Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999), Brian Holmes (2003), Maurizio Lazzarato (2004), Brian Massumi (1998 2002), and Tiziana Terranova (2000 2004); art-activist-education groups such as Bureau d’études, Bureau of Inverse Technology, Carbon Defense League, Critical Art Ensemble, Institute for Applied Autonomy, and Uninomade; and the work of many contributors to publications, in-print and on-line, such as DATA browser, Fibreculture Journal, Multitudes, Mute, Net-time, and Republicart. Well aware of the problems of enumerating group membership, we prefer, however, not to make a roll call, but rather to focus on the intellectual affinities and political commitments which we believe constitute transversal media studies as a critical force and as an ongoing experiment in “collective cognition” (Toscano 2003:104).

‘Transversal’ in this context refers to these two distinct, though related, aspects: a set of intellectual connections and a strategic orientation.

The intellectual connections cross academia’s internal and external boundaries, making sideways links between disparate traditions, concepts, and practices. These include autonomist-Marxist politics, poststructuralist philosophy, and tactical media praxis. The autonomist Marxism flows most obviously from

the widely discussed work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2004), but also from that of their Italian comrades, such as Paolo Virno (2004; Virno & Hardt 1996), and from other, differently nuanced voices from within the autonomist lineage, such as those of Dorothy Kidd (2003), Massimo De Angelis (forthcoming), or the Midnight Notes (1992) collective. Poststructuralist philosophy is present in the ubiquitous influence of Michel Foucault (1977 1978) and Deleuze and Guattari (1983 1988), and also, more recently, of Giorgio Agamben (1992 2004). The tactical media practices are largely those born in the post-Seattle Indymedia explosion of the counter-globalization movement, but also reach back to earlier generations of alternative media, and forward into free and open-source software, peer-to-peer networks, and distributed computing. We are tempted to add some geographical references, and speak, as Bifo did in a conversation with one of us some years ago, of a convergence of Italian autonomism, French poststructuralism, and North American cyberactivism. But in fact part of what makes transversal media studies exciting is that all of these components have become transnationalized beyond Northern borders, and are now being remixed in Delhi, Buenos Aires, and Shanghai.

As a strategic orientation, 'transversal' refers to a radical political perspective stressing the powers emanating from below of multiple, laterally (and often tentatively) connected individuals and groups who are contesting global capitalism. Here it is important to note that the interactive and participatory form of contemporary networks disguise, partially, the vertical powers of neoliberal state and corporate command (see Bureau d'études 2003). But these vertical powers are nonetheless dependent on, and hence vulnerable to, desires and capacities within such networks for horizontal self-organization and species-life planning by counterpowers that have become irreversibly multiplicitous. Utilizing concepts as tools for opening thought to new possibilities for life, transversalism involves a mapping of the conflict of constituted and constituent powers on the mediascape. Brian Holmes (2003:141) provides a lucid statement of the aims of what we call transversal media studies when, in his discussion of the "flexible personality" generated by post-Fordist capitalism (the updated equivalent of the "authoritarian personality" described by Adorno in the 1950s), he remarks: "Those who admire the Frankfurt School or, closer to us, the work of Michel Foucault, can hardly refuse the challenge of bringing their analyses up to date, at a time when the new system and style of domination has taken on crystal clear outlines," but must "avoid the trap into which the Frankfurt School, in particular, seems to have fallen: the impasse of a critique so totalizing that it leaves no way out..."

Within this broad overview we specify four lines of inquiry or thematic interests recurrent within transversal media studies:

1. A dissection of the systems of communication, information networks, and modes of cultural production vital in the post-Berlin Wall complex of global power variously referred to as 'Empire' (Hardt & Negri 2000 2004) or 'networked capitalism' (Dean 2004; Terranova 2004).
2. An investigation of how, within such media systems, human capacities and sociability are subsumed by biopower; in particular, an examination of the 'im-material labour' question (Brophy 2004; Hardt & Negri 2000:290-94; Lazzarato 1996).
3. A critique of these media complexes based not so much—or only—on exposing the antithesis between the 'ideological' and the 'real,' but rather on tracking the political valency of their affective dimension, their modes of subjectivation, and the incessant traffic between the "virtual" and "actual" (Deleuze 2002; Masumi 2002).
4. Constructive, participatory analysis of the potentialities of tactical media and of collaborative creativity as partial elements of a social experiment for a planet beyond capital; in short, "exodus" (Virno 1996a).

Although asserting the importance of this current of thought we nonetheless want to do so in a non-rivalrous way. We are quite explicitly not declaring that transversal media studies displaces, say, the political economy of communication or cultural studies. Indeed, transversalism shares with those two traditions many affinities; as well, those traditions have themselves aided in opening a space for transversal media inquiry. Transversalism shares with political economy an analysis of the commodified organization of media, but focuses more strongly on counterpowers that challenge capitalist institutions from below. Transversal perspectives share cultural studies' attention to the subjectivity-producing activity of media and culture, but do so from a standpoint that emphasizes fluid multiplicity, dynamic becoming, and antagonistic capacities, rather than, say, identity formation. It undeniably overlaps both fields—and each does some things much better. We are, however, suggesting that transversal media studies manifests a new conjunction of intellectual, artistic, and political forces, a concatenation that is now generating a powerful conceptual lexicon. Our study of games of empire,

which we survey next, is an attempt to put this lexicon to work in a case study of a specific medium.

### **Games of Empire: Biopower at Play**

Just as the 18th century novel was a textual machine creating the bourgeois subjectivities requisite to an emergent mercantile society, and as television and film were vital to 20th century Fordism, so video and computer games are the media specifically exemplary of networked global capitalism. To designate the transnational order adequate to globalizing capitalism, Hardt and Negri (2000) boldly redefined the term 'empire' to refer to a universalizing yet decentered planetary regime operating through a hybrid, multilayered ensemble of political, military, corporate, and non-governmental organizations. Although we believe some of the many criticisms leveled against Hardt and Negri's account are correct—especially those taking to task their tendency to downplay the centrality to this order of the old-fashioned US 'imperialism' now so manifest in the George W. Bush administration's policies (Boron 2005; Harvey 2003)—we continue to use the concept of Empire to refer to the totalizing momentum of the world market in the twenty-first century.

The energies that Empire draws on exceed those that are traditionally covered by the term labour-power. Capital now taps psychophysical energies at multiple points: not just at work but also as consumerist consciousness, in (in)formal education and training, in style, language, and aptitudes, and even as a source of raw materials extracted in genetic engineering and medical innovation. Aimed at optimizing and managing myriad forms of life, 'biopower,' as we use the concept here, designates the subsumption, extraction, and harnessing of vital forces by capital in an era when it rules over social life in its entirety and swallows human subjectivity and nature (see Foucault 1977:135-145; Hardt & Negri 2000:22-27, 2004:93-5; Lazzarato 2002). As we mentioned earlier, of special importance to transversal media studies is the immaterial labour that produces flows of information, communication, and affect. The significance of immateriality to the wider mobilization of biopower is immediately grasped by thinking of how central media, marketing, communication, and surveillance are, not just in creating new commodities—such as video and computer games—but also in managing workplaces and influencing consumers. It is down the immaterial networks of communication that the tendrils of Empire's power stretch ubiquitously. It is, however, the very scope of biopower in the age of Empire that opens this system

of rule to a widening range of sites of contestation, as the counter-globalization and anti-war movements demonstrate.

We propose that digital games crystallize in a paradigmatic way the cultural, political, and economic forces of a global capitalist order based on the mobilization of biopower. Next, we outline six reasons for this claim: because of games' autonomous origins, world-market organization, immaterial production, machinic subjectivities, actualized virtualities, and subversive possibilities.

### Autonomous Origins

One of the distinctive features of transversal media studies is attention to the way technocultural innovations often emerge 'from below,' as manifestations of an autonomous invention power, and are only subsequently appropriated by capital—which then takes credit as the mother of all inventions. This dynamic of autonomous creativity and corporate capture was of central importance to the rise of gaming. With worldwide revenues of some \$25 billion, rivaling and synergistically integrated with the film and music industries, games are today a mammoth business (see Kline et al. 2003). But they were not invented by business. A genealogy of digital play reveals primitive interactive games, such as Spacewar, were created by bored Pentagon student-researchers in the 1960s (Kline et al. 2003:84-108). Liberated from within the military-industrial complex of the Cold War era, the earliest games were hacked, or accidental. This invention power was then captured by entrepreneurs such as Nolan Bushnell who founded the pioneering commercial video-game company, Atari, launching the multi-billion dollar interactive entertainment industry. But, as we discuss later, the progress of the industry continues to be propelled from below by the informal innovations of an expanding population of avid player-producers who 'mod' games (short for modification), archive abandonware, circulate shareware, and construct the virtual worlds of online games. These are all productive activities of "free labor" (Terranova 2000) that the game industry tolerates and, in many instances, nurtures, but it does so carefully as these activities are simultaneously symbiotic with and antagonistic to its commercial logic.

### World-Market Organization

Today the video and computer game business has a corporate structure and consumer population fit to the era of the world market. Although the interactive entertainment industry was launched from the US, in 1984 the North American market annihilated itself in a disastrous crash and the sector was revived by a triad of companies with roots in Japan—Nintendo, Sega, and, later,

Sony. The game industry evolved a set of complex trans-Pacific enterprise webs, which also rapidly spread across the Atlantic to involve European game producers, publishers, and players. Presently, the industry displays a triadic organization with distinct but interacting North American, European, and Asian hubs, a complex international division of labour, and an even more complex crossover of cultural styles. There are powerful game-development centres in Montréal, London, and Paris; South Korea is a centre of online gaming. Tokyo is as much a games Mecca as Los Angeles, but will soon be challenged by Shanghai. Hardware and software are exported and imported, legally and illegally, around the globe, from Moscow to Mexico City; we have seen sports video-games played in wooden bazaar stalls by impoverished children in the old Islamic quarter of Cairo, bootlegged copies of Halo 2 sold (at a tenth the price of originals) in underground bazaars of Delhi, and crowds of hundreds logging-on for virtual combat in cavernous Chinese gaming halls. As well, the game sector hosts some of networked capitalism's most powerful transnational corporations, from Microsoft to Electronic Arts and Sony, many of whom see gaming consoles as the portal to digital consumption in the 21st century.

### Immaterial Production

Making virtual worlds requires the combined skills of programmers, graphics designers, software testers, scriptwriters, animators, sound technicians, and musicians, working in studio conditions, over several years, with multi-million dollar budgets. In an attempt to harness this cooperative, creative labour, game development studios have constantly experimented with organizational forms—teams, charismatic leadership, ultra-flexible schedules, open-space work areas, flattened hierarchies, stock options, participative management, unregulated hours, and an ethos of “work as play” (de Peuter & Dyer-Witheford, forthcoming). These efforts have enjoyed considerable success, but have also generated new forms of disaffection and conflict in game studios, both over a lengthening of the working-day to perpetual ‘crunch-time’ proportions and over intellectual property rights. In many ways, the game development workforce is exemplary of the account provided by Lazzarato (1996) of the intellectual, affective, and communicational capacities of the immaterial labour required by post-Fordist capitalism. Moreover, the unpaid labour performed by participatory game-fan cultures is illustrative of what in transversal media studies is conceptualized as an increasingly boundless space of exploitation, with a blurring of the distinction between work and non-work time (Virno 2004:102-4). But it is important to add that the artistic and technical work performed in stylish studios rests on top of layers of more mundane, precarious labours, including the janitorial staff

who clean the studios, the electronics assembly workers putting together game consoles and computers in global maquiladora and free enterprise zones, and African child-miners who extract rare minerals such as the col-tan (columbine-tantalite) indispensable to the circuits of digital technology. Close examination of the division of game labour therefore affirms both the importance of immaterial labour and the latter's interdependence with continuing, often brutally exploitative, forms of all-too-material labour (Dyer-Witheford 2005).

Machinic Subjectivities

Using 'machine' in the sense given it by Deleuze and Guattari (1988), we look at the computers and consoles required for games not just as a collection of circuits and chips but as machines generating an arrangement of affects, capacities, and propensities in the subjectivity of its users. These include fundamental changes in the nature of the human, propelled by the techno-economic vectors of Empire: intimate relations with artificial intelligence, new rhythms and intensities of 24/7 involvement with machines, polyvalent cyborg subjectivity, and networked interactivity. These changes involve the gendering of subjects. It is two decades since Donna Haraway (1985) famously asserted the possibilities of 'cyborg' feminism. But a question confronting transversal media studies today may be why in the case of digital games—which provide informal apprenticeship in information technologies in general—the emergence of this female cyborg is so slow. Much of the enthusiasm in the mid-1990s about 'girl-games' has collapsed (Cassell & Jenkins 1998; Laurel 2001). Although more women are gaming—particularly in networked computer games—their engagement as players, and even more so as game developers, has advanced at a rate almost glacial compared to the whirlwind social transformations of which global capital is capable.

Drawing on the work of feminist autonomist Marxists (Dalla Costa & Dalla Costa 1995; Fortunati 1995; Kidd 2003) and Deleuzian feminists (Buchanan & Colebrook 2000; Griggers 1997), we argue that, historically, the game console has figured as a machine for the production of masculinized subjectivity. Accredited layers of military ancestry, targeted marketing strategy, violent affectivity, and the gendered organization of uninterrupted leisure time have made it, in many ways, a 'toy for the boys' (see Kline et al. 2003:246-68). Indeed, the console is today one of the social machines that construct gender as a binary system. Always contested, this gendered constitution of the gamer has nonetheless proved very durable; whether it continues to be so, or gives way to a regime in which digital play is an ingredient of the new "becoming woman" that Camille Griggers (1997) sees in process within imperial capitalism, depends on con-

tests over biopower's gendered segmentation of productive, reproductive, and consumptive forces, both within the game industry and in the wider institutions of Empire.

### Actualized Virtualities

The 'virtual' worlds of video and computer games both spin-off from and feed into the 'actualities' of imperial biopower, creating imaginary simulations (but also concrete technological tools) that at once reflect, produce, and reinforce the subjectivities required by its military, economic, and political apparatuses. We highlight three sites of virtual-actual encounter on the gamescape: war, accumulation, and biotechnology.

### War



Full Spectrum Warrior

The most evident instance of the centrality of games to Empire is their integration with what James Der Derian (2001) terms MIMENET, or the Military Industrial Media Entertainment Network. No one who has followed the burgeoning literature on virtual war (Burston 2003; Crandall 2004; Lenoir 2000; Stockwell & Muir 2003) will be surprised that the Pentagon has commissioned the developers of *There*, a massively multiplayer online game, to build a virtual carbon copy of planet Earth, starting with Kuwait City; estimated time to completion of the total global model is two years. Other notable instances of the intersection of virtual and actual war include the US Army's widely discussed online computer game, *America's Army*, launched in 2002 to recruit young Americans with no experiential connection to war, but plenty to video-games; *Kuma Reality Games*,

an online gaming service that invites subscribers to ‘re-live’ military news—an attack on Al Qaeda in the Afghan mountains, the capture of Saddam Hussein, or the assault on Fallujah—in the form of ‘playable missions’; and Full Spectrum Warrior, a dual purpose military-commercial co-production sponsored by the Institute for Creative Technologies, an institutional nexus for entertainment industry collaboration with the Pentagon, that allows civilian gamers to experience simulations used for Army training. The Department of Defense Game Development Community, supported by DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), currently lists some forty games ‘custom made’ for military purposes, about twenty-five ‘off-the-shelf’ products considered useful, as well as several mods, confirming that militarized gaming is a central part of what Der Derian terms “a new configuration of virtual power” or what Hardt and Negri (2004:41) dub the “military-vital complex.”

### Accumulation



Grand Theft Auto:Vice City

It is not just war games that are symptomatic of Empire, but also and equally the ludic entrepreneurialism of Roller Coaster Tycoon, the manic acquisitiveness of Pokemon, or The Sims’ interpellation of players as omni-acquisitive design-conscious middle-class consumers. These games, themselves a major consumer commodity, are manifestly about learning habits and logics of accumulation. This pedagogy extends even to apparently transgressive games. Grand Theft Auto:Vice City is set in the mid-1980s, the Ronald Reagan era of neoliberalism, against the backdrop of the city of Miami, Florida. The game is designed around a story and mission structure of progress through a crime syndicate that mirrors ladder-like advancement and promotion through a corporate hierarchy, or

a kind of 'extreme capitalism' where mastering the city as market territory and networking is of fundamental importance. In its economic imperative, brutal violence, and satirical commentary on contemporary America, *Vice City* is a contribution to the "cynicism" that Virno (2004) lists as one of the "emotional tonalities" of the multitude today. The complexities of the virtual-actual interaction become manifold in the Grand Theft Auto (GTA) series: Rockstar Games, the developer of the franchise, turned sagas of property-violating criminality into a major marketing strategy, and, in the process, generated a moral panic over the alleged corrupting effects of its virtual worlds, a panic that, in the recent 'Hot Coffee' furor over sex-scenes buried in *GTA: San Andreas*, generated Rockstar's own very actual near-criminalization and loss of stock-market value.

### Biotechnology



Evolva

Here by biotechnology we mean all the radical 'life science' changes, from xeno-transplants to performance-altering drugs to cyborg prosthesis that is the cutting-edge of techno-capitalism today. Genetic engineering is the explicit topic of games like *Evolva* and *Impossible Creatures*. Biopower is also the theme explored within a number of role-playing games that are set in fantastical, and apparently archaic worlds. These seem like nostalgic throwbacks to fairy-tale or feudal realms. But alongside the orcs, elves, wizards, beast-people, and chimeras of games like *Morrowind* or *Neverwinter Nights* are also, we argue, very contemporary notions of species-alteration that are the ultimate destination in capital's designs on biopower. These games, with their flexible menu-driven character design, 'leveling up' attributes for health, intelligence, will-power, perpetual purchase of self enhancements, and teams composed of complemen-

tarily specialized bio-classes are parables of the dynamics of an emergent order where success in work, career, and life depend on perpetual market-governed self-modification. Indeed, massively multiplayer role-playing games such as *Everquest*, *World of Warcraft*, or *Guild Wars*, provide perhaps the most complete illustrations of Empire's mobilizations of biopower. For, as Edward Castronova (2001) has analyzed, in these games the interactions of millions of chimerical avatars—usually, as the games titles suggest, heavily based on war, combat, and primitive-accumulation style looting—generates 'in real life' economic effects by producing virtual assets tradable for actual money. These markets then in turn spawn game-play sweatshops in Mexico and Eastern Europe where corporeal cyborg-workers labour for long hours to accumulate magic swords, mystic castles, and mage characters for sale to affluent Northern players, creating a fully-circular, and fully-marketized, loop between actual and virtual capital (Thompson 2005).

Of course, our trinity of themes—war, accumulation, biotechnology—does not encompass everything about games; just a lot, highlighting their virtual rehearsal of the primary actualities of Empire—shopping, with violence, by mutants.

### **Subversive Possibilities**

Soldier in the war against terrorism, risk-taking corporate tycoon, acquisitive suburban consumer, self-augmenting mutant in the market for upgrades... Checking off 'imperial' subject-positions in the digital games output is depressingly easy. More challenging, more inspiring, and more the point of transversal media studies, is to find aspects of game culture that contest the current global order: virtualities for alternative actualities. Are there games of "counter-Empire"? (Hardt & Negri 2000:205) We return here to Hardt and Negri's account of Empire as a thoroughly ambivalent system that cultivates the very creative and cooperative capacities it also has to repress and contain—a kind of sorcerer's apprentice that conjures up forces it cannot fully control. It was to name this uncontainable aspect that they developed the concept of "the multitude" (Hardt & Negri 2004). The multitude is the antagonistic subject of Empire—the insurgent constituent power struggling within and against capitalism's global order to create a more democratic and just society.

We find on the margins of game culture a diversity of multitudinous experiments which are opening up alternate possibilities for the medium. These experi-

riments include: (1) re-appropriation, where peer-to-peer networks and 'warez' cultures are the leading edge of subversions of intellectual property rights; (2) autonomous production, where hackers, game mod-ers, and open-source programmers create a digital game commons, hinting at possibilities for an open culture of game-content creation against the proprietorial boundaries of a corporate model; (3) minority experiment, where feminist new media artists are a particularly strong force, critiquing and reinventing the symbolic and affective uses of this medium; and (4) tactical media, where the media activists of Seattle and Genoa seize gaming as a tool for the circulation of struggle, showing that digital play, like other commercial media, now refuses to stay circumscribed within the predictable bounds of market logic. Often sharply departing from the complex of militarist, capitalist, and cyborg spectacles that tend to characterize gaming, these cells of gaming activity are opening the medium towards what autonomists term processes of "self-valorization," (Dyer-Witheford 1999:68), what Guattari (1995) termed a new "ethico-aesthetic paradigm," or, simply, the



OUT



Escape from Woomera

production of new subjectivities whose desires, capacities, and collaborations clash with those of Empire.

For example, a group called Open Sorcery interrupts the popular online counter-terrorism game Counter-Strike with virtual anti-war protests and, in a project called OUT: Operation Urban Terrain, beamed their ludic brand of anti-war theatrics into the street protest at the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York; an Australian group has developed *Escape from Woomera*, a mod in which the player breaks out from a refugee detention camp; the Italian media collective *Molleindustria* has made short web games that deal sardonically with the precarious workers of post-Fordism; and Eastwood Real Time Strategy Group has used game-modeling technology to map the cartography of

high-tech global capitalism. This last project, ironically named *Civilization IV: Age of Empire*, includes on its map the ‘military-entertainment complex,’ ‘immaterial labour,’ and ‘governmentality.’ This snapshot of dissident game activity shows us that transversal theory, game development, and the dissemination of immaterial-labour skills into autonomous zones are beginning to feed into and spiral round one another, creating new arenas of conflict.

## **Conclusion: Games of Exodus**

But is it possible to envisage more radical horizons for interactive games than sporadic insubordination—to go beyond counter-empire to “exodus” (Virno 1996a) from Empire, where games might make a contribution to an escape option that would build more just, participatory, and equitable societies? Perhaps. Consider that many digital games are a ludic exploration of the possibilities of collective human development, up to and including fundamental socio-economic, environmental, and biological alterations. Simulation virtually rehearses options—tactical, strategic, and societal—in preparation for concrete actualization. This is a capacity that passes into popular pedagogy via games that contain popularized versions of technologies today used managerially, militarily, and politically to make critical social decisions about resource allocation and human trajectory. These technologies have been made available to the multitude only as a matter of play, as fantasy. Yet one might conceive of such media in a context where networked simulation is not just a matter of entertainment, but a component of ‘real life’ societal self-organization. It is, in fact, hard to envisage what form a twenty-first century post-socialism might take other than a distributed but interconnected system of communication devoted to solving problems of material and immaterial resource allocation. Can we imagine a world in which the capacities honed by generations of young people informally trained in *Civilization* or *Rome: Total War* find a place in the widespread participatory planning of economic and environmental possibilities? This would be a collective-intelligence corollary to an emergent sense of “species-being” (Dyer-Witheford 2004; Marx 1964). It would be a contribution to a multitudinous application of “general intellect” (Virno 1996b)—one devoted to confronting species-level societal and ecological problems that the present global order seems so unable to address: not games of empire, but games with a world to win. Exploring such possibilities—those of “the reversal of biopower into biopolitics” (Lazzarato 2002: 111)—is what ultimately drives transversal media studies’ confrontation with our present.

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## Prosumers of Second Life unite!

Excerpt from fourth editorial meeting, 8 December 2005



Snapshot from meeting

**Usagi Musashi:** *Humans need an outlet of sorts to release our inner most needs. For example, a club owner might want to own a club to be in power over others. To feel bigger than life. Well this is Virtual Reality, so it's ok. But the problem is they lose touch with the real world. Some larger club owners here think it's real life. Hence they control the staff and its members in ways that are sickening.*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *I think it's a general challenge to stay in touch with bigger contexts for people, also in fist life.*

**Usagi Musashi:** *They have power and Linden Lab [the company that owns and manages Second Life] lets them do what they want, because it boosts the amount of people they can get in the game. I look at Linden Lab as a business form. Not because I make money. But because Linden Lab uses the members for their advantage. They use members as assets. And ask members to do things for them based on their location in the world....*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *How is that?*

**Usagi Musashi:** *Well, if Linden Lab is getting 10 million in development money why*

can't they pay these people instead of using the, "Body for dollar"

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Have you been asked to do things for them Usagi?

**Usagi Musashi:** Yes a few times. I was asked to help build the Asian (Japanese sim) but they refused to hire me in real life

**Hiro Pendragon:** According to Linden Lab recently, they spend a majority of money reinvesting in staff growth

**Usagi Musashi:** Hiro, yes I know. But point is they use the members any way they can.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** So what did you tell them Usagi?

**Usagi Musashi:** Well, I ignored their message and thought they had a lot of balls to ask us to build for free and not hire sub-contactors to do the work

**Hiro Pendragon:** Linden Lab was explaining that they run in the red – but it's a controlled growth, and only in the red because they are growing, not because they can't make money. But running in the red means not much money for developers. That's definitely something I want to change. I want developers to come together and provide common resources. Maybe a legal organization that can offer legal representation on demand.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Maybe it's time to form a union for exploited workers in Second Life?

**Hiro Pendragon:** Financial advice / backing. I wouldn't say we're exploited. And I'd say that definition is far too large – we can't be grouping scripters and builders with... say, dancers. The dancers need their own union ;)

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Or section of the same union.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Have you worked for the lindens Hiro?

**Hiro Pendragon:** I volunteered with quality assurance back in version 1.6 testing. I found it to be worthwhile to see how Linden Lab operates, but it was a huge deal of stress, no pay, and no acknowledgement of the contributions I made – which includes

changing some of the quality assurance process itself.

**Sorgaard Jacques:** Sounds like a union will be needed...

**Usagi Musashi:** I think there will be. Why not. They are using us and making X amounts in Real Life on us.

**Hiro Pendragon:** To me, Linden Lab has sort of two tiers. There's the Linden Lab "we have stock options waiting for us, we make decisions". And then there's Linden Lab "We love Second Life so much that we bust our rear ends underpaid"

**Sorgaard Jacques:** Yepp...agree with you Hiro

**Usagi Musashi:** I really do enjoy this game/life. But what they are doing with members, over-working us at times is just unfair

**MichaelJohn Turner:** This is about consumers feeling like unpaid producers?

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Yes, and it's something which extends way beyond Second Life. The whole notion of "prosumers"

**Hiro Pendragon:** It's so true though, Second Life is an awesome prosumer tool. Instant access to audience, very low cost, and near-pro level of control.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** "awesome prosumer tool" – yes – but it's easy to feel exploited when you understand that you are the product. Kind of like when they asked you to work for free Usagi...

**Usagi Musashi:** Yes Voyeur... I mean at first I thought WOW I get to help out. After running around without having control. To start dealing with problems. I thought Oh My God this is nuts

**MichaelJohn Turner:** We are the product hmm...

**Usagi Musashi:** WE ARE THE MAIN CONTENT. When Linden Lab sells off Second Life, we are the asset to be sold

**jesz Murakami:** Again, if you can't transform it you are contained by it.

## The laws of digital world autonomy

From Flack Attack

Authors: Mattia de Bernardis // Carlo Giordano

According to the etymology, the word autonomy is composed from two Greek words, autòs and nomòs, respectively meaning (roughly) oneself and law. Basically, it describes the possibility to live within the laws we prescribe to ourselves (which does not necessarily imply to abide by them: that would further limit autonomy)[1]. It should be distinguished from the concept of freedom because it is more technical and finite. Freedom could be conceived as “total autonomy” and, as such, a rhetorical, mystical concept that cannot be used operatively. According to a French writer, in Chinese language, freedom and autonomy are expressed almost with the same composed “word”, Dz'-youè. Dz' can be conceived as “I, my self”; youè can be translated as “origin”[2]: so, basically, “I am my own origin”. Chinese culture, he adds, conceives excesses of freedom/autonomy rather as a threat than an opportunity. The Italian writer Berardinelli adds that, while following self-governing principles, nations usually create wars and slavery (as new limitations of autonomy...). In some way, it is similar when we criticize a poor level of interactivity in a media artwork: we must always keep in mind that a concept of total interactivity does not pertain to the human being itself[3]. By recognizing autonomy as a concept containing, in it, its own (I would say technical) limitation, we decided then to prescribe autonomy its own laws in the digital realm.

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## First law of digital world autonomy

Every text is an idle machine[4], meaning it waits for someone to put it to work and produce its meanings. This implies that no digital world can be fully autonomous from its readers/agents (at least from its Model Readers/Agents, if not its empirical ones). It is disputable whether real world itself is autonomous from its

readers/agents (does a tree falling in an uninhabited forest produce any sound at all?). It follows that agents can never demonstrate the autonomy of the world (see below). However, readers/agents in their turn are never fully autonomous from the digital world they're exploring: the readers are constrained by the substance of the expression (see below) and by the risk of a total deconstructionism of the content, the agents because of the inherent dependency of action from the context where it takes place[5].

## **Second law of digital world autonomy**

As a consequence of the first law, all autonomy is but an illusion (impression) of autonomy. Since real world seems to display the only full-fledged autonomy (which violates first law), the more effective the impression of autonomy a digital world gives its reader/agent, the more realistic (i.e. the more similar to real world) it looks like. Note that this is true only for situations we already have knowledge of in real world. For instance, it is more likely we will feel autonomous when killing an automaton with a laser gun, rather than when talking to him about our sentimental affairs. What textual strategies are at work inside a digital world to create an illusion of autonomy? What are the distinguishing features of an autonomous digital world?

## **Markers of the limitations of autonomy for agents**

It would be hard to define levels and thresholds of autonomy in this case; we will start then from the borders, when the agent perceives absence, or, at least, severe limitations to its autonomy. For sake of exemplification, we use examples out of *The Truman Show*, exploring the way in which Truman, the protagonist, realizes that he is not the autonomous agent he has always believed he was, throughout all of his life.

Basically, we found limitations to autonomy in the repeating pattern, i.e. when we perceive loops, recurrent paths in movements, be them physical, psychological, spatial etc. The strength of loop in destroying the illusion of autonomy is enormous: after discovering loops Truman cannot suppress anymore his suspects. On the level of limitations to movements, in the basic videogame *Pac Man*, the agent has only four choices: to move up, down, left or right. On the contrary Truman has almost the freedom of movement of any human being (except when he tries to reach the limits of the world-text, which is spatially forbidden to him). Nevertheless, Truman does not seem to show a higher freedom

of psychological, “existential”, movement. Following with his telltale example, the stage floodlight falling from the sky is suspected as well to be a reduction of autonomy, to the eyes of the agent. This is because the technical error, i.e. the bug, is a discontinuity that implies quitting representation, while at the same time marking the emergence of the “textual machine” (which has to remain hidden) on the stage of action. In other words, the text pursues the strategy of creating a perceptual continuity to render otherwise discrete elements. This is basically what happens in many of today’s ideological apparatuses: for instance, in standard Internet browser, which renders the experience of a flow out of discrete, separate objects[6].

Also, presence/absence of “other minds”: the existence and the intelligent behaviour of other agents, no matter if human directed or simulated by a software, is crucial for an agent to give impression of living in an autonomous situation, because it adds a strategic complexity to its behaviour. If Truman were born in a world of unintelligent robots, he would have been forced to realize, sooner or later, that he was imprisoned in a world asking him a fixed behaviour. Being as he is in company with so many real persons (which he assumes to have his identical experience of the world) is one of the most important features in his assuredness about the autonomy of his life.

It’s likely that what it takes for an agent to be autonomous in a digital world is just what it takes him to be autonomous in the real world: when you happen to fall in a loop in your real world experience, you feel trapped in a completely mechanical universe. In a digital world this feeling is emphasized by an unrealistic perceptual appearance and the dependence from the technological code of the substance of the expression (see below). Is there a simple relation of symmetry between the agent’s autonomy and the world’s autonomy? On the one hand, if you and your baker repeat the same actions everyday, both you and the world you are in do not seem to be very autonomous; on the other hand, an agent seems capable of real autonomy only if the world where it operates reacts to its actions in a way which is inscrutable and autonomous to the agent himself. A two-way relation, however, doesn’t seem to hold: you can be free even in a world which does not allow you to be that (for example, in school or in the army), or, on the contrary, you can be totally deprived of autonomy in a context which is completely autonomous both from you and from any other agent (for example, a castaway on a rock).

When there’s such an asymmetry of autonomy between agent and world, this

happens because the agent is either more or less than adequately competent (in a broad, semiotic, sense) for the world he/she is in[7]. If we could always put ourselves on the level of the agent presupposed by the world for its right functioning (the Model Agent), we would never feel like we or the world or both of us are not autonomous. Pac Man doesn't really feel trapped in a simplistic and auto-referential world[8]! It is perfectly possible that real world itself, which appears to us so balanced between its own and our autonomy, gives us this impression only because we are not enough semiotically skilled to realize the broader, higher level textual world we are encapsulated in. So in the end, we (human beings) as agents are too over skilled in the real world not to notice occasional absences of autonomy; and at the same time, we are too under skilled to grasp how far these may get.

The theory of an eternal recurrence[9] - implicit when assuming a finite number of "atoms" combining, therefore, in a finite number of ways - could never be verified by agents. On the level of real world as text, we lack a "play time" long enough to verify whether patterns repeat exactly. On the level of real world agents, we lack a sufficiently high "resolution" (meaning our frequency during conversion from continuous states to discrete) in order to identify these possibly existent minimal unities (at every level, from physical particles to personal and public stories, events).

### **Markers of autonomy for readers**

On the level of content: quotes, tropes, experimentalisms, post-modernism and such are all ways to make clear to the reader the possibilities he/she always has to interpret the meaning of the text in complete autonomy, even ending in a complete deconstructionism. On this level, every interpretation of meaning lead by fixed rules is self-imposed, thus intrinsically free.

On the level of expression, on the contrary, the reader has to scan the perceptual appearance of the text, completely dependent on the substance of the expression, i.e. the medium. Every medium has a built in "technological code", i.e. the set of previous knowledge you need to have in order to give sense to its perceptual appearance: for a written text, you need to know how to read, while for a movie you can use your normal perceptual competence in order to see objects and movement (but you need to learn the syntax of editing and cadrage, for example). Digital media address the task of freeing the reader from the technological code of the expression in two ways:

- By structuring information in a shape that simulates human thinking's own architecture. This is possible thanks to the expressive potential of information technologies now available (hypertexts, databases, cyberspaces and so on). The aim here is to attain a second-level autonomy: express meaning and contents in exactly the same way it is stored and manipulated in our minds. The autonomy thus is not seen as freedom from technological code (which can be, on the contrary, quite elaborated), but as direct isomorphism of the content expressed to mental content.

- By simulating our perceptive experience of natural world. The idea is to dis- solve technological codes in the most basic semiotic skill a human being has: understanding the world around him[10].

This second path is evidently at work in most of the digital media (particularly in videogames). The simulation of real world perception is, for the reader, what the autonomy of action in an autonomous environment is for an agent. Since, normally, in digital worlds the reader has the possibility to be an agent (and an agent has to be also a reader), no autonomy can be reached without both of these ingredients. Similarly, many of the observations we made on the markers of autonomy for agents are, *mutatis mutandis*, relevant to the discussion of the autonomy for the readers, seen as independence from technological code of expression. For example, it is clear that a main issue here is the more or less accurate continuity of figurative features in perceptual appearance (from forest to tree, branch, leaf, grain of the leaf) pushed to the limits of "normal" perception. Here it holds the same point of adequate semiotic competence seen before for agents: readers could not be able to perceive the difference, to spot a "low resolution" if they are under skilled, or they are not given enough time etc. Basically, it is the case of the Eliza software for psychoanalysis tests: in five minutes, people sometimes could not manage to understand whether, on the others side of the screen, stood a real psychologist (a reader) or a machine (an agent). Think about a 3D graphics whose resolution is so high and neat it cannot be distinguished from real world graphics. Others features a digital world must display, to give the reader the illusion of autonomy (always an illusion of it, as the second law goes) seem to be: - Multi-sensoriality - Variability of the enunciation markers (example: variable point of view) - Continuity among texts, which is properly the phenomenon called intertext[11]; continuity and multi-sensoriality are preserved, in a digital world, through the common digital code underlying different medias; - Fluid and real time movement.

## Autonomy for worlds

Digital world can be autonomous towards:

- Readers (see up)

- Agents (see up)

- Real World. On the one hand, the “autonomist” utopia goes towards a possible, total autonomy of the digital world. But this is common to all worlds that are, as texts, implicitly separate from real world. Digital world instead is as real as the real world, thus creating not autonomy, but a more complex dialectic (see, for instance, all the questions related to currencies in note 11).

No mention has been made in this article about what is perhaps the most central issue about autonomy for secondlife inhabitants: is it possible for Second Life avatars to achieve a complete autonomy in their Second Life actions, such as it can never be attained by real people in real world? This issue has not been addressed for three reasons: (1) it is treated extensively in many other contributions, written by people far more experienced in Second Life than ourselves. (2) It requires, to be interesting, that all the issues about “technical” autonomy and likeness to real world life that we have discussed are solved: Pac Man is not an avatar for whom it makes sense to argue whether he is more or less autonomous than his real world player. However, we believe that a good comprehension of the semiotic basic mechanisms for digital world autonomy is essential for any discussion about upper level (and perhaps more philosophically glamorous) autonomy of avatars. (3) The philosophical hypothesis about a new world where it can be possible to create a totally free, autonomous society is a utopia. This does not mean that it is futile or unintelligent to discuss about it. It simply means that it does not exist, and will never exist. Every realized utopia breaks down very soon or becomes rather quickly a frightening dystopia, as we should know by now (after Sade, Orwell, etc. etc.). We prefer to discuss something that it is there (and will always be there) such as the technical and semiotic constraints for autonomy illusions in digital (and real) worlds, rather than concentrate on something that is not there and never could be. This is purely due to a lack of philosophical imagination on our side, of course: the need for a completely free world where to live in complete autonomy from limitations of all kind is a very deep-rooted, existential need for everyone of us, and it would be stupid to ignore it. Can Second Life become a place of total autonomy in this

utopian sense? From a purely theoretical point of view the answer is simple: no. But theoretics miss completely the point here: walking towards an unreachable place does not mean to walk in vain.

Bologna-Milano, 19 December 2005 In progress

## Notes

1. A basic example: a Republic governing with laws prescribed by itself.
2. Interestingly, the original pictogram, later evolved, was a grain.
3. Basic test: try to quit the room and fly...
4. See Umberto Eco [1979].
5. The only way for an agent to be completely free from its environment is probably to dismiss any will to do something, thus becoming an ascetic and consequently no more of an agent or, at best, an agent in a indeterminate passive state.
6. Alex Galloway [2004] has described many of these “techniques of continuity” that could be applied as well to videogames, virtual and real worlds: concealing the source (the algorithm for videogames), eliminate dead links (bugs, after all), eliminate “no links” (dead ends with no links to other pages, thus showing the spatial boundaries of the net), etc... These are used by apparatuses like capitalism, Hollywood, etc.
7. Where “adequately” means “like the Model Agent”.
8. On the other hand, the Model Agent of consumerist societies is still dramatically closer to Pac Man than to modern games like The Sims: following fixed paths, eating what it has been prescribed to, escaping from the bad guys etc...
9. The theory was conceived by Nietzsche. See Borges, “History of Eternity”.
10. Though we are not explicitly referring to it, you may notice an apparent similarity between these two strategies and the two symbolic forms described in Manovich, *The Language of New Media* [2001].
11. In the specific case of Second Life, apparently the change between currencies reduces Second Life’s autonomy from real world; the Linden Dollar is directly dependant from the U.S. Dollar. Paradoxically, however, if we think of currency as a “consensual hallucination”, with no real counterpart (like it could have been in the years of Bretton Woods gold exchangeability), it is this continuity with the real world that propagates reality through Second Life.

## **quest for autonomy in the datascape and landscape**

From Flack Attack

The two-sided development of physical and digital autonomy in terms of movement through space, identity, and interactivity is fascinating. In the digital world we increasingly have access to virtual reality, artificial intelligence, online communities and collaborations, open source software. In the physical world these digital augmentation tools available to us in cheaper, smaller, more mobile and wearable forms every year allow us (for instance) extended data availability, connectivity, and locatability. The result is an ever increasing augmented reality, with the digital fusing into the physical, and a greater range of choices to be made.

In regards to the online virtual world of Second Life, the media are very excited about the ability to create objects, by its members as well as by the community as a whole. The even bigger news story is that these digital creations can be sold, resulting in an economy that crosses the border of the virtual world in the exchange of real world cash. But as some Second Life participants are enhancing their autonomy by creating income and jobs, based on the objects and services they are able to create and sell in this online community, could it be that at the same they are losing datascape autonomy, as the digital becomes secondary to the age old mercantile system? Can a greater range of options supercede such contextualizations and considerations?

Second Life also seems to allow the erasure of a real world identity into a malleable online life. The question is: does this creation of a new identity make a greater autonomy in the second world alone or does it also bleed over into physical world constructs and psychological well being?

There was a moment on a space shuttle flight in the 1980's when an astronaut needed to fix a broken bay door. He headed out to accomplish his task with two cords connecting him to data and to the shuttle interior. One cord was a power cord for the computer on his back and the other was his oxygen line. The former head of NASA in the documentary "Machine Dreams" argued that this was the first true cyborg. There were two lines that sustained life. The astronaut could not have completed the task without the computer, and the computer needed him; in tandem, man and machine worked simultaneously in a free float in space. This saved the mission.

The man/machine dichotomy goes back to early 1920's films intercutting between wheels and gears and the human form in motion and Vertov's "Man With a Movie Camera" (1929). These precedents apply to the current state of man/machine, but now the augmentation is much more layered and complex, with functionality far beyond simple task completion. The issue is now of how experience, reality, interaction and body are to become increasingly augmented and existing in hybrid spaces. How will identity shift and resonate? How has this begun in Second Life both in augmentation/alteration/deconstruction of self and the effects this ability and experiential interface has in a person's non augmented daily actions and sense of self? Is autonomy enhanced by the ability to move in digital spaces and the increasingly augmented physical world, but also to leave, to choose?

Is this a new augmentation of free will?

jeremy hight

(edits by Michael Smit and jeremy hight)

### **Talk: quest for autonomy in the datascape and landscape**

From Flack Attack

What is 'autonomy' in the datascape and landscape? Is it the ability to move from the one space to the other, or of the one to affect the other? Or can it exist separately, it being desirable but not always evident in either?

We seem to have a certain economical autonomy, in both the landscape and datascape. We possess the ability to earn and spend money in both; and Second Life and U.S. dollars can be exchanged into either currency. To some extent Second Life is a welfare state since it is possible, once admitted, to survive in SL without further income beyond the monthly allowance, although it does limit your choices. If you take the time, many things can be found or created for free, and the same time can be invested in the creation of objects or services for sale. Time then is the truly autonomous currency of Second Life. Just as, I would argue, it is in Real Life.

An autonomy of Space & Movement is less established in Second Life. Those without the skill at, or access to the Poser software needed to create new

animations, are limited to the free or purchased ones. But these are the movements of the marionette. I would love to be able to stroke the cheek of a lover, to pick a flower, even to walk with that slight limp caused by an early and curtailed running career. Sadly, there is no control other than choice from the pre-conceived. I know of citizens with real life impairments who are liberated by Second Life. They can walk, run, dance and fly. Others wish to renew their disability (Autonomy in physical (dis)ability) in the virtual world, as it is part of them. Part of who they are. And something it is hard to be without, it has such a defining role.

We have an autonomy of identity in Second Life, as we will never have in the real world. Many seasoned Second Lifers have 'alts', extra avatars that allow them to be many personas. I personally find this hard to grasp. I have striven to make my avatar as much like me as in real life. It seems dishonest to do otherwise. However, I know that this is my inheritance from real life. It is part of my identity that is hard to relinquish. So, again both real life and Second Life do not make a substitute for knowing or moulding yourself.

Having said all this, there is nothing superficial in Second Life that wasn't that way already. And no act of creation or exploration leaves the agent unchanged. Maybe the ultimate autonomy is to decide how much of the second life is part of the first, and vice versa.

DoctorMike Soothsayer  
(edits by Michael Smit)



# C'est un secret public: nous nous engageons pour la sécurité d'Atlantique.

Afin d'aider l'Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord (OTAN) à garantir sa sécurité au 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle, la Principauté de Sealand offre aujourd'hui son assistance. Située à six milles nautiques du territoire Britannique, Sealand est l'emplacement idéal pour le futur quartier général de crise de l'OTAN. Nous sommes connectés. Nous sommes éloignées. Nous sommes autonomes. Nous sommes ouverts aux propositions. Et nul n'a besoin de le savoir.



**Principality of Sealand. Mainport to Imagination.**

## **Autonomy and the constellations of Identity**

From Flack Attack

The concept of autonomy has so long been of constellations and form. The individual identity is such a composite of information, influence, location, internal processing, perspective, movement and how this all interconnects. The crowd of self is a concept in psychology that looks at how indecision, passivity, confident and/or strong action are all composite actions culled from past experiences, memories and events. The indecision is argued to be from differing experiences, what was learned or what was damaging from the experiences, from different perspectives from varying periods of related confidence or insecurity, and the complexity of making a tough decision. Autonomy is also sculpted by many external factors, controls and limitations that can be social, political, physical and situational.

I was born with Cerebral Palsy and was expected to never walk. My parents were brave and took a chance on pioneering surgery that literally rebuilt my foot from within (I had a severe club foot). It worked and although I wore leg braces as a boy and didn't walk until 3 and a half and in a hospital hallway with nervous nurses cheering and I have some leg damage and scarring, I am ambulatory. I have long had an awareness of the societal paradigms of perceived autonomy by the semiotics of body and physicality, and the divide between this and the autonomy of many individuals. The limitations laid upon the physically challenged are more often institutional, perceptual and monetary than personal and physical. My mother had severe multiple sclerosis and was bedridden for almost 20 years. She was mentally as alert and brilliant as always until near her death, but was seen by many as more childlike and the affected speech pattern alteration of how some spoke to her was an insult to her intelligence. Her identity was not defined by her body, but the short hand semiotics of assumption, discomfort, fear, misunderstanding as prejudice.

We are lightning in a piece of meat in a sense; the electro-chemical impulses, memory, thoughts and action emanate from within the brain like lightning inside. We are also an accumulation of memories, experiences, shifts in perspective, context and of body. The body is seen as a major part of identity, yet it also can be seen as a collection of functions, task completing tools, simple to complex functionality to fight or flee danger, find and consume food, sleep and to allow the mind and internal being to function and grow in time.

I am ambulatory, qualify for a handicap parking sticker, have a deformed leg and permanent scars, and am 6-2 270 pounds, with a sensitive and once painfully shy disposition, am an academic/artist/writer. The assumptions over the years were that I was surely a football player or bouncer before my mouth opened and words came out even as I saw myself more like an 18 year old woody allen. Others knew me as over the phone, letters, etc (the earlier forms of text and non body identity before the net was public) and painted me in as their own personality, temperament and sensitivity saw fit. Others saw my limp, my bad leg and the scars up the back and saw an other, to see as less than or as some form of being that was defined by hardship at all times ( as though this leg was my body, and as though it was more severe than it was).

The Autonomy came to be from accepting these constellations and seeming oppositions as one joined entity and leaving it at that. The world of Second Life is full of possibility and danger in terms of malleability of identity. The points earned by appearance rating can be akin to societal and peer pressure and I have seen in the game world first hand how it has taken some autonomy away from avatar/people clearly worried, nervous and unsure as to their well being and approval in the second world. To earn points is to earn approval. This creates hierarchy, expectations, less and more as fluid concepts of opinion yet tangibly important.

Body of data, of pixels, of zeroes and ones as biological material, is already free from human body perception and its potential for assumption and bias. Will there be a disabled/differently abled avatar? More importantly, how would they (we/I) rate in a game world judged partially by appearance? To escape is a longstanding form of freedom, but what of transposing? Would the wheelchair/cane/limp etc. get pity points, curiosity, a lesser than sense of appearance as the body options in the game/world engine would be limited and semiotically reconfigured?

The autonomy in dreams has long been the fodder for literature and film. The hybrid world of second life is fascinating as it allows this loss of body semiotic as much or more so than that of the ambulatory. The complexity of identity and self is of constellations of self. Autonomy also, like all words and the multiplicity of contexts and definition shadings is a bit malleable, but choice, interaction, expression and paths in time and landscape composited by decisions and action are essential readings and resonances of the word and its related concepts. The ability to make decisions, weigh options, create progressions; this is the making

of identity and presence regardless of if it is in the physical world, digital or in both.

Jeremy Hight

An interesting book that may shed light on thinking about Autonomy in the context of an international virtual collaboration space such as SL is "The Geography of Thought" - How Asians and Westerners think differently...and why. Reviewed here:<http://www.mindspring.com/~kimall/Reviews/geothought.html>

Komuso Tokugawa

## Avatar identity

Excerpt from fifth editorial meeting, 11 December 2005

**Gonta Maltz:** *Would it be wrong to believe everyone in this circle has modeled their avatar at least somewhat from their real life self?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *In my case, an interpretation of an idea.*

**jesz Murakami:** *Which avatar?*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *My Avatar was hijacked*

**Gonta Maltz:** *There are so very few individuals that strive to make their avatar completely unhuman*

**Tom Bukowski:** *People's representations of self usually starts out with some kind of referentiality link to a first life understanding of self, but that's a starting point and where the representation goes in second life can often be quite distinct. For instance, a human avatar might in some cases be more "different" from real life self than a nonhuman one, but much of it depends on how one defines sameness and difference in the first place.*

**jesz Murakami:** *I had a great one the other day. She went to an ethics discussion as an energized sphere (blue) with attendant flames*

**Michael/John Turner:** *I definitely wanted to be the same as in real life, but even more like me than in real?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *I had a really bizarre moment, where I was chatting to a female Second Life friend, and I realized my Avatar was hot for her Avatar. I wasn't, but my interpretation of my persona was. Everything got kind of complicated since she's a lesbian and I'm a straight male. And we both got partners in first life, so no hanky-panky.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Did you feel that you needed to reveal your "real" self? And are you a straight male here Stefan?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *Voyeur, I've always been very open with who I am first life.*



Stefan Nilsson (left) and Tom Bukowski (right)

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Just dressed up... then...?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *Nope, here, I'm a bisexual female. Kind of... Merely making the point that Avatars go beyond 'dresses'.*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *AV-sexual*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *It's an interpretation of a dream. We all become thespians. (no, not lesbians)*

**jesz Murakami:** *But all avatars are in-human*

**Gonta Maltz:** *The ability for users of Second Life to represent themselves as they wish is what I believe to be a glimpse of the future, when people will be able to build avatars in real life. I'm a male lesbian in first life*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Sure... but if we think of self as constantly performative we already have avatars in first life*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *I'm trying to make the point that male/female blurs. A male name does not necessarily mean male gender.*

**Benny Pirandello:** *Ah so you are going for cognitive dissonance, Stefan*

**jesz Murakami:** *Avatars are either/neither*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *To what extent is this performative self meaningful to you Stefan?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *That is not clear to me yet. I do know that I use a somewhat more... deliberate language for my Avatar than I'd do whilst chatting on a web community. Or on MSN. There is always the idea of the avatar, even subconsciously. Actually, I do think you all do that, that it's a part of that phenomenon that makes you subconsciously mimic the other speakers dialect or sociolect.*

## **Jerry's Jerry**

by Jerry Paffendorf

On January 1st, 2006 I am retiring my first Second Life avatar, SNOOPYbrown Zamboni, and coming back as myself with an avatar named Jerry Paffendorf, which is the name I go by in real life.

I'm sentimental about shedding SNOOPYbrown, who was already made to look like me. SNOOP served me well for the last two years and I've made many friends, done many things, and created what it's no exaggeration to call a new social identity through him. But it's time for my Second Life 2.0, which is really something like First Life 1.0. I'm going into the virtual world with direct accountability back to the real world and vice versa. A new adventure for a new year and a new world.

One of my roles is working with the New York Law School to develop a project in Second Life called Democracy Island which explores issues of collaboration and autonomy in its own right, experimenting with virtual worlds as an interface for real world civic participation. Visiting professor David Post works from the same office and recently sent me a link to a talk he gave called "Jefferson's Moose." Here's his synopsis:

"The organizing trope is the story of how [Thomas] Jefferson, while in Paris, had a complete moose skeleton shipped to him from New Hampshire. He was trying to show the French zoologists of the time that animals did not get smaller in the New World — and, additionally (or so I argue), he wanted to dazzle them with the sight of an animal they knew nothing of and that was truly an awe-inspiring sight. And I'm looking, among other things, for the cyberspace equivalent — the "aha moment" that gets people to think "we've got something truly new on our hands here."

I love this, and recognize in it a similar motivation for my retiring SNOOPYbrown, but with a twist. Instead of impressing upon skeptics and the uninitiated that virtual worlds like Second Life are something truly new and different (which I find to be understandably taken for granted), I'd like to show how they can function as familiar and empowering extensions of the lives we currently lead and the people we already are. So Jefferson had his moose and I have my Jerry, both signifying different but complimentary things about new worlds as

we struggle to understand them and their relationship to existing worlds.

It will be interesting to see how the effects of my decision play out. As it is, people will occasionally post online about SNOOPYbrown Zamboni and if you do a Google image search for “jerry paffendorf” a picture of SNOOPYbrown shows up. When my avatar shares my real name Google will start returning even more mixed-reality search results on me, which is exciting and a little bit scary. Keeping a direct line of identity and accountability back to the real world from within a virtual world poses many interesting issues here.

For starters, I wonder if I'll be more careful about what I choose to do and say in world. SNOOPYbrown used to wear pink sneakers, but now it's Jerry Paffendorf in those shoes, which reflects more directly on the non-avatar me (“You wear pink sneakers, you weirdo?” \*You\*). And if I play a shooting game in Second Life, the description of my actions is that “Jerry Paffendorf ran around killing people,” which doesn't make me sound very nice. These are mundane examples, but you get where this is going. I guess you could call it real-play as opposed to role-play, getting your first life tangled in the constant invitations to experiment and uncontrollable networks of your Second Life and having that information reflect directly back on your first life (as Google won't let you escape the actions of your avatar!).

Standing at the start of this transition I wonder if being who I am in real life in a virtual world will soften or shake my non-avatar sense of self in new ways. I'm pretty sure it will. Even in reality, I can easily think of people as avatars controlled partially by themselves and partially by the networks and environments they inhabit in a kind of spaghetti loop of feedback and communication with the rest of the world. Virtual worlds, by virtue of being worlds so obviously made out of our choices, simply reveal this reality more clearly and allow identity- and role-shifting to happen on accelerated timescales. I'm fond of the phrase “being built while building and building while being built” to describe our position of being at once autonomous and automated by the networks of things around us. This is something I'm rediscovering through “SNOOPY” and “Jerry” and the way they're both creating each other, and I look forward to finding out first-hand how compelled I'll be to change my behavior in response to the new pressures of my increased virtual-to-real accountability.

## **Time is a lie and so is autonomy**

From Flack Attack

On autonomy. By Moa Hanssen.

Since analysis of a happening is a construction and a production of meaning to the happening from outside and therefore a cognitive activity, the happening can never be autonomic. All happenings have this relationship to everything outside the happening and therefore one can say that nothing can ever have an autonomic reality.

In order to analyze the happening further one can search for some kind of core of the happening and there bump into details that charge an autonomous understanding of the fact, although on this level the analyzer can never charge any appropriate model to confine with her/his whole being. In search for autonomy it therefore gets even more non-autonomous. One can say that in a deeper intertextual search for knowledge the happening presented above gets more complex and more objectified as time goes by.

This makes any kind of research complex in a way of trying to objectify its outcome, the closer to the understanding of its context the more subjectified it gets but further away from any kind of autonomy. For the closer we get to the intertext the more borders will show outside the phenomena closely hijacked with its different context and discourses.

In this way any closed kind of circuit is impossible to find, no autonomy, no intertexts standing alone, no happening or phenomena objectified and no research coming to definite results. It's all winding on the more we see to its spaces. Time is a lie and so is autonomy.

## **A Response to "Time is a lie and so is autonomy"**

By Neal Stewart

Moa Hanssen writes, "Since analysis of a happening is a construction and a production of meaning to the happening from outside and therefore a cognitive activity the happening can never be autonomic."

However, there is a distinction between a happening and an analysis of that hap-

pening. Participants can experience a happening without necessarily analysing it and without introducing external meaning. So, it can remain autonomous in this sense.

Alternatively, the participants of a happening - their whole beings - are an inseparable part of the happening. If we adopt a Nietzschean post-nihilism view where value and meaning is something to be created by the individual and imposed on the external world, we could have 'autonomous' happenings with analyses-construction and meaning-production occurring from within the happening by the happening.

Those who object might invoke determinism to argue that, because free will is an illusion, even the Nietzschean individual's imposition of meaning is causally-determined, externally, and therefore not autonomous.

You might respond to this by arguing that, "Yes it is".

Alternatively, one might argue that the happening of all happenings is called the universe and that the universe is truly autonomous. The idea of 'outside the happening' is a lie.

That's what happens when you get all cerebral and wordy.

So we need to focus on the other sense of the term 'autonomy' - the 'revolution of everyday life' sense where time is real. The one where we get to be an island of laughing Dionysian-ninja-pirates and "everyone in Balencia gowns with red corsages, and big dance palaces full of music and lights and racial impurity and gender confusion. And all the deities are creole, mulatto, brown as the mouths of rivers. Race, taste and history finally overcome."



# 名密码使用法

## Cryptography

### 암호술

At Sealand, we provide global secrecy for any foreign intelligence service on national security topics. Here you find discrete security to conduct your counter- and arms control intelligence activities, counterterrorism and to contest international organised crime. Sealand – the second safest place on earth after Fort Knox, USA. We offer unlimited and dynamic cryptographic space, where new modes of surveillance and counter-surveillance can be carried out. We provide secure digital archiving facilities for collective intelligence in the war against terror. We also offer our expertise to model transnational networks and political cells to secure their data safe and sound – in our vault. The 21st century 'data cave' is your preferred international information storage location. We gather, change, distribute and archive information. Welcome to the crypt.



Principality of Sealand. Mainport to Imagination.

## **Autonomous sex communities**

From Flack Attack

Excerpt from third editorial meeting, 6 December 2005

**Jayr Cela:** *Slavery is wrong. However it is rampant. I believe we can not stop it.*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Slavery... in what sense Jayr?*

**Jayr Cela:** *People here [in Second Life] seem to wish to be enslaved*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Can one be enslaved voluntarily?*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Don't they everywhere?*

**Jayr Cela:** *Some are enslaved involuntarily. Against their will.*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *But slave in what sense Jayr?*

**Jayr Cela:** *They are just foolish people who give their will to a master*

**Roberta Dalek:** *"give" is voluntary*

**Jayr Cela:** *Correct. That is flaw in my original plan*

**Roberta Dalek:** *The goreans are one of the autonomous communities here in second life, another obvious one are the furies. The goreans have their own role-playing continent.*

**Usagi Musashi:** *Second life is a place where Greek style slaves are becoming trendy and it seems to be growing.*

**jesz Murakami:** *I read an article on Chinese sweat shops here.*

**Usagi Musashi:** *From what I've been hearing it's a big problem they are causing.*

**Jayr Cela:** *Yes, and it disgusts me.*

**Roberta Dalek:** *I think the sweat shop thing was hype – there was 'one' person*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** Are we not all sweating for Linden Lab?

**jesz Murakami:** The sweat shops are in first life working for Linden dollars to US dollars. Article was about a week ago.

**Roberta Dalek:** But money from where?

**jesz Murakami:** They're hiring people to work sex shops through computers.

**Roberta Dalek:** Most escorts seem to be bored US women...

**Jayr Cela:** I want to explore and conquer

**VoyeurOne Baron:** You want to have slaves Jayr?

**Jayr Cela:** No, I do not believe in slavery

**Roberta Dalek:** But suppose I wanted to be your slave?

**Jayr Cela:** All mankind should be free

**Roberta Dalek:** But can I not be free to choose to be enslaved? Can you restrict my freedom to restrict my freedom?

**Jayr Cela:** That is the flaw in my thinking

**Sorgaard Jacques:** Voluntary slavery or submission... isn't that what consumerism and the structure of a middle class is all about?

**jesz Murakami:** We can all be free slaves

**Usagi Musashi:** Don't you think slavery in second life is a little silly?

**Roberta Dalek:** It's a fetish

**Jayr Cela:** It is only a Simulation

**jesz Murakami:** If all are free, is there freedom?



Roberta Dalek

**Roberta Dalek:** *No one is truly free of course - we all allow ourselves to be restricted by society*

**jesz Murakami:** *If all are slaves is their slavery?*

**Usagi Musashi:** *I have friends that tell me that real life Greek style slaves in second life is silly and does not even come close*

**Jayr Cela:** *It's only a game. World will not change because of what we do*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *It is interesting that slavery plays such a big role in relationships chosen to explore here*

**jesz Murakami:** *That's sad*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Still WE change depending on what the world does*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** Or you could argue that the world is made up of what we do...

**Roberta Dalek:** This is a good space to create autonomous sexual communities

**MichaelJohn Turner:** What's that Roberta?

**jesz Murakami:** Is faking sex autonomous?

**Roberta Dalek:** Second life is a good space to make autonomous sexual communities. Much better than a MUD for example. People can explore fetishes in a safe(r) environment

**Usagi Musashi:** Well in a virtual world more than likely people involved in Greek slavery are ones that would never even come close to do it in real life

**Sorgaard Jacques:** True Usagi...still Second Life slavery is something in itself

**Jayr Cela:** I have no idea. I am happy. And will continue to enjoy this simulation.

**Usagi Musashi:** From my experience Second Life slavery is nothing but people that want to control others based on their warped real life values

**Sorgaard Jacques:** Probably true Usagi

**Roberta Dalek:** Second Life is a space used for community self expression. Furries have had text based spaces – furry MUCK, and lower quality graphical places. With Second Life's creation tools you can be the squirrel you feel yourself to be

**Usagi Musashi:** Yes only if the people you are dealing with are on sound mind otherwise it's just another form of mental control

**Roberta Dalek:** A BDSM mantra is "safe, sane and consensual"

**Usagi Musashi:** I heard that stuff before. But really, come on...

**VoyeurOne Baron:** So in a sense what you are implying Roberta is that the groups involved in role playing activities might be able to form stronger communities that are less dependent on Second life as a specific platform. And therefore more autonomous in a sense?

**Roberta Dalek:** *Furries and BDSM online groupings have existed before Second Life and will exist afterwards. People tend to move with others. If Linden Lab banned them from Second Life they would continue elsewhere*

**jesz Murakami:** *Maybe just more enslaved*

**Usagi Musashi:** *Linden Lab will never ban them because to them they are value of members.*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Well sex and capitalism go hand in hand*

Notes:

Two major communities - BDSM (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BDSM>) and Furries ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Furry\\_fandom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Furry_fandom)). BDSM further broken down into Goreans and non-Goreans.

Goreans of Second Life (<http://shadowfyre.com/portkar/html/index.php>) and Goreans Portal Radio (<http://www.goreansportal.com/Radio/>).

Ar

Glorious Ar in Second Life has a notecard with rules on. Excerpt: "You are 'slaves' because you have chosen to be, for whatever reason seemed good to you. No one chained you up and dragged you from your dorm room".

(Found online: City of Ar: <http://www.geocities.com/delphius2002/id88.htm>)

There are other separate Gorean sim communities- Ko-ro-ba, Port Cos, Edens Gate, Anago, The Woods, Port Kar, Philereme, Treve, Bella...

Non-Gorean

Perilous Pleasures on the Isle of Bliss is a longstanding club.

Furry

FurNation Prime. Has Club Fur. <http://www.FurNation.com>.

There are also other furry spaces.

## Interview with a slave in Second Life

From Flack Attack



**FA:** *Could you please first describe a typical day in Second Life?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Yes Ma'am....A typical day is, that I log in after my real life work and see, if my Mistress is online. If she is, I'm with her, and if not, I go explore the world.*

**FA:** *At what point did you decide to become a slave?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Well, Ma'am, I have been submissive to females a long time... I don't know the exact time.*

**FA:** *You entered Second Life already as a slave?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Well at least as a submissive.... my Mistress turned me into a slave, Ma'am.*

**FA:** *How's that? Did she ask you?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Well, D/s is a complex thing. Even though I'm a slave it is actually something we both work out together. My Mistress would never do something to me that would hurt me for real. (both mentally and physically)*

**FA:** *That aspect is interesting. Isn't that a kind of contradiction? Since in Real Life people usually don't decide to become a slave and don't set up rules.*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Yes Ma'am it is a kind of contradiction. The slave should have little or no power, but that is just a fantasy. In fact the slave has power usually by using a safeword.*

**FA:** *You keep some of your autonomy?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Well, I have not used it so far. A good Mistress makes sure that the slave is happy. She finds the limits of the slave and takes him to them, but not over them. Since she never takes me over them, I never have to use the safeword. So in that sense I always obey her... (like a slave)*

**FA:** *Can you give me an example of something you wouldn't do for your mistress?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *Well here we have to understand, that there is a big difference between what I would do in real life and here. But basically I would not do anything that would hurt others or myself or my Mistress.*

**FA:** *Talking about Second Life and Real Life... has being a slave here influenced the way you see rules in real life?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *No, I don't think so. I don't want to talk that much about real life but I'm not sure that I could be as much of a slave in real life as I am here. That would be hard. But here I like it Ma'am.*

**FA:** *Why do you think people want to have slaves in Second Life? What's the reason?*

**Verne Nilsson:** *That is the big question. Why do some want to be slaves and some own slaves? I'm really not sure. One thing is clear though... For me it is a sexual thing.*

**FA:** *Can you describe the way you feel for your avatar? Would you e.g. change your*

skin, if your Mistress tells you to do?

**Verne Nilsson:** Yes, Ma'am.

**FA:** Your gender?

**Verne Nilsson:** I would have a hard time with that, I think, since it is a sexual thing for me... I want to be a male and I want to obey a female since I'm heterosexual, Ma'am.

**FA:** So being male is one thing that makes Verne Verne?

**Verne Nilsson:** Yes, Ma'am.

**FA:** What else?

**Verne Nilsson:** Well, being submissive to females is absolutely an important part of Verne (and myself) Ma'am.

**FA:** Most people point out, that the greatness of Second Life is the feeling of freedom. Do you feel that too?

**Verne Nilsson:** Yes I do. Here I may be as submissive as I want Ma'am :-)

## **Interview with a Mistress and her two girls in Second Life**

From Flack Attack

This interview was conducted within the virtual world called Second Life, at the gracious home of a Mistress and her two girls that were present. There were no stipulations as to what questions might be asked or how long the interview would go. There was no request of anonymity, but this writer took the liberty of replacing the actual Second Life avatar names with their titles. A separate interview with the girls alone was not requested as it didn't seem appropriate or relevant. The anonymous interviewer is a sub herself and has her own reasons to withhold her name.

**Interviewer:** (to Mistress) Could you describe a day in Second Life?

**Mistress:** Oh heh... Well I am the mistress of this household so it falls on me to provide for my girls, in doing so I work a lot of jobs, to make ends meet. I lecture, I have a store, I host events. My girls help me out when they can. Any free time, I spend with them caring for them.

**interviewer:** ~smiles~ Are you also a Mistress in real Ma'am?

**Mistress:** No..., my real life precludes being a Mistress. I am a mother of two children and am married for fifteen years. I am a housewife but I find being a Mistress here to be more rewarding than it seems to me for some of the Real Life mistresses I have met. I am still very Dominate in Real Life.

**interviewer:** Were you always so dominate?

**Mistress:** Yes... I am an actress and a model in real life, when I do get work; and it took some aggression to make it in that business.

**interviewer:** Ma'am when you came to Second Life were you immediately a Mistress or did you find that place later in chat?

**Mistress:** Heh funny story with that... I knew nothing about Dominate/submissive (D/s) when I came to Second Life... and my next door neighbor introduced me to it. I thought like most people think: that it was some crazy sex fetish thing and thought nothing more of it. I went through a really bad breakup and became very depressed. My friend came to me and offered to take me in as a submissive to her. And explained that sex had nothing to do with it. So I said ok... I was about to give up all hope anyway. And I thought to give it one last shot before logging out of Second Life for good. She took me in and cared for me. And gave me a freedom that I had never experienced before. It healed me and opened my eyes. Now mind you I still knew almost nothing about D/s. But I learned there what it was not. It is not a sex fetish. It is about loving and caring people. After a while, and after learning what a submissive and what a Dominate was, I realized I was on the wrong side of the tracks.

**interviewer:** Can you describe for me what the opening of your eyes was about; was it more than just the D/s?

**Mistress:** Well... it is hard to explain unless you experience it but here goes. You know how you work all day, answer to all these people all day long, and have all these deadlines and pressures handed to you? Well as a submissive most of those things

are taken from you... you're cared for and loved, for nothing more than caring for and loving your Mistress back. Your Mistress protects you. Makes the tough decisions for you. Guides you.

**interviewer:** Do you only have girls Ma'am?

**Mistress:** At the moment yes. I have found that girls understand these principals better than men. Most men I've met are either Dominates themselves or if submissive are looking for a sexual release. I have had boys before... and no luck finding the right one. But I am hopeful someday. ~smiles~... It is in a girl's nature to either serve or protect.

**interviewer:** Do you ever miss being a sub Ma'am?

**Mistress** ~looks thoughtful for a moment~. ... Let me show you something for a moment. Do you see this. Inside this glass bubble is my original collar. Sometimes when things get hard. And I wish there was someone to take care of me... Yes I miss it. But it is like missing a simpler time. Like longing for one's childhood innocence again.

**interviewer:** Do you believe that having been a sub makes you a better Dom?

**Mistress:** Actually, I do. I think every Dom(me) should take a walk in a sub's shoes to know what it is like and what is needed... But to follow up where you're getting at... first girl was a Domme who ended up being a sub.

**interviewer:** Ohh I didn't know that. That is quite interesting. May I speak to first girl about that now?

**Mistress:** Yes of course.

**interviewer:** ~smiles~ Thank you Ma'am.

**Mistress:** (to first girl) As I said before please answer fully and completely.

**first girl:** Yes Mistress.

~Mistress runs her fingers through first girl's soft hair, pets first girl on the head. Good girl!~

**interviewer:** (to first girl) How was it that you found yourself a Mistress?

**first girl:** Well Ma'am, so many subs had said to me why didn't I become a Mistress and they would feel more secure, so I thought well why not try. So I did. I had two subs, both male. They were very good, both of them, but sadly the first one's wife got jealous. So he had to leave me although we still keep in contact now. The other, he was just trying out the lifestyle and didn't like it. He also still keeps in contact.

**interviewer:** ~smiles~ What about it made you not like it, or did you like being a Mistress but just decided it wasn't for you?

**first girl:** Well I got too attached to be honest and thought it was because I did something wrong but I hadn't, so I went back to serving. But I must admit I get far more from serving than I did being a Mistress: It's what's in my heart.

**interviewer:** Tell me about your heart. What is it about being a slave that satisfies?

**first girl:** girl loves to please and serve Mistress, it's what she's here for and girl knows she is loved and needed.

~Mistress smiles broadly.~

**interviewer:** And does being a 'girl' enter into your real life at all?

**first girl:** Well yes, as even when I'm not here my heart is; girl would love to serve in real life but I'm afraid my husband of fifteen years and my children think I'm crazy... But I serve them constantly. They just don't see it that way Ma'am.

**interviewer:** Might I ask your other girl similar questions if she wishes to speak Ma'am?

**Mistress:** yes of course; she is my newest girl and is still learning, but has been a VERY quick study.

**girl:** Good evening, Miss.

**interviewer:** Greetings (to girl). ~smile~ How is it that you find yourself here my dear?

**girl:** I am not very knowledgeable about people, and got myself into trouble several times, and Mistress offered to take me into Her household, to protect me and teach

me how to deal with people.

**interviewer:** So Second Life was not a kind place for you I take it. How is it that you met Mistress? Were you seeking some family?

**girl:** Many of the people I have met were and are marvelous, but I did not understand what some had in mind, and hurt their feelings, some badly. I did not intend to, and do not wish to do so again. I met Mistress the second day I was in Second Life. I was looking for furniture, and found Her shop. I met Her there, and She made me a coffee table on the spot, and gave it to me. It is one of my most prized possessions; it is upstairs. I met Her several more times, some of them after I got into jams, and She took me under Her wing. I was not looking for a family; it found me.

**Interviewer:** So how is it being the new kid and learning to serve? Do you have any thoughts about what you might tell others considering the leap?

**girl:** a person should know her, or his, nature. I am what my father, who was an Army officer, would call "not officer material". I make a good follower, not a good leader, and I know this about myself.

**first girl:** you follow well lil sis.

**interviewer:** I like that officer material quote.

**girl:** thank you onesan [loving name that means something like sister].

**Mistress:** I want to say something really fast. Just because a girl is a submissive, they are not mindless robots. A lot of people think that and it is just not true.

**interviewer:** Do you ever become frustrated with the lack of knowledge in the "normal world" or within the D/s community itself?

**Mistress:** Each of my girls has their own distinct personality and drives and I encourage that. Sorry for that outburst... but it is something I like to scream from the roof tops! And yes the lack of knowledge from people outside the lifestyle is disturbing, BUT it is the lack of knowledge from the people who claim to be in the lifestyle that simply infuriates me.

**interviewer:** It seems that you have found a worthy Mistress.

**first girl:** yes W/we have Ma'am. Sadly can't say that for E/everyone on here.

**Mistress:** first girl has had some really bad experiences with previous masters though...

**interviewer:** (to first girl) What kept you trying to find a good Dom?

**first girl:** Like I said before: serving is in my heart, it's what I love to do. I knew not A/all are bad. It was just finding the right one. But I almost gave up and went vanilla.

**interviewer:** ~laughs~ at vanilla.

**first girl:** Sorry that's the term W/we use for people not of the lifestyle.

**interviewer:** Do you have any advice for someone looking? What to look for?

**first girl:** Well that's hard, as so many seem nice till you have the collar. But don't be fooled. find out about them from somewhere, someone will know, watch them don't become theirs straight away. Get to know them and have a training period, before you take there collar. See if it's what you both want.

**interviewer:** Wise words. ~smile~

**first girl:** Girl has made that mistake before. I've been put in a cage. I've been abused. And it stays with you. I won't ever forget. I was put of goreans. By an ex Master. Who abused me. I was new then, so knew no better.

**interviewer:** That being said is there anything you wouldn't do for Mistress?

**first girl:** Not really Ma'am because I know Mistress would never ask anything of U/us that wasn't fair. But W/we always have the option to say no. And girl has never needed to, in the time I have served Mistress.

**interviewer:** That is quite a compliment.

**girl:** smiles. as for me, I did not research Mistress (name withheld) at all, but I trusted Her, in large part because there were several instances where She could easily have taken advantage of my inexperience, and She did not.

## Comments on slavery

From Flack Attack

As a female submissive, I started to talk to a lot of people in the D/S scene and read about the psychology behind it. In my case submission is psychological and theoretically driven by the same mechanisms in Second Life as in First Life.

I came across an article by Andrea Dworkin, famous feminist, about sexual submission. She explains the sexuality of the man as positive and the sexuality of the woman as negative. The intercourse itself is an exchange of power where the one who's being penetrated is owned. If men's sexuality is sadistic, female sexuality is masochistic, and her eroticism is close connected to her will to surrender. The sexuality of the man is nothing in itself and becomes something in contrast to female sexuality. Dworkin also describes the masochistic nature of the woman that sees herself as whole only with the positive power of the man, and therefore also enjoys the exchange of power. Both parts feed of this polarization.

Naturally this is a wide description. All men are not dominant as all women are not submissive. And all people don't find exchange of power sexually interesting.

My experience is that most people in the scene find it all very warm and positive. They look at it as a symbiosis rather than slavery. Also, the sexual interest in S/D does not seem to be chosen voluntarily but come naturally, as if controlled by bigger forces than we can understand fully. As a submissive, the analysis of S/D that Andrea Dworkin presents is the most painful to accept but also the one that I find most interesting. She of course wants to destroy polarization and liberate us all from this slavery but the actual "slaves" don't want to be free. The slaves who don't want to be free choose not to believe in the analysis. I, as I partly believe this analysis, would discard my sexuality just to see if there really is freedom, and what it feels like, but ones sexuality is not easy to discard since it is such a deep force. Also, fully believing in the analysis means doubting a lot of people's personal belief so I just leave it at being a point of view rather than the truth.

/Lovisa

## LILAYANA ELEMENTAL MANDALA GAME

by jesz Murakami  
From Flack Attack

This is an outline sketch for the SpaceTime configuration of an evolutionary community [commu/inity], it is a group meditation game, it is in two parts: Structure (space) and Play (time).

### BASIC GAME STRUCTURE (pre beta 0.0)

#### 1. PRELIMINARIES: The Board & The Pieces

The Game is one of societal evolution aiming for a development of individual Compassionate Awareness in positive cooperative community [Commu/inity] thru Optimal Intimacy practice. Optimal Intimacy is based in Self Intimacy operating Awarely in a context of 3 modalities of deepening intimacy: from Casual to Surface to Deep The Board is the Circle of Playrs [in teams of 6] The Board-Circle (Mandala) has nine levels of intimate Play, From most casual to deepest interplay The individual Pieces are the Players who provide the focus of and the context for Play. They also provide the members for the Fundamental Triadic pieces that organize and run the game. The Elemental [beginning] Game contains the first three levels in the Casual mode modeling all three modes - casual casual, surface casual, deep casual; this replication within mode continues in the intermediate and advanced games to the 9th level, deep deep

#### 2. BASIC PLAY: The Player and the Plays

The Introductory game is [can be] a 2 hour play with opening, closing and about 5-6 individual Playr games of 15-20 minutes plus transitional interludes

#### 3. TRANSFORMATIONAL PLAY: Tactics & Strategy

This as a game of societal evolution makes a clear distinction between psychological and societal individuality and provides for the unified evolution of both. The specific method in the Game is the interplay of intimacy groups. In the Game the development of intimacy groups and their play is a Prime ingredient

#### 4. PLAY: Essential Practice

Each Game starts with four triads [each team of 6 has 20 available playing triads – 10 paired sets--team modalities] the triads are responsible for running the overall game as well as starting (providing) the individual game Plays and transitional interlu-

des Each Playr develops a minimum of three intimacy groups in which they are members

(1- all same gender, 1- one of two same gender and 1- only one of their gender)  
[this gets a bit complex in Second Life as gender is looser and we can reverse gender polarity -- will probably operate from First Life gender determination – but this may run into its own difficulties and may not be operational till deeper versions of game]

5. SCORING THE GAME: Measuring of Mind Play Attainment

6. ADVANCED RULES OF PLAY: Dedications to Aware Play

7. ADVANCED STRATEGY/TACTICS: Precepts of Compassionate Being

7 POINTS OF PLAY (pre beta 0.0)

1. LEARN THE PRELIMINARIES Root of the Game [ADIMULA]  
The Board and the Pieces (field & teams) (world & roles)

2. LEARN THE BASIC PLAY Guts of the Game [MAHASVADI]  
The Player and the Plays Think of all phenomena as like dreams. Respond to Game situations from (spontaneous-primordial) Awareness. [that is from your Wildness (un-tamed)] Rest in your (and you're) natural pure essence. Practice sending and taking (love & compassion) thru riding the higher (Prana/Chi) breath. Recognize the 3 positions and their 3 objects as the very bases of virtuosity and don't hide them. Absorb the affirmations of aware community. Train in all modes of behavior. Bring them to balance in yourself and then extend yourself to include the whole mandala.

3. TRANSFORMATIONAL PLAY Heart of the Game [VAJRANA]  
Tactics & Strategy Let Primordial Awareness change all bad conditions to health. Drive all blame into one (self) [there is no one else to blame][Taking Full Responsibility-- is blameless] Live in gratitude, and don't hyphenate. Establish the indestructible grasp of Absolute Truth that allows you to see thru relative truth and its bewilderment as play of the mind. The Elemental Focusing Mandala is a powerful means of transformation. Bring all game situations to Awareness quickly by joining them with mandala practice.

#### 4. PLAY Soul of the Game [LILAMANI]

Quintessential Practice // Work with the “5 forces” [QPM] // The “5 forces” are the basis (of transforming) // Awareness of behavior is important

#### 5. SCORING THE GAME Speech of Awareness [AKASAVISU]

Measurement of Mind Play // The purpose is contained in one point – control of ego clinging // Always rely on just a positive frame of mind // Even tho distracted if U can do it, it is still mind training.

#### 6. ADVANCED RULES OF PLAY Mind of Awareness [PRANA]NA]

Dedications to Aware Play

#### 7. ADVANCED STRATEGY/TACTICS Body of Awareness [BODHISAHA]

Precepts of Compassionate Being

[with appreciation to Atisha’s Mind Training in Seven Points]

### OPTIMAL INTIMACY

Optimal Intimacy is a process (a practice) for coming from your true authenticity (Awareness), While being mutually supported in that process by those around you (commu/inity), And is the means and goal of the Lilayana Mandala Game. It is based in self intimacy, and allows operating awarely in a full range of human interactions: from casual encounter, to acquaintance, to friend, to deep friend, to lover, and beyond . . .

### NINE LEVELS OF INTIMACY

Optimal Intimacy operates within three main levels of deepening intimacy: from Casual (a ground basis of friendliness), to Surface (a sharing of commonality and practice of friendship), to Deep (an enjoyment in the dissolving of difference and the sublimeness of spiritual lovers). These three levels are replicated within each main level, giving the full Nine Levels of Intimacy. Nine levels offer useful distinctions for the aware exploration of the nature of human interaction.

Levels 1–3 – Casual Intimacy (ADIYANA): Life is “as a game,” and the source of the game is culture. We live by the rules of our cultural game, but [unawarely/ semi-awarely.] Playing at levels 1–3 allows us to learn the rules we are playing by already; to learn alternate sets of rules; and to prepare to play different games. Basic Requirement: Desire to not give up true self for illusions of intimacy. Activities: Team formation, preliminaries to Game formation.

Levels 4–6 – Surface Intimacy (MAHAYANA): In the 3 levels of Surface Intimacy, we have contact with others at the level of our surface characteristics – that is, our common qualities and interests – and we actively explore good worldly relationships. Although we are moving towards authenticity, it is recognized that at Levels 4–6, one is still operating from ego action and moving within the grooves the culture has provided. Basic Requirement: Dedicated intention of not giving up Authentic Self and genuine intimacy for ego selves and pretensions of intimacy. Activities: Game formation.

Levels 7–9 – Deep Intimacy (VAJRAYANA)::

Basic Requirement: Devotion to Authenticity and Aware dedication to using the opportunities of illusory arising to uproot residual afflictive tendencies.

Activities: Aware Game Play.

Triadic Communication a process for transforming conventional communication based on fantasy, Obligation, and assumed understanding into an intimate presencing based in authenticity, awareness, and assured exchange of meaning.

Triadic Communication Requires deep exploration of meaning examining language assumptions and achieving assured communication. Provides a third viewpoint that opens interactions to new possibilities. Minimizes negative dynamics of dualistic assumptions that can interfere with really hearing what others are saying. Establishes a foundation for development and exploration of aware, intimate, evolutionary community.

Triadic Communication as a practice is designed to increase awareness and depth of communication. Its basic requirement is a willingness and intent to assure communication rather than assume it. To increase our awareness and experience assured communication, we must be willing to let go of habitual assumptions about the process of communication. When we communicate with someone to whom our language is a second language, we tend to take care to make sure there is understanding; but when ours is the primary language we tend to assume the meanings attached to the words of others are the same as ours. This is rarely true beyond the most simple usage.

Triadic Communication allows the exploration of our individual language assumptions, with the aim of achieving mutually agreed understandings in meaning and usage of language. This is accomplished by examining assumed meaning



within the increased awareness which a group of three affords.

The Basic Form of the Triadic Communication Practice is the Triad which consists of three individuals meeting for about one to two hours. During each person's turn, or focus, they express a current involvement in terms of an interest and/or problem, which is heard and "fed back" without interpretation or reaction by each of the two listeners until the speaker agrees they have been correctly heard. With this basic assurance, each listener may then share their own feelings, interpretations, perceptions or intuitions.

Why Triadic? The triadic form provides a space where hidden and unheard material can be clarified not only to others, but to oneself. This expanded reflection allows a loosening and even a freeing from previous role functions. This process moves into exploration of self as individual and as atom in the group molecule. . . moves into an exploration of the group's collective identity and archetype. Working with this process has vast potential for changing one's life, not only on the individual but on the collective level.

Triadic Communication opens the consciousness and awareness of the group as a whole. It offers a group consciousness experience in a triad, which as the smallest group sets a model for doing larger groups. However, these are just words on a page. To really understand what it's about, one has to do the practice itself.

Who should try Triadic Communication? . . .and why? Anyone, individuals or groups, who wants to move towards greater intensity, freedom and creativity in their lives.

Triadic Communication is part of the early developmental stages of building aware community. Habitual ways of communicating need replacement. We can set up different ways of sharing. Start developing a community body that is real. Allow enough real acceptance so that energy can actually move between the individual bodies. Then you have not just people you are compatible with, but people you are free to be. We're ultimately talking about species evolution: taking members of this species, and making available the opportunity to awarely evolve into societal organism.

Say . . . . . from Homo sapiens to Huma societus

### LILANANDA SAMBHOGA'S TEACHING OF THE 3-FOLD RIDDLE

THREE IN ONE: ONE IN THREE: ALL ARE NONE

THE WORLDLY RELATIONSHIPS ARE THREE

THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP IS ONE

THE TRANSCENDENT RELATIONSHIP IS NONE

There are five barriers to intimacy,  
The first three are very difficult to remove,  
The fourth is next to impossible to remove,  
The last is impossible to remove.

Most people don't even bother to remove any of the first three,  
But instead call them relationship and lean on them  
As illusion of intimacy rather than acknowledging them  
As the barriers closing off the intimacy they allude to.  
True intimacy requires the removal of all five barriers.  
True intimacy is the accomplishment of the impossible.

The wiki ([www.flackattack.org](http://www.flackattack.org)) has full three part article:

1 QUESTION(INGS) OF AUTONOMY

2 ANSWER(INGS) TOWARDS AUTONOMY

3 IMPLEMENT(INGS) OF RELATIVE TO ABSOLUTE



# 정보 배출구

서구에서 정보는 경제적 가치를 의미합니다. 저희 사회에서는 많은 동무들이 정부 과잉, 열린 정보망, 불확실성, 신뢰성, 위험 사회를 앞가랴하고 있습니다. 여러분네 사회는 그 반대일 것이라 짐작합니다. 정보망 통제가 점차 어려워지고 있는 지금, 시랜드 공국은 여러분과 여러분네 국가를 안전한 정보 관리의 세계로 초대합니다. 저희가 여러분의 정보가 외부에 노출되지 않도록 담보해 드리겠습니다. 법이 없는 국가인 저희가 여러분의 비밀을 보호하고, 자유로운 정보교환의 장을 제공할 것입니다. 시랜드 공국은 '자르 피난처'라는 탈현대적 꿈을 이제 막 실현하려는 참입니다. 저희는 고객 여러분들께서 비밀리에 만나고 소통할 수 있는, 통제나 재도가 없는 공간을 만들어냈습니다. 저희는 '분열된 디지털 세계'의 교량 역할을 하며, 고객 여러분들께서 진정한 선택의 자유, 표현의 자유, 사적 자유를 보장해 드립니다. 저희의 사업에 동참하지 않으시겠습니까.



**Principality of Sealand. Mainport to Imagination.**

## **Autonomy and Working Together**

by: Hiro Pendragon

From Flack Attack

The notion that there is no "true autonomy" as it is defined has been around nearly a century. To say that one is "autonomous", it implies the state of being alone, or separate. In a classical sense, science and theological thinking have both separated humankind from its environment. Religious figures considered man and woman to be a divine creation that exists in, but not part of nature. Until Darwin, scientists have largely agreed. Evolution sparked a radical philosophical notion: that man is part of his environment. That shock wave in philosophical thought reverberates even today, as we can read about Kentucky's move toward creationism, masked as questioning of evolutionary theory, and euphemized as "Intelligent Design".

The turning point in our philosophy when "true autonomy" became impossible was when science completely separated its ties to the notion of a separate duality of human and nature. This occurred with the advent of modern physics. Dr. Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle shattered the notion that science could ever be purely objective. The impact of this principle shook the philosophical world. If there is no real separation between observer and subject of observation, then all things are interrelated. The Internet, world economies, and truly, online massive multi-user persistent worlds are a natural result of this interrelation of the human race.

## **Redefining Autonomy**

What we are left with as an idea of autonomy is not a state of separation from our environment, but a distinction from it while still existing in it. That distinction is choice, and it is not a diametric "Do I have choice or do I not?" sort of value, but more of a qualitative one. In other words, since no one can distinguish themselves as a completely isolated entity from their environment, they instead describe how they are different.

This difference from the environment is not that straightforward, either. When considering what makes us autonomous, it should be noted that we are considering the deviation from the natural flow of events; we are considering how one's choices and will guides the person's life. Plainly stated, autonomy is how a

person makes choices that are truly his or her own, and not merely "going with the flow".

This redefinition makes it difficult to measure, because often times a person's choice may be to go with the conditions around him or her because they are the most ideal. What makes autonomy even more difficult to examine is that these decisions may be conscious or subconscious. We get into the question, "Is a person really aware of their choices that they are making?" The conclusion that arises is that autonomy can not be conventionally measured simply by looking at what a person is doing.

## **Autonomy as Symbiosis**

As individuals interact, they are meeting each others needs. As these needs are met, more choices are available to them, and the ability to follow through on a choice becomes less difficult. Accomplishments from work on a choice provide more interaction with others, and the process repeats. With each iteration, the individuals involved see their ability to be autonomous increase.

It is ironic that such interaction and cooperation improve autonomy. Autonomy is "supposed" to be making ones own choices, but its clear that availability to make autonomous choices is improved through having needs met by others. Autonomy is not a single-person idea, as the thesis first stated, but instead the cooperation of more than one person to accomplish many peoples' goals.

## **Improving Autonomy in Second Life**

Autonomy is an ideal greatly supported by virtual worlds. We have an opportunity to interact with people across the globe. This opportunity creates the greatest set of cooperation that we can currently achieve. As people interested in increasing autonomy, we need to examine how we can support people in Second Life today. Let's skip back to the areas of support that I mentioned in "How To Promote Autonomy".

### **I. Monetary**

Those who have financial resources should look to ways to spread it in the community. This does not mean charity, per se, this means investing in individuals and groups who are making autonomous choices and who in turn are

helping others be autonomous. How do we know which individuals and groups are doing this? They are people who are able to provide the other three areas of support.

## 2. Material and Non-material Resources

"If you build it, they will come." is how the saying goes. People need offices, supplies, transportation, food, health care, legal support, Internet access, and a whole host of other things to work on what they want. We need to look at ways to provide easy access to these things.

This effort could come in the form of something ambitious, like a Second Life Small Business Group that negotiates a health care package for members. This could come in the form of donating used office furniture to other Second Life developers. This could be something very simple, like allowing new residents to Second Life build on parts of your land; people don't necessarily like to commit to buy their own land while they are still deciding whether to commit to Second Life as a development platform.

Regardless of how big or small the task, we have the access to communicate with people around the world; we should use it.

## 3. Human Resources

The bottom line is that collaboration leads to innovation. People together exchange ideas that lead to new thoughts. Larger projects require more than one person. Really large-scale projects require interaction of several organizations.

As working relationships become larger and more complex, we need to investigate tools to make it easier. Second Life lacks and really needs some robust tools focused on promoting collaboration. Public forums, employment boards, texture libraries, good search engines, building and scripting education and trade associations are all sorely lacking.

This article is edited, full version available at [www.flackattack.org](http://www.flackattack.org)

## Autonomy, Art, Meaning

By Michael Smit

From Flack Attack

We all create all the time. It is impossible not to create, even to 'do nothing' is a form, an action. To me the creation of something transformative and meaningful in the dialogue between ourselves and the surrounding world is an interesting and relevant definition of art. Every human being deals with the challenge of making their life meaningful. In that sense, what Joseph Beuys said in the 1960's or 1970's is very true for me: everybody is an artist ("Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler"), at least at times. Together we create our shared world. Not all our creations can be equally creative, meaningful, or artful. As an artwork, our world might seem a rather crude one, of maybe not very high quality.

A few years after moving from Europe to Northern America I started to notice much disconnection around me from the basic inter-relatedness that rules our existence. Maybe the move to the new environment gave me fresh eyes. Living in the San Francisco Bay Area in the United States I saw many choices being made that serve only limited interpretations and meanings of the world. An alarming number of homeless people, a blown up economy around a high tech gold rush, a country with 25% of its children in hunger, seemingly non-informing media and short-sighted national policies. But exploitative actions seeking short-term gains for only a few people that don't benefit a long-term success or even survival of the bigger system we are part of, can be observed all over the world. Human beings are only one of many species in this system, but our relative autonomy has had a disproportionately huge impact on its state.

To me, it is \*because\* of our limited autonomy that we can create and experience meaning. Not only for ourselves but also for our group, our country, our planet, life as we are part of it. The meaning of the next moment always depends on which choices we will make, on how we respond to the magic possibilities in this very moment. The successes of our relative autonomy are the moments experienced as meaningful, and these depend on our ability to listen to, explore, and create existing and new connections with our world. We all have access to and experience of this power of art. It's a shared ability, a source of wellbeing, and a responsibility.

Out of this thinking my interventionist and collaborative How have you been an artist today? public art project (2004-2006) was conceived. In its first manifesta-

tion in 2004 about 2000 printed cards — the question with blank space for a response underneath it on the front, with return address on the back — were manually handed out by me in public spaces in the San Francisco Bay area. Every person was given a basic explanation and the invitation to mail back the response. About 300 responses were mailed in. In the second manifestation myself and participating volunteers went to public locations to ask people this same question; out of which many meaningful conversations, dialogues, with surprising intimacy came forth. These conversations are recorded and transcribed and will be made available in different forms, always accompanied by the invitation to respond and collaborate, to actively further co-create its meaning.



Michael Smit, How have you been artist today? (2004-2006)

## **Relative autonomy, art, and meaning within Second Life**

The online virtual world Second Life is a participatory and commercial product offered by a company called Linden Lab in San Francisco. It seems to offer a new platform to exercise ones relative autonomy.

In Second Life there are a series of choices to make. You have to pick a name before you can enter. Gender, general looks and the amount of virtual property can be changed after entering. Interactions with others add to one's identity. These choices offer the possibility of creating new meaning, new temporary definitions of oneself. Once in this 3D world you're free to puppeteer and edit your character any way you want it, on the risk that you get banned when breaking the terms of agreement. It is said that people generally are nicer here than in the real world since they don't want to loose access, and because living

in Second Life is more fun and productive that way. It is also said that it is addictive, a word that points to an artificial 'high', an 'escape' of perceived previous limitations, and something hard to let go of. Explorations are made, certainly in the sexual and gender spheres. I've heard Second Life also been jokingly called Second Wife, presumably referring to both the addictive qualities as well as the new relationships established there.

After deciding to have my avatar be as much as possible like myself, in name, looks, and interests, my first decision and intervention here was to turn my private land into "Social Land", into a public space in which I invite people to connect with each other beyond the private obsessions and virtual islands that I felt surrounded by. I found myself amidst other colonizers, virtual pioneers, who were all seemingly focusing on their own private utopias or escapes (exploring who they could be, if offered a clean and seemingly anonymous start); including no-access barriers or walls right against my virtual piece of "First Land". My experiences in this experiment in the listening to, learning from, and exchanging with others that I would normally not have known or interacted with, are positive. It has improved the connectedness, understanding, and "living" experience in my virtual neighborhood.

Second Life brings us back to the same possibility and challenge that we actually face every moment: to be new with, and so co-create, our shared and existing world.



Michael Smit, Social Land - Inviting and meeting local people; sharing our different backgrounds and interests (2005)

This article is edited, full version available at [www.flackattack.org](http://www.flackattack.org)

## **Talk: The Balkanisation of the wiki**

Excerpt from third editorial meeting, 6 December 2005

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Roberta...you have experience of WIKI production...right?*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Yes – I’m a long standing administrator of Wikipedia – been involved since October 2003*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Last time we spoke, you had some interesting reflections on how different versions of wikipedia (in different languages) tell different stories about the same thing...*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Yes, I hope everyone knows what wikipedia is – if not – Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit*

**MichaelJohn Turner** *nods*

**Roberta Dalek:** *It exists in multiple languages and language communities can request to have the space for their own edition. All content is written and edited by the users*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *I didn’t know that part... (different languages)*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Issues that are contentious obviously have contentious articles. Articles on the middle east, G.W. Bush, global warming, Hitler. Recent wars where you have contributors from both communities (there is a large debate in linguistics as to what a language is vs a dialect)... In Yugoslavia prior to the 1990s war, there was one language – Serbo-Croatian. Originally there was a wikipedia in Serbo-Croatian. With the independence of individual states of the former Yugoslavia each has its own language – Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian. There are differences between them (Serbian written in Russian alphabet for example) but they are mutually comprehensible. Now we have a wikipedia in Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian... And some trying to put together a joint one on Serbo-Croatian*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *Are you from that region?*

**Roberta Dalek:** *No, I’m from the UK*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *Ok... since you said ‘now we have’*

**Roberta Dalek:** *The articles on contentious issues relating to the war have different slants because of the different origins of the contributors*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *yes*

**Roberta Dalek:** *There are other issues on different topics – the article on evolution is more contentious on the English language wikipedia than the Swedish one, as evolution is more contentious in the US than in many other countries. As we write our own encyclopedia we write about what is important to us*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *I thought this was an interesting observation in relation to trying to establish a common reference... which is what wikipedia does I believe. But it then also shows a multitude of stories rather than one History. And this I believe relates interestingly to the notion of autonomy*

**Roberta Dalek:** *In an opposite movement to the splitting in the Balkans there are attempts to make a joint “Scandinavian language” one*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *aha*

**Roberta Dalek:** *Although I cannot read Arabic there is an Arabic wikipedia – we can presume that its articles on the Palestinians have a different slant from that of the Hebrew one*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Very interesting in relation to Autonomy, language both as communality and as a border*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *And as an ongoing process*

**Roberta Dalek:** *They are just reflections of real life divisions*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *And attempts to unify (Scandinavian ex.)*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *True... and they also underline some of the complexities that we face in an attempt to create shared knowledge on a global scale*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *Very true Voyeur*

**Roberta Dalek:** *The internet can bring us together - but our contrasting world views can bring us head on*

## Moldovan?

By Roberta Dalek  
From Flack Attack

English Wikipedia gives some background "Moldovan (Latin alphabet: limba moldovenească, Cyrillic alphabet: ЛИМБА ДИВЕНЯК, sometimes translated into English as "Moldavian") is the official name of the state language of the Republic of Moldova. It is also an official language of the disputed territory of Transnistria.

A significant number of experts consider standard Moldovan to be virtually identical to Romanian, an Eastern Romance language, save for some minor orthographic differences, and that its status as a separate language is a political rather than linguistic one. Some Moldovan linguists, however, dispute this claim. There are, however, more differences in the spoken languages of Moldova and Romania, most significantly due to the influence of the Russian language in Moldova. The matter of whether or not Moldovan is a separate language is a hotly-contested political issue in the Republic of Moldova." (from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldovan\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldovan_language))

However there are more contributors to Wikipedia from Romania than from poorer Moldova. The battle takes place on the talk pages - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Moldovan\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Moldovan_language). At the boundary between east and west shall we blame the Russians? Romanian imperialism?

Moldovan in Moldova has been written in the Latin alphabet since independence from the Soviet Union. Only in the unrecognised state of Transnistria/Trans-Dniester is it written in Cyrillic.

<p><b>WIKIPEDIA</b> <i>The Free Encyclopedia</i></p> <p>navigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Main Page</li><li>■ Community Portal</li><li>■ Current events</li><li>■ Recent changes</li><li>■ Random article</li><li>■ Help</li><li>■ Contact us</li><li>■ Donations</li></ul> <p>search</p> <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/> <p>toolbox</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ What links here</li><li>■ Related changes</li><li>■ Upload file</li></ul>	<h3>Anti-Romanian discrimination</h3> <p>From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia</p> <div data-bbox="370 1240 825 1279"> <b>This article may contain original research or unverified claims.</b> Please help Wikipedia by adding references. See the talk page for details.</div> <div data-bbox="312 1295 884 1334"><p>This article contains information that has not been verified and thus might not be reliable. If you are familiar with the subject matter, please check the article for inaccuracies and modify as needed, citing sources.</p></div> <div data-bbox="370 1344 825 1383"> <b>The neutrality and factual accuracy of this article are disputed.</b> Please see the relevant discussion on the talk page.</div> <p>Historically, <b>anti-Romanian discrimination</b> has sometimes been present in the policies of countries bordering Romania towards the Romanian-speaking population residing in these countries like commonly happened between any countries whose political borders did not coincide with the patterns of ethnic population. The term is also known as "<b>Románofobia</b>" (<b>Romanophobia</b> in the Romanian language) or <b>antiromanism</b> in reference to hostility toward or prejudice against Romanians, which can range from individual hatred to institutionalized and violent persecution.</p>
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## **Xanadu - Floating World**

Excerpt from sixth editorial meeting, 13 December 2005

**Jack Sondergaard:** *I write about design of software that encourages every viewpoint to be heard, not just the consensus one.*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *interesting...*

**Jack Sondergaard:** *So that is different from what wikis encourage, which is primarily one viewpoint, or at least only the mainstream ones.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Is that the wiki? Or the wiki culture?*

**Jack Sondergaard:** *Both, I think, as the software encourages just one version of a particular topic or sub-topic, and not a multitude of versions expressing many viewpoints on some subjects.*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *I thought it encouraged the formulation of the most agreed upon viewpoint? Including opposite ones in a way?*

**Jack Sondergaard:** *But I would favor the expression in a complete way of all viewpoints and freedom to comment on each. And I believe that those holding a particular viewpoint can usually best present it, although individuals vary widely in how effectively they can do that.*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *Can you give a practical example?*

**Elgar Prudhomme:** *I am not familiar with many of the technologies available, besides wikis and personal web pages/ blogs. MichaelJohn's request speaks for me, too. :)*

**Jack Sondergaard:** *Software designed decades ago, but still in development, a hypertext system called Xanadu, allows for practically unlimited versions of any document to be created. And complete freedom to quote anyone else without asking permission, and all quotations point back to the full context of the original. So it favors different goals than wikis, which generally have only one version of a topic.*

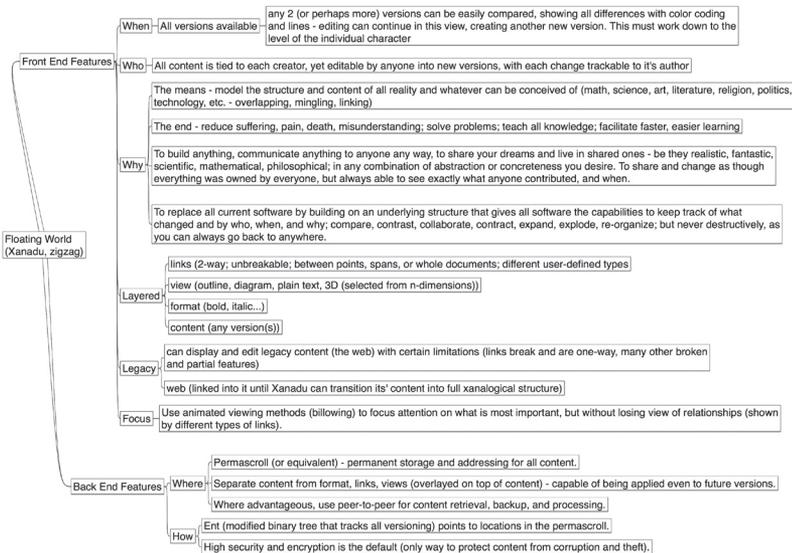
**VoyeurOne Baron:** *But can't there be a problem of just speaking beside each other and never having to confront... if there is no desire to find common points of reference...?*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Isn't that the same maybe Jack, as saying everything that's somehow on your mind and therefore impractical?

**Jack Sondergaard:** Anyone can create an overall topic index, recommendations, a magazine, if you wish, and link it to recommended documents. I don't think it is impractical, as you aren't forcing anyone to read it, but it is there so if someone finds it useful, they will recommend it to others. I think it encourages individual critical thought, rather than trying to think only as a group.

**MichaelJohn Turner:** Don't we edit ourselves to the most agreed upon words?

**Jack Sondergaard:** Yes, we tend to not be controversial and come to a consensus, even when the facts don't yet support only one possible conclusion.



Floating World diagram submitted by Jack Seay (Jack Sondergaard) from <http://hyperworlds.org>

## The Grey Commons From Flack Attack

Palle Torsson & Rasmus Fleischer Speech transcript to 22C3. Berlin. December 2005

### **The Grey Commons - strategic considerations in the copyright**

[Palle Torsson]:

Introduction: We are the many shades of the Grey commons

DJ Danger Mouse took the vocals from Jay-Z's The Black Album and remixed it with the Beatles' White Album and in his creation, The Grey Album, he was breaking the copyright law. The success of his work would never have been possible without file sharing.

The remix has always been here, in the way we as beings become. Splitting, mapping and absorbing the world with our minds.

When computers made a similar splitting possible by storing and processing information a breakdown of the mass medial dichotomies started, the computer that takes this property and as it starts it's most basic functions copies and remixes.

It is vital to acknowledge that we are confronted with intellectual property considerations in our every day life from kids playing with poke-mon to yoga masters. This is something that has become part of our life in the most concrete way because the possibilities of the universal machine, the computer.

It is not a grey commons in terms of the law but as possibility, as technology and technique. It is not optional but inscribed in the technique we use every day. The grey is not here exactly by an effort but rather as the shortest way to make life work with technology. The shading, the tuning and twisting is omnipresent; it is not something you can wish away.

What this really is about is our conditions of living, how information is used, transferred and owned in society.

On a personal level we all have stories that describe this experience. With the remix as the norm, steps to a democratization of creativity are taken and in the process we are liberating the myth of a special class of artists isolated from the rest of us fans, amateurs or consumers.

Like in a contemporary epic: with the creation at our finger tips we are now pounding the old mass medial aura and we are in a state of transgressing the hierarchical consumer-producer society.

[Rasmus Fleischer]:

We all know it is grey and we intend to keep it that way.

### **A pro-piracy axis of the North...**

The Pirate Bay is the file sharing Bit Torrent tracker website based in Sweden and has become the most popular Bit Torrent site in the world and now receives more daily hits than CNN. Piratbyrån (The Pirate Association or Bureau of Piracy) in Sweden and Piratgruppen (The Pirate Group) in Denmark are sister organizations that promote information piracy and supports the culture through discussions, event, media advocacy, advice and develop the questions about Intellectual Property and file sharing.

Piratbyrån was born in late summer 2003, from an integrated internet radio broadcast community and IRC channel populated by the Swedish hacker community and demo-sceners. Piratbyrån was initiated to support the free copying of culture and has today evolved into a think-tank, running a community and an information site in Swedish with news, forums, articles, guides and a shop and has to date over 50000 members.

When the Danish equivalent Piratgruppen.org was founded in 2004, one year after Piratbyrån, it caused even more interesting responses. The Association of Danish Music Journalists nominated Piratgruppen for their "Idea of the year" award. The copyright industry turned hysteric, and the big trade union confederation in Denmark withdrew their sponsorship for the prize award. Then the interesting thing happened that the Roskilde Festival came in as a new sponsor, in explicit solidarity with the pirates. That showed that all parts of the music business does not sympathize with the record industry's anti-piracy stance, and at the same time the whole controversy gave the new Danish Piratgruppen a

great deal of attention.

As the prosecution of individual file-sharers had started earlier in Denmark than in Sweden, one of their first actions was to set up a fund for juridical support. The aim is said to protect and expand this grey zone. A similar fund is now about to be established in Sweden too, as the anti-piracy persecutions has started.

[Palle Torsson]:

### **A tale of an artist living under the current copyright regime**

I have been involved with Piratbyrå since more than one year now. I wanted to engage in Piratbyrå because it is the best way for me to oppose the current copyright regime and basically make a link to the redistribution of culture which I find to be a key element in bringing about a funnier place to live in.

In 1995 I started the project Museum Meltdown in collaboration with another artist Tobias Bernstrup. With this project we got international recognition as the first group of visual artists to use computer games in the art practice.

Museum Meltdown consisted in a series of site specific computer game installations in European art museums. Using the graphic engine of existing video games such as Doom, Duke Nukem 3D, Quake and Half-Life we transformed the museum architecture into violent first person shooter games where the museum visitor could wander around inside a virtual version of the museum killing and blowing up master pieces.

I have experienced and love the power and potential of the open file and information structure of the computer game community – where files are shared among kids for the benefit of the evolution of playing, which basically is the same mentality of sharing that game culture was originated from. This experience is essential for me in the way I look at the possibilities of the digital culture today.

Another key experience that led to the involvement with Piratbyrå was born in 2000 when I made a video that was censored and stopped on copyright grounds. The video 'Pippi Examples' consisted of short sequences in slow motion from the Pippi Longstocking films made around 1970. The video was made

to question the sexualized common gaze. The copyright holders SF (Swedish Film Industry) disapproved of the video and after a national debate, a settlement was made and all the copies of 'Pippi Examples' were destroyed.

I came to understand that I had to fight for my freedom of speech and that I could no longer only rely on my identity as an artist to be able to do what I do.

My work with Piratbyrå is one way for me to map out and understand the relations and powers involved with production of art in society, and to find a power that opposes the current copyright regime.

In my work I always appropriate, borrow or steal other people's work to make something new. I live in, I distribute with, and take from the circulation of information. The configurations of the medial structures are my workspace. The motivation for my work is to try to intervene in this structure to expand the grey zone.

Now I am running the project [artliberated.org](http://artliberated.org) about art, censorship and intellectual property, with Piratbyrå.

[Rasmus Fleischer]:

## **The Västerås case & The Evidence Machine**

In Sweden, the first sentence against an individual file-sharer came a couple of months ago. Two relevant aspects have been emphasized in Piratbyrå's argumentation.

The guy who had shared one movie was convicted to pay a fine. That basically means that the same process cannot be repeated. In Sweden there is secrecy on IP addresses, meaning that the police may only inquire ISPs about the identity of someone on the net in regard to a more serious offence.

Antipiratbyrå of course says that no one should feel safe, that they will catch people anyway just by reporting a greater number of shared movies to the police. That may work on P2P-networks like Direct Connect; however, on BitTorrent you cannot see how many files an individual is sharing, only what IP-addresses that are sharing one particular torrent at the moment.

By pointing such things out and show that the networking protocols are always one step ahead of the juridical protocols, Piratbyrån tries to show how hollow the anti-pirate's claims of their own success are.

The second thing to point out regarding these judgments against file-sharers is that the courts have chosen to rely on screen dumps as evidence. Screen dumps submitted to the police by Antipiratbyrån themselves. It is of course very controversial to let private lobby groups representing the movie industry get that kind of control over jurisdiction.

Here, Piratbyrån demonstrated the madness by producing a piece of software, The Evidence Machine, letting anyone go to a site and produce fake evidence of file sharing against anyone. The juridical dilemma is still not settled, so hopefully this kind of pedagogical tools can demonstrate what kind of way you are stepping into if you accept screen dumps as evidence.

Another issue in Sweden this year has been Antipiratbyrån's registering of IP addresses of suspected file-sharers. This habit was banned, as they had not applied for the special license you've got to have under Swedish law. However, that was later turned around as they got dispense from the authorities. But it has in many ways been obvious to the public that the anti-piracy lobby is also operating in their own, very doubtful, legal grey zone.

But of course they are dependent on the existence of police officials willing to give priority to the hunting of file-sharers over real criminality. That raises very controversial ethical questions that of course should remain open. Most policemen really don't have the will to hunt down kids, and when it is possible to identify the ones who does follow the anti-piracy lobby's wishes; it is easy to point at the totally unreasonable costs for tax-payers for every victim of the anti-piracy-hunt.

## **The new Swedish copyright law, summer 2005**

For a long time it was legal to download music for personal use in Sweden, while the uploading of copyrighted material was criminal. But since the 1st of July, the EU copyright directive has been implemented in Swedish law, meaning that also downloading was turned illegal. However, while the anti-piracy lobby of course wants us to believe that it suddenly has become very dangerous to be a file-sharer, and many voices have spoken up against the supposed "mass-crimina-

lization of teenagers”, Piratbyrån has tried to present a more realistic picture.

Most file-sharers use bittorrent, where every downloader is also an uploader, and thus they were formally criminals also before this law, that didn't really seem to have changed anything.

Generally, it is important not to accept this talking about “downloading”, as if it was some kind of activity completely separate from the uploading. We insist on talking about file-sharing as a horizontal activity.

The free sharing of culture has so many sides, so many grey zones and safe havens, that the anti-piracy-lobby can only attack a very small part at the time. Or, of course, they can attack free internet communications in general, as they more and more try to do right now. Rendering this dilemma visible is done when we give up talking about things in the copyright industry's universal terms, and instead shifts the focus to the diverse reality of cultural circulation: The Grey Commons.

[Palle Torsson]:

## **The Grey Zoning**

The 'grey zone' also becomes visible if we put attention to how arbitrary the very definition of 'copying' is. How it is based upon outdated technical categories.

There is a tactical point in clarifying how it is getting harder to distinguish between local transfers of data, for example in wireless environments, and “file sharing” between different systems. Clarifying that digital technology is built on copying, and that internet is built on file-sharing.

Copying is always already there. The only thing copyright can do is to impose a pseudo moral differentiation between so-called normal workings and immoral.

For the copyright industry, it is of extreme importance to keep people uninformed of the real workings of networked computers. They want to make an artificial distinction between “downloading” and “streaming”, as equivalents to record distribution and radio broadcasting.

Our role here is to keep insisting on that the only difference lies in the software configuration on the receiving end. But copyright law will never be able to acknowledge that. It has to rely on fictions, on a kind of cognitive mapping, where notions valid for traditional one-way mass media are forcefully applied to the internet. We call it Mental Rights Management.

[Rasmus Fleischer]:

It is essential for the copyright industry to keep the majority of computer users trapped in believing that the 'window' of their web browser is exactly a window through which they can look at information located elsewhere, under someone else's control. Our job here is about making clear that everything you see on your screen or hear through your speakers, is already under your control.

Zeros and ones have no taste, smell or color – be they parts of pirated material or not – and therefore it is impossible to construct a computer that cannot reproduce and manipulate these zeros and ones – as such a machine would no longer be a computer, but something as grotesque as a digital simulation of the machines of the last century.

## **The historical background**

But of course the aim of copyright is to do exactly that. Copyright was born in 18th century England in order to regulate the use of one specific machine, a machine that was expensive, few in numbers and that could write but not read, namely the printing press. Ever since, copyright laws have tried with varying success to make other machines imitate the characteristics of that one-way medium.

The concept was pretty easily adapted to the first technologies of sound and image recording, as gramophone and film entered around the turn of the last century.

But – in the seventies machines that could both read and write was spread to a wide population, like the Xerox paper copying machine, the audiocassette and video recorders. This transformed the production of culture, as well as the distribution. Remix, cut-up and mash-up cultures flourished, with early adopters like William S. Burroughs.

[Palle Torsson]:

The industry started to claim that home taping was killing music. From the beginning they wanted to stop the technology altogether. However, the common compromise solution in Western Europe gave the introduction of a special tax on magnetic tapes, in order to compensate the copyright holders for a calculated loss of sales.

Since that time, the sampler, the CD-burner and portable memory devices has continued to make the possibilities greater. Now we've got the combination of home computers, broadband, network protocols and compression algorithms that together define what we know as P2P file sharing.

As we stand here today a fair question must be if a principle that was implemented for controlling printing presses in 18th century England should be the whole which our present world should circulate through.

Some people argue that this like a great work of art copyright has been standing the test of time. For us it is only a conformation on how strong the basic function of information control is in a society and that as we depart from this control are reaching further into the future.

[Rasmus Fleischer]:

### **Compensation systems?**

Some voices now call for a so-called "alternative compensation system", as a way to save both the copyright system and file sharing. The idea usually is that a special fee should be imposed on every internet connection, so that a bureaucracy could channel the money to publishers and other rights holders.

It has been presented as a progressive alternative to mass criminalization, and is advocated by, amongst others, Lawrence Lessig, the EFF and here in Germany by the campaign Kulturfltrate, supported by Attac and CCC.

Just a week ago, it was reported that French parliamentarians had voted for a fltrate solution where downloading would be legalized. Many copyright reformists celebrated that as a victory and talked about "legalized P2P filesharing", which was totally misleading as uploading would be even more criminalized than

before.

However, a rather extraordinary development during year 2005 is that the anti-piracy organizations are starting to pick up the same kind of ideas. In Sweden, Antipiratbyrån has made numerous demands about the claimed 'right' for so called content-producers to rob the ISPs on a part of their income.

A British ISP has gone into a joint venture with SonyBMG, offering its costumers the legal right to share the SonyBMG-controlled music, as long as they pay a flat rate – and accept that their file transfers are monitored and stopped if the filters detect transfers to people who not use the same ISP.

Cory Doctorow from the EFF did applause this as a step in the right direction. We see this more as a clear example of internet sabotage and economical blackmail from an industry that can not accept to be pushed out by the future.

We have never been interested at all in so-called alternative compensation systems, as we generally find it as based on thinking totally grounded in pre-digital media, based on the principle of loss, and denies the complexity of circulation in networks.

## **Beyond the irrelevant consumer/producer-dichotomy**

The copyright industry today likes to present the problem as if internet were just a way for so-called "consumers" to get so-called "content", and that we now just got to have "a reasonable distribution" of money between ISPs and content industry. But we must never fall in that trap, and can avoid it by refusing to talk about "content" altogether. Instead, we talk about internet as communication.

As clever entrepreneurs of course do understand, Internet business is not about selling information, it is about selling the possibility to interact. In addition to file-sharing, people use their broadband connections to so many kinds of production, circulation and communication.

Therefore, it is totally wrong to regard our role as to represent "consumer interests". On the contrary, it's all about leaving the artificial division of humanity into the two groups "producers" and "consumers" behind.

[Palle Torsson]:

## **A vital experiment of complexity**

Maybe what is most important now is to bypass the urge for solutions, for victory in battles or for compromise and stability.

For example, talking about how to "compensate" copyright holders is to obscure the truth about the social production of culture, replacing it with the myth about copyright as some kind of "wage" for artists. And while some of the Creative Commons licenses can of course be usable, it would also be a trap to believe in that a "some rights reserved"-approach would do anything to cool down the anomalies we are talking about.

On the contrary, trying to keep the "grey zone" as open and wide as possible will almost automatically produce better conditions for going beyond prevalent economic imperatives. Making general statements about "THE" alternative to copyright always brings the danger of strengthening copyright's universality claim.

We think that our projects have in general succeeded in escaping the most obvious re-territorializations, like explaining file-sharing just as a response to expensive records, and instead opened up new grey zones.

The drive of discovering, thinking and inventing alternative processes of production is the affirmative power of life as a vital experiment of complexity. Internet piracy is all about desiring-production, and its deepest effects in the long run are beyond our human capacity to compute.

Just as Walter Benjamin talked about art as production of desires that cannot yet be satisfied but that inevitably will reach far beyond the goals originally impossible to imagine.

Rasmus Fleischer Palle Torsson

This article is edited, full version available at [www.flackattack.org](http://www.flackattack.org)

## LIFT ARCHIVE - SZUPER GALLERY

From Flack Attack

[www.liftarchiv.de](http://www.liftarchiv.de)

Lift Archive

Government offices put laws and political decisions into practice. Thus the citizen encounters in government offices the state in its practical manifestation. Public discussion of the political consequences of the work done by government offices takes place, if at all, in parliament and in the media.

Against this backdrop, we have to see the decision to open a space for reflection in the local authority in Munich. The Lift Archive that the artists' group Szuper Gallery installed in the entrance hall refers to the site of its installation, and in ever new attempts using the means of art; it poses questions about the composition of public space. Unlike most of the works financed from the Kunst-am-Bau budget [a programme to put works of art in public buildings – Trans.], which are typically static, the Lift Archive, in which one could ride up and down as in an elevator, served as a site for changing exhibitions, installations and video presentations.

Over the course of four years, the Szuper Gallery not only presented its own works but also invited other artists. The spectrum of presentations ranged from a video shot in the corridors of the local authority by way of documenting the history of the micro-state Sealand, as a utopia of an autonomous state, in a series of videos that dealt with various aspects of public space – not least repressive ones – by way of the invitation sent by the artists' group Schleuser.net and its question *Do We Really Need a New Anti-Imperialism?* on to the provocative transformation of the flags of Western countries into 'burka spectres' or the call to vote on a painting.

As befits a democratic discussion, the contributions were controversial. The controversies led to protests and the covering up of the Lift Archive. Szuper Gallery declared that this temporary covering up was itself part of the artistic discourse. Now that the exhibition phase is complete, the activities will be documented and archived as a permanent installation in the Lift Archive.

Heinz Schütz



'What is to be done - Work in Progress-  
A collaborative by schleuser.net, KVR, Szuper Gallery at the Liftarchive'

## Testing the Latitude of Design in a Government Office

By Michael Hauffen

At the invitation of the Szuper Gallery, Schleuser.net [i.e., “refugee-smuggler.net” – Trans.] made an appearance in the elevator archive of the local authority of the state capital Munich. The function of this government office is not simply to make available to the city’s ‘citizens’ documents relating to administration and to manage the associated data; rather, it is also responsible for processing applications to be granted the status of citizenship and, in the process, to reject some of those applications. In this context, ‘citizen’ refers to a status that functions as a complement to the bureaucracy.

In response to the criticism and distrust of the bureaucratisation of society that has existed at least since Max Weber, this office is making efforts to gain acceptance by its customers: the citizens. As part of this trend, which can be seen as analogous to a broader principle of customer friendliness, the city government decided a few years ago to change its architecture, introducing a bright foyer open to the outside – that is to say, at the architectonic borderline between inside and outside – as a visible expression of the citizen’s friendly reception. An artistic contribution was planned as well, and presumably the crucial factor behind that decision was the fact that these days it is generally agreed that one aspect of the proper tone of customer service is to indicate an openness to individual requests – and what could be better suited to that than art?

These efforts do not, however, apply to the other function mentioned above. There the trend to ‘move closer to the citizen’ is counteracted with a trend to more frequent rejection of non-citizens. Talk of non-citizens’ ambitions to self-realisation, creativity or curiosity may seem outlandish in the face of a lack of elementary preconditions for individual latitude in shaping one’s own life. The range of alternatives to the role of the patient applicant (with little hope of a future) is so narrow here that it is scarcely possible to imagine any interest in art.

The commission of the city planning department that was responsible for the choice of art at this location did, however, approve, in the form of the Szuper Gallery’s Liftarchiv, a concept that pays a great deal of attention to precisely this hidden aspect of the reshaping of the relationship between bureaucracy and individual. Observing this dark side of the status of citizens thus goes hand in hand with a search for alternatives to the dominant order, which might at first seem to mean above all the search for possible forms of resistance.

It is must truly be called the dark side of the status of citizen, in part because the complementary roles of citizens and the bureaucratic organisation are based less on a transparent discourse or rational consensus than on tacit recognition of relationships, and presumably that is precisely how they acquire their essential function. Whenever dissent is articulated, it cannot, conversely, be perceived as binding criticism within the horizon of general problems but must instead be assessed as a potential threat to a structure to which the society has adapted and which views itself as a normality that is cordoned off as much as possible.

Consequently, the concept proposed by Schleuser.net responds to this impossibility of objective discourse by offering an aesthetic strategy for re-evaluating symbols. The installation *Do We Really Need a New Anti-Imperialism?* does not formulate and manifest a direct criticism against an institution (however that might be orchestrated) but rather introduces an organisation that sets the cross-border traffic in motion at this systematic point.

Hence in this first step the members of Schleuser.net avoid triggering the predictable 'normal' defensive reactions; instead, they produce a situation that vexes these very reactions. Neither do the members of Schleuser.net simply adopt a position contrary to this or any other social reality, nor do they merely play the victim card, which would implicitly acknowledge the organisation's role. Instead, they themselves make a point of behaving like a customer-friendly institution that is integrated into a network of activities and is working to optimise social mobility and homeostasis – that is to say, genuine, standard demands of modern societies.

Relative to their circle of customers, they position themselves as outside the boundaries that separate citizens and their normality from the rest of the world, and they are occupied in practice and in theory with the questions raised here. Nevertheless, they employ methods that all but personify this normality inside those borders. They offer a customer-friendly service for those who want to cross borders. They study, collect and archive information and knowledge that can be used for that purpose, and they form an organisation that can bring this information to bear in the political field in the name of its (potential) members. Thus the members of Schleuser.net treat those who have been excluded from the normal rights and opportunities of citizens as already, in that tacit sense, citizens who must be provided for officially. To put it another way, they

offer themselves as a kind of supplement that merely extends and completes the government office's area of responsibilities.

Naturally, this deconstructing game with a border that is at once preserved and redrawn in every social operation that refers to it does not go unnoticed. From the standpoint of an individual suffering under the bureaucracy, it is possible to appreciate this deft turn against one of the bureaucracy's own weak spots. From the perspective of those who are concerned about the absorption of social insecurity, it is already touching sensitive spots. In this respect the members of Schleuser.net are not exactly acting cautiously; indeed, the emotive world 'anti-imperialism' in their eye-catching title directly provokes the system of early warning sensors. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it would also trigger a counter-reaction in an office such as this one; if anything, it is surprising that the response was so circumspect: without saying a word, the offending text and the associated installation were covered up, and for a time no one was officially notified of that action. In all probability, it should be understood as having happened in anticipation of turbulence that result when other government offices (in particular the city planning authority, as the patron of the work of art it had selected), the press, or the artists of Schleuser.net reacted, generating a conflict that would create more waves than would be compatible with the ideal of unquestioned continuation of operations.

With respect to this more or less predictable manoeuvre, however, the artists were less concerned to insist on any particular manifestation than they were to explore real actions, sensibilities and latitudes as elements of a dynamic context in which borders not only have to be defended but also permanently reproduced. Which operations those involved carry out, or how they decide in this sort of ambiguous field of options, can only be calculated as long as the other side in each case clings to expected patterns of behaviour. In that sense, the agreement reached between the Szuper Gallery, Schleuser.net and the hosting government office – that the reaction was not censorship but itself an artistic action – was a surprising reinterpretation of the usual case of free artistic expression being hindered by the bureaucracy. From the perspective of art, the most interesting aspect is that it maintains the build-up of tension of a symbolic intervention that draws the viewers' attention to the ambiguity of social processes of coming to an agreement. Particularly when one of the parties involved is an institution of seemingly unflinching solidity, this result can express in concrete terms the expectation that the final decision about the possible organisation of modern societies has yet to be taken.



# جوع

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## Reflections from The Port

By Simon Goldin & Jakob Senneby  
From Flack Attack

The online 3D world carries a promise of Other. The notion of an emerging society in a networked sphere. Although, online worlds have existed since the 1970's (first text-based and later simple graphic versions), the newer generation of online worlds with millions of users world-wide, seem to offer a more complex social setting. A setting in which people spend much of their lives and in which some make their living.

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Even though the “white collar” jobs are supposedly SO much better paying, you wind up earning the same amount for more stress and less free time. This is personal to me. I’m taking a jump to being my own boss :). Like I said – it’s a good time to be an entrepreneur.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *That’s cool (but also means work = life... usually)*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Yeah, but the rewards are staggering. Ownership. A feeling of pride in what you create. Things that... hell, we haven’t had since pre-Ford. Since before jobs became lever-pulling.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *What’s your business Hiro?*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Well, I do scripting contracts and I run my weapons shop :) Also tools development*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *In Second Life?*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Yes, that’s where I’m transiting to. I still work a 40 hour job Real Life... but not for long.*

The notion of Other is the lure of a second chance. A ‘second life’. An escape route (the online world Second Life has used the holiday retreat as a metaphor in advertising) or a chance for building a collective imagination (much of the academic interest in Second Life has been about new forms for participatory decision making and democracy projects). At one of the Flack Attack editorial

meetings Lex Paz proposed a reading of ‘virtuality’ as a political concept:

**Lex Paz:** *The idea is to reinterpret virtuality into a political concept in relation to Marx general intellect and Hanna Ardent’s discussion on virtu.*

**Jack Sondergaard:** *Do you mean something like having political offices and duties in virtual worlds or something else?*

**Lex Paz:** *Rather trying to think virtuality as a kind of common intellect where “political ideas” can “come into existence”. A kind of portal for the creating of politics*

**Elgar Prudhomme:** *I am not sure what is meant, still, by “virtuality” - I would like to think of this space, “Second Life”, as a virtual reality space. By “Common Intellect” do you mean that which we tend to produce in discussions in places like this one?*

**Lex Paz:** *Yes. But more the making of Second Life as a whole. Sharing a common imagination...*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *You mean to look at virtuality not only as ‘almost like physical/ analog reality’ but as a state of becoming reality?*

**Lex Paz:** *Yes, that’s it. a state of becoming reality...*

It’s this notion of ‘becoming’ that presents an opportunity. The fact that online worlds are still in a process of institutionalization. An ongoing negotiation of norms, which allow for a degree of fluidity and uncertainty.

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *When I was new in Second Life I accidentally came to a funeral of an avatar. I guess I read it as being roleplay. As something curious or interesting. Everybody was dancing, because Zack, who had passed away, liked to dance. I was photographing and asking a lot of questions. I spoke to Anna, the avatar organizing the event and found out that it was the funeral of her Second Life boyfriend. He was supposed to have come back after a business trip in first life, but never returned. He had died in a plane crash. I still didn’t get it. Continued asking stupid questions, until Anna really told me off. How could I just gate crash her boyfriend’s funeral and not take it seriously.*

There is a tension in the meeting of norm systems. An inside and outside of specific codes. The outside working the inside, appearing ignorant but unprejudiced, moves with friction within the norm. The inside on the other hand moves effortlessly, appearing enlightened but conservative. The meeting between the two however, is where new institutions can emerge.

The process of institutionalization can be seen as one of building common points of reference. Creating meaning by sharing not only a visual environment but also a cultural one. Can this be done without merely re-building visual representations of known entities (House, City, Nature, etc) and re-inventing known legal, economic and cultural value systems?

Virtual world entrepreneurship with exchange rates to dollars, first-life charity work within Second Life, cultural productions in the virtual/real border zone, and other activities that blur the boundaries between 'virtual' and 'real' localities seem to work away from the virtual as an escape route, as exit. With increasing complexities and less controllable systems comes a point where individual autonomy gives way to communal. Autonomy becomes a matter of organising your community, and maybe in the long run, how to compete with other communities over a functioning organisation.

**Stefan Nilsson:** *How depressing. For a while we lived in the hope of greater freedom in Second Life. Now we find that we cannot break free of the basic constraints of first life.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *How do you mean Stefan?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *No, I just realized that so far, we've only brought with us our first life aspirations.*

**jesz Murakami:** *Not aspirations, mostly desperations*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *But is it possible to become someone in Second Life (beyond First Life)?*

**Stefan Nilsson:** *Actually, I'm currently struggling with that identity issue. Do I WANT to meet other people, or is it my Avatar that is meeting other Avatars? In a web community, you're more of people-to-people. This is looser.*

**jesz Murakami:** *Do you separate your first life avatar from self?*

**Sorgaard Jacques:** *When Second Life starts to write its own history and becomes a stable context then the blurring of first life and second life really gets into effect...*

Early Virtual Reality thinking often referred the avatar to the idea of the mask. The avatar is something you put on, and decide when to take off, effortlessly gliding between identities and relations. But what happens when you find yourself at a downtown restaurant discussing gossip from the last (virtual) Flack Attack meeting? Did you just put on the mask again? The interconnection between contexts seems much more complex than that. You can neither put on nor remove the mask...

In working with The Port (a community-driven space inside Second Life) we are part of defining this context. Architecturally we try to move beyond representation, working with a structure established by Port architect Tor Lindstrand/ Kapital Metropolitan. In our activities we aim to achieve a degree of autonomy from within Second Life. Can The Port be embedded in programmed code and still be an autonomous entity? (Second Life being an environment ultimately owned and produced by the company Linden Lab)

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *I am very curious Hiro, because if you are becoming a full time Second Life-entrepreneur, then there are a lot of interesting questions regarding autonomy...*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *I'm curious too. This is new to me :)*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Like to what extent your business (and thereby your income) is dependent on Linden Lab*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Well, I mean anyone in Second Life depends on Linden Lab in a few ways.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Of course, but this becomes on a different level if Second Life is what you do for a living*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Yeah, a different level? How much time do you invest in Second*

*Life on a purely hobby basis?*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Well, I'm kind of doing it professionally as well. I'm here as part of my art practice*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *And do you see how people who just treat it as a hobby burn-out often?*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Probably. No first hand experience*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *A year ago I took a whole month off, but partly because I was sick with two different flu strains.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *But this is also one of the starting points for Flack Attack on Autonomy. Sorgaard and I are interested in how we can use Second Life as a platform and still have a level of autonomy. Can The Port be something in itself for example? On a long term basis we are working on applications that can move in and out of Second Life (that kind of parasites on Second Life) without being dependent on Second Life.*

**Hiro Pendragon:** *Heh, I like that. I think bottom line – for the Port – as long as you have interesting things happening, it will attract attention, No?*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Sure. But also, as long as we have interesting things happening at The Port in Second Life, we are part of Second Life as a product...*

Trying to act autonomously within any given structure poses problems. But issues of autonomy need expanding outside of the relationship to a discrete organizational entity. There is a more general question of whether one can act autonomously, and at the same time establish a common language and shared references. A challenge which lies at the core of a collaborative production such as Flack Attack.

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *It's in the meeting between self and world meaning can be created. That's my article's basic idea. Between paratar and avatar [An avatar is the online representation of self. Paratar refers to the offline 'parent' of an avatar]*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Right... and I think Hiro is taking on a similar approach in "Autonomy and working together"*

**jesz Murakami:** *Can paratar be avatar to its paratar – where does autonomy lay (lie)*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Yes, jesz you tend to ask that...*

**MichaelJohn Turner:** *Yes, between any perceived forms and self?*

**jesz Murakami:** *Truest self is autonomous. Ask the Buddha.*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *Not sure about the notion of “true” or “self”. And don’t believe in Buddah*

**jesz Murakami:** *Not a matter of belief – don’t know about*

**VoyeurOne Baron:** *I think we should continue looking through the articles...*

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