The Death Drive: Cronenberg, Ondaatje, Gould

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The Death Drive: Cronenberg, Ondaatje, Gould
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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Death Drive: Gould, Ondaatje, Cronenberg," submitted by Ann McKinnon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

[Dedication]

For my mother and my daughter.

Abstract

The Death Drive: Cronenberg, Ondaatje, Gould.

This project investigates how three English Canadian artists, David Cronenberg, Michael Ondaatje, and Glenn Gould represent the Lacanian Real as the corporeal body, as cause, and as a negative sublime respectively. It interrogates what I call the death drive of Canadian identity, a repetition of the symbolic pre-occupations of the nation state as an insensate insistence of the problem of non-being that continues to the detriment of the natural world upon which it is founded. Since its inception, the Canadian nation-state has been understood through the ideal of a limitless Northern frontier, and as Harold Innis warned, Canada's natural resources would be traded away on the basis of this spatial ideal. While a strong state is necessary to protect national interests, it is on this conceit that an imaginary Canada is erected and the material, subaltern condition of the country as a neo-colony of the United States is masked. I argue that Lacanian psychoanalysis best describes this problem of non-being governed by the logic of objects in a staples economy, a virtual move accelerating the abstraction of nature and labour. The theoretical importance of the death drive is that it both creates the imaginary nation as well as deconstructs ego- affirming nationalisms, while at the same time enabling the symbolic articulation of place necessary to forestall captivation in the image system supporting virtual capitalism. Each of the three texts studied, *Crash, In the Skin of a Lion* and *The Idea of North* reveal a different instance of the Lacanian real read via the death drive.

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Abbreviations of Texts

SE	*Freud, Sigmund.* Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of *Sigmund Freud* (24 volumes). Trans, and ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1953–74.
S1	Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar. Book 1. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–54.* Trans. John Forrester Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1991.
S2	—. The Seminar. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–55. *Trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1991.*
S3	—. *The Seminar, Book III. The Psychosis, 1955–56.* Trans. Russel Grigg, Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1997
S7	—. *The Seminar, Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–60.* Trans. Dennis Porter, Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1997.
FFC	—. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1981.

Introduction: Conscientious Abjection[1]

The Death Drive

> If, in the 19th century, subject-constitution is represented as childbirth and soul-making, in the 20th century, psychoanalysis allows the West to plot the itinerary of the subject from Narcissus (the Imaginary) to Oedipus (the symbolic).
>
> —Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism."

> Every time that a new technology has been invented, a new energy harnessed, a new product made, one also invents a new negativity, a new accident.
>
> —Paul Virilio "Critical Mass."

> I am a woman not an accident.
>
> —Chrystos "The Accident."

> What is astonishing is not that something was able to be, but that it was able to not-be.
>
> —*Giorgio Agamben,* The Coming Community.

This writing explores the Lacanian death drive in David Cronenberg's film *Crash,* Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion* and Glenn Gould's radio production *The Idea of North.* All three are different media and represent different means of understanding how desire and drive create visual and auditory National space. I read each text psychoanalytically in consideration with Canadian communications and literary theory. Jacques Lacan's re-visioning of Sigmund Freud's death drive brings to light the contradictions and limits of any representation of place or identity. The death drive

[1] Hal Foster asks if abject art, given that it is meant to be expressive of the Real, can be represented at all. If so, do such representations constitute a form of "conscientious abjection?" Do they escape an instrumental or moralistic interpretation? *(Return of the Real* 127–168).

is paradoxical, for either it moves toward homeostasis or it searches for excitation. It involves both repetition and attempts to go beyond the pleasure principle. The death drive marks the extimate space of discourse, the space between the subject and its relationship to the world. It brings us to Lacan's *tuche,* or the place where representational effect crumbles enabling an eruption of the enigmatic Real. The force of the death drive comes from a "Thing- signifier" not from a message. The death drive creates, does not resolve, antinomies. As such, the concept of the death drive encourages an aporetic method of reading because the drive creates the space for at least two inconsistent positions. In my reading of Cronenberg, Ondaatje, and Gould, I translate the force of the drive in their texts to illuminate the limits and possibilities of subjective freedom rather than to posit a single reading of each text.[2]

Just as the Frankfurt school discovered in psychoanalysis a means of describing the way society constitutes the individual, or how outside forces construct the subject, Harold Innis—like Theodore Adorno—knew that monopolies of thought are often incoherent because they always marginalize something or someone and, in so doing, create their own antithesis. Innis argued that institutional knowledge is often doomed to failure principally because it is enabled by an extinction of the past. For Innis, this inevitability also creates space for new and radical forms of thought and historical change, a notion very much in line with the Lacanian death drive. The insights of Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan are analogous to some basic tenants of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Innis' linkage of political economy to cultural biases and McLuhan's insight that new media not only shift epistemology but also change our relationships to our bodies and space resonate with psychoanalytic conceptions of identity, media, and space. As Lacan points out, not only the subject but also the most complicated machines are made with words. McLuhan agrees: "All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in a new way" *(Understanding* 57).

However, gender construction is *the* fundamental social process for Lacan, and any social system that takes prohibition as its founding moment demands a subjugation of the body and nature to the Law or language, which in its most authoritarian forms is heterosexuality, capitalism, and the nation state. Lacanian psychoanalysis is impoverished, for although Lacan's mirror stage elaborates how a self—an *imago*—is constituted intersubjectivily in virtual space, because Lacan's subject must renounce the mother's body and turn towards phallic Law to enter the social, and because the construction of social life entails a violent severance from nature, Lacan's theorizing invariably erects an abstracted heterosexist matrix interpellating all bodies, including

[2] Freud's enigmatic death drive is a conceptual means to account for an empirical field. The death drive is at its most Freudian in Lacan's early work. (1950's) In this instance, it is conceived as a nostalgia for lost harmony and it inaugurates the suicidal tendencies of narcissism. The death drive is a force emanating from the Real but it becomes an effect of the imaginary register. However, in later Lacan, the death drive is linked to the symbolic register and culture rather than to biology or the body.

the body of nature. In psychoanalysis, to create a social system the Law demands we refuse nature and the body. If the Law is not heeded, the subject is stranded in the Real of its body, is unable to enter the social realm, is unable to make political change, and, lost in psychotic space, is unable to even utter understandable narratives about alternative existence.

And, neither do the Canadian theorists take into account the gendered construction of the world. However, what these critics, like Henri Lefebvre, bring to Lacan is a recognition of underlying material, spatial, and therefore political forces that are excluded from and exceed Lacan's visual, phallogocentric domain.[3] What Lacan brings to the Canadians is a theory of how gender is tyrannically constructed and how space is produced by phallic verticality. What both psychoanalysis and the Canadians theorize is how these new spaces could be productive sites for social change. Harold Innis, with his emphasis on the oral vs. the visual, points to how new negative space created by each technological invention could be appropriated. There is much potential in contradictory space.[4] Nevertheless, while Innis reveals the blind spots of Empire, the problem remains: How does one use contradictory or negative space to harness and serve emancipatory politics?

The death drive attacks the structure of the ego or all imaginary identifications. What sets the drive in motion is the manner in which the imaginary covers over the Real. The death drive marks a return of the repressed (Boothby 185). Without symbolic law, it is impossible for the Lacanian drive towards the *jouissance* beyond the phallus to be realized. The imaginary mobilizes primitive drives, but only by evacuating, refusing, or excluding other energies from the body. This is the "civilizing" and mediatory job of the symbolic order or phallic law. What threatens to emerge from the Real is oneself– "one's refuse, one's own corpse" (Boothby 65). Lacan tells us that the foreclosure of phallic law, or the rejection of affect, is never total for what has been foreclosed from the symbolic must necessarily re-appear in the Real.

And yet, *contre* Lacan who argues that a refusal of symbolic law ensures the subject is psychotic, a notion of the impossible, inexpressible Real can nevertheless help us to rethink space as something much more radical than negative dialectical space. Discovering exactly how contradictory spaces are produced is absolutely necessary to rethinking notions of the body politic, but this does not address the fragility of nature

[3] Henri Lefebvre's book, *The Production of Space,* draws upon Lacanian psychoanalysis and as such would appear to be a much more usefid comparison to Lacan *vis a vis* the problem of space than, for example, Harold Innis. However, while Lefebvre historicizes Lacan's registers (the Real, the symbolic and the imaginary) his spatial dialectic of history remains set in heterosexist terms. Innis' and McLuhan's emphasis on flexibility and sound could open up productive new means to think of space outside of Lacan's and Lefebvre's theorizing of all alterity as first heterosexual.

[4] The protest in Seatle against the World Trade Organization (1999) reflected such an appropriation of the space produced and controlled by capitalism and power. The press mentioned that the people who converged in Seattle were not unified in their protest, and so the protest was dismissed by some as being chaotic, unorganized and therefore ineffectual. And yet, arguably, the success of the protest lay in the divergent groups approriating the contradictory space created and sustained by niche capitalism.

or the Real of the body. In Lacan, nature, outside of signification, is an instance of the impossible Real. Sublime nature takes on the force of a Thing- signifier which is, in this project, what I call the Northern Thing or a feminine, negative sublime.[5] This sublime is, of course, not a new concept. But psychoanalysis can describe how sublime space is produced and how it could be dismantled. Only psychoanalysis makes clear that the Real has powerfiilly disruptive effects. In our era of eco-crisis, the notion that the techno-nation cannot control and domesticate the Real of nature could be a productive site from which to theorize how to forestall reading nature and bodies both instrumentally and according to utility. For with each new technological advancement and in the name of efficiency, new spaces, new negativities, and new identities are created everyday, ensuring that the subject is more properly understood as an object in the 21st century.

Northrop Frye declared Canada a Utopia, a site with no real place and a society with the potential to be realized in perfected form. Lacanian psychoanalysis is more conceptually useful in understanding the contemporary nation state, space and identity than notions of Utopia (Fiye), nostalgia (Grant), an ontology of space/time bias (Innis), or an apparatus approach to subjectivity and space (McLuhan). In Lacanian terms, place is real only insofar as it is a virtual point in extimate space.

The subject apprehends place– an actual site—because place exists in counteraction to the position the subject occupies. Place is at once virtual and real. However, the nation state is always a virtual or imaginary notion hence identification with it as place is always constituted from the outside-in. It is an unreal space, "confiscated" as Henri Lefebvre says, from nature *(Production* 49).

Innis and McLuhan argue that the subject is mediated and, once "outered" into space, is both constructed and undone by its own creations. The problem with Innis and McLuhan's theory of mediation is that such imaginary identification with the created world constitutes a kind of logic of objects wherein humans, like animals before us, become machines. Lacan' explanation of how space constitutes the subject is much more conceptually useful in this instance: the Lacanian subject, when faced with the negative space that each new technological invention produces, suffers a kind of vertigo of space. This misrecognition or confusion between the inside and the outside of the body is an effect of the mirror of the world. The subject falls into negative space thereby *becoming* space. Lacan argues that symbolic Law must intervene and forestall such imaginary capture. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject can only be known via its place in the symbolic order of things. And, to appropriate Lacan, just as the subject needs an interior sense of self understood through narrative, a sense of place can only be understood via the symbolic and the narratives told about a given place.

[5] Throughout the Glenn Gould chapter on *The Idea of North,* the North as negative sublime or the sublime object of ideology will be capitalized. The north as abstract space or the north as ground will be written in lower case.

The emphasis on orality, narrative, and the ear in this writing is not meant to set up yet another binary, but to argue, with the help of Innis and McLuhan, that there is a difference between psychosis heard and psychosis seen. This reading of Cronenberg, Ondaatje, and Gould is in no way meant to privilege psychoanalysis or to uphold patriarchal Law. Rather, it endeavors to show how every effort to bring all those who refuse symbolic mediation—the abjected others and the Real of nature— often results in re-captivating bodies in the wholly visual imaginary register. There is always the danger of reading representation moralistically or instrumentally—every drive to flout the Law can be stopped short by what could be an even worse form of authority. In each text examined, although in completely different ways and via completely different media, art attempts to articulate the radical Real. Unfortunately, each representation in this study invariably points to the limits of any such representation of the Real.

What each failure and each limit marks is new space. Psychoanalysis formulates identity as a problem of misrecognition and reads cultural history as the result of repetition. It enables the reading of a subject's history, but it is not a form of historicism. Nevertheless, throughout this project, the problem of history arises. Following Freud, Lacan states that time does not exist in the unconscious (Evans 206) and so psychoanalysis is not concerned with a "real" past but the way in which the past exists in memory and the way in which the past is described: "History is not the past. History is the past in so far as it is historicised in the present" *(SI* 12). The past exists in language, a concept that is, as Joan Copjec writes, "no mere tautology" *(Read* 8). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, language is the material condition of any history, known only through narrative.[6]

But how do we read history psychoanalytically? In this project, George Grant and, to a much lesser extent, Northrop Frye appear aphoristically in this writing. These two patriarchs are founders of an intellectual history of Canada, a history that is, arguably, bolstered by a conservative politics of nostalgia. Grant, Innis, McLuhan, and Frye are not included in this writing to represent a static form of Canadian intellectual identity. This would work at cross purposes to my inclusion of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which does not return to a lost plenitude or an authentic subject. Lacan does not hold out hope, as Marx and Henri Lefebvre do, that the subject can ever "return to the wealth of his being" (Gregory "Lefebvre, Lacan" 32).

There are three reasons why Innis, Grant, Frye, and McLuhan appear aphoristically in this text: First, as paternal signifiers, these figures operate as a kind of historical force. Living past their historical context via repetition, they construct a conservative Canadian intellectual and political history. Each signifier is meaningless outside of its

[6] Henri Lefebvre disagrees with Lacan's argument that language has priority over space and with the ideology of castration which "puts prohibitions not productive activity at the heart of social space" (Lefebvre 36). Derek Gregory posits that "although [Lefebvre's] own project seeks to reverse these priorities [...] his work carries forward, in displaced and distorted form, the same conceptual grid" ("Lefebvre, Lacan" 29). However, there is a stark contrast between Lefebvre's history of the production of space and the atemporality of psychoanalysis.

signifying system; however, when a signifier is taken out of context, it takes on the force of the "Thing-signifier" and has enormous power: "Every real signifier is, as such, as signifier that signifies nothing. The more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is" (Lacan *S3185).* The Canadian North, for example, represented as the feminine sublime is utterly conventional and as such informs some of the most lasting clichés of Canadian-ness—that Canadian identity is constructed by unyielding winters and a mortal necessity to combate them and that an un-peopled land existed before European conquest and settlement. These clichés have informed one version of the imaginary nation, Canada. The North as a feminine, negative sublime is a dangerous representation, for it ensures that the actual north and its peoples will be read instrumentally and will be used and administered according to utility.

Thing-signifiers have so much power that they engender monolithic history. For example, once one takes Innis the historian out of his historical context (a conservative thinker nostalgic for Empire), then Innis' negative dialectical strategy is an ontological, rather than a factual, representation of a given history. For although it is true that communication technologies link Canada's hostile and vast land mass– the railway and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation-long after the western frontier has gone, the North remains in the imagination of many Canadians as a hostile outer space. Technology remains the only force strong enough to stand between "man" and his death in terrifying northern nature, a notion so entrenched in Canadian thought that George Grant re-states Nietzsche's aphorism "the will to power" in Canadian terms as the "will to *techne.* "

Second, aphoristic writing has the effect of a Benjaminian constellation, in which a repressed or forgotten past erupts into the present. This constellation effect also describes the force of the death drive in the symbolic register as a return of the repressed.[7] Once the past is repressed in the push to what Harold Innis calls efficiency, then the dialectical movement of historical materialism is suspended. However, these repressed events nevertheless remain alive under censorship, for repression "is one of the liveliest forms of memory" (Lacan *Ecrits* 51).

Psychoanalysis cannot admit to a split between positive, historical appearances and the linguistic being: "Language speaks voluminously in positive statements, but it also copiously speaks of its own lack of self-sufficiency, its inability to speak the whole unvarnished truth directly and without recourse to further, exegetical speech" (Copjec *Read* 9). Repression is a means to describe the analysand's inability to speak the whole truth of her history.

Only the death drive has the power to dismantle the force of the Thing- signifier, for it is always a signif/er, never a signifr'ec/ that is repressed. What is repressed is an "ideational representative of the drive" (Dylan 165; Lacan *S2* 218). In order to rewrite

[7] The death drive in the register of the Real is known by psychotic symptoms (psychotics foreclose the master signifier). Only neurotics can repress. Primary repression is the repression of the signifier in that it reflects the impossibility of ever uttering a complete truth. Secondary repression and the return of the repressed are the same thing (Evans 165).

the terms of the nation state these ideational representatives of the past have to be thought through and dismantled, and space must be made for a new story of alterity and difference to be written. This re-writing is a difficult task and the failure to do so appears in each of the three texts studied. Indeed, if the death drive were successfid, it would signal the end of psychoanalysis. Unfortunately, the paternal signifier regulates the binary system of language, and it is difficult to relativize castration, the logic of presence and absence upheld and entrenched in our current digital world. Digital technologies fit the ideology of castration all too well.

The radical Real gives the negative sublime its force in Gould's *The Idea of North.* It is an idea represented by the decomposing, decorporealized body at the core of history in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion.* It is what could be lost because of technology and because of each new powerful negativity created by technology that lures the subject out into space and eradicating its interior subjectivity, as in Cronenberg's *Crash.* And yet, in each of these texts, the Real as cause cannot be wholly repressed; this is an idea that ensures those who foreclose the Law have the potential to re-direct history. Negation or negative space enables another speculative history not history understood as the positive, factual appearance of events and people in the world.

The symbolic register is of crucial importance to psychoanalysis—and the psychoanalysis of culture—for the very structure of society is symbolic. The symbolic dimension of language constitutes the social and cultural realms and produces the imaginary effects that determine subjectivity. While the symbolic order constitutes subjectivity, the death drive has the potential to dismantle it. These two ideas bring us to the third reason Canadian thinkers appear aphoristically in this writing. It has become a convention of post-modernity that in order to deconstruct Western rationality one must attempt to perform this deconstruction in writing. For example, Marshall McLuhan's aphoristic prose style reflects the epistemological shifts brought about by the new electro-magnetic media. And, Harold Innis employs a negative dialectical strategy as a means to bring human time—the time of everyday life versus machine time, mercantile time or the time of the stock market—back into play. Innis recognizes the margins as an essential source for a critique of power. But Innis' project (taken up by Marshall McLuhan) also resonates with Theodore Adorno's claim, who argues in *Minima Moralia* that only negative dialectical thought expressed aphoristically allows for an expression of subjectivity, especially the subjectivity of the isolated individual (16).[8] This is an important notion, for in Canada, the individual has been conventionally thought of as a kind of "solitary outlaw" a subjectivity linked to Canada's marginal status both to Europe and the United States and to Canada's vast geographical space.[9]

[8] Adorno argues "As today the subject is vanishing, aphorisims take upon themeselves the duty to consider the evanescent itself as essential. They insist in opposition to Hegel's practice and yet in accordance with his thought on negativity: "the life of the mind only attains its truth when discovering itself in absolute desolation" (*Minima 16).*

[9] Gould's status as a "solitary outlaw" peculiar to Canada is posited by W.P. Powe in *The Solitary Outlaw: Trudeau, Lewis, Gould, Canetti, McLuhan.*

The Canadian North as negative sublime is the illusory *a priori* necessary to register the demand to dismantle its illusory effects. And, the subject of the drive attempts to counteract the negation imputed to it by symbolic law and its syntax, technology. In this writing, the myth of the Canadian as a desolate, isolated individual is in part dismantled by the death drive. This notion of the existential loner—the subject that cannot admit contradiction and attempts to live alone in a pluralistic world—is an idea that should be discarded, in Canada and everywhere else. And yet, the negative sublime is the backdrop for English Canada's unique contribution to political, historical, and philosophical thought; it is an original discourse on technology rather than a preoccupation with European notions of historical sense.[10] Who can argue against Gould that his solitude was not essential to his creativity? The death drive can productively explain these paradoxes and creative tensions.

If the negative and sublime North is read psychoanalytically, one can trace how subjectivity, or the creative individual, is constituted. Each new communication or technological invention brings about violent time/space biases, and, as the above quote from Virilio suggests, each new technology creates a new negativity. Innis' negative dialectical method is based on limitation, efficiency, and negativity.[11] When communications technologies become efficient, their products become narrower and narrower in scope, and the culture they represent becomes increasingly homogeneous (Stamps 72). For this project, what is important in. Innis' work is the idea that efficiency not only designates short term cost effectiveness. In Innis' more philosophical writings, efficiency clears the way for new space. Innis as well as Lacan tell us where phallic Law is fragile and where it can be overturned by the forces of the inassimilable Real. Totalizing discourses cannot domesticate or appropriate the Real, and so the traumatic Real remains an object of fundamental anxiety. Understood this way, the Real is cause. Any push to efficiency cannot contain the Real. It is a threat to any signifying system, and as such, the inexpressible remainder of the Real marks the site of all agonistic ontological battles.

Conscientious Abjection

If the claim by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak that serves as an epigram to this introduction is correct—that in the 20th century psychoanalysis allows the West to plot

[10] *This argument is Arthur Kroker's, from his* Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/ Grant.

[11] Judith Stamps offers an example of Innis' version of political economy: "the present-mindedness associated with statistical method grew out of an obsession with gold as a medium of exchange. [Innis] demonstrated further that this was significant because present-mindedness fostered imperial attitudes that, like Adorno's identitarianism, were insensitive to cultural differences [...] Adorno was especially interested in revealing how modem markets, as carriers of the spatial bias, trampled the labouring classes. Innis focused more on the plight of cultures colonized by the market operating at a global level." (*Unthinking Modernity* 65)

the itinerary of the subject from Narcissus or the Lacanian imaginary to Oedipus or symbolic law—then arguably the 21st century belongs to the Lacanian Real.[12] The death drive erupts from the Real against the constraints of the imaginary ego. The Real of the body is ranged against the imaginary or the subject's mental schema that the symbolic or the Law regulates. The ideological importance of the Lacanian Real is that it carries the trace of any expulsion, thereby making the politics of abjection most urgent in our contemporary world as spectacle governed by the imaginary. The imaginary register is known in its most ubiquitous form as capital driven advertisement. What is needed, then, is the intervention of the Law to say No! to the global spread of the American culture industry, the engine of late capitalism. The Law is considered crucial in Lacanian psychoanalysis, for it regulates the paranoiac imaginary or psychotic capture, arguably a necessary form of paternalism in the 21st century.

However, as mentioned, the Law of the Father is most often imposed without any consideration of actual bodies, the body politic, or the body of nature. The Law is meted out without consideration of subjective and material conditions. The Law is absolutely necessary to forestall imaginary capture but patriarchal law has no regard for difference. Luce Mgaray describes the symbolic order as *indifferent* because it does not recognize sexual difference. Its influence is authoritarian—or blindingly paternalistic—and its power is embodied in all fields of knowledge. Irigaray attempts to imagine a maternal community beyond totalizing phallic law and, in this instance, the imaginary is understood to be a liberating utopian site of possibility ranged against indifferent patriarchal Law.

Irigaray's position *vis a vis* the symbolic and the imaginary is not the position of this project. In a cultural reading of psychoanalysis, the imaginary register is the advertising image system of contemporary consumer culture. And, Irigaray's position does not fully take into account the Lacanian Real. Any theorizing of the Real must be considered absolute space and the Woman are thought to be beyond signification. Traumatic negations, such as women and nature, are without a political voice or referential plenitude. For example, in her critique of "post-colonial reason," Spivak argues that the North's rejection of "affect" and its foreclosure of its "resource- hungry" lifestyle

[12] Spivak, to my knowledge, has never made the claim that the 21st century belongs to the Lacanian Real. However, Michel Foucault in "Of Other Spaces" alerts us that "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history; with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever- accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (22). Foucault goes on to describe the mirror and its construction of the subject in virtual space. Spivak's aim is to show how deconstruction can serve reading, but her notion that the "native informant" as the foreclosed identity of the 21st century points to the use of psychoanalysis and its ability to theorize the "lost objects" of history. Foreclosed identities return into the discursive world as "a cryptonym, inhabiting us so that we cannot claim the credit of our proper name." (Critique *111)*

are moves to ensure that the poorest woman in the South remains abject, stranded in the real of her material conditions *(Critique 6).* Captivated in the world of the spectacle, disavowing any responsibility in a resource hungry drive to fill the lack in being, the West ignores the deprivation of much of the world's peoples and degrades nature. In any regulatory symbolic (imperial) law—which for Spivak remains in its most tenacious and entrenched figuration the trio Kant, Hegel, and Marx—there is always a foreclosure of all other subjects and knowledges.

Western metaphysics is fundamental to our cultural practices and languages; however, *contra* Spivak, theorizing the politics of the abject cannot merely mean a deconstructive move to bring repressed terms/identities back to dismantle European theory. If women and absolute space, for example, are beyond language and so aligned with the undifferentiated maternal body outside of monumental history (cf. Kristeva), then they are stranded in the Real of their bodies and anchored in their place by ideological iteration. However, women, outside of signification in obscene or psychotic space are, as Judith Butler argues, very real threats to signification. As threats, they are ideologically controlled so that they stay out of discursive exchange *(Bodies* 199). The potential to marshal this threat, to dismantle phallic law, is always already built into the ocularcentric psychoanalytic system. Is there, Hal Foster asks, the possibility of conscientious abjection? Or, are the abject, once represented, merely re-interred in the imaginary register *as* representation?

Psychoanalysis remains important to feminism and to any theorizing of the abject, for as Richard Boothby discovers in his reading of the death drive the radical move in Lacan is his insistence on a "union beyond the imaginable of flesh and word" (228). The Lacanian death drive brings us to a much more complicated selfreferential relationship between the law of the word and the persistence of negativity, or the corpse left behind, that enables subject constitution. Foster is primarily concerned with visual representation. In this project, Cronenberg's *Crash* throws up the limit of a politics of abjection, for the abjected corpses—Cronenberg's zombielike characters—represented on film are re-captivated in the image system. However, because the Real cannot be represented, the problem of the Real remains. All those who foreclose phallic law-lesbians, poets, critics—are designated as psychotic, and as such their difference does not signify; their voices cannot be heard.[13] Therefore, Spivak's well-known question, "Can the subaltern speak?," addresses the problem of listening. The voice is what penetrates the flesh. Through the insights especially of Harold Innis, who argues that listening is the most radical democratic act, perhaps the problem is not that the psychotic cannot signify but rather that no one is listening. In this project, the ear is ranged against the maleficient evil eye of European theory. Orality is privileged in Canadian theories and the voice is the most vivifying object in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Like McLuhan, Innis'

[13] See Judith Butler's "Arguing with the Real" in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (187–222)

later writings were increasingly concerned with the importance of sound and voice over sight and writing in North American space-biased culture.

But Innis does not fall into the trap pointed out by Derrida. He does not favour the voice and posit writing as an auxiliary supplement. Innis and McLuhan, perhaps in typical Canadian fashion, are simply calling for balance between space and time, between ocularcentrism and the rest of the human sensorium. While

Derrida alerts us to the illusory self-presence of the voice, Lacan instructs that the voice, as object, makes even the illusion of this sort of presence impossible. More important to this project, negative dialectics describe the limits of power whereas the drive is ostensibly limitless. There is a difference between how far one can go because one will be stopped by limits and how far one ought to go in a world without limits. And, the problem remains that the spaces we move through, the places we construct, are designated by phallic verticality and linked to sight; our most powerful technological inventions are indebted to the eye. Further, seeing is knowing, and the imaginary links our rationalist obsession to visibility. And, after all, in order to see the anamorphoic death's head of technology, one must have a point of view. However, it is precisely because of our vision enhancing technology that it is becoming harder and harder to "see" or to represent the Real—for example the affluent West has a blind spot when it comes to the tragedies of Affica—and so the aesthetics of the 21st century must cover much greater distance than ever before to come close to the *jouissance* effects of the Real. Other senses, as McLuhan argues in his life's work, have to come into play to combat the nullifying effects of vision. For each new negativity created by technology is later banished to the margins, out of sight.

Technology/Labor/Nature

The three texts that elucidate the death drive are interrogated within the categories of technology, labour, and nature, categories that are nevertheless coterminously defined. For example, nature can be said to be a social and/or cultural category, given that it is often read instrumentally or in terms of its utility or inspiration. Human labour transforms nature for human purposes, and technology is the product. Technology in this reading of Canadian cultural texts is an instrument of culture, rather than a tool that husbands wealth from nature. Labour constitutes the middle section of this project, for it is neither nature nor culture understood as *techne* but their matrix.

In Chapter One, the death drive in David Cronenberg's *Crash* is situated in the symbolic order. Technology in the film is an example of Lacan's third kind of object; that is, the oppressive automobile is a "massive embodiment" of *jousissance.* This third object cannot be reduced to imaginary mirror play. It has material presence (while at the same time embodying the lack in the Other) and so points to the necessity of symbolic law (Zizek "Object as Limit" 113). The character's automobile collisions are an attempt to go beyond the pleasure principle to *jouissance* experienced as suffering. In

their death drive—represented concretely as the corporeal body's impossible collision with technology—they drive to experience the *jouissance* promised beyond the phallus that constructs and regulates their world. And yet, in their drive, the characters experience neither *jousissance* nor knowledge nor death.

They are, in a sense, stalled in traffic. Unmediated by phallic law, they are stranded in an interminable refrain and destined to repeat past acts rather than to create an emancipatory future. In *Crash,* when the body and technology collide, the body does not escape the banality of the simulated world. It is ultimately re-captured by the very instrument of the simulacrum—the camera.

In *Crash,* if the characters' drive is radical at all, it is because they attempt to drive much further than is possible. They attempt to go beyond the closed system of advertising that promises—but cannot deliver—harmonious totality. Marshall McLuhan argues that Madison Avenue would ultimately kill sex, because everything from death to sex is given the same treatment. Cronenberg's Toronto is a banal North American Everycity and the characters in the film are the living dead; they have mind-numbing jobs and unsatisfying sex. The Real is known only by the uncanny scars that mark the traumatized bodies that circulate in the World of the Accident.

The place of the Real is where representation falls short or fails.

The affectless character's in Cronenberg's *Crash* have inherited Michael Ondaatje's Toronto. In *In the Skin of a Lion,* we see that representation depends on death and even the dead, as Walter Benjamin wrote, will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. In Chapter Two, Labour, the elite in *In the Skin of a Lion* represent Harold Innis' insight that in any system those in power control time and so often have a blind spot when considering the natural world. Innis' concern with the elite's crude idealism is marked by nothing less than the elite's disavowal of death. In the Labour section, I attempt to interpret the force of the paternal signifier made manifest in the novel via monumental architecture. The separation of skilled and unskilled labour, of the intellectual and the physical labourer, and of the elite and those who are led reflects a time bias pinning the subalterns in any society to space thereby condemning them to a crudely materialistic version of existence. Impassive cosmopolitans can move with capital, but unskilled labourers, women, and children remain behind each anchored each in their place.

In Ondaatje's novel, the representation of labour and capital is known in the smooth surfaces of the built environment but it is the stories of the immigrants that gives this ancient struggle between the master and the slave mythic resonance. All those who died to build the architecture of the city are also calculated into the building of monumental history. However, *In the Skin of a Lion,* written in a mythopoetic style, haunts privilege. Functioning as the return of the repressed, his stories told via oral remembrance write an alternative history. Ondaatje resuscitates labor, but the tragedy of the death drive as repetition is that it can only be read retroactively: "the events of art reach us too late, travel languorously like messages in a bottle" (Ondaatje *Skin* 146). In *In the Skin of a Lion,* repetition masks the traumatic Real, the site of struggle. The death drive,

the mask of the symbolic order, is known by the lines of flight and limits drawn between the capitalists and labour in the novel. The abjected or feminized labourers are at once the excremental remainder and the *a priori* support of the Law of the Father. Toronto, in a sense, is built by that which is left over from power. The Real operates as cause or as an object of exchange. The elite need labour to build the city, and the labourers pay their pound of flesh to build the city and thereby make history. This exchange, however, remains invisible to those in power. The elites, like all subjects, need a blind spot in order to have access to their reality.

In Chapter Three, Nature, Glenn Gould's radio sound poem *The Idea of North* inaugurates a new example of the post-modem sublime.[14] The death drive appears in its most complicated incarnation in Gould's sound poem. The drive represents a nostalgia for referential plenitude and a line of flight out of any such anchoring of identity. The dread of hostile space, of distance, and of solitude informs much of Gould's *The Idea of North.* But Gould's production, created by radio technology and structured like a fugue, is an example not of terrifying but of liberating acoustically sublime space. According to Marshall McLuhan, acoustic space offers fiill sensory and emotional involvement, a world of total affect. In a psychoanalytic reading, boundless, direction-less and horizon-less, the sound of Northern space represents a form of psychosis. Gould's radio sound poems are an example of what I call "technological-dialogism," a distinct form of Bakhtinian dialogic discourse ruled by the ear rather than the eye. Speech in McLuhan's electromagnetic "all-at-onceness" in *The Idea of North* is unmoored from the body, creating a space without place, an exemplar post-modem national space. But Gould's sound poems also offer a kind of spatial fix, in that they briefly capture the subject in its trans-national condition, for these representations of North necessarily depend on the sublime object of ideology, the North, to signify. This negative sublime may not actually exist but absolutely must exist in order for the sound poems to mean. Gould's poems, as *non-sense* or psychotic word salad can, *contra* Judith Butler, be heard—that is if one uses one's ears.

Radio technology kills off Kantian notions of the natural sublime, and Gould shows us that the North is lorded over by the same calculus of interests as the south. Gould's *The Idea of North* reveals the limits of any construction or nation state. As Judith Butler has shown that the phallus—the "morphological imaginary"—is a metaphor umoored from biology and can, as it were, change hands.[15] Paradoxically, according to the contradictory movement of the Lacanian death drive, any imaginary construction is also at once undone by the Real, the hole in the symbolic that makes such imaginary identifications possible. What Gould achieves in his radio sound poems is nothing less than keeping these two contradictory movements at play in that, while he posits the

[14] The sound poems are called radio documentaries by Glenn Gould (*Glenn Gould's Solitude Trilogy: Three Sound Documentaries);* however, I am calling *The Idea of North* a sound poem to amplify my appropriation of the Lacanian notion of psychosis, or the sound poem as a kind of "word-salad."

[15] See Judith Butler's "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary" in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (57–91).

need for an imaginary Canadian North, he does so not to make it "real" and offer impetus to actually go North (Discover North! — as Canadian tourist propaganda currently exhorts travelers) but rather to encourage people to leave the north alone and stay in the south.

For George Grant, North America unmoored from European history is dynamic and "future directed." In North America there is an acceptance of the chaos of all possible horizons. The death drive represents the radical potential of Grant's unregulated horizons as well as the inevitable trap of the imaginary, which ensures that all subalterns, including nature, remain abject or abjected in the capital system. However, to put it simply, the problem is that North Americans cannot take the long view. Without historical sense in a wholly spatialized world governed by present minded technology, Canada, as a neo-colony of the United States, is fixated on the problem of non-being. It is a country whose desire is truly the desire of the Other—or America—and a nation that seems to be completely unable, in its imaginary capture and in the absence of any symbolic mediation, to forestall the selling off, for example, of its natural resources. As long as Canada is defined as a place of nature or "natural" — which in political-economic terms is a social category—Canada seems doomed to remain a staples economy.

This writing, organized in a tripartite structure, does not have a conclusion, for there is no dialectical resolution to the sorts of tensions at play in Lacan's paradoxical death drive. The drive does not follow the movement of the Hegelian dialectic where Being is separate from Nothing by negation—it does not convert nothing into something, into being. No does it make a case in favor of any bias, to resolve the contradictions of the great yin and yang of the world, space and time. The only solution to the puzzle of the death drive is that all drives come to their end, and so the efficacy of the metaphysical drive is that it tests limits to discourse. In the spirit of the interdisciplinary forwarded by Harold Innis' Canadian political economy, this project attempts to keep the *aporiai* of the object gaze and the object voice, to keep space and time at play. For in this reading, the radical potential of all creative/destructive drives do not so much stop or go into infinity, but rather, if Cronenberg is correct, in the manner of all traffic, the drive for change is often frustrated, stalled.

Part 1: Technology

Panic Space: David Cronenberg's Crash

Introduction: What does the machine want?

> The myth of "insatiable" female sexuality is in effect a metaphor of the insatiable demands the socioeconomic system makes on men as human beings. It is not the woman that men cannot 'satisfy.' What men cannot satisfy are the machines: technique, technology, production, and performance. — Anthony Wilden, *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange*

> Machines then appear in light of their true end: as immediate, direct indicators of the social relation of death upon which capital thrives.
>
> —Jean Baudrillard. "Symbolic Exchange and Death."

> I want to be a machine.
>
> —Andy Warhol[1]

This reading of David Cronenberg's *Crash* inagurates the trajectory of the death drive. In the film, traumatic, abjected, excremental bodies come back as the return of the repressed. On the cusp of the virtual world, the film shows us what is really at stake when we collide with technology and brings us to what some have argued is the end point of the death drive, which is to say the end of psychoanalysis. If borders and boundaries are successfully ruptured or transgressed, then desire understood as the desire for the correct imaginary object no longer obtains and the heterosexist matrix of psychoanalysis falls apart.

Desire, Lacan cryptically tells us, is bom by death (*Ecrits* 277). In David Cronenberg's *Crash,* the desire of the structural subject has been eradicated by drive; even the drive's promise of death or change is stalled in the character's wholly visual world. The subject of the life affirming drive is meant to crash through the imaginary register, but suffers instead the "death of a thousand aesthetic cuts" (Kroker's *The Last Sex* 3).

[1] Quoted in Gene Swenson's, "What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part 1," *Art News* 62(November 1963): 26.

Although the characters in the film are willing to die to become authentic, the symbolic in this instance fails to sever the character's specular relationship to the world of advertisement in which they live. The characters in *Crash* drive to encounter Death head on, their absolute master. But in the end, the life sustaining drive brings them neither freedom nor death. The lines of symbolic law have merely been redrawn, and other, perhaps more authoritarian, limits are set.

The film does not represent new spaces of desire. It more accurately portrays the time of the contemporary subject, manifest as *fin de siecle* tedium or boredom. *Crash* explicitly represents what has always been so difficult accept; that is, to accept the castration entailed by the death drive which means that the subject must abandon the narcissistic dream of self-adequacy. The subject of the drive must abandon the dream of an absolute, whole self, a difficult notion given that in the post-modem simulacrum the gap of mis-recognition is all too easily filled up by advertising imagery. Unlike Jean Baudrillard's reading of the J.G. Ballard novella upon which the film is based—wherein sexual drive dismantles signs, bars, limits and borders— Cronenberg's medium is film. The drive towards promised *jouissance* beyond the phallus is not easily realized in this medium. For the characters in *Crash*— depicted in McLuhanesque "cool" tones—the encounter with the traumatic Real not only remains a missed encounter, but is framed as a kind of frigid trauma.[2] And, although the drive is not limited by gender and all the institutions supported by gendered divisions, the redundancy of the Lacanian non-relation between the sexes is replaced by the specular misrecognition of our identities in the simulacrum. In short, the drive may crash through the limits of gender and the symbolic/real limit of human flesh, but it stalls in the world of advertisement. At the end of the film, we clearly see that the characters will merely continue to repeat. They are stuck in the imaginary register; they are automatons frozen in the image system. They die the death of a thousand aesthetic cuts. They are, ultimately, suffering the autism of repetition. It is a road movie, but it is a movie on the back roads. It represents Lacan's psychotic refrain.

The *Crash* community is fully spatialized. On the road, its members believe that they are finally free from the metaphysics of death that underwrites the masculine, existential western subject. Instead, the film points to the psychosis at the core of diagetic reality. They are the living dead, zombies in pure drive. And the automobile, the democratic mass article that represents human freedom from necessity, is also one of the most dangerous of our technological inventions. It is not unlike evil or death — it is so commonplace that it is utterly banal. The everyday-ness of the car and our dependency on it disguises its Real features. Looked at from a direction, we can see its

[2] Movies are considered a "hot" medium by McLuhan, for film "extends one single sense in high definition." Television is "cool" because not as much visual information is provided with video and much more needs to be filled in. McLuhan's admitted that his famous distinction between cool and hot mediums would no longer obtain as technology changes. For McLuhan, as television technology changes, it simply will no longer be television (*Understanding Media* 22).

anamorphic death's head by the pollution it causes in the world, by lethal accidents, by endless lines of traffic and automobiles piling up in junk heaps.[3]

Crash brings us to the cusp of the embodied sexuality of the machine world. The automobile is the third sex, its metallic allure constructed by the hysterical male who, suffering narcissistic phallic panic, projects onto the world of objects his imaginary vision. The hysterical male's fetishistic desire is to cover over the knowledge of his lack and the Real of difference. *Crash* depicts the tension between the symbolic—represented in the film by the highway patrol—and the imaginary, the media images that hail the characters and over which the symbolic has no mediatory power. Ideally, the creative/destructive potential of the drive should open up new space especially given that the subject matter of *Crash* is, in part, *techne*—art and technology or all that is created in the world—which explicitly embodies the link between desire, language and the drive " beyond the limits of life" *(S2* 326). The subject of the drive is both supposed to become eccentric to the imaginary and "ek- static...stretched out over time in the succession of the signifying chain" (Boothby 211). Hurtling towards the impossible object of satisfaction, the subject "submits" to the process of becoming.[4] Here, Lacan is indebted to Heidegger who claims that death-not death of the biological body but rather death understood as a structural transformation—is change or a deterritorialization of old space in the creation of new. Change is bound up with anxiety. A flight from anxiety is a flight from death for the subject, when faced with death, is faced with its own unrealized potentiality. Face to face with death, the subject flees at exactly the moment death needs to be faced head on.

However, while the characters do face death head on—indeed, they collide very graphically with the machine world—what the audience sees is phallic panic rather than the radical be-coming of the drive. Lacan's intervention into Heidegger is his installation of the symbolic as absolutely necessary to deconstruct imaginary capture in ego identifications which merely appear to forestall death anxiety. The violent collision of the automobile and the corporeal body is meant to enable unmediated *jouissance*

[3] Sublimation points to the fact that emptiness is the only alternative—the void that art covers over. In psychoanalysis art—or all representations of human desire including technology — is organized around emptiness or death. Lacan's explicates this phenomenon with his example of anamorphosis, or the optical illusion in which the signifier always points to something beyond signification ("Anamorphosis," *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.* 79–90).

[4] Heidegger's notion of temporality influences Lacan's re-writing of the Freudian death drive, in that the drive reflects the creative/destructive process of becoming. Heidegger's ex-static being, "as having a past that is recovered and made its own, not as something static and inert, but as interpretable in terms of an open and undetermined future. Only when *Dasein* in its being-towards-Death confronts its possibility of being radically other than it has been does the full meaning of its temporal existence open up before it" (Boothby 211 and Heidegger *Being and Time* 374). Although they have similarities, the difference between Heidegger and Lacan is the difference between phenomenology and structuralism as reflected in their attitudes to death and anxiety. Boothby reminds us that the term "authenticity carries with it a subjectivist overtone." In contrast, Lacan puts the emphasis on "drive" rather than "being", which is to say he emphasizes Otherness and fragmentation rather than authenticity and autonomy (Boothby 221).

or the subject's contact with the impossible Real, but we see that there is no release; nothing is ever liberated from the constraint of the image. *Crash* is a cinephile's dream text wherein the camera easily entraps us in its fetishizing, phallic eye. It incarcerats the subject and brings us to the limit of the drive.

Unlike J.G. Ballard's novella, little blood, semen or even motor oil are visible in the film, though all important secretions in the novella. What Slavoj Zizek calls "the raw, flayed, palpitating flesh of the Real" is most often hidden from view. In the film, we know we are in the precinct of the Real only because of the uncanny scars on the human and machine bodies. We see the wound that the lost object left behind, and we see the characters probe these traumatic openings—like Freud's tongue in a toothache — in an attempt to find the impossible object. But we never encounter the Real of the corporeal or machine bodies.

The last sex sacrificed before the creation of the third, machine sex is the female body (Kroker *Last Sex* 18). This is an old story perhaps best narrated in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* the narrative of masculine nostalgia for lost origins, for impossible totality, and for the desire to control reproduction. This desire to control reproduction is the dominant trope of science and techno-capitalism which inform many of our current political debates on abortion, child care and paternity.[5] The woman as symptom linked to *jouissance* is misrecognized as the barrier to the masculine subject's *jouissance* (Lacan *Feminine* 168).

In *Crash,* the sexual non-relation between the woman and the man is rerouted to the machine. Propelled by the desire for knowledge, the subject goes on a drive to answer the question: where did I come from? In the last scene of the film, James Ballard (James Spader) chases his wife Catherine (Deborah Unger) through a guard rail down an embankment. This scene illuminates what stands between the man and his machine is not only symbolic law but also the female body. The last long shot of the film is a picture of Catherine on the ground with James behind her, her car looming on its side over top of them. Catherine survives the crash—she does not be-come—and James whispers in her ear "maybe next time, maybe next time." This triptych—man, woman, machine—is reproduced, of course, by a camera. The character's are easily re-absorbed into the simulacrum, back into exactly that which they violently wished to escape.

[5] Lacan is indebted to Hegel's story of bondage, which is not only about alienation from oneself, but more importantly, it is about aggression which Lacan reenvisions as being most marked in the sexual relation via libidinal power transformations. The drive in the film absolutely must be rendered explicitly sexual, for it represents the unchained force of the energetics of the body and the machine and the body as machine—the destructive and life affirming libido. Lacan makes an important intervention into Hegel when he declares that the notion of sublation or *Avfehebung* is one of "the sweet dreams of philosophy," for he is pointing to the fact that the human subject is marked by sexual difference, and therefore, women and men have a fundamentally different (and therefore are antagonistic) relationship to the Real (*Feminine Sexuality* 153–4). Psychoanalytic feminists are divided on how essentializing this notion is, but largely agree that there are at least two sexes and that they cannot be dialectically resolved.

On this reading, the graphic desire to see bodies come inside-out is not only a representation of *avant garde* crash culture or a depiction of liberating trauma. It is also the desire to externalize the maternal womb and its contents—to look inside the female body to answer the question of origins. Ultimately, in Cronenberg's *Crash* the limit of the impossible union between man and machine is a gendered. Although *Crash* tells us where our current limits are enforcing the sovereign difference between the human body and the machine—a union the character Vaughan (Elias Koteas) describes as a "fertilizing event"—the film is not as radical a representation as it may first appear. And, the film is not much of a departure for Cronenberg. All of his films follow a convention of horror in that they represent the masculine horror of the repulsive maternal body.

Rather than an historicist reading of the world, psychoanalysis reveals how historicist nostalgia and/or our will to *techne* function to conceal the traumatic Real. Lacan's rejection of Hegelian mediation is also a rejection of teleological time and history (Boothby 216). Cronenberg's world is an example of the syntax of the second death, a notion akin to Lukács' concept of second nature, "this alienated, reified, dead world" of mass culture.[6] The characters have no inner life. They appear to be completely in thrall to the image and technology; they are formed by the logic of objects. All historical debt is annulled in the future anterior tense of the death drive, the very vehicle and plot of Cronenberg's film.

And yet, a Lacanian reading of the film posits the "necessity of the moment of creation *ex nihilo* as that which give birth to the historical dimension of the drive" (Lacan 5P7/213). For without the signifier at the beginning, it is impossible for the drive to be thought of as historical; however, the law of the signifier insists that there can be no overcoming of history.[7] Referentless, the characters' move away from history is preempted, frozen in film, the most present-minded of technologies. Jean Baudrillard warns that photography and film mark "the end of subversion." For even though the body in the film is in its most traumatic form and although *Crash* shows us a possible means of subversion, technology re-frames these bodies and nature as merely one more commodity sign in a world of signs.

Cronenberg is the most curious of creatures, an idiosyncratic film maker who has chosen to remain working in Canada. The Canadian film community has awarded his films, including *Crash,* with Canada's highest film honors. But *Crash* garnered a

[6] Second nature is Lukács term, and it is synonymous with Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. In his *Theory of the Novel* Lukács posits that second nature is analagous to "a hill of skulls of decaying inwardness." The skull becomes the metaphor for the commodity fetish or the "fossil of history" for Walter Benjamin (Buck-Morss 160 and 422).

[7] David Cronenberg comments that "the conceit that underlies some of what is may be difficult or baffling about *Crash,* the sci-fi-ness, comes from Ballard anticipating a future pathological psychology. It's developing now, but he anticipates it being even more developed in the future. He then brings it back to the past — now — and applies it as though it exists completely formed. So I have these characters who are exhibiting a psychology of the future" (http://www.Cinemania/microsoft.com. 9709–14).

mixture of applause and disgust when first shown at Cannes in 1996, an ambivalence reflected in the film's special jury prize "for audacity" contravening the vote of the jury president, Francis Ford Coppola, who was reportedly disgusted by the film. When it was screened at the London Film Festival, the British Secretary of State for National Heritage called for its ban. Ted Turner, the owner of *CNN,* and at the time of *Crash's* release the owner of *Fine Line Pictures* its distributor, attempted to block distribution of the film in the United States.[8]

It would appear that the film caused some panic. But perhaps the most dismissive criticism of the film is that *Crash* is unremittingly boring. Ranged against the outrage at the film's subject matter, if the film is offensive, it is because it is flat or alienating. Cronenberg never thinks his films are outrageous and is often genuinely confused about audience reaction, given that audiences consume and condone such fare as slasher films aimed at teenage audiences. His films produce more *angst,* panic and/or anxiety than fear in the audience. One watches Cronenberg's films and has the uncanny feeling they should not exist.

Crash represents our current limits of the drive, not at all a mundane observation that the film is merely about having sex while driving. The censorious reception of the film completes it negatively, marking its limit, a compelling notion given that the film is really all about limits and the panic and pain they generate. Arthur Kroker and Michael Dorland specifically name Canada a "panic" space, an exemplar post-modem nation. The panic we suffer in the late 20th century is arguably about vulnerability—the vulnerability of the body and nature– and hysterics, or those without a secure identity, feel this vulnerability most intensely.[9] Canadian panic/hysteria is quite simply a death anxiety. We feel impotent in the face of mortality, which in the early 21th century is, arguably, the death of nature and in politics the death of national identifications. Hysterics speak the truth of death via the somatic symptoms written on their bodies, nature, and the body politic, marking the traumatic truth of the vulnerability of all life and the contingency of all identities.

Marshall McLuhan argues that panic always accompanies technological shifts, for they are "a threat of uniformity on a world scale [...] the projection into the future of mechanical standardization and specialism, which are now past" *(Understanding* 359). Further, McLuhan argues that anxiety in the automated and electrical age will inevitably give way to boredom (26). Human sexuality has always been regulated, and

[8] David Cronenberg said Francis Ford Coppola and other jury members at Cannes "simply declined to be involved with this prize (special jury prize for audacity) because they just disliked the movie so much. I'm told that the discussions were so bizarre—like worrying that there would be copycat incidents of people crashing into one another—Atom Egoyan said it was the most banal, silly discussion among a group of quite intelligent people" (http://www.cinemania.com 97-09-14. Pp 1–6).

[9] Elisabeth Bronfen calls for a re-examination of hysteria from its gendered definitions. In Freud, hysteria's etiology is traumatic first, not first feminine and sexual: "Yet what the hysteric broadcasts is a message about vulnerability — the vulnerability of the symbolic (the fallibility of paternal law and social bonds); the vulnerability of identity (the insecurity of gender, ethnic, and social designations); or perhaps above all, the vulnerability of the body, given its mutability and mortality" (xiii).

the film elicits panic because of the fear of uncontrollable sexuality along with the related fear that our technology is lurching towards consciousness.

A new morality is formed through our anxious relationship to technology.

The death drive, emanating from the Real, marks the limit between the body and the mind, a gap that is arguably becoming ever wider in our virtual age.[10] One disavows technology's potential danger and mistakenly believes that it can resolve what "that idiot Descartes had cut in two" (Lacan *S2* 73). Boredom is the result of this widening divide and because of the glut of images in contemporary culture, increasing the desire for at least the representation if not the experience of ecstatic pain. Although the film does not offer a revolutionary vision of the future, it is successful in that it points to the psychosis that is within the structure of all reality. Cronenberg presents us with something that could be worse than being regulated by paternal law, which after all, human beings have many ways of getting around. *Crash* shows us what is at stake when we become trapped in the world of images.

In response to the film's censure, Cronenberg questions whether critics do what only psychotics do: they confuse reality with representation. Is there a difference between "reality" and representation? In *Crash,* "new" sensations are found to be really rather passive, perhaps because they are merely old sensations, now products of mass culture infinitely reproduced and hence ultimately unfiilfilling if not completely nullifying. Instead of liberating the character's in a rush towards mortified enjoyment, *Crash* in the end presents us with a nihilistic aesthetic. David Harvey, following Theodore Adorno's sorrowful question of what kind of aesthetic is possible after Auschwitz, asks, what kind of aesthetic is possible after Henry Ford?[11] Adorno's demand that we consider exactly how we discursively limit human beings and nature ensures that aesthetics remain central to the goal of undermining hegemonic instrumentality.

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[10] When asked about the Cartesian mind-body opposition within the context of digital technology, Cronenberg responds: "Well, I think the tendency still is for the separation of the two. I think that rather than integrating those things, what all of this technology is doing is further separating the two. I think the mind is more easily digitized than the body, and so it's flowing further and further away from the body. I think that's really what the end result of it all is" *(*http://www.Cinemania/microsoft.com. *97-09-14).*

[11] David Harvey cites Adorno's "legendary" elitism *vis a vis* the aesthetic question and argues that Adorno's aesthetics, in the end, reinforced a kind of bourgeois "art for art's sake." Harvey calls this a withdrawal into "Leibnizian conceit *."(Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* 136). He remarks elsewhere that the "confidence of an era can be assessed by the width of the gap between scientific and moral reasoning. In periods of confusion and uncertainty, the turn to aesthetics (of whatever form) becomes more pronounced " *(The Condition of Postmodernity.* 327; Gregory, Derek, *Geographical Imaginations* 352.) Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin were, as victims of European anti-Semitism and fascism, living in times of uncertainty. However, in order to make this claim, Harvey shifts the emphasis back onto society and away from nature. Aesthetics are extremely important in any interrogation of what is natural and what is considered reproduction. Adorno's argument rests on "the nexus of rationality and social actuality, and upon what is inseparable therefrom — that of nature and the mastery of nature" (Dialectic of Enlightenment. *XVT).*

Cronenberg's *Crash* answers Harvey's question. The film's aesthetic is marked by repetition. The automobile, created by the assembly line and reified in the infinite regression of the urban traffic jam, is captivated by the imaginary, or film. Cronenberg's images do not reflect the sublime machine velocity once celebrated by the futurists, now the ubiquitous image of contemporary advertising. This is not the automobile as the emblem of democratic freedom on the open road. Rather, *a la* Jean Baudrillard, the automobile on this reading upholds the social relation of death upon which capital thrives. The commodity automobile in *Crash* is the very engine of capital, and as such it offers the narcissistic masculine ego a rigid, imaginary homogeneity. But it is also a symbol of the drive, and following the logic of capitalism, the automobile at once offers consistency as commodity and undoes the subject. Repetition is a function of the death drive as a mask of the symbolic order, but repetition must not be confused with reproduction (Foster 132). Repetition is not mimetic; it does not have referential plenitude. Rather, repetition is best described as technological for it functions as automaton, linking the profound subliminal effect of media technologies on the subject's perception and consciousness resulting in a confounding of inside and outside, a confusion of space or the limits between the subject and the world.

In his reading of *Crash,* Michael Grant calls Cronenberg's narrative style a "transmutation of presence into absence, of being into nothingness" (183), a reading very much in keeping with Cronenberg's declared tastes in modernist, European literature rather than *avant garde* film. Cronenberg's characters move towards death; however, it is incorrect to consider the film an example of such dialectical exhaustion or negation of being. The Real of the body is unassimilable, and in *Crash* the traumatic or abjected body is the remainder of crash culture. There is no movement of being into nothingness; rather, the movement is from the existential subject to the corpse.[12] Hal Foster argues that we are currently suffering "bi polar post-modernism" in that our culture reflects both an ambition to inhabit a place of total affect as well as the desire to be drained of all affect: "to possess the obscene vitality of the wound and to occupy the radical nihility of the corpse" (Foster *Return of the Real* 166).

In Foster's notion of traumatic discourse, the subject is evacuated and elevated at once, resolving the contradictory imperatives in critical culture: deconstructive analysis and identity politics (168). In *Crash,* these contradictory imperatives play between the twin poles of the paradoxical death drive, between autism and full sensual, sensory experience. Cronenberg's film is all about our alienation of desire in an ocularcentric world (the imaginary), our current and future limits (the symbolic), and the high-jacking of nature, our sublime object of ideology, over which all our agonistic arguments are waged (the Real). *Crash* gets right to the heart of the ethics of psychoanalysis, to the basic conflict between Freud's notion of the amoral sexual drives ranged against a

[12] Kristeva's notion of the abject includes the body before full separation from the mother—not yet interpellated into society or subjugated—as well as after seperation when one is determined by the external world. For more on the abject, see Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* and Hal Foster's use of the abject, its relation to the Real and representations in art in his *The Return of the Real*, 149.

civilized, regulated moral subject.[13] For Lacanian psychoanalysis respects the patient's right to resist domination, the subject's right to enjoy (Evans 58). Lacan names such a subversion of the rigidity of subject—his or her nostalgia for origins-ethical. The mediating function of the symbolic is to separate the imaginary from the Real, and as such, the ethics of psychoanalysis insists the analyst discover w*here* the subject is alienated from her desire. The death drive's ability to deconstruct the imaginary register is positive resistance, but is also neurotic fixity or suicidal self-punishment.

On this reading, the film can be read as liberatory because totalizing histories and master narratives are dismantled. However, if the Real is understood as cause or the unrepresentable, untranslatable *dijferand* between the competing registers the imaginary and the symbolic, then how can we read the traumatic body left behind in the drive? The question is, can there be what Hal Foster names "conscientious abjection?" How can either the hysteric or the corpse, stranded in the Real, be considered politically and historically? What conclusions can we draw from knowing where our limits are, or, do we have any? Do we need a notion of absolute nature or a notion of the biological body that will die to make historical claims? If technology widens the mind/body divide instead of bridging it, is the film (wherein death is framed thereby promising eternal life beyond the limits of corporeal experience) presenting new bodies or constructing new spaces? In Cronenberg's version, the potential of the unification of the human and machine is displaced on to the woman's traumatic body.[14] What if the third sex or the new body, ostensibly freed from the tyranny of its imaginary constitution by the world of objects, is merely a 21st century version of the transcendental subject, which is to say a subject that believes that his limits are merely imaginary? Are we back to an object-less, limitless ego who, now believing himself to be one with the machine, can go anywhere, do anything and at no cost? Does the future belong to the adolescent boy, who dreams that if need be, he can use technology to reach escape velocity off a dying planet?

Am I Alive or Dead?

> The effect of electric technology had at first been anxiety. Now it appears to create boredom.
>
> —*Marshall McLuhan,* Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man

[13] According to Freud, if the drives are too strong to be sublimated, sexuality will either be expressed in perverse forms or repressed, the former described as psychosis the latter leading to neurosis ("Neurosis and Psychosis," *SE XIX*149). Lacan installs ethics as essential to psychoanalysis, but not in the manner of traditional ethics revolving around the concept of the Good, for psychoanalysis sees the good as an obstacle to desire *(S7* 230), and it is not to pleasure. When pleasure meets its limit or is transgressed, it turns into pain.

[14] See Barbara Creed's reading of Cronenberg's *Crash,* "The Crash debate: Anal wounds, metallic kisses," in *Screen* 39:2 Summer, 1998: Reports and Debates.

> So the story of *Crash* ends neither with a bang nor a whimper but with an outcome that the founding manifesto of futurism could never have envisaged, not to mention embraced: the emergence of tedium itself as the greatest thrill of all.
>
> —Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "*Crash* (Speed as Engine of Individuation)."

> Keyword for Hell: Boredom.
>
> —*Walter Benjamin,* The Arcades Project

> I disliked *Crash* intensely because it bored me so much...
>
> —Bart Testa, University of Toronto, 1996.

An historicist reading of culture and any transparent notions of nature are left far behind in the human desire for the shock of the new. In contemporary culture, the new is ultimately nullified by repetition in the mass system (of which the assembly line and the automobile are emblems) and camera technology is the controlling, omnipotent, and entombing gaze. The characters in Cronenberg's *fin de siecle* film are as bored as 19^{th} century *flaneurs.* They are zombies in a polity of boredom, coming from nowhere and going nowhere in endless lines of traffic which have the effect of eliminating all organic endings of the drive. The celebrity or media culture they have been hailed into is a world where funerals and other symbolic rites of passage are not heeded, for dead movie stars never really die. Media technology unanchores them from their symbolic moorings in the past. Movie stars, living in the present tense of spatializing technology, roam the earth forever in re-runs as images infinitely re-repeating in different contexts, zombies that are impossible to pin down historically.[15]

In psychoanalysis, history is only ever understood symbolically or mythically — the register of the Real as cause is not an historicist notion. Vaughan's car is a 1955 Lincoln, the model that that took President J. F. Kennedy on his drive towards his death. When James asks Vaughn if he thought the assassination of JFK was a motor accident, he replies, "A case can be made for it." J.F.K's death drive, endlessly repeated on video, television, and film, functions as the return of the repressed as historical passion.[16]

Vaughan re-stages James Dean's famous highway death as performance art *and* reckless driving–or the aesthetics of perversion as traffic violation. Vaughan, unlike

[15] Psychoanalytic history is not a dialectical, or cause and effect version of history, or a history made immanent within relations of power/knowledge. Lacan, unlike historians, posits a metaphysics which "is impossible" but "one cannot practice psychoanalysis, not even for one second, without thinking in metapsychological terms" (Lacan 57110; Boothby 63). There is a productive paradox in thinking metapsychologically: if Lacan acknowledges the impossibility of metaphysics or a metalanguage, then he also acknowledges that the whole of a person, the whole of society, can never be reduced to one, impossible system. But people and societies nevertheless envision wholeness.

[16] J.G. Ballard has written a short story entitled, "The Assasination of J.F.K as a Downhill Motor Accident."

the zombie couple of James and Catherine, is a masculine hysteric: his somatic symptoms are written on his body via his prophetic medical tattoo, which is "ragged and dirty...like [his] prophecy." The problem of the hysteric is that he always needs another subject to organize his desire. Vaughan finds Catherine and James with whom he creates a new collective spiritualism, a kind of technopaganism. In Vaughan's view, bodies violently coupling with automobile technology is a form of worship, for it has the larger goal of becoming one with the media culture that calls all subjects. Vaughan would agree with Lacan (and disagree with Jean Baudrillard) who insists that we must not reduce these "mystical ejaculations" or "the mystical to a question of fucking. If you look carefully, that is not what it is all about. Might not this *jouissance* which one experiences and knows nothing of, be that which puts on the path of ex-istence?" (Lacan *Feminine Sexuality* 147). James Dean's fatal accident is reified as historical passion. Vaughan's accidents, like Bernini's sculpture of the ecstatic St. Theresa, Lacan's icon of hysteria, are meant to have the representational force of the religious sublime. According to Bernardo Bertolucci, the film is a "religious masterpiece" for its images evoke religious iconography in its compulsive repetition or rehearsed trauma.[17] Vaughan's actual staging of automobile crashes give them erotic *frisson,* but they are meant to elevate mechanistic sex into something much more transcendent

The difference between the novella and the film is that film kills off the sublime velocity of the machine by hard framing it. Once frozen as image, it is no longer sublime. Vaughan has elaborate plans for exacting representations of the crash deaths of Jane Mansfield and Grace Kelly. Near the end of the film, his assistant attempts the Mansfield crash but does not survive the wreckage. While driving, Vaughan inadvertently comes upon the accident, and, paparazzo-like, snaps close-up photos of the crash wreck and its victims. Breathlessly aroused, he declares the Mansfield crash "a work of art," illuminating that only the moment of the collision of the corporeal body and the machine can maintain the Benjaminian aura killed off by all other mechanical reproductions.

But Vaughan destroys the aura of the accident when he takes photographs of the crash and its victims. The camera ensures that the drive to dismantle monoculture is thwarted. While the death drive moves towards "difference over unity, fragmentation over wholeness, heterogeneity over any principle of sameness" (Boothby 136), Vaughan's dialectic of benevolent psychopathology and his willingness to re-make it photographically undercuts the radical potential of the drive. Vaughan moves through a series of negations—the subject of lack and its desire for death collides with the object automobile, colliding in a bloody dialectic that is meant to turn loss into gain in the image. He does not, in the end, "liberate the sexual energy of those who have died with an intensity that is impossible in any other form."

[17] J.G. Ballard in an interview with Ralph Rugoff quotes Bertolucci in "Dangerous Driving" (*Frieze* 50).

James, while driving Vaughan's Lincoln, looks into his rear view mirror. He watches Vaughan and a prostitute couple in the back seat. This McLuhanesque scene is repeated; James later watches Vaughan with his wife, Catherine, through his rear view mirror in a car wash/shower sex-scene.[18] Throughout the film, the women's lingerie is like a carapace; its surface shinyness reflects the metallic surface of the automobile, a *mise en abime* of referentially. In a choreography of techno-corporeal sex, the hood of the convertible Lincoln is raised over their bodies to cover the car while at the same time Catherine lifts her top for Vaughan. For Marshall McLuhan, the rear view mirror represents how we have only mediated responses to material reality. The aphorism, "the medium is the message" illuminates that there is nothing new created by each technological shift. In comparison, Lacan insists that even though an object has been displaced or has disappeared, the subject is still fixated in the same relation to the *objet a.* And so, when James watches through his rear view mirror, what he sees are past acts, not new acts.

For Lacan, machines have a "life" simply because they have an *historical* memory. The repetition of movements, understood in an electrical sense as the unchanging circuits of demand and desire, constitute a kind of history:

> Let us suppose that this machine is constituted in such a way that it is incomplete, and will jam, will only be definitively structured as a mechanism once it perceives—by whatever means, a photo-electric cell, for instance, with relays—another machine identical to itself, with the sole difference being that it would have already perfected its unity through what we may call a prior experience—a machine can have experience. (Lacan *S2* 51)[19] The electrical life of machines corresponds to and describes the Lacanian drive, inasmuch as the notion of drive is discussed as energy and has an historical dimension, for the drive refers back to something memorable because it was remembered. Remembering, "historicizing," is coextensive with the functioning of the drive in what we call the human psyche. It is there, too, that destruction is registered, that it enters the register of experience. (Lacan *S7* 209)

If Baudrillard is correct, the death of the body is banal, but the death of symbolic systems is subversive.[20] Devastating drive, then, creates new space and creates a kind of history. And, linked to the past as memory, partial drives do not arrive *ex nihilo;*

[18] J.G. Ballard declares the car wash scene in Cronenberg's film version of his novella one of "the greatest scenes of cinema" ("Dangerous Driving" 50).

[19] In *Understanding Media,* McLuhan argues the inverse of Lacan's reading of machines: "The machine assumes electricity as store and expediter of information. These traits of store, or "memory," and accelerator are the basic features of any medium of communication whatever. In the case of electricity, it is not corporeal substance that is stored or moved, but perception and information" (353).

[20] See Baudrillard, Jean. "Symbolic Exchange and Death." *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings.* Ed. Mark Poster, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988.

rather, after the mirror stage, the foundation of the phallic signifier that sets history in motion is revealed as a function of the signifying chain:

> [The death drive] requires something from beyond whence it may itself be grasped in a fundamental act of memorization, as a result of which everything may be recaptured, not simply in the movement of the metamorphosis but from an initial intention. (Lacan *S7* 211)

The subject's moment of recognition in the mirror "decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into a mediatization through the desire of the other" (Lacan *Ecrits* 3) resulting in aggressivity. According to Lacan, Freud begins with a nervous system tending towards equilibrium or death and ends up with a very vital, unmanageable unconscious:

> The brain operates as a buffer-organ between man and reality, as a homeostat organ. And then [Freud] comes up against, he stumbles on, the dream. He realizes that the brain is a dream machine. And it is in the dream machine that he rediscovers what was there all along and which hadn't been noticed, namely, that it is at the most organic and most simple, most immediate and least manageable level, at the most unconscious level, that sense and speech are revealed and blossom forth in their entirety. (*S2* 76)

What Descartes and Freud tore asunder—the human mind from the body and the mind from itself, split into conscious and unconscious projection—Lacan's mirror or each new "machine" puts ever more distance between.[21] In Lacan, the body is now understood only in specular images outside itself, and identity and ego are a chimera.[22] But everything depends upon the hidden body beyond the scars—the raw flesh that so horrifies and disgusts and the screaming of metal as it opens up into orifices—and the horror of the subject penetrated and almost obliterated by technology's pupil-less gaze.

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[21] Freud used spatial metaphors in *The Interpretation of Dreams* to describe "psychical locality " and in this instance his models are topographical, not physical or anatomical. His first topography is divided into three sections: the conscious; the preconscious; and the unconscious. The second topograpy divided the psyche into three "agencies": the ego; the superego and the id. Lacan thought that Freud should have gone even further with topological models to "forbid imaginary capture" (Evans 208; Lacan *Ecrits* 333). Lacan spatializes or virtualizes Freud energetic system of the psyche.

[22] Lacan and Hegel are both critics of the consciousness of the ego, including Descartes's rational cogito and the autonomous, transcendental ego of Kant. Hegel insists upon the individual's historicity, which in Lacan's psychoanalytic reading is the history of the subject, understood as the unconscious. *The Phenomenology* endeavours to dissolve illusory conceptions of the self as an abstract ego, a notion that appears in Lacan as misrecognition and the fundamental alienation of the authentic subject. The end of Hegel's *Phenomenology* describes an inverted mirror world—Lacan's mirror stage— illustrating Hegel's complaint that science must recognize itself in this mirror. For Lacan, if science does not recognize itself in the mirror it will be captivated by the ego.

Lacan's machines have memory because each iteration, each repetition reaffirms the power of whatever discourse that structures the subject. The phenomenological self and the material body are arrived at through discursive accretion. The subject of the drive, unlike the dialectical subject of desire, incessantly slides. The subject does not have the usual anchoring points where things are pinned down (*capitonnage*); in other words, there is no reference back to a symbolic function (Wilden *System* 273). They have neither desire nor gendered identity nor history. Once on the drive, the characters find themselves in a state of primal discord, for there are no longer guardrails directing traffic, no boundaries, no limits, no symbolic anchor, and no structuring Law containing the Real. The automobiles and those along for the drive just crash on through them.

In *Crash,* the death drive is shown in its most mechanical and insensate form as a progression through empty time. And, although the characters believe themselves to be different or anarchic, they are as alienated as the laborers in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* who mistakenly believe that their labour is somehow a moral act. *Crash* exemplifies the energetic power of machine technology, which is to say that it represents the myth of *Geist,* or the spirit of automatic progression. History conceived or mobilized as technological progress is thought to be driving forward; however, at the end of *Crash* we see that nothing has budged, not even the progression of life into death. Even what appears to be the shocking idea of having sex with automobiles is not new. There is nothing new about virtuality—it is an idea as old as the symbolic order itself. The 21st century body is still created by the logic of the symbolic order — it is a rule bound body; that is, if it is an understandable body, it must fit our vocabulary, our desires and our future expectations.

Nevertheless, the death drive "requires something from beyond whence it may itself be grasped in a fundamental act of memorization" (Lacan 57 211). Psychoanalysis focuses on these irruption's of unconscious processes into conscious discourse. It posits that historical "reality" is merely a mirror effect. We see history rushing up behind us in James' rear view mirror, in that the techo-bodies in *Crash* exist long before they discover their new sexual vitality in Vaughan's Lincoln. James says to Catherine at the airport hospital that after "being bombarded with road safety propaganda, it is almost a relief to find myself in an actual accident." Their bodies have been interpellated by television news, advertisements, road safety propaganda and videos of crash tests long before Vaughan dreams that his automobile collisions could join the corporeal body with the images that call it and create it.

The characters in *Crash,* although seduced by velocity and power, remain alienated and aggressively entrapped in the image system. Following in the path of Narcissus, libidinal drives are completely overtaken by the mirror of technology and the subject vertiginously fall into its space. Media technology hails the desiring subject; the automobile is the mechanical form after which we fashion our desire.

The machine "is not merely the opposite of the living, the simulacrum of the living, " but rather "embodies the most radical symbolic activity of man" (Lacan 52 74). For Lacan, the machine marks the time of the body, and, on this reading, ultimately

the body in the film can be said to represent the technocratic features of fascism. The characters in film, in their drive to become one with the commodity object, are ineluctably interred in the closed system of the technologies that drive the market economy. There is no enjoyment, only images, in the imaginary.

The language of Ballard's book, and the cinematic terms of Cronenberg's film reflect surface shininess, glinting like technology itself. As mentioned, *Crash* is highly conventional in plot and story, informed more by Cronenberg's taste for high modernist literature than *avant garde* film, and its subject matter appears at first glance to be the rather tiresome and conventional connection between masculine sexuality and machines. All of the terms in both the film and book versions are highly technical: "No ass, no dick, no cunt: but the anus, the rectum, the vulva, the penis, coitus" (Baudrillard *Simulations* 113–15). Baudrillard argues that this eradicates the sexual *frisson* of coupling bodies in Ballard's *Crash!* I think that it merely makes scientific terms seductive. Scientific terms make the connections between sexuality and technology explicit, connections that Donna Haraway reminds us are very much fixed and unexceptional: "Science remains an implicit genre of Western exploration and travel literature...science as heroic quest and as erotic technique applied to the body of nature are utterly conventional figures" *(Simians* 205).

The automobile is the privileged machine in the film, encompassing all the scientific, political, discursive fields of technology, or the artifact as masculine *techne* which is, via the "alchemy of body and mind, more powerful than nature."[23] Because the characters in *Crash* are wholly taken over by the machine world, they seem to declare that if you can't beat the world of simulation, then join it. Hal Foster, in his reading of Andy Warhol's pop art, argues, "more, if you enter [the simulacra] totally, you might expose it; that is, you might reveal its automatism, even its autism" (Foster 131).[24] Cronenberg agrees:

> In *Crash,* I'm saying that if some harsh reality envelops you, rather than be crushed, destroyed or diminished by it, embrace it fully. Develop it and take it even further than it wanted to go itself. See if that is not a creative endeavor. If that is not positive. (Rodley 201)

[23] Rosi Braidotti, in "Mother's, Monsters, and Machines," argues that alchemical symbolism is the appropriation of the womb by male "art," "that is to say, the artifact of male techniques. Paracelsus, the master theoretician of alchemy, is certain that a man should and could be bom outside a woman's body" *(Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* 71).

[24] Andy Warhol told the critic Gene Swenson that "Someone once said my life has dominated me. I liked that idea" positing what Hal Foster calls a form of "subversion by immersion." Warhol was infamous for declaring that he liked boring things, for the more they were exactly the same and the more images repeat, the more meaningless they become and "the emptier and emptier you feel." Foster argues that Warhol's crash paintings, drained of meaning, are a defense against affect. Once traumatic images are completely integrated into a the symbolic order and their uncanny affect domesticated via repetition. See Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real,* 131.

In the end, the film brings us to the nihilistic pole of Foster's bi-polar postmodernism. It represents the radical nihility of the corpse or the autistic refrain/repetition of psychosis. The subject in *Crash* is not structured by the metaphoric, vertical anchoring of phallic law; instead, the subject infinitely repeats past acts, projecting them into the future.

At the start of *Crash,* the characters are "eccentric" to themselves in relation to the imaginary register or the media images that interpellate them. James Ballard works in the film industry-he not only lives in dulling monoculture but is, in part, responsible for its creation. The bored zombies in *Crash* suffer from existential inauthenticy. They are caught up in unfuifilling jobs, dissatisfying sex, and endless traffic jams. In one typical exchange, James and his wife Catherine have a perfunctory conversation on their balcony overlooking a jammed freeway. The conventional question, How was your day? is replaced by the equally mundane phrase "Who did you fuck at work today, darling? Did you come?" As Fred Botting and Scott Wilson comment, sex in *Crash* is like work; it is machine-like and automatic ("Automatic Lover" 186). But more than that, in Lacanian language, even this seemingly provocative speech is empty speech. It is merely a discourse of the ego or everyday, idle talk. Sex, divested of desire, follows the superegoic command to enjoy!–to keep on fucking—but for James and Catherine, sex is engaged in without much pleasure.[25]

Vaughan (Elias Koteas) is a kind of techno-sexual prophet who encourages them to crash through the imaginary register, through the captivating images of the simulacrum towards the ecstatic be-coming promised beyond the law to go on their deterritorialzing and dionysian drive. Once they meet Vaughan, they are no longer desiring subjects but are subject to the drive, and they attempt to crash through the screen of the simulacrum towards the ultimate goal of mortified enjoyment. At first, James would do everything in his power to avoid accidents. But once he is in an actual accident he cruises in his automobile and, like Marinetti's killer shark, he circles accidents, the very perimeter of death. James no longer flees from death; he chases death down.

The characters in *Crash* are alienated in the imaginary, initiating their death drive. However, the imaginary mobilizes the drive only by excluding other energies of the body. A systematic emptying out of *jouissance* must be enforced so that the subject no longer suffers as a social being, ensuring in turn the docility of the subject in service to the Law.[26] In Kristeva's reading, "refuse and corpses show me what I permanently

[25] In *Poetry, Language and Thought,* Hiedegger makes the distinction between idle talk and authentic speech, notions Lacan appropriates as *parole vide* and *parole plein* respectively. However, Lacan goes further than Heidegger, in that it is not so much that empty speech does not say anything, but rather that the subject will or cannot hear what is being said.

[26] Lacan's "jouissance of transgression" is found first in Christianity, for in Christ's passion—his death and subsequent rebirth—punitive Judaic Law is substituted with love. The paradoxical death and everlasting life of God which brings forth Christianity is an event Lacan links with the interdiction: "Thou shalt love thy nieghbour as thyself. " This is impossible for human beings, for the resistance to the commandment and "the resistance that is exercised to prevent his access to *jouissance* are one and the same thing" ("The Jouissance of Transgression" *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 193–194).

thrust aside in order to live." Richard Boothby appropriates Kristeva's notion, arguing that in our abjection of oneself a self is established, for "what threatens to emerge from the real is ultimately a part of oneself, one's own refuse, one's own imaginary corpse" (Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 3; Boothby 65). The abjected bodies at the crash site are "edged with the sublime" for they test the limits of sublimation and install in the place of certainty, panic or hysteria.[27] The Real of the body is both the condition of identity or knowledge and that which makes it impossible. All representations, all identities are contingent pieces of the Real, resistant to symbolization:

> The very word sign is given by the thing itself, it indicates that at least at a certain point, the abyss separating the Real from the symbolic network has been crossed, ie: that the Real itself has complied with the signifier's appeal. (Zizek, *Looking Awry,* 32)

What is left-over, this corpse, is what Lacan calls the "headless" object of the drive:

> The object of the drive is a subjectivization without subject, a bone, a structure, an outline, which represents one side of the topology [...] the subject is an apparatus [...] the subject sustains himself as desiring in relation to an ever more complex signifying ensemble. *(FFC* 184–5)

Cronenberg's *Crash* because it is film best represents how the object gaze invades and dismembers the body. The object gaze *qua* technology devours the subject, breaks down the body, and eradicates its internal life. In this manner, the subject becomes space (Foster 146). The subject is the site which presents the hole in knowledge. It is a "border effect" or a de-limiting fragment. The crash bodies are traumatic *(p-ou-vaaúc)* remainders. The traumatic subject does not flee from the knowledge of death; she or he faces it head on and attempts to break through the screen of simulation. But anxiety or panic covers up the traumatic Real. The lost object cannot be recovered. When Vaughan first encounters James in the airport hospital, he runs his hands over James' wounded body, probing the holes the lost object has left behind. And in some of the crash scenes, bodies are tinned inside out— literally abjected.

At the start of the film, James and Catherine's erotic life is quite unfulfilling but once they are introduced to the world of the accident, they *enjoy* crashing automobiles. They enjoy watching automobiles crash; enjoy their bodies crashing into automobiles; and enjoy their bodies crashing together when in automobiles.

[27] Lyotard warns against confusing the Kantian sublime with Freudian sublimation Freud's sublimation is a term that is forwarded to account for human creativity that is not necessarily sexual, but nevertheless motivated by sexual instinct. The two forms of sublimation are artistic creation and intellectual inquiry and so, unlike perversion, sublimation has socially sanctioned aims. Foster does not confuse the Kantian sublime with Freudian sublimation. Lyotard's notion of the aesthetic sublime is something troubling, horrifying or outside the boundaries of taste, therefore calling into question the limits of socially accepted sublimation.

Read psychoanalytically, the collision of technology and flesh is enjoyable because it is somehow intrinsic to our condition. Enjoyment via the Real appears to be structurally prior to the symbolic order; however, this is only an imaginary effect for the Real is that which has been masked, hidden, and elided for it threatens the imaginary integrity of the subject. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, enjoyment is understood tautologically—it must pre-exist the symbolic order simply because the symbolic order exists to mask it. And power, in the case of *Crash* the highway patrol, does not like to have its enjoyment stolen. Ideology or authority does not exist once its mask is tom away.

Before Vaughan theorizes the world of the accident and the liberating force of the traumatic body, sexuality in the film is grasped only in the image. But Vaughan does not only want a release from his mortal condition through the liberating force of traumatic *jouissance* that will sever him from imaginary identifications. He is after something much higher than McLuhanesque coupling with technology. At first he tells James that his goal was to "re-shape the human body by technology," but later admits that this explanation was merely a ruse to test potential participants and is a "crude sci-fi concept that floats on the surface." Vaughan is after something much more transcendental: "a liberation of sexual energy mediating the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity that is impossible in any other form. To experience that, to live that, that's my project." Vaughan's metapsychology, what he calls "benevolent psychopathology," undercuts the subversive potential of the drive, for it implies a dialectical reconciliation with the primordial object of satisfaction in its theorizing of the union of flesh and word. Vaughan, in this instance is not deconstructing Western philosophy, he is dreaming the dream of Western philosophy—to subíate the irreconcilable, to dialectize the drive which, paradoxically, would be much more subversive if Vaughan did not attempt to catch it up in his art, this dialectic of desire.[28]

But *jouissance* remains in some form nonetheless and returns in symptoms written on the body. In *Crash,* regardless of how damaged the character's bodies are in their collisions with automobiles, the characters, like cartoon characters that are killed over and over, keep coming back for more. Zizek explains that the notion of the two deaths in Lacan is akin to contemporary video games. The players possess several lives. They are under constant threat—a monster could eat them and they could lose their life. But if they thwart danger, they are rewarded with extra lives. The logic of the game resides in the difference between these two deaths. On the one hand, the player loses a life, but the much more profound death is one in which the player loses the ability to play the game at all *(Sublime* 135).

The tautology of death—death at the heart of a signifying system that only symbolic death can kill—brings Lacan's provocative notion of the "second death" into play in

[28] According to Hegel, the making and the appreciation of art is dialectical: "Hegel has three movements in a work of art. The form or *Gestalt,* the content *(Gehalt or Inhalt)* and the meaning *(Bedeutung).* " Spivak *Critique* 40).

Crash. After the death of a body, there must be a second death that prevents the regeneration of the body, usually enacted through symbolic rituals such as funerals that escape the code's interminable, infinite capacity to absorb and defer all meaning. The second death for Lacan is the point at which the very cycles of nature unto death are annihilated in favor of the traumatic, sadistic fantasy of inflicting perpetual pain *(S7 248).* Lacan invokes this Sadean dream of inflicting torture and torment on the body that will not only survive but will retain its beauty. Zizek explains in his reading of the death of Antigone:

> It is as thought, above and beyond her natural body (a part of the cycle of generation and corruption), and thus above and beyond her natural death, she possessed another body, a body composed of some other substance, or excepted from the vital cycle—a sublime body. *(Sublime* 134.)

This sublime body, linked to Lacan's notion of the living dead, appears in a dream related by Freud:

> A man who once nursed his father through a long and painful mortal illness, told me that in the months following his father's death he had repeatedly dreamt that his father was alive once more and that he was talking to him in his usual way. But he felt it exceedingly painful that his father had really died, only without knowing it. *(SE* 1911a 225)

Lacan turns his attention to this father that does not know he is dead. The obscene little man who refuses to die comes back as a partial object causing anxiety or panic because, unmediated in the dream, he has not taken up his proper symbolic function. This is the site of *das ding,* the Real traumatic kernel at the core of the symbolic function (Zizek *Sublime* 135). He is the living dead, all drive without desire, for a "drive is precisely a demand that is not caught up in the dialectic of desire, that resists dialectization" (Zizek *Looking Awry* 21). The father who is not dead brings subversive *jouissance* into the world, the exceedingly painful knowledge that the dreamer feels when he realizes his father does not know he is dead.

All of social life is taken up with regulating traumatic *jouissance.* One mourns, but one must not go on thinking that loved ones are still somehow alive.[29] However, the agent of symbolic Law, the father in the tripartite structure of Lacanian psychoanalysis, *needs* the rogue father of enjoyment; he is the necessary flip side, for you cannot have both meaning and enjoyment; such subversive enjoyment is denied the speaking subject.

[29] The law in its first instance is epitomized by the voice not the letter. For the covenant of the letter of the Law can only acquire authority from this remainder of the dead Father, that part of him which is not quite dead: "The object voice bears witness to the rest of that presupposed and terrible Father's *jouissance,* which couldn't be absorbed by the Law, that reverse side of the Father that Lacan calls *le- pere-la-jouissance,* his ultimate deadly cry that accompanies the instituted Law" (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 27).

The imaginary or zombie father does not have the symbolic— hence the structuring— function of the dead letter or the father of the Law. This zombie or partial object is never quite absent, nor is it entirely present; rather, it creates the ground for imaginary recognition, for one either recognizes oneself as the one who is addressed by the voice (psychosis), or after the mirror stage, as one who has a voice. Once voice is vocalized, the subject takes its place within the community.[30]

Vaughn wants to be a person, not a subject under the law. He is a new creature of metal and flesh and he endeavors to open new spaces that will in turn transform him. This is the blank space from which monsters, fantasies and zombies emerge and that inevitably create new subversive communities of pleasure. (Zizek "Grimaces" 65). If the world of *Crash* is hostage to the logic of the object, according to Baudrillard's principal of simulation wherein both the reality and pleasure principals have been absorbed, then the characters in *Crash* cannot enjoy.

But as zombies, they nevertheless do enjoy. Although the dead Father of Law does not enjoy, the living dead, or the imaginary "obscene little man [who] now is the clearest embodiment of the uncanny"[31] does. The paternal "No" that socialises the child is the invocation of the dead letter of the law that gives life to the subject is not heeded (Lacan *S3* 180). Erasing the limit between life and death, the zombie inevitably returns and comes back as the return of the repressed.[32] The "living dead" mediate high art and mass culture and, in so doing, generate a multiplicity of meaning. The living dead are those who reveal their opposite; that is, they are somehow more alive than ordinary life (Zizek "Grimaces of the Real" 45–47).

Throughout the film, the cinematography is in hallmark Cronenberg blue, cool tones and the music underscores the film's Brechtian alienation. James and Catherine are zombies; they are monstrous but not the "red-hot devils of folklore." Rather, they are the cool blue devils of the electronic media (McLuhan *Understanding* 112). The "zombies" of the second death turn against symbolic law, enacting Lacan's notion of*pere-version.* The living dead erupt from that part of history censored, or the unconscious

[30] Both Slavoj Zizek and Frederic Jameson posit Edvard Munch's *The Scream* as the symbol of modernism. The figure in Munch's painting bears witness to the horrors of the twentieth century and modernity's end. He or she panics because he/she has had a glimpse of the terrifying Real—that which remains unrepresentable but exists nonetheless. And, as the convention goes, screams are always silent in a nightmare. Zizek argues that the un-vocalized scream designates the disintegration of a coherent social order.

[31] Prior to being sublated, the father in this instance is a sublime substance of enjoyment. But this is an illusion: for the father has always been dead: which is to say, he was never alive *and* does not know that he is dead.

[32] Toni Morrisson's *Beloved* is a profound example of the notion that the return of the repressed can represent an otherwise buried history. The character Beloved is not merely a ghost; she exists and does not exist and so can represent the "sixty million and more" that died in the middle passage and in America at the hands of European slavers. In the United States, which Morisson charges suffers from historical amnesia, *Beloved* tells a story that otherwise has not been told by people who have not been considered historical subjects.

marked by a "blank or falsehood" (Lacan *Ecrits* 50). They face the interdiction of the Law. In *Crash,* when the characters collide with technology, they refuse the mirroring technology of the simulacra and the very symbolic structure that articulates their identity. They attempt to bust out of this imaginary gestalt and crash through the symbolic network that demands they be what they are designated. They turn toward the father of enjoyment, the not-dead father who is pure drive without desire, and encounter head on the terrifying, senseless, and sublime Real. This turning towards the Father of the Law and looking the Law and its interdiction face on is *the* perversion of the 21st century. It is essential to the politics of difference.

This encounter with the Real is traumatic not only because the body suffers pain but also because this encounter is always a missed encounter in that it marks absence or the lost object of the drive. The subject does not merely see images; rather, it is "touched" by images, a phenomenon Lacan names *tuche,* graphically rendered in the film as collision: "the encounter with the Real" is a space "beyond the automaton [...] beyond the insistence of the sign, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle" (Lacan *FFC* 53). The *tuche* points to the confusion between inside and outside, the point of the disintegration of the boundary between subject and object where the Real returns violently and breaks the subject down, causing anxiety.[33]

There is much anxiety in a world of violent images that do not cause bodily pain. *Crash* repeats some of the most iconic traumatic images from the 20th century, and, like Andy Warhol's repetitions of the famous photograph of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the film presents us with a "kind of nightmare of shock victims who prepare for disasters that have already come" (Foster 136). In Cronenberg's film, the re-representation of iconic film images such as James Dean's crash death function as a reiteration of the image showing us, as Hal Foster argues in his reading of pop and *avant garde* art, where the simulacra or the world of the spectacle cracks.

In the imaginary simulacrum of *Crash,* nature is the mystical remainder, its aura or affect killed by technology. But it is precisely nature that the characters try to "feel" in their violent collisions. Hysterics are fatherless and as such especially understand the fragility of paternal law, and, when the symbolic disintegrates, the Real nevertheless remains. But with its uncanniness, its very eeriness, *Crash,* illustrates that, for good or for ill, like Hamlet's murdered father, zombie fathers always come back from the dead. Always already a dead letter, his message returns yet again in all death drives. In psychoanalysis, the symbolic order strives for homeostatic balance, but there is at the centre a traumatic element which cannot be symbolized. The zombie/ghost/doll that

[33] Although the Real as rupture is violent and beyond the pleasure principle, it must be bound by something, usually the symptom. This traumatic point of the Real, linked to visuality and the gaze, is often described as the vanishing point in linear perspective from which the gaze "looks" at the viewer: "Perspectival painting has different ways to sublimate this hole: in religious painting the point often represents the infinity of God (in the Leonardo *Last Supper* it pierces the halo of Christ), in landscape painting the infinity of nature (there are many nineteenth-century American examples) and so on" (Foster *Return* 36).

uncannily erases the limit between life and death always inevitably returns. The return of the repressed is, then, a form of historical expression. The buried corpses of nature and labour come back, and these living dead have an uncanny way of reminding us of what is Real. Apparently, this is a tedious notion in the spectacle of the 21st century.

Zombie Porn

> Language is a virus from outer space.
>
> —William S. Burroughs

> All sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors.
>
> —Jacques Lacan, *Seminar II,* 49

> The virus is the mirror.
>
> —David Cronenberg

> Everybody knows we have restored full civil rights to perversion.
>
> —Jacques Lacan, "The *Jouissance* of Transgression." *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*

In the first crash of the film the body of Dr. Helen Remington's husband, thrown from the driver's seat, penetrates the windshield of James Ballard's automobile. In the remaining crash scenes of the film, the sex acts between automobiles is shown by them sideswiping each other or crashing from behind. Each crash releases enormous energy; release of all forms, as Freud reminds us in his analysis of jokes, represents freedom, expression of new ideas, poetic speech and/or metaphor *(SE* 8:11). When two objects completely different from each other are brought together, "*esprit'* is the result, for "man defies his very destiny when he derides the signifier" (Lacan *Ecrits* 158). The collision of flesh and technology is meant to create new meanings, new metaphors, and new spaces.

Crash causes panic, for there is fear that new techno-bodies will create a multiplicity of uncontrollable new spaces of desire, for if the symbolic limit of the skin is split it opens "up to endless displacements of desire" (Lacan *FFC* 205). If these traumatic, scarred bodies bring us back to the most premature expression of the body before the mirror stage, then the phallic signifier no longer regulates the "proper" choice of love object.[34] For Lacan, our perverse desire to look upon the traumatic body is linked

[34] Cronenberg has mentioned that body tattooing is analogous to crash sex: "and then, you combine that with a group of people who are willing to reinvent sexuality, who are saying that maybe the normal organs of sex are not the only possible organs of sex, who are asking: What else is possible? Combine that with the kids today who are doing the tattooing and the piercing and the scarification and the branding and all that stuff." Practitioners of body tattooing often call their art the "new primitive" movement (http -*Jfwww.Cinemania/microsoft. com.* 97-09-14).

to the premature expression of the subject-coming-into being, an idea shown in the film when Vaughan and James "rubberneck" and are held captive by accidents while driving. The space of the body is marked by subjective tension, for self-preservation runs counter to the desire to return to the body in pieces. The contradictory result is the "vertigo" caused by the will to dominate space and the subject's "neurosis of self punishment," creating an antithetical movement which dismantles the body in space (Lacan *Ecrits* 28).

The subject is captivated by the dismembered body because bodily evisceration and mutilation are rooted in tensions produced by the imaginary gestalt of the ego. The Real, then, can be understood as the link between the psychic and social worlds, a relation ruled by the death drive (Lacan *Ecrits* 27; Boothby 40). In the film, when the Real of the body crashes against the constraints of its imaginary identity as dictated in the simulacrum, the death drive erupts from the Real against these constraints made by the imaginary ego. The paradox of the death drive is that the subject rails against unity which, paradoxially, impels the subject to go back to a body before the mirror stage, the most primordial expression— the body in pieces (Boothby 40).

But are new bodies and new spaces created in *Crash*? If phallic law no longer dictates choice of proper love objects or regulates sexed bodies, then what kind of body is created in *Crash?* Donna Haraway writes, "It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. It is not clear what is mind and what body in machines that resolve into coding practices" *(Simians* 177). The "rear-enders" in the film point to the subversive potential of anal eroticism, a symbolic reversal that tests the limits of the Law. And yet, the pleasures of driving and crashing are ultimately as imaginary as Lacan's infamous sexual non-relation, for crash culture in its push for gender-less sexual ecstasy does not go far enough.

For the film to be truly subversive, it would have to move beyond the pleasure principle of the world of advertisement. Technology enables the subject to drive much farther and faster, but celebrity culture ensures that these new sexed bodies will not get any closer to the impossible object of desire.

While desire may create intersubjective virtual space—the great mirror of the world—the death drive productively dismantles it. Jean Baudrillard calls J.G.

Ballard's *Crash!* an autogedden. Cronenberg has repeatedly said in interviews that he is interested in pleasure, desire, and sexuality from the point of view of the virus, a most promiscuous organism. Viruses are a kind of machine which our bodies support, for like machines viruses are "half-way between being alive and dead," a definition very much like Lacan's second death or the Zizekian zombie. Here Cronenberg agrees with McLuhan, who posits that our technologies are the product of desire projected into the world; they are prosthesis of our bodies, but more than that, they have the power to shift consciousness, shift epistemology.[35] Humans, the creators of machines, are also

[35] It is important to recall that McLuhan considered television programming a televised *object* not unlike Lacan's notion of the object gaze. Television cannot be read as content. As a cold medium

constituted by machine "desire," or mirroring technology understood as the desire of the Other that makes identity possible.[36] Virtuality is viral, for the body is always already contaminated by its technocreations. Further, mediation of any kind—the windshield, T.V. or our computer screens—may shift or may colour epistemological understanding but it cannot protect the corporeal body from slamming into its own creations.[37]

"We" create technology, and, like a monster, the virus/technology at times has as much, if not more, agency than we do. Cronenberg's films question the perceived gap between what we consider consciousnes—consciousness "outered," as McLuhan says, into technology— and the corporeal body. Cronenberg's bodies are *not* outered into technology; they are left behind. Cronenberg's bodies are ventilated remainders of death, and, like George Grant, his films at once privilege and critique technology: "We can hold in our minds the enormous benefits of technological society, but we cannot so easily hold the ways it may have deprived us, because technique is ourselves" (Grant *Technology and Empire* 137). In Cronenberg's work, subjectivity inheres neither in the human body nor in the mind. Subjectivity in the film is a Lacanian illusion, anchored in its place by *techne.* The limit of the subject is transgressed by the virus. The boundary between the body and the machine is impossible to police, for technology is part of our genes, our chromosomatic make- up. Like Haraway's bodies that resolve into code, technology is always already an infection, created by the terms of our own bodies. Technology, like the Lacanian object-gaze, takes over; it techno-digests and cannibalizes its willing host, our flesh. Once infected with a virus, beings inadvertently become devoted to supporting its growth, making viruses a charismatic entity.

Lacan uses the term *lamella* rather than virus to explicate the libido and the unrationalized paradox of the subject/object divide. The *lamella* represents Lacan's attempt to explain Freud's energetics of the imaginary (Boothby 63). It traces the space of the libido from the external object to its insides, a being that is both inside and outside itself. Lacan's libido is contradictory for it is both life and also representation marking the death of the thing. The *lamella* is a lining of the Real, distinct from other partial drives; it has a privileged relation to the Real which concretizes it as a kind of organ

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it eliminates affect. Jean Baudrillard invokes McLuhan in his short article "Holocaust" to describe the danger of traumatic history such as the holocaust achieving an aesthetic dimension. Broadcast via television, Baudrillard argues that it is next to impossible to resuscitate a "hot" topic such as the holocaust, impossible to have a heated debate from "the cold monster of [televised] extinction" (*Simulacra* 50).

[36] The idea that the mirror is a vims is exemplified in Cronenberg's film *Dead Ringers.* Cronenberg's twins are incomplete if separated and doomed if they remain together. Cronenberg also links the viral mirror to video for it is a mirroring technology which allows one to see oneself from the back for the first time, the privileged vision of the twin before the advent of film and video. Video images reproduce ad infinitum — they have a viral life beyond the original host—and can be transmitted from machine to machine, with each re-playing mutating the video like a vims (Cronenberg, David, http://www.zappa.users.netlink.co.uk/mond2000.html 0504–00).

[37] Mediation in its strictest literal sense implies a connection by an intermediary; in epistemology, mediation is a problem of translation and articulation between the subject and the world.

"in the sense of an instrument [...] situated in relation to the true organ" (Lacan *FFC* 196). It is described as an "amoebae in relation to sexed beings, immortal — because it survives any division, any scissiparous intervention. And it can run around, " but its "zoological place is the libido" (197). It is both a kind of prosthesis and an animal—an instrument and an amoebae—and it shuttles between the two, coterminous notions, nature and *techne,* or the Real of the body and signification. The libido results from the separation between "biological sexuality and human sexuality as organized by the signifying process" (Brousse *Reading Seminar XI*114). The *lamella* is imaginary, and so offers a creation myth of sorts.

The *lamella* represents a libido free of the body, or the libido as an organ without body. It is described by Slavoj Zizek as an "indestructible life substance that persists beyond the circuit of generation and corruption" (Zizek *Reading Seminar XI* 205). The *lamella* articulates "another Lacan" a "Lacan of the drive not desire, of the Real not the symbolic." It erases the limit between the unconscious and the outside world via orifices that open and close: "All except the ear, which can never close, pointing to the marked structural difference between being heard and being seen, between the object voice and the object gaze" (Lacan *FFC* 195). The *lamella* describes an in- or ex-vagination between outside and inside, between the unconscious and a non-phallic, non signifying organ of the libido. It links the erogenous zones of the corporeal body and the unconscious and, in this reading of *Crash,* is a useful metaphor to describe the effects communications technologies have on the human body. Finally, the *lamella* is the "post-modern notion *par excellence*" for it articulates the shift from the symbolic to the Real. (Zizek 205; Lacan *FFC* 198).

In *Crash,* the character Gabriella is so damanged by automobile accidents her body is supported by an exoskeleton (Rosanna Arquette). Gabriella is like a *lamella*— a being both inside and outside herself. She embodies an unchained libido shuttling between technology and nature. Gabrielle's scar on her leg is not merely *like* a vagina; it is a new opening. When bodies collide with technology, insides come outside and new openings construct new bodies that, in turn, corrupt existing symbolic networks, or the body politic. Slavoj Zizek describes the horror we have of insides coming out:

> In short, our relating to the body implies the suspension of what lies beneath the surface, and this suspension is an effect of the symbolic order — it can occur only insofar as bodily reality is structured by language...skin itself functions as the "dress of the flesh." (Zizek 208)

When James and Gabriella are in the luxury automobile showroom, she says she wants to see if she can "fit into a car designed for a normal body." Gabrielle signifies as woman simply because the woman is always already "chained to space" and therefore is a "boundary subject" (Kristeva *Nationalism* 34–5), a notion effectively shown in the film in the scene where Gabrielle attempts to climb into a luxury automobile. Her attempt to get into the automobile is thwarted by her body that is also part machine.

This scene is violent; her metallic exoskeleton tears the "flesh" of the automobile, its leather seat.

Jean Baudrillard's reading of J.G. Ballard's novella insists that there is no deep structural subject in *Crash!* Baudrillard writes, "Goodbye erogenous zones," implying, of course, a goodbye to perversion:

> The non-meaning, the savagery, of this mixture of the body and of technology is immanent, it is the immediate reversion of one to the other, and from this results a sexuality without precedent — a sort of potential vertigo linked to the pure inscription of the empty signs of this body *(Simulations* 112).

Ballard's *Crash!* represents for the participants "a fertilizing rather than a destructive experience, a liberation of sexual and machine libido" (125.)- But this is not value free: "Do we not see, in the car crash, a sinister portent of a nightmare marriage between sex and technology?" He goes on to claim that sexuality in *Crash!* is "no more than the rarefaction of this thing we call desire" (116). In Ballard's book the bodies are unmarked; each body, regardless of gender, whether car or prosthesis, represents signs colliding in an indifferent universe. Sexuality here is "totally lacking in desire" in a "universe of sexualization." The same violence is done to the body and to the automobile. In the world of "The Accident," the metallurgy of the car and the semiurgy of the body are coterminous. The contusions and scars of the body, the dents of fenders and the shattering of windshield glass of the car, all make "hole[s] that offers [themselves] to the discharge reflex." The Accident is not an effect of neurosis or repression. Its resulting violence cannot be traced back through the structures of unconscious desire; rather, The Accident lays bare the lie of this deep structure. It shows the "sex of life" as non-perverse pleasure. But at the same time, the automobile and its colonization of our life world becomes the dominant metaphor for life, and, if the collisions are seductive at all, it is because they are simply denuded of meaning (113). They are shiny bits, and we are attracted to them like carrion-loving crows.

The Accident, a release of enormous energy, is a libidinal liberatory collision, a cross fertilization wherein sexuality as signifier is understood through unlimited grammatical couplings. On this reading, the remainders of the crash—the injured or dead bodies, the crumpled car—reinstate the notion that death, wounds, and mutilations are not metaphors of castration. Even though they signify, they do not necessarily emanate from deep structural "signifying machines."[38] However, like masochistic techno-necrophiliacs, Cronenberg shows that we are all too willing to consume the inanimate products of technology and even be killed by our own creations, the "ragged and dirty" business of Vaughan's prophecy.

[38] Baudrillard makes an important comparison between Kafka's *Penal Colony* and Ballard's *Crash!* wherein the former, body inscriptions and mutilations are still "in support of a textual inscription" and hence represent a puritan repressive "signifying machine" whereas the latter does not articulate a deep, structural or moral subject *(Simulations* 113).

The psychoanalytic subject and the human person are strictly opposed; "subjectivization" entails a radical evacuation of personhood by regulating *jouissance* by the very law that is needed to ensure we are not trapped in imaginary identifications. This excludes "the real of the life substance, its palpitations; one of the definitions of the Lacanian real is that it is a flayed, skinned body, the palpitation of raw, skinless red flesh" (Zizek, *Reading Seminar XI* 208). Lacan reads the subject in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as the very substitution for nature, a substitution that marks the inevitability of death at the core of subjectivity — if,

Lacan avers, such a thing as the subject or nature exists *(S7* 213). The death drive, understood in the symbolic register as a mechanistic drive to repeat, is not a function of the biological body. The biological body remains, however, and it is known through nausea, vomit, and ejaculations.

But there is not even masculine "pure and simple discharge" made visible in the film (Baudrillard *Simulacra* 112). According to Laura Mulvey, the "money shot" is a visual trope signaling the climax of the heterosexist pom film, a "genital event" that she links to commodity fetishism.[39] The quest romance of the pom film is to view achieved orgasm—the money shot that articulates the "truth" of the male body. This truth marks the transcendental shift from tactile to visual pleasure, from the lived body to the masculine, specular mind. The voyeur of conventional heterosexual pom, for whom the spectacle of feminine pleasure is only understood in the economy of phallogocentrism, does not visually privilege women's orgasm or ejaculation. In Cronenberg's *Crash,* masculine orgasmic release is never achieved, not only because it is not seen but also because Catherine and James admit to their inability to orgasm; perhaps Vaughan could bring them beyond mechanistic sight into bodily enjoyment once again? In this manner, if one appropriates Mulvey's terms of heterosexist pom, all the corporeal bodies in *Crash* would be marked as feminine, given that the ejaculatory "truth" of the masculine body is not seen. Cronenberg has cited anecdotal evidence that it is the kiss between Vaughan and James in the film—the most tender, least violent sexual act in the film—that so outrages audiences. And yet, even though reigning heterosexual masculinity seems to be easily flouted by a kiss, we never see the two men with the full frontal explicitness we do women, and in this sense, once again, the film is utterly conventional.

According to Jacques Derrida, Kant's sublime is a negative pleasure for it produces the feeling of vital force followed by discharge. It is "ejaculation rather than vomit, which this overflow could at first resemble."[40] Nevertheless, the truth of the male body

[39] Following Marx, in her "Fetishism and Hard Core," Linda William's argues that the "money shot" becomes an "embodiment of value" in our profoundly alienated, occularcentric society and is a clear example of how the phallic economy fails to recognize sexual difference. In Marx, social relations assume the illusory relation between things, instead of actual people.

[40] Jacques Derrida explains Kant's textual economies in sexual terms: "[the sublime] is a pleasure which brings forth only indirectly, that is to say, in such a way that it is produced by the feeling of an instant inhibition... of vital forces followed right away by a discharge [...] the sublime contains less a

remains hidden, thereby making it more sublime. Lyotard cites Kant, who names the passages in Exodus the most sublime for its interdictions on making such graven images. The sublime has force because all presentation of the absolute is forbidden (Lyotard 78). The post-modern sublime "denies the solace of good forms, the consensus of taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable" (81). Art which is in "bad taste" causes anxiety in the viewer, and that is its subversive potential.

Crash, simply because it does not go far enough, is not so much a subversive representation as it is instructive. Further, for Slavoj Zizek (contre Baudrillard who argues that post-modernity is all surface and no affect) the very hyperrealism of postmodernism invokes the "nausea" of the Real, a result of a disavowal of the absolute existence of the Real. The further we move into a simulated world, the more powerful the pull of the Real as formulated by Lacan. Our modernist nausea and post-modern panic/hysteria remind us of its power:

> It is a commonplace to the talk of the postmodern "society of the spectacle" whose reality is supplanted by an image of itself, and where, consequently, individuals lose the character of social agents and are reduced to external observers of the spectacle. Yet the other side of this "derealization" is the hyper sensitivity to reality as something that can be hurt, of the inherently painful dimension of our contact with reality exists even at the most microscopic level — as if the subject were reduced to a pure receptive gaze precisely because he is aware of how every encroachment upon the world, even the most benevolent, cuts into the world, hurts it (Zizek "Grimaces of the Real" 59).

If the sublime is unrepresentable, then its opposite, the obscene, occurs when everything is exposed and all is mere information. However, in Cronenberg's version of *Crash,* when one considers that bodies are colliding with automobiles, the insides of the body most often remain mysteriously encased. According to Hal Foster the difference between obscene art and pornography is spatial:

> The obscene is a paradoxical representation without a scene to stage the object so that it appears too close to the viewer. The pornographic, on the other hand, is a conventional representation that distances the object so that the viewer is safeguarded as a voyeur *(Return of the Real* 114).[41]

positive pleasure than admiration or respect; that is to say, it deserves to be called negative pleasure" (Derrida "Economimesis" 21).

[41] This is comparable to Lefebvre's definition: the division of space via a facade that separates the inside from the outside illustrates phallic verticality, wherein the inside is the "scene" and the outside designated an "obscene" area, outside the law (Lefebvre *Production* 36).

The Real is not framed, at least in any sort of punctal or categorical sense, and hence is not represented, yet it exists nonetheless. It is an obscene space—a space without a place.[42] The crash victims are beyond the ejaculatory sublime and even the obscene, for their traumatic bodies are abject. As mentioned, most of the crashes occur from behind (which Cronenberg has, often with exasperation, pointed out in a number of interviews) representing anal eroticism, the renunciation of which implies the abjection of homosexuality. Hal Foster argues that anal eroticism tests the world of symbolic difference for it represents a symbolic reversal of phallic law (160), for what defines perversion in psychoanalysis is the subject's place within a symbolic order (Lacan *FFC* 182). This is the proper place which the characters flout.

If the obscene does not have *a scene* within which it can be represented, framed, and hence viewed, then the film is a paradoxical representation indeed. *Crash* is obscene not because everything is seen but rather because, as a representation of the drive, it has no *place.* It has crashed through guardrails; its anal eroticism is a reaction against symbolic sublimation and so causes fear and panic. This is much more in keeping with what Arthur and Marilouise Kroker call "penis burnout":

> Because in all of the technologies of sex which make possible a sex without secretions (the computerized phone sex of the Minitel system in Paris; video pom for the language of the gaze; designer bodies; and gene re-treading), in all of these technologies *of sex,* the penis, both as a protuberance and ideology, is already a spent force, a residual afterimage surplus to the requirements of a telematic society (Kroker *Panic* 180).

Kroker calls postmodern sex without secretions "an unproductive sex ," an "excremental sexuality as the third order of simulation into which sex vanishes," an inevitable effect of the acceleration of the scotomization of the body in late, or virtual, capitalism (181). His definition is one that Cronenberg concurs with, for he insists that the body is not so easily digitized as the brain, and hence along with the penis, it will be left behind (Cronenberg http ://www.cine*mania/microsoft. com* 97–0914).

When the crash community first meets, its members watch "pornography," which in their case consists of crash test-dummy footage. Like much pornographic film, the action is repetitive, mechanical. In another scene, the characters ignore the television, but the viewer/listener can hear the background noise of what seems to be a nature program on television about fish or fishing—a male voice over tells us how fish mate. In *Crash,* nature is only ever represented, for nature does not exist. Televised nature indicates the "fundamental feature of post-modern hyper realism: the very over proximity to reality brings about the loss of reality" (Zizek *Reading Seminar XI* 207). Or,

[42] This idea is one of Cronenberg's most prevalent cinematic tropes and a convention of horror. The characters in his film *Shivers,* after they have infected everyone in the apartment building with a sexual parasite, like zombies drive, they drive out of the parkade into the streets of Toronto ostensibly to infect the entire city. And they move beyond the screen infecting the viewer's space.

as Baudrillard would say, in the simulacrum, hyperreality is more real than the Real– animals mating on television are much more "real" than those mating somewhere off the margins of technology. Mating occurs on the assembly line, not in animal life. In the infinite world of reproduction, biological reproduction on television is merely one more instance of the iteration of the code.

Technology is all eye, all mouth, all appetite. The object gaze or the gaze of the world dismantles the subject, breaking the body into pieces. It is endless and insatiable: technology must always be newer and faster, and so it easily consumes the consumer. The gaping holes in metal have the ability to "techno-digest" the body; they are like giant orifices that swallow the body whole. Zoe Sofoulis calls *techne* "the cannibaleye of masculinist extraterrestrial projects for excremental second birthing" (Haraway *Simians* 163 and "The Persistence of Vision" 284). In short, *Crash's* genre is horror not pornography. Cronenberg seems more interested in the insides of bodies—the repulsive maternal body—than he is interested in ejaculating bodies. Like pregnant female bodies needing forceps to aid their labour, the crash- bodies can only be freed from the crumpled automobiles in *Crash* by the "jaws of death." Utilized in the "Jane Mansfield Crash," they open the death womb of technology, second birthing dead movies stars into the infinite reproducibility of film where they are re-bom into the world and made immortal.

Ours is the age of "penis panic," caused by the disappearing member of the phallic economy. There is always a reaction in the form of inversion, denigration or repression when human sexuality steps out of its limits. It is delimited, in the case of the attempted censorship of *Crash,* by phallogocentric humanism. *Crash* no doubt causes panic/hysteria also because the all powerful phallus of masculinity has, as it were, changed hands and been given over to the object. In the absence of an oppositional limit, the difference between the living and the non-living has been confounded, just as the limit between animals and humans is arbitrary. We share both animal and technosexuality—a sexuality ostensibly without limit in the age of DNA manipulation and cloning—which can be understood as both technological and biological, a border war that seriously challenges old, ethical frontiers. New bodies and space may have been created, but how subversive are they in the world of the spectacle?

The Car is Dead. Long Live the Car

> All the rhinos and hippos and elephants in the world, gathered in one city, could not begin to create the menace and explosive intensity of the hourly and daily experience of the internal-combustion engine. Are people really expected to internalize — live with — all this power and explosive violence, without processing and siphoning off into some form of fantasy for compensation and balance?

—Marshall McLuhan, "The Mechanical Bride." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*

In the end, at this existential level, we can only talk about the libido satisfactorily in a mythical way...in former days what returns here used to be expressed in terms of the gods, and one must proceed with care before turning it into an algebraic sign. They're extremely useful, algebraic signs, but on conditions that you restore their dimensions to them. That is what I am trying to do when I talk to you about machines.

—*Jacques Lacan,* Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis.

It is precisely because the highway is an undeniable signifier in human experience that it marks a stage in history.

—Jacques Lacan, "The Highway and the Signifier: Being a Father" *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III, The Psychosis..*

Crash flouts the conventions of the road movie. The masculine narcissistic subject drives toward freedom, transgressing barriers moving towards the *jouissance* that tells him he is alive. But in *Crash* he finds nothing at the end of the road. For the end of the road does not lead to freedom or uncolonized space—Mexico or North—or the promise of death. The subject of this road movie remains trapped behind the signified in an infinite refrain. Castrated or alienated within language the characters in the end remain autistic, stalled in an interminable second death.

Reflecting the paradoxical tension of the death drive, on the one hand, the automobile is the emblem of our imaginary capture in the capital driven world of the spectacle or the code (of which the stock market is arguably a symptom), and, on the other hand, its machine power has the potential to violently crash through such imaginary identifications. Zombie-like characters, traffic without end, automaton sex, and the dead movie stars that captivate Vaughan are each emblematic of the media spectacle that tranquilize the world. The automobile is created by the host it will destroy. As mirror/virus it captivates the ecstatic subject of the drive.

J.G. Ballard in his "Project for a Glossary of the 20th Century" writes, "all of the millions of cars on this planet are stationary, and their apparent motion constitutes mankind's greatest collective dream," analogous to the notion that historical change is a collective hallucination. Vaughan's resume includes the title of "specialist in computerized international traffic systems," an astonishing job description which speaks to technology's global reach and the desire of system control writ large. Traffic, groping towards consciousness, must be regulated and rendered docile. The systematic control of traffic is a metonym for global systems and the stock market, where speed of light exchange becomes the referent for human activity. The space of the body is where we drive; it is constituted by such systems and regulated by the code.

The traumatic acceleration and disruption of the body brought about by speed and spatialization in turn generates their opposite: the body's need for homeostasis. McLuhan, in an uncharacteristic Freudian turn, argues that homeostasis or equilibrium is the strategy of all organizations, "especially [those] biological," which are in a constant struggle for inner conditions to remain constant in the face of rapid external change *(Understanding* 98). In comparison, Lacan tells us that the signifier "polarizes" in an attempt to bring margins back into the centre. His communications example is the highway which functions as signifier because, like the Law of the Father, the highway "polarizes meanings, hooks onto them, groups them in bundles" thereby creating a field of meaning *(S3* 291). Lacan cites roadway maps, for they show how major pathways of communication are usually traced from North to South, organizing the vertical, symbolic function of the signifier in human relationship to the land. Lacan goes on to use this metaphor to account for psychotic delusion (293). Not following the rules of the road—to take minor pathways and to roam—represents a form of psychosis. A father gathers the world. To be unmanned is to be off track, derailed, unsignifiable.

In *Crash,* James rejects the paternal metaphor when he flouts the Law of traffic. But he is also inefficient—if not obsolescent—for he follows antithetical directions or Lacan's "infinity of minor paths" (294). For Canadians Innis and McLuhan, roads and paper routes are also inextricably bound as routes of both regulating metaphor and exchange. McLuhan argues that roads, like all communication, speed-up man and further extends him, creating in economics a centre-margin structure, where the margin will inevitably cause the centre to fall apart *(Understanding* 91). Whereas sea travel creates centres without margins within suspended time—a kind of Foucauldian holiday-time or heterotopia—the mechanical and electrical speed enabled by elecromagnetic and digital technologies create centres everywhere and "margins cease to exist on this planet" (91). Although a return of the repressed margins can be liberating—especially within the context of Canadian political economy—according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is nevertheless an inefficient means of communicating.

According to Marshall Mcluhan, this implosive/explosive speed inevitably causes violence to the human organism. The annihilation of space, McLuhan points out, permits easy annihilation of space-travelers as well. Although speed improves things, it also accentuates problems in form and structure. On the road, when Vaughan and his friends are not killed in automobile accidents, their bodies are so damaged they are ultimately only mobile within metallic exoskeletons. Gabrielle is not just rubber and metal, but flesh and bone. In McLuhan's terms, she has been truly "outered" into technology, and the space covered in this outering is immeasurable, making it unclear where the definition of human and machine begins and ends.

McLuhan argues that the energy and force of the car is the result of the biological form—which he names electricity-crossed with the mechanical form. Like Mary Shelley's famous monster animated by electricity, the delineation of what is human ranged against the non-human, between the creator and the created, no longer obtains. The car represents the most powerful and ubiquitous animation of our flesh ever seen:

"The crossing of electricity, the biological form, with the mechanical form was never to release a greater force" (McLuhan, *Understanding* 220). In *Crash,* sex is un-moored from the demands of one kind of reproduction but is replaced by quite another. Sex, even according to biology, has always been considered a disruptive "antisocial" force which must be regulated to control labour and ensure maximum efficiency[43] In *Crash,* not only the members of underground crash culture but also the automobile's sexual force, must be controlled. And yet the world of images remains uncensored. In almost all his films, Cronenberg shows how, in Marshall McLuhan's memorable phrase, we are the sex organs of the machine world.[44]

And, in a deceptively straightforward depiction, the film reveals how every drive is *virtually* a death drive (Lacan *Ecrits* 848). There are many overhead shots of non-stop traffic in the film. These images, at once banal and horrifying, represent cars as if they drive on their own engines. The drive of the metallic herd's source, aim and agency are unknown. The automobile's represent Lacan's bone or structure the drive. After their initial crash, James Ballard asks Helen Remmington: "Is traffic heavier? There are three times as many cars as there were before the accident." It is as though, he says, the cars are "gathering for some special reason [he] does not understand." There is something demonic about Cronenberg's automobiles. But, unlike other demons or Frankenstein-like monsters that are not allowed to reproduce or are killed in the final scene, there is no restoration of social order in the film. The car reproduces ever so easily. The iteration or assembly line of the code ensures the automobile's promiscuous survival as unchained libido.

Marshall McLuhan insists that the car is no more sexual than the wheel or a hammer, and yet, for McLuhan the humanist, all roads lead back to the human subject in his shift of attention onto the world of objects. Even so, McLuhan's techno prosthesis does not move far from the psychoanalytic prosthesis *par excellence,* the fetish. For the car as prosthesis is still a trophy prosthesis; it is both a sexual object as well as the ultimate commodity. The automobile and monumental architecture are the two emblems of advanced capitalism. Architecture's materiality represents intense labour and capital demand (Ondaatje) and the automobile is the object most clearly linked to the individual and the freedom that informs capitalist ideology and the privileging of this as a democratic ideal. It is important to note that more people own cars than can

[43] Donna Haraway quotes the biologist, E.O Wilson: "Sex is an antisocial force in evolution [...] When sexual reproduction is introduced, members of the group become genetically dissimilar [...] The inevitable result is a conflict of interest [...] The outcomes of these conflicts of interest are tension and strict limits on the extent of altruism and the division of labour" (Haraway *Simians* 57). Haraway traces how biology is constructed through biases in systems sciences or cybernetics, military combat, competitive sexuality, and capitalist production.

[44] Marshall McLuhan does not agree with the psychoanalytic reading of the car as fetish object: "But funny as the Viennese analysts have been able to get about the car as a sex object, they have at last, in so doing, drawn attention to the fact that, like the bees in the plant world, men have always been the sex organs of the technological world. The car is no more and no less a sex object than the wheel or the hammer" *(Understandingan* 220).

afford to fly–than need to fly as day to day transportation—and so Ballard and Cronenberg both begin *Crash* in an empty airport hospital. When the crash victims are taken there, one can surmise that other hospitals are full with motor accident victims while the airport hospital is completely empty. The car is the most visible, everyday object that consumers depend upon. We know that the automobile is inextricably bound to resource monopolies and to the senseless—albeit fully rationalized—irreversible damage the car does to the living world. We are caught in the demand of the symbolic circuit and, like the fetishists famous disavowal, we persist in driving.

And so the automobile in the film is not merely a fetish. Such a reading would limit the automobile as a supplement or replacement of the original [natural] ideal. The fetish/automobile indicates the impossibility of being the original, and so also the impossibility that there is an original. But in *Crash* the object is taken further: it is more properly a Lacanian object — a massive embodiment of *jouissance*[45] And, because Vaughn is not merely interested in Baudrillardian surface — his notion of benevolent psychopathology sublates the world of the accident by attempting to turn loss into gain — Vaughan's automobile accident is art in its most profound incarnation. Vaughan's accidents are meant to cover over the hole in being.

McLuhan predicted that, because we are able to transcend the problem of distance, the car's usefulness as transportation will be undermined. Just as the horse was no longer efficient transportation after the motorcar, so we will find more strictly recreational uses for the automobile: "The mere obsolescence of the wheel does not mean its disappearance. It means only that, like penmanship or typography, the wheel will move into a subsidiary role in the culture" *(Understanding* 219). Jean Baudrillard also points out the automobile's "obsolescence of meaning:"

> The car is no longer an appendix of a domestic, immobile universe, there is no longer a private and domestic universe, there are only incessant figures of circulation, and the Accident is everywhere, the elementary, irreversible figure, the banality of the anomaly of death *(Simulations* 113).

[45] Zizek explains that Lacan has three orders of objects: one, is the *objet petit a,* a lack or the left over of the real, setting in motion the symbolic order. Zizek cites the Hitchcockian "MacGufifin" as an example, which is to say that is *objet petit* a is a "nothing at all" that is nevertheless an absolutely necessary pretext for action. Another object is one of exchange: the symbolic object which cannot be reduced to the imaginary and embodies the lack in the Other, an example of which is the letter in Edgar Allen Poe's *The Purloined Letter,* the circuitous route of which is explicated by Lacan in the *Purloined Poe.* The letter as object operates as a kind of guarantee of the symbolic order, an entrenching of the paternal power of the Law. The third is an object that has "massive, oppressive material presence." Zizek cites the birds in Hitchcock's *The Birds.* This object does not circulate as an object of exchange; rather, they are an imaginary presence embodying terrifying *jouissance.* (Zizek "The Object" 112–3).

Obsolescence is at the core of any system analysis; when things are no longer useful, the system must rid itself of any surplus that hinders productivity.[46] McLuhan predicted in *The Mechanical Bride* that the automobile in the age of jet travel would no longer be as useful and would take on a new role as art or costume. This notion is picked up in contemporary *avant garde* art which utilizes the refuse of society and re-works it into new forms.

And yet, one has the feeling that it is not the automobile that is obsolete in *Crash.* Rather, it is the human being that has become redundant. As mentioned, objects have clarity and coherence in a wholly visual world. The automobile is much more coherent than the human subject in *Crash.* The film reminds us that even though our technological creations are a part of us, like any monster, technology points to the fragility of bodies and environments. Our creations, like viruses created by our own bodily codes, come back to kill. Does the automobile, created by us, inhabit the same space as the corporeal body? The automobile is the lure that draws us out into space. If McLuhan is correct, then once we outer ourselves into technology, we are captivated by space. And, perspective of the world must be altered when we so radically compress space and time[47]

There are new mirroring technologies every day, regardless of phallic, regulating law. Lacan often refers to technology in his work, specifically to photographic technology, and to how our creations have taught us that the "image in the mirror" still exists, whether "man" sees it or not.[48] What is at issue here is the mapping of space, not the instrumentality of sight. Lacan offers the example of the blind man who can nonetheless "see" for he can conceive of the very real field of space that he finds himself within. The geometrical points of the image in the mirror can be seen by the blind man, for vision does not emanate from the viewing subject alone. In this manner, Lacan's theorizing on reflection ensures that not all of the world is a an effect of mirroring — the *lamella* and other metaphors ensure that the imaginary is not that static.[49] Here, the mirror is an object in space that in turn informs us about space operating as a "kind of picture," for it frames space that is filled first by "natural and later by social life." Lacan calls

[46] See Haraway on obsolescence and biological theory in "The Biological Enterprise: Sex, Mind and Profit from Human Engineering to Sociobiology" in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature.* New York: Routledge, 1991, 43–70.

[47] Lacan's notion of the mirror stage is indebted to Roger Callois' "legendary psychasthenia" or psychotic space. See Lacan's "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience." *Ecrits: A Selection.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1977 and Elizabeth Grosz's *Space, Time and Perversion.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

[48] Lacan argues that even if all living beings disappear "the camera can nonetheless record the image of the mountain in the lake, or that of the Café de Flore crumbling away in total solitude" *(S2* 46).

[49] Henri Lefebvre criticizes this form of psychoanalytic thinking: "All the same, to argue (as some overzealous proponents of psychoanalysis do) that all property can be defined in terms of a kind of mirror effect, on the grounds that possession of an object by the 'Ego' makes that object the Ego's own is to overstep the bounds that 'culture' places on stupidity in general *(Production* 186).

the Cartesian subject "a sort of geometrical point" (Lacan *FFC* 86) that marks this collective and historical passage of the shift from absolute to abstract space (Lefebvre 286), from the corporeal to the social body.[50]

Lacan and McLuhan are found to be on similar ground when discussing machines. Lacan traces Freud's energetics model of the psyche from its foundation in biology to a more topographical understanding of the psyche via Freud's imaginary dream work. Lacan's topographic models–the torus, the borromean knot, the moebius strip, the klein jar—are all surface without reference to distance, size, area and angle. They are meant to subvert language's tendency to metaphoric resonance, to bury alive the deep structural resonance of the humanist subject. Lacan's topographical models are meant to be more than mere metaphors; they are structure itself, in the most concrete sense: "They do not represent reality; rather, they belong to the order of the real" (Copjec *Read* 11). Not only do structures and machines describe the mind; machines also create the mind. For example, Lacan argues that Hegel was wrong in his analysis of history and his elevation of Napoleon as "the soul of the world" because, as an idealist, Hegel could not apprehend the importance of the machine that defined his era and that must have informed his "mind," the steam engine *(S2* 74).

Similarly, McLuhan remarked that Marx went wrong in his economic and class analysis because "he based his analyses most untimely on the machine, just as the telegraph and other implosive forms began to reverse the mechanical dynamic"

(Understanding 38).[51] Between Hegel and Freud there was the advent of the machine. Lacan tells us Freud "stumbles on the dream: "He realizes that the brain is a dream machine" *(S2 76).* Read through the Canadian lens, Lacan's declaration that the unconscious is structured like a language resonates in McLuhan's notion of the body/mind being reshaped—or structured—by our technologies. For even the most complicated machines are made with language.

Lacan's assertion that human drive, desire, and will, etc. described as energy could not have been thought before the machine—not because there weren't machines or mediating technologies but because there *were* slaves—sounds very much like passages in Harold Innis' writing on monumental architecture and McLuhan's discussions on specifically electro-magnetic technology. Lacan maintained that the energy of slave labour was not thought about until the energy levels of the machines that took its place became a concern:

> There is not the hint of an equation as to their output. Cato never did it. It took machines for us to realize they had to be fed. And more—they had

[50] Henri Lefebvre does not make the same rigid distinction between the imaginary and symbolic registers as Lacan. He theorizes a mirror that is both "imaginary with respect to origin and separation" and symbolic or "concrete and practical with respect to coexistence and differentiation" (Lefebvre 186).

[51] In a compelling bit of synchronous thinking, according to McLuhan, the machine which derailed Marx's "untimely" reading of economics and history was the steam engine, for McLuhan thought that Marx would have been more on the mark to base his analysis on the new telegraph *{UM221).*

> to be looked after. But why? Because they tend to wear out. Slaves do as well, but one doesn't think about it, one thinks that it is natural for them to get old and croak (75).

The pyramids are monumental and historical precisely because many slaves died in their building. Without bodies "croaking," as Lacan avers, there is no monumental history. The slave is not only surpassed by the machine's ability to produce energy, but history is foreshortened by the machine. For Innis, because we do not think of the machine as alive, the animal death of the body that informs history is given over to the obsolescence model of machines.

The move from slave labour to the labour of the machine also marks the move from time-heavy labor to the scotomized body accelerated by techno-capital expansion. This expansion has, in effect, wholly spatialized the body and accelerated the mind/body split. Although McLuhan appears to make a case for the prosthesis of technology as body, there is nevertheless in his work a remainder in his descriptions of the outering of the body in technology. It is the numb body, the television watching couch potato, the excremental body of panic culture.

Like the heterosexist matrix that ensures that feminine desire can only be understood in relation to the Other, *Crash* amplifies the structures that dictate the terms of the desiring body. The body in *Crash* is perverse insofar as the structures designate it as such, though crash culture is not the moral and ethical world of enlightenment humanism. When we drive automobiles, clearly our bodies go along for the ride. In *Crash*, the automobile does not articulate what Haraway calls a new grammar, a new story about gendered identity. Rather, as Baudrillardian "autogedden" it is the terrifying tale that we have always told ourselves about machines; because we think they ultimately have no agency, we misread them and hence give away our own.

In *Crash,* the distinctions between the corporeal body and the body of technology no longer hold, and the mimetic gap between representation and reality crumbles. The sado-masochistic characters in *Crash* show us that the source of the energetics of the death drive is in the depths of the Real. And so in *Crash*— unlike in Haraway wherein the liberatory human/machine cyborg posits a world of abundance-death and scarcity remain at the core of subjectivity, as a kind of collective hallucination. As Harold Innis argues, every civilization has its own methods of suicide. While Cronenberg is correct to say that critics do not know the difference between reality and representation, he should have gone much further. It is impossible to tell such differences in a wholly spatialized world without the perspective of death.

> The problem is knowing whether the Master/Slave conflict will find its resolution in the service of the machine...
>
> —Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*

> It isn't a simple artifact, as could be said of chairs, tables, and of other more or less symbolic objects, among which we live without realizing they

> make our own portrait. Machines are something else. They go much further in the direction of what we are in reality, further even than the people who build them suspect.
>
> —*Jacques Lacan* Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Psychosis.

> Our electric extensions of ourselves simply by-pass space and time, and create problems for which there is no precedent. We may yet yearn for the simple days of the automobile and the superhighway.
>
> —*Marshall McLuhan,* Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.

While the symbolic has the ability to deconstruct imaginary identifications and to move the subject beyond alienation from behind the mirror, the symbolic is dangerous because it enforces rigid subject positions, positivistic science, and punitive institutions. Symbolic law reduces otherness to negativity and, in late capitalism, it ensures that commodity forms are privileged over life. As Drucilla Cornell succinctly puts it, the limit causes pain (24). And yet, for all of its subversive potential, because Cronenberg's half metal half flesh characters aim to become one with the simulacra, they end up performing a kind of Liebnizian digital-god game, the game of zeroes and one, a game of life and death wherein the mind is much more easily digitized and the body is the excremental remainder.[52] Cronenberg's virus/machine is created by our own bodily codes. The faster technology goes, the greater its force, and the stronger it becomes, the less likely its host will survive. Its velocity is stopped, however, in *Crash.* Heterogeneous drive-all those minor pathways—is stalled in the universal image system. While the characters may not drive on the main roads, everything nevertheless remains the same.

Crash reflects the end point of the fixed perspective of modernism. There is no longer a parallactic drift, a notion that helps us understand that our embodied vision could easily be tricked. Instead, technology not only enables us to see, but ensures that we think we can. McLuhan argues that as surely as the abstraction of visual sense demands a fixed perspective on the world, morality was wrenched from reason via technological discourse. This abstracted vision informs biology, what Lacan names the science of death, for the death of the body is brought about by the reign of the discourses of science, a "menace threatening everyday life" (Zizek *Awry* 36).

Desire, unlike drive, does not have a relationship to an object, but rather desire's relationship is to a lack. The static desire between humans serves as the motivating force behind the partial drives. Drive is not organized by sexual polarity: "there is no relation between the drive, drive satisfaction, and the opposition between male and female" (Brousse *Reading Seminar XI*112). There is no passive/active polarity

[52] Baudrillard quotes Marshall McLuhan in "Symbolic Exchange and Death:" "The mathematical Leibniz saw in the mystic elegance of the binary system of zero and one the image of Creation. The unity of the Supreme Being operating in the void by binary function would, he felt, suffice to make all beings from the void" {*Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* 139).

organizing the drive. The drive is a montage because it links together two things that are heterogeneous: the Other and sexuality without sublation. The drive does not emanate from a biological source, and satisfaction is not found through objects and does not diminish drive:

> As real, you are a sexual organism. Once in the field of language, a part of you escapes that field, remaining in the field of biology. That is in no way a psychoanalytic definition of sexuality. It is like an exigency of the real: you cannot pretend that it does not exist. For example, if you consider the case of transsexualism, the subject, in his confrontation with the real, wants to change it. A contradiction has to be dealt with: the subject is convinced, for example, that he is a woman, but finds himself saddled with a male organism. He is forced to find a way to adapt the real to his imaginary and symbolic conviction. Although this is not in any way a definition of sexuality in the field of the unconscious, it appears to be the frontier of this field as real. The drive is thus, as Lacan says, an apparatus by which to bring some sexuality as real into the field of the imaginary and the symbolic. (Brousse *Reading Seminar XI*113)

In this way, the drive tricks the Real, for it revolves around a hole that is filled up or covered over with the analysand's history, with the images that history provides (Lacan *FFC* 168).

Vaughan's ragged and dirty philosophy is marked on his body. His medical tattoo is the mark of biology, a discipline Lacan calls the science of death. Vaughan's body is written by the dead letter of scientific law. He has the mark of the hysteric; the signature of the knowledge of life's vulnerability. At the start of this peculiar Canadian film, James and Catherine are caught up in the signifier's network. They are automatons and they compulsively repeat. James and Catherine are the living dead. They are alive but excluded from signifying processes. At the end of the film, James (once again driving Vaughan's now smashed replica of J.F.K's Lincoln), chases Catherine's car off the road, through a guard rail and down an embankment.[53] Lacan states there is no sexual relation. The Woman, as a symptom of man, ensures that the Father's law and the symbolic order is secure. It really doesn't matter whether or not Catherine is alive or dead, for James speaks of Agape (love) and dreams of Eros/Thantos (death). And Catherine is like Antigone at her limit who says "I am dead and I desire death." (Lacan *S7* 281. Between the biological death of the body and its symbolic demise there is a kind of "sub-death."). Catherine finds herself between two deaths. She signifies from this indeterminate space between aesthetic cancellation and sacrificial violence. Her

[53] McLuhan writes that "the Kennedy event provides an opportunity for noting a paradoxical feature of the cool TV medium. It involves us in moving depth, but it does not excite, agitate or arouse" *{UM* 337). The use of Kennedy's Lincoln in Ballard's novella and Cronenberg's film reinforces the automaton drive and the numbing effect of repetition.

tortured body has already been excluded from the community—she has gone through the rails—into this indeterminate space that makes her body beautiful, sublime.

However, like Vaughan's photographs which destroy the traumatic aura of the accident, Catherine and James are merely re-captivated in the Imaginary, in the photographic frame: Kroker argues "There is a terrible equivalency between being framed and being dead (both negate identity) [...] the sacrificial woman has an eliminated identity [...] consumed by a kind of post-modem sub-death." At the end of *Crash* even death has been "stripped of its fatal sovereignty" (Kroker's 3). After Ford, the iteration or assembly line of the code ensures its promiscuous survival; the image reproduces ever so easily.

Crash is a great act of repetition and so perhaps boring for those who go along for the drive. Cronenberg's films warn that there is no passive technology and that the camera is most dangerous, for by its ability to repeat images, it permits the lie of the immortality of the flesh. Arthur Kroker argues that this is the result of a "will to purity" in the age of crash sex. The subject, faced with the world of advertisment, suffers an hysterical turn in reaction to the death of all referents. It is also a death drive—not dead yet!—from Freud (biology) to Lacan (technology). The master/slave dialectic does not resolve itself in the third sex of machine or digital technology. Each new technological invention creates a new negativity but traumatic bodies remain. For Marshall McLuhan, all new media is an extension of our bodies or minds. The automobile is an extension of the human foot, the computer extends our central nervous system, and both leave our flesh behind. The character's in *Crash* attempt to bring this dead flesh along for the ride, to shock it back into an embodied sensitivity.

The theoretical efficacy of the death drive is that it has the potential to deconstruct or annihilate the symbolic order that excludes difference in order to construct "reality." Ultimately in *Crash* there is no obliteration of the symbolic order. Each prohibition is merely replaced by another. In the end, *Crash* tells us that while prohibitions in a given community still exist (thou shalt not couple with technology).

The Real is known only by the distortions it makes in symbolic structures. All of this appears to point to an ideologically closed field, structured by the iron Law of the Father. But things could be much worse. The superego-imperative, Enjoy!, is both a call to pleasurably create and is taken to its most traumatic non-conclusion in *Crash.* When the Imaginary is unregulated by the Law, we are left with the universe of the much more authoritarian superego. Instead of the dead letter of the Law, a more punitive force exists—the law that does not know that it is dead. Death in Lacanian psychoanalysis is primarily a loss of imaginary form and coherence. But, if death is aesthetically canceled in the virtual world of the 21st century, then these problems with origins no longer obtain. Lacan insists that *pere-version* is the most radical perversion and it points to the psychosis that is at the heart of any symbolic structure. David Cronenberg, faced with the interdiction of the censors, argues that critics do what only psychotics do—they confuse fiction with reality. The last scene of *Crash* tells us that in an age without symbolic mediation, it seems impossible to make difference

signifiy. In *Crash,* both *jouissance* and prohibition are impossible, and as such, it is impossible in the film to determine where the place of difference *is* between reality and representation.

Part 2: Labour

The Voice of Democracy: Michael Ondaatje's In the Skin of a Lion

Introduction: Flesh Death

> If it turned out, for instance, that every society and particularly (for our purposes) the city, had an underground and repressed life, and hence an "unconscious" of its own, there can be no doubt that interest in psychoanalysis, at present on the decline, would get a new lease on life.
>
> —*Henri Lefebvre,* The Production of Space.

> The solution of the problem of democratic government rests in the cities.
>
> —Harold Innis, "Democracy and the Free City." *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change.*

> Now he will be a member of the night. He sees his visage never emerging out of shadows. Unhistorical.
>
> —*Michael Ondaatje,* In the Skin of a Lion.

In Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion,* the buildings constructed by immigrant labour are mausoleums containing the old world. They eradicate the lived, indigenous histories of North America thereby creating space for the history of the "new" world. Architecture is also always a kind of tomb, for monumental architecture has the symbolic power to enable the history of men. It is the most powerful paternal, capital symbol murdering the Real. All of the action in *The Skin of the Lion* occurs in relation to R.C. Harris' buildings. They are the sites of the struggle over the Real of nature and the body, and the chiaroscuro style and structure of the novel reflect the dialectical business of husbanding wealth from nature via labour and technology. In Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion,* could something new be revealed when the Canadian negative dialectician Harold Innis — who, after all, is no fan of occularcentrism — bumps into Jacques Lacan in the dark? How are space and time articulated in the novel via architecture and narrative? And what kind of productive theorizing can be forwarded when continental psychoanalysis is thought within the frame of Canadian political economy and history?

Ranged against symbolic power, the abject labourers can only mark the limits of the experience of freedom at its most negative pole, which is to say, psychosis. There is a difference between reading a literary, psychoanalytic or even historical account and truly understanding the material conditions of a nation, a city and its labour. Any such reading can only ever be partial and retroactive. Ondaatje's novel can be most productively read as version of the return of the repressed. *In the Skin of a Lion* dismantles and hence rewrites dominant history through labour understood as pure drive. The novel re-traces the tension between the eternal mythical, monumental time of architecture and the space in which lives are lived, a conflict that circumnavigates the impossible Real. The Real is cause between being and thought, between life and a revolutionary ideal, between the recognition craved by the subject and inevitable death, between social laws and our inability to conform to them. This negative or inexpressible space is what gives the play of symbols in the world meaning and, in this manner, the Real is cause in psychoanalysis, which is to say that as a living substance—the body or nature—it has its own internal principle of change that cannot be completely controlled by the symbolic order of things. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's influential question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is not so much a question of *how* to give the abject voice in an retroactive act of interpretation, but rather questions whether we can *hear* the subaltern speak, dead or alive? Is there something called "conscientious abjection" in art? Can an aesthetics of abjection ever escape instrumentality? Can feminized labour be both disruptive of society and its very foundation? Ondaatje tells us, "Official history, news stories surround us daily, but the events of art reach us too late, travel languorously like messages in a bottle" (146). Does this mean that representation, far from being useful politically, is always too little, too late?

R.C. Harris' buildings in *Skin* are symbolic edifices bearing history into the world. They enable a signification or desire beyond the imaginary. Like ancient pyramids, they are erected at great human cost and to the detriment of labouring bodies and the natural world. Architecture is labour, capital, and time intensive; it represents pure speculation and sheer sacrifice, especially when buildings are built by indentured labour or by slaves. The sheer size of Harris' water filtration plant and the utility of the water viaduct give his monumental, capital and labour intensive architecture symbolic and therefore historical resonance. Desire comes into being in buildings which are powerful paternal symbols occupying the very place of Real or absolute nature, eliding old histories and creating legitimate and obscene space, or that which is intelligible or outside of signification. What is installed in the place of the Real is sublimnity—the awe one feels in constructed, monumental space. Architecture is grounded and massively symbolic; it is culture, which according to psychoanalysis arises as a response to the loss of primary objects, to negativity. Monumental architecture is the height of civilization and hence the very symbol of sublimation. It is both a form of violence on the world and our greatest art. The space it creates marks the place of subject constitution and is the apex of civilization and social order.

Ondaatje's novel, although somewhat obliquely, shows us what is at stake in the acceleration of spatializing capital expansion in North America and its homogenizing cultural effects. According to Harold Innis, North American life is spatially biased. This is a problematic notion, for spatialization appears to eradicate class differences, differences that nevertheless remain a defining element of North America history and life. Marshall McLuhan insists that the city is a collective extension of our skins while Harold Innis understands the city to be the radical margin to the centralizing tendencies of the nation state; however, class antagonism is the subject of this novel, represented as the age old battle between capital and labour over land and water. The space in which this battle is enacted, the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant, is the site of their radically different conceptions of time. Psychoanalysis is most useful for analyzing spatial memory or the repressed life or alternative history of the city as its unconscious. Although psychoanalysis has been accused of disguising social structures in favour of the atomized individual, the death drive and psychoanalytic notions of spatial memory are efficacious precisely because they are not historicist notions. Throughout life and history there are many mirror stages, each of which is a historical transition, for they move the subject from the imaginary register to the symbolic. The symbolic register regulates enjoyment emanating from the Real — it is death work or sublimation. Space external to the subject is virtual; it is the space of the mirror stage where the subject is constituted outside itself via intersubjective, imaginary identification. The death drive traverses this space marking the time of the subject. If the past is repressed and pushed out of continuity—enabling the ability to forget and a move into atemporality—then the dialectical movement of historical materialism is suspended, "putting into parentheses the progressive movement of *Aufhebung"* (Zizek *Sublime* 144).

But repressed events nevertheless remain alive under censorship. For repression is one of the "liveliest" forms of memory, especially "as long as there are men to place their revolt under the command of the struggle for the coming to political power of the proletariat, that is to say, men for whom the key-words of dialectical materialism will have a meaning" (Lacan *Ecrits* 51). When dialectical suspension occurs, we are in the realm of pure repetition or the death drive, in the signifying chain as automaton. History according to psychoanalysis does not move forward in a bloody, dialectical struggle; rather, we can only speak of history retroactively from the perspective of the future anterior, the future as it "will have been." For example, the return of the repressed is the past returning *as if* from the future, and so introduces conflict into symbolic reality. In other words, the traumatic Real enters the symbolic as a sign — the return of the repressed inevitably functions as sign: ... what we see in the return of the repressed is the effaced signal of something which only takes on its value in the future, through its symbolic realisation, its integration into the history of the subject. Literally, it will only ever be a thing which, at the given moment of its occurrence, *will have been.* (Lacan *SI* 159)

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, "history is not the past. History is past in so far as it is historicized in the present" *(SI* 12). The unconscious is "that part of my history marked by a blank or occupied by a falsehood: it is the censored chapter" *(Ecrits* 50). Psychoanalytic analysis can only isolate detail from historical totality wherein "not the dream as a whole but the separate portions of its content" is interpreted (Freud *Interpretation of Dreams* 178). However, since the signifier can only signify retroactively, and since what was done can always be undone, the novelty of the present can only be novel if the past survives. The unconscious and memory, therefore, must be understood as Real, for novelty means that the present must be unique from its antecedent, which, on this logic, must be known:

> The persistence of the past in its entirety is thus necessary if the possibility of a recurrence of events is to be excluded. The death drive, then, which recognises the possibility of the past's destruction, is inextricably linked to repetition. The death drive and the compulsion to repeat are thus the inevitable corollaries of symbolic, life (Copjec "Cutting Up" 232)

There are two deaths in psychoanalysis, but only one can be said to be historical. The first is the biological death of the body, but the second death occurs in the symbolic through the various rituals of mourning and repetition "where the texts of history are inscribed"

(Copjec 232). Like Nietzshe's notion of a "memory of the will," history is in part created out of acts of forgetfulness limiting the subject's horizon, and like a "doorkeeper," it closes off memory, thereby excluding and later forgetting what is too disturbing *QGenealogy* 58). All those lives marked by a blank or the censored chapter of a city's life are written over by symbolic life, which the death drive productively dismantles, producing an alternative history.

George Grant's famous lament, his conservative nostalgia for a Canadian past that never existed engendering a paternalistic lament for a future that will never be, is a version of this blank or censored chapter. Whatever Grant thinks Canada could have been (Lacan's will have been) implies a break from the past—from which it nevertheless finds its support—in order to create a future. It is a future Grant believes to be doomed, thereby presenting a conflict in symbolic reality, a notion repeated in his writings on civic identity. Lacan would no doubt consider Grant's view as representative of what he called the perspective of the Last Judgment; which is to say, the perspective of those who believe things [will] fail precisely because they think there is a proper place for all things and proper outcomes of all acts.[1] But language produces effects in the world in the absence of any such intention.

[1] The perspective of the last judgment reflects the "relationship between action and the desire that inhabits it" (313). Human desire is based on the assumption that everything that happens can be accounted for. In "The Paradox of Ethics," Lacan takes to task the notion that everything can be accounted for, principally in its Kantian incarnation with his assertion of the immortality of the soul founded on the fact that there is nothing on earth that satisfies the demand for moral action. Lacan

Hegel's bloody, historical struggle between the master and the slave is reformulated in the Canadian Harold Innis' unique political economy as a series of violent time/space biases. Like George Grant, Innis was convinced that the only way to counteract visual spatializing biases is to reinstate the oral as a core feature of democratic thought. Ondaatje has been accused of apoliticism in his novels. But his mythopoetic narrative brings into history the popular memory of lived lives that ideology elides—a profoundly political act.[2] *In the Skin of a Lion* is both a radical memorial of labour and a hegemonic history of the ruling class. The novel painstakingly describes the back breaking work for low wages, illness and death that is the lot of the laboring classes. Men and women die to build the new world, represented in the novel by Toronto's Bloor Street Viaduct and the R.C. Harris Water Filtration plant. What one cannot discern in the smooth surfaces of architecture is the misery put into its building; the lives lost tunneling, the daredevils who barely survived building bridges, the men and women who labour in dyeing vats to supply the new city with commodities that they cannot buy:

> That they consumed the most evil smell in history, they were consuming it now, flesh death, which lies in the vacuum between flesh and skin, and even if they never stepped into this pit again — a year from now they would burp up that odour. That they would die of consumption and at present they did not know it. (Ondaatje 1301)

It is the infrastructure of the city that reveals class differences, and it is scenes such as the one above that make such differences painfully real. Ondaatje's metaphors of death—the eating away of flesh in the dyeing vats so that the laborers can eat and live—represents the extimate space of the drive. The flesh death of animals is both inside and outside the subject. In the vacuum between flesh and skin, death breaks through the skin-surface of the laborers, and so this horrible work has the status of the terrible, unassimilable Real.[3] The space between dead animal flesh and the living skin of the laborers is the ambivalent, unwritten space of the Real, the death zone that makes history possible. Buildings and things made in the world "internalize" relations to the environment, "they gather together social, symbolic, psychological, biological and physical relations in place so as to offer some sort of identity" (Harvey *Justice*

says, "As if we hadn't been plagued enough by desire on earth, part of eternity is to be given over to keeping accounts" (317). And so, Lacan's ethical question is: have you acted in conformity with the desire that is within you?

[2] Arun Mukheijee, writing about *Running in the Family,* claims that Ondaatje's work is largely a-political (49–67). However, whatever scandalous history or barbarous events Ondaatje does not mention in his autobiography and novels are also, by their absence, invariably pointed to. Stories unfold by negation. What is left out of the narrative passes over into meaning as surely as what is left in. Ondaatje stages political events in his work without overtly commenting on them. His uncanny literary text is, in this sense, not writing ideology. For more on this reading of narrativity, see Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" 1–23.

[3] Lacan understands the flesh as "wild" because it is wordless but nevertheless still "logos" for it has a both a life and death cycle (Jaanus, Marie. "The Demontage of the Drive" 119).

308). And working with death cannot but help shift relationships to the world. The laborers smell and taste death, but the venture capitalist sees a shimmering vision of the eternal city. The laborers pound of flesh is, in commissioner Harris' all consuming vision, a necessary and benevolent gift. Things were made in the world, buildings built, water brought to the city, a history begun, paternity guaranteed in eternal time.

A city is built, but whose history is constructed? Revolution occurs when previous histories are annihilated. Slavoj Zizek explains that through the success of revolution, each failed attempt will be resuscitated and given new meaning: "In this sense, revolution is strictly a *creationist* act, a radical intrusion of the "death drive:" an erasure of the reigning Text, creation *ex nihilo* of a new Text by means of which the stifled past "will have been" (Zizek *Sublime* 143–4). Revolution sets in train a second, symbolic death and lived experience dies under the force of the symbolic. Marxism is suspicious of the notion that a force or surplus exists outside the flow of historical processes (Harvey *Justice* 109).

Indeed, Ondaatje's novel foregrounds the problematic notion that someone outside and completely disenfranchised from power can have actual power. In psychoanalysis, notions of reality are constituted by this exclusion of the traumatic Real. The labourers' pound of flesh, knowledge of which Harris represses, is the price the labourers pay for Harris' access to his "reality."

In *The Skin of a Lion,* architecture represents historical memory, but not historical content. Although products of labour and technology, unlike a Marxist reading of history, the building of the viaduct and the water works in the novel do not fulfill an historical demand. Historical experience is not something that ensures the truth of the transcendental subject but rather is known only through the process of limitation by which subjectivity is represented. For example, in the world view of those with power, women and labourers occupy a negative semantic and social space. However, negativity creates the most profound sort of space. Signifying processes emanate out of negativity, hence the abjected represent the subversive drives versus the social constraint of the Law.

The history of the labour that built Toronto is written first in the novel and later in an international art exhibit in honour of Ondaatje's book. The exhibit was held in the actual buildings and on the grounds of the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant in Toronto, Ontario, 1988. The novel's tenebrestic style renders life and death as a negative dialectical struggle between light and dark, between order and the chaos that is death, between threat and homeostasis. Unfortunately, like much of the history of labour everywhere, their material conditions do not change—they will die young, poor and ill. But because of Ondaatje's novel the laborers, like the architecture they built, live on symbolically. All those who have died to build the city were not properly buried, and so they return from the dead. *In the Skin of a Lion* offers a history from below-revealing the struggle of labour by tracing the space of their lives in story—and maps networks of social relations including the history of the elite's writ large in monumental architecture. Unlike official versions of historical events, buildings used

for public gathering offer a kind of collective memory or a spatial history of the city. The underclasses of the city in the novel are its unconscious; the subalterns come up from below and out from the shadows to challenge the ruling elite on the very ground of the elite, R. C. Harris' Water Filtration Plant.

R.C. Harris, city commissioner, is a time-bound man. He is on the fringes of Empire in Canada and is nostalgic for Empire — his derivative architecture reflects his conservative nostalgia. Harris' buildings do not necessarily exemplify current preoccupation with eclectic architectural style, but like post-modernist architecture his plant wraps one style within another. Greek and Italian immigrants in Toronto build a water filtration plant modeled on Byzantine architecture and Egyptian design (Ondaatje 109).[4] Ondaatje's novel reiterates this in its structure; he wraps themes to mirror the creative and destructive potential of vision and technology that create Harris' buildings. Buildings modulate space creating new social relations and new bodies and ultimately alternative histories. The form of Ondaatje's novel keeps the tension at play between dialogic orality and occularcentrism, betweeen lived memory on the margins of power and monumental history, and between spatial and time-biased media tensions that are represented thematically through architecture and the mythic stories of the labourers.

The signifier always receives its signification retroactively, which implies that whatever has been done can be undone. If the Real is considered as cause, of a change that is not an historicist notion but is nevertheless an internal principle of life and therefore death, then the past is not immortal and neither abjected bodies nor bodies in power are eternal.[5] If the Real is understood as cause, then surely there must be a way to make change in the world without being in a position of power? The collision of many events that each have their own independent cause ensures that chance and coincidence have an enormous amount of force in the world. The world may arise in response to lack or negative space but never in the same way. Negativity does not create one, but many spaces. How, then, can those outside of history, the new Canadians in Ondaatje's novel, abject and in the dark, create something in the world? Long after Hegel declared that the Orient is outside of history, how can labourers in a new, wholly spatialized country such as Canada be understood as historical, political? How do the abject (neither subject nor object) make change? How do the marginalized in negative space manage to create something instead of nothing at all?

[4] Ondaatje mentions that Thomas Pomphrey, the architect of the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant, modeled the entrance to the actual water works after a Byzantine gate. For unknown reasons, the actual gate was never constructed but it is alluded to in the novel.

[5] The Lacanian Real as cause is a notion that is often dismissed and attacked because Lacan attempts to explain Freud's energetic system of the body via Aristotle's metaphysical notion of "The Prime Mover."

History

> There is no architecture of socialism.
>
> —*Henri Lefebvre,* The Production of Space

> No one wants to talk about architecture any more.
>
> —Michael Ondaatje

> What kind of architecture (in the broadest sense of that term) do we collectively
>
> want to create for the socio-ecological world in which we have our being?
>
> —*David Harvey,* Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference.

Through the invocation of oral myth and with a Benjaminian aura, the viaduct and the waterworks in Ondaatje's novel represent how architectural space reveals not only social relations, especially the specific, grounded, lived experience of labour, but also the importance of orality and myth to popular memory. Myth, religion, and collective memory inform regional and national memory and history. Memories "constitute and are constituted by the formation of distinctive places (shrines, places of worship, icons in stories, etc.)" (Harvey *Justice* 306). There are three movements in *In the Skin of a Lion* regarding time and space. Historical memory is contained in R.C. Harris' architecture, but not without great cost. Architecture reflects a bias of space, and although labour builds historical sites under capital conditions it is essentially expendable and secondary to construction. The labour in the novel is marked by machine time-as Marx argued, time is everything, labour is nothing. However, Ondaatje re-writes labour back into history as mythical time-detached from architectural space—through dialogic speech and story telling.

But there is a problem with the notion of mythical remembrance informing national identity. As Mina Loy once famously claimed, such collective memory or conventional morality is an excuse to shoot your neighbours.[6] One community's liberatory myth is another's imprisonment. And, struggles over representation are "as fiercely fought and as fundamental to the activities of place construction as bricks and mortar" (Harvey "Space to place" 22). Mythical remembrance can stereotype places just as the stereotyping of others as a means of acquiring self-definition quickly slides into scapegoating. And there is no evidence that face to face dialogue is more democratic than more mediated forms of communication.[7] However, following Harold Innis, arguably there

[6] See Mina's Loy's *The Lunar Baedeker & Time Tables: Selected Poems.* Highlands, N.C.: J. Williams, 1958.

[7] David Harvey invokes Iris Young's argument that not only is there no evidence that place bound politics and face to face dialogue is more democratic, after Heidegger, there is much proof that invoking these notions is dangerously nationalistic (*Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* 311).

must be a balance between visual, spatial biases and narrative, oral time. Ondaatje's novel does not resolve these contradictions but rather contrasts a teleological, mythical form of epic oral poetry with the potential and pitfalls of face to face dialogue in the abstract space of an architectural site, offering a version of the politics of place.

In the Skin of a Lion takes place in 1930's Toronto. At the end of the novel, Patrick Lewis makes an archetypal underwater journey to what he believes to be the seat of power, the inner chamber of the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant. Patrick swims up the water filtration plant through its feminized intake tunnel, which ingests and regurgitates water in a continuous cycle of exchange. Explosives strapped to his body, he intends to blow up commissioner Harris' monument to avenge the deaths of the hundreds of men that perished in its construction. Patrick is badly wounded from his journey into this underworld, and when he reaches Harris' office he is vulnerable. He does not want to be seen, to be subjugated, to be trapped in Harris' field of vision. Standing before the patriarch of the city, Patrick tells Harris to turn off the light, and Harris obligingly pulls on the cord of his gooseneck lamp. In the dark, unable to see his nemesis, R.C. Harris imagines he recognises in Patrick a man like himself—a man of vision:

> On the ceiling high above him was the window with eight half-moons. If he looked up in a while there would be a suggestion of blue. My god he swam here, Harris suddenly realised. That's how he got in, through the tunnel. What vision, what dream was that? (Ondaatje 241)

It takes vision to build Toronto and vision to be a revolutionary and tear it down. But there is a fundamental asymmetry between the ruling and oppressed classes, designated by different modes of temporality and different lines of sight. Harris is a nostalgic time-biased man who has *vision* but as, with all vision, he has a blind spot. He does not see the physical world of his workers; he cannot see the men who tunnel and are buried alive under the weight of the earth, or the men who fall off half- built bridges in the dark. Their families, living on the margins of the city they build, are out of sight. While he inadvertently gives oral history roots by building, what Harris the visionary neglects is the difference between how places are imagined and the material social practices that construct them. Patrick too has a blind spot. He has vision — he swims through the maternal intake tunnel and is reborn. This is vision borne of Patrick's experience, and his story will be mythical only in the retelling. But if Patrick actually did manage to blow up the Water Filtration plant, he would run the risk of being vilified and forgotten. His blind spot is that he does not recognize that his identity exists only negatively in relation to power.

Harris' historical legacy is what Walter Benjamin names ruling class history, which is empty, homogeneous and continuous, whereas Patrick the labourer experiences time as discontinuous and "filled," in other words, as historical materialism. Ondaatje writes both sides of Benjamin's famous statement: "there is no document of civilisation which

is not at the same time a document of barbarism." R.C. Harris, unlike those who manage paper instead of buildings — those who George Grant calls the "last men" because they live in the present tense — has historical perspective. Harris does not have the short time horizon of the venture capitalist. He is driven by ego, not temporary greed. He does not merely measure value and surplus social labour time for profit; he exploits labour for a much longer, monumental view. Like a pharaoh, he wants to immortalize himself. He desires to secure time in the face of the spatializing bias of the last men of North America who create the new world through the management and exchange of paper, the men whom George Grant declares "cannot despise themselves" (Grant *Time* 45). Patrick learns that in Harris's world on the cusp of the new, wholly spatialized world, blowing up buildings would do nothing to stop the "last men." They would merely build again.

While Harris identifies with Patrick as a man of vision, he knows that Patrick has chosen the wrong route for revolutionary change:

> Earlier Harris had understood why the man had chosen him, knew he was one of the few in power who had something tangible around him. But those with real power had nothing to show for themselves. They had paper. They didn't carry a cent. Harris was an amateur in their midst. He had to sell himself every time. (Ondaatje 242)

In his Massy Hall lectures (1969), George Grant argues that the limit and form of time in Europe is the past — in North America, the future. North America is a dynamic civilization and so "our apprehension of temporality was concentrated on the future" (20). Friedrich Nietzsche taught George Grant that time is created by human beings and always understood within the "horizons" that express "the values that our tortured instincts will to create" (Grant *Time* 40). Objective time is the time of the marketplace. In Grant's reading, Nietzsche declared God dead because North American time, determined by intense capital trade, is paradoxically limitless. And so the new world for Grant, *contre* Northrop Frye, is not a Utopia, a place of limitless potential. It is a chaos of possible horizons, which implies a multiplicity of foci for present-minded power. Grant criticized this bias — spatially biased North Americans are unable to take the long view.

Harris' desire to build is best described by Harold Innis' insight that civilizations that seek to control time employ communications media that are "durable in character, such as parchment, clay and stone...media that emphasizes space are apt to be durable and light in character, such as papyrus and paper [...]" (Innis *Empire* 5), and "a concern with communication by the ear assumes reliance on time...the bias of paper and printing has persisted in a concern with space" (Innis *Bias* 106, 76). Time-biased media are heavy and difficult to transport. Time-taking, labour-sapping, they are literally massive not merely by weight; they have huge cultural implications. Paradigmatic monuments—the pyramids are the time-biased medium *par excellence*—take lifetimes of intensive labour to build. Skilled laborers possess rarefied techniques

of stone masonry—an investment of time. Massive time-biased media have built in social hierarchies. Stone masons are members of the lower classes and the sheer physical force that is necessary to transport and build stone structures requires unskilled labour. The materials used to build monumental structures usually travel from great distances, a time investment invoked in the novel: "Cranes lowered 9800 tons of steel sheet piling rolled in Sault Ste. Marie. Trucks were driving in the bricks from Cooksville" (Ondaatje 109). Harris knows that there could be a public out-cry against conditions of labour which would slow down his construction, but depression era laborers were eager to work at any wage in all conditions, and almost half the Water Filtration Plant was constructed within a year. Harold Innis calculates the dead into any structure, for as anyone who has marveled at the pyramids knows, many lives lost to construction add to a structure's monumentality.

The monumental architecture in *In the Skin of a Lion* reflect's divisions between the elite and those who are ruled, or, what Pierre Nora designates as dominant, monumental (spatial/abstract) history versus the dominated, lived history of a place.[8] For Innis, time biased civilizations do not have easily transportable wealth—they are inward looking, superstitiously religious and crudely idealistic. They depend on the transmission of myth for social cohesion—Innis and his student Marshall McLuhan posit that "the old world" in any civilization is ruled by the ear. Time-heavy, massive media are unsuited to administration of large areas, and so their cultures are insulated from difference. Cultures that are spatially biased are crudely materialistic and often secular; they tend toward decentralized democracy. Paradoxically, the lightness of such media inevitably creates a contradictory mass cultural and social uniformity and crude materialism.

In Ondaatje's novel, the spatial difference between labour and capital in relation to the Real of nature is best understood temporally. Capital in the text is represented by monumental architecture—the monolith of eternal time—the history of the laborer is told in his short, brutal life. The novel represents both Grantian time as history and its subversion. Time, as a kind of Marxian "formless inevitability," is necessarily spatially/technologically marked if it is to be historicized. Pierre Nora, like Innis, distinguishes different sites of memory signifying in space by the relative portability of monuments. He would agree with Innis that portable sites of memory are light; Innis' example is ancient tablets of the law which give way to papyrus. Topographical sites are heavy

[8] Modem techno-capitalism is the compass that future-directs America. Nietzschean space—which he calls the substratum and force of time—is contrary to Hegel's space which is the product of hegemonic historical time. Lefebvre explicates this notion; historical time is the space which the state occupies and mies over, a "theater of universal tragedy, as the cyclical, repetitious space-time of death and of life" (Lefebvre 22). Harold Innis argues that religion marks time and empire produces space. For both thinkers, Hegel's notion of time refers more accurately to a colonizing of space: "The element of time had been organized in relation to religion to meet the demands of space in relation to Empire [...] The destruction of time and the increasing importance of monopolies of space were evident in the writings of Hegel for whom progress was perpetual movement and strife or of Marx who regarded time as 'formless inevitability'" ("The Problem of Space" 409 — 419).

and linked to physical geography such as tourist stops reflecting the glory of the nation state which are very much grounded and immovable at a viewing site. They are defined by their mass, and because they are hard to move, their location is usually not arbitrary. They are contextualized and so accrue symbolic force. Nora states that monumental memory sites are "dominant" or imposed from above. And yet "dominated" sites also inevitably become places of refuge or sanctuaries for the living memory of local peoples (Nora 23).

Massive edifices possess the weight of paternal history: "Cultural activity, evident in architecture and sculpture, capable of impressing peoples over a wide area, is designed to emphasize prestige. It becomes an index of power" (Innis *Staples, Markets* 317). Harris does not labour to build the Bloor Street Viaduct nor the Toronto Water Filtration Plant; nevertheless, he patemalistically conceives of them "for himself' (Ondaatje 110). The viaduct is his "first child of public works" (29). It is his boy-child, the masculine "pier" that "struts" (30,49), and ultimately becomes a "murderer" when workers die (31). The waterworks are described as a human body (220); its intake tunnels are described as feminine, and the beautiful building his "mistress" (110). Harold Innis identifies the patriarchal ego at work in building monumental history:

> Cultural activity, evident in architecture and sculpture, capable of impressing peoples over a wide area, is designed to emphasize prestige. It becomes an index of power. A concern for continuity, the biological limitations of the patriarchal system as a basis for dynasties, and the difficulties of maintaining a high cultural level over a long period of time will involve an emphasis on types of architecture calculated to reflect a control over time as well as over space. (Innis, *Staples, Markets* 317)

Feldspar is the material that builds history in *In the Skin of a Lion.* Patrick's father, a dynamiter for logging and mining companies, is buried under an avalanche of feldspar— the very material that builds the city strikes him down in middle age. Hazen Lewis' time horizon is, horrifyingly, already set by the market—he is killed by the rock that makes the capitalist wealthy (Ondaatje 74). When Patrick arrives in the city, all he has is a chunk of feldspar in his pocket, a talismanic reminder of where he comes from and, because he is a labourer like his father, the prophetic knowledge of how he may die (53). In the inner sanctum of the Water Works, R.C. Harris' immovable desk is made of feldspar. Harris' study space is the space of the individual atomised against the social world—the capitalist's weightless time ranged against the grounded body of the labourers. At the end of the novel, Patrick returns to Marmora—where marble is found to build the water works —to his lover Clara, whose name means "light," invokes not only privileged sight but also the ontological ideal of weightless, or eternal time over the world of labour and death.

Rock is valued differently by different interest groups. David Harvey, in his discussion of ecological vs. market definitions of time and space, asks us to imagine a conversation

> between an economist and a geologist over the space-time horizon for optimal exploitation of a mineral resource. The former holds that the appropriate time horizon is set by the interest rate and market price, but the geologist, holding to a very different conception of time, argues that it is the obligation of every generation to leave behind an aliquot share of any resource to the next. There is no logical way to resolve that argument. *(Justice* 229)

The materials used in building reveal the wider conflict over different time-horizons in which social space and identity are constructed. The buildings are commissioned from above and, if Ondaatje had not re-represented them in his mythopoetic fiction, they may have remained strictly dominant forms of memory. For Pierre Nora, memory is how living societies install remembrance within the "sacred," and hence history is suspicious of memory and "its true mission is to suppress it and destroy it" (Nora 9). Ondaatje's novel is not concerned with hegemonic history, but with the archival ephemera that informs memory via myth and the architectonics of historic, or Lefebvrian abstract spaces.[9] Abstract space is a geometric phallocentric space, a space where previous histories have been erased by capital expansion. For Harris' buildings to resonate symbolically and mythically, they must be taken over by bodies where stories are told orally or face to face.

We can hear the mythic resonances of Innisian oral democracy in Ondaatje's novel, wherein the tyranny of the gaze is exchanged for the dialogue of human speech. Socialization of labour occurs in the novel when Harris' public spaces are overtaken by the workers for the purposes of democratic dialogue. Innis was interested in orality, for the spatial bias of the West fails to incorporate the co-operative forces of dialogue. Innis, like Adorno and Benjamin, saw a frightening continuity between modem spatial biases and the spread of oppressive regimes in the 20th century (Stamps 78). For Innis, the key to balance is to return to flexible oral traditions that can aid popular memory, ranged against authoritarian history (which in the 21st century is, arguably, taken over by the culture industry) which presupposes its own end. Innisian orality, through a negative dialectical movement, brings into view that which has been marginalized, and as such offers a kind of "spatial fix" grounding a people's popular memory in a place.[10]

Although an Innissian historical reading of space/time biases is dialectical, once speech occurs, the effect is akin to Bakhtinian dialogism.[11] For Innis, spatial biases are

[9] Lefebvre describes the task of archetectonics to "describe, analyze and explain the persistence, which is often invoked in the metaphorical shorthand of strata, periods sedimentary layers, and so on" (*Production* 228).

[10] I am appropriating this term from David Harvey, who argues that a spatial fix is necessary, given that in "late electronic capitalism, because the circulation of capital is unstable, it "embodies powerful and disruptive contradictions that render it chronically crisis prone" ("The Geopolitics of Capitalism" 123–63).

[11] The "polyphonic novel" for Bakhtin is a musical metaphor describing extra linguistic elements that inform and ground meaning: a "set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—

the contradictory result of the centre of Empire attempting to fix meaning (Stamps 80). The key to balance is to return to an oral tradition that affords flexibility of opinion through interpersonal communication on the margins of empire. The oral tradition enhances cultural memory, which for Innis articulates "true" historical time because it is too amorphous to be hijacked as hegemonic history. There is more tolerance for ambiguity in oral tradition than in writing. For example, although recitation of epic poetry changes somewhat in the telling, it is designed to be memorized and so creates stability and a sense of belonging through collective social remembrance. And, orality is sacred in the sense that it retains the Benjaminian "aura" that visual representation in the 20th and now 21st century has eradicated.[12] Story time, face to face, is not mercantile or factory time. It is not the time of the markets.

R.C. Harris creates because he desires plenitude and phallic wholeness: Patrick, his laborer, desires to destroy because his spatial relationship to the real is completely different. Harris, seated at the centre of his monumental building, sees his power as concentrically radiating out from this centre and, as creator, he thinks he is part of both the community he travels in and the disenfranchized one his power creates and controls:

> Harris saw the new building as a human body... Harris was happy in the cocoon of humming machines. He would get up and roam through the palace of water which he had dreamed and desired and built...the building pulsed all night in the east end of the city on the edge of Lake Ontario. It was rumored that people on the south shore in New York State could see the aura of it. (Ondaatje 221)

Harris' office in the bowels of his monument is the sacred domain that kills all living substance and elevates the dead letter of the Father's Law. The symbolic father in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is necessarily a dead father. In Harold Innis' writing, spatially biased mediums such as writing, hence history and architecture, depend on his death:

> The permanency of death became a basis of continuity through the development of the idea of immortality, preservation of the body, and development of writing in the tombs by which the magical power of the spoken word was perpetuated in pictorial representation of the funereal ritual. (Innis *Bias* 93)

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that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" *(The Dialogic Imagination* 428).

[12] Ondaatje describes Harris' buildings as having an "aura" *(Skin 221)*. Innis does not argue that sacredness of the oral tradition is analogous to Benjamin's notion of "aura." However, Innis maintains throughout his work that the emphasis on space in the visual arts eradicates oral traditions.

The permanence of death, of course, is what makes it symbolic. Harris' monolithic creations are metonymic; they are not only part of Toronto's body politic but also what motivates his endless drive for the unity and eternity he can never achieve. Harris understands the buildings to be part of his own body. But the labour of the slave is, ultimately, what constructs history and culture.[13] Harris has the clout and the vision to build the viaduct and the water filtration plant, but it is the slave labour of the immigrants that actually construct them.

Nevertheless, Harris' buildings represent "the mastery of a *simulated* space [that] is the source of power, that the political is not a *real* activity or space, but a simulation model, whose manifestations are simply achieved effects" (Poster *Baudrillard* 159). Sight unseen, Harris wields enormous power. And, in turn, Harris sees the city as somewhat uniform. However, in the laborer's view, the city is divided. The city is separated by invisible and visible lines of power, and the subaltern's identity is constituted below marks of power, lines they can only cross covertly. Under the cover of night, the laborer's illegally take over the water filtration plant. In *In the Skin of a Lion,* the division between the capitalist and the laborer's is reflected in the differences between architecture and those subaltern groups that take it over clandestinely through *agit prop* theatre and oral poetry—monolithic structures re-territorialized as sites of difference, as a democratic space by "an illegal gathering of various nationalities" (Ondaatje 115–121):

> An hour after dusk disappeared into the earth the people came in silence, in small and large families, up the slope towards the half-built water works. Emerging from darkness, mothlike, walking towards the thin rectangle of the building's southern doorway. (115)

Symbolic limits or the sheer vertically of the monument cannot stop the immigrant labourers from scaling its height or crossing its threshold, one example of how people have a way of getting around paternal law. In an interesting similarity, Marshall McLuhan claims that if some technology operates as an extension or prosthesis of some senses, it also must then necessarily narcotize bodies and numb other senses, a move that shifts apprehension of the world and ourselves. Lefebvre mentions McLuhan and invokes this notion when he claims that the logic of visualization ensures that "bodies [are] emptied out through the eyes" (Lefebvre 286, 98). The division of space via a facade that separates the inside from the outside vertically, ensures that the inside is the "scene" and the outside is designated an "obscene" area, outside the law (Lefebvre 36). Henri Lefebvre's "scotomization" of the body-spirited away and covered by abstract space—is a "blind spot" in the field of vision which Lacan names the hole in the symbolic that, if the master signifier is foreclosed, characterizes psychosis, organs without bodies, and McLuhan's idea that bodies are emptied out through the eyes.

[13] "The historical process, the historical becoming of the human being, is the product of the working slave and not of the warlike master" (Kojeve "Desire and Work in the Master and Slave" 49–66.)

Bodies are dismembered by the object gaze. Harris' spiriting away of labouring bodies creates abstract space, which as lifeless meta-system not only represents a kind of psychosis, but also how bodies disappear in the vertical, phallocratic space of the city. Whereas the diachronic, metonymic movement from one signifier to another is the structure of desire in narrative—a horizontal partition of space—the law creates abstract, phallocentric universal synchronic space. Ondaatje shows how social antagonisms over the real construct spatial differences:

> This is what Lacan has in mind when he claims that the very distortion and/or dissimulation is revealing: what emerges via the distortions of the accurate representation of reality is the *real,* that is, the trauma around which social reality is structured. (Zizek *Gaze and Voice* 115)

The labourers move from the obscene place outside of symbolic law—a space without a place—to the very scene of power when, under the cover of night, they take over the water works. Lacan has shown that the consistency of what we consider "reality" depends on that which is excluded. If the *objet petit a* or the object gaze or voice are not excluded from reality—if they are not primordially repressed—psychosis results, hence the psychotic hears voices or believes herself/himself to be seen at all times. The space of labour is this abject space; indeed, they are right to be paranoid in what they believe to be a panopticon, Harris' water works.

The narrative is, in part, constructed by journalistic and archival sources. Like Walter Benjamin, Ondaatje mythopoetically reclaims this cultural ephemera, filling up hitherto unthought space with the popular history of the immigrants. For example, an undated photograph in the Toronto archives of a man cycling across the newly constructed viaduct does not make it into the newspapers of the day, but this archival picture resonates as a Benjaminian detail in the "Bridge" section of the novel (Ondaatje 27.)[14] The photograph was omitted from the newspapers at the time — the fight against Fascism in Spain was making headlines — but was retrieved by the Ondaatje. This retroactive act puts fascism in Spain in the shadows and the building of Toronto into the light. But one event cannot mean without the other. Adorno and Horkheier maintain that liberalism is merely one step on the way to totalitarianism, a shift seen in the *laissez-faire* capitalist Harris' punitive methods of policing his plant, a shift that resonates because of "the events in Spain," because "the government's crackdown on unions, made the rich and powerfid close ranks. Troops were in evidence everywhere. When the last shift left the water filtration plant the police and the army moved in to guard it" (Ondaatje 220). But at night, outside of Harris' control and vision, live theatre, song and dance take over the water filtration plant. And operating as a return of the repressed in *In the Skin of a Lion,* the conditions of labour are revealed through their stories.

[14] Dennis Duffy reveals some of the archival sources for Ondaatje's novel, especially newspaper clippings and R.C. Harris' correspondence in "A Wrench in Time."

Memory

> Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events.
>
> –Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History" *Les Lieux de Memoire.*

> The subordination of man to the machine situation arises in which men are effaced by their labour; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is the speed of two locomotives [...] time is everything, man is nothing [...] time sheds its qualitative continuum filled with quantifiable things [...] in short, it becomes space.
>
> —Karl Marx: *Capital*

> Laboriously, revocable, in the image of voyaging, historical time is detached from space, the irrevocable pattern of all mythic time.
>
> —Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment..*

Ondaatje re-inscribes oral history by framing the novel within the ancient Mesopotamian oral poem informing the Bible, *The Epic of Gilgamesh.* For Innis, the highest form of orality is epic poetry because the poet describes succession in time while the artist or architect represents coexistence in space (Innis *BiaslOl).* As in the frame of the novel, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is significant not only for the telling of the ancient struggle between different powers for identity, but also for the importance of water, the controlling metaphor of the myth and the novel.[15] Not only the city but Patrick and his father, Hazen Lewis, depend on water. Hazen works as a dynamiter for the timber and mining companies, blasting apart logjams to keep commodities moving down-river from hinterland to capital. He dynamites feldspar to excavate even more precious rock from the earth. The creek that the young boy and his father live by is called "Deep Eau" later anglicized to "Depot Creek," reflecting the shift from French to English power (Ondaatje 15–16).

In *Gilgamesh,* Enkidu leaves the wilderness and comes to live in Gilgamesh's kingdom. At one point in the story, the Gods decree that Enkidu must die. He flees back into nature and after a journey through the watery underworld he rises up to tell Gilgamesh, who is terrified of death, his story. Patrick, like Enkidu, arises up out of the water to greet Harris who, also terrified of death, listens to his story. Enkidu has learned self awareness, a revelation following the trajectory of the death drive. Through

[15] Innis is interested in Byzantine and Mesopotamian history. Where the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers meet is the "cradle of algebra, " for the Summerians were responsible for the invention of cuneiform script used for their records and accounts. Before the Summerians were assimilated into the Babylonian/ Assyrian culture, their epic poetry linked a chain of historical remembrance. The Summerian influence is felt in the Babylonian/Assyrian cultures in their libraries built to house knowledge and construct official history ("The Problem of Space" 395–6).

his death and descent into the underworld and his resurrection, he comes into the city to tell his story, and history begins. Ondaatje's novel takes place during the 1930's, the end of an older, European influence and the beginning of the time of the spatially biased "last men" of the new world. Harris calls Patrick "mongrel company" a "lost heir," who, like Enkidu in *The Epic of Gilagamesh,* "stays in the woods and rejects power" (Ondaatje 238). Like the epic poem, *In the Skin of a Lion* is a deluge story that revolves around the paradox of life and the inevitability of death-life's meaning as an acceptance of death. Enkidu is a man in a state of nature changing through sexual experience into social and historic man, a notion that is retraced in Ondaatje's novel when Patrick moves from the hinterlands of Ontario to meet Clara and Alice in the new city.

All cities are sister cities to Giigamesh's ancient Sumerian home, a city built on and by water through systematized knowledge. Power depends on the control of water, and Harold Innis' history of biases in empires is traced through the primacy of water in the building of civilizations, and through this need for the absolute control of water which can tear civilizations down. Ondaatje's Harris warns the city officials that "the Goths could have captured Rome by destroying the aqueducts which led into the city. Cutting off the water supply or poisoning it would bring the city to its knees" (Ondaatje 220). Toronto is on the shore of the Great Lakes of North America, the centre of early technological activity in the new world. In the Canadian literary imagination, water from the Great Lakes is a preeminent trope. Watery motifs ferry Canadian nationhood from its cradle — and, if Innis is correct, if Canada remains a staples economy its water will inevitably be sold off to The United States of America—to its grave.

The narrative structure of the Mesopotamian myth informs the bible: "the virgin birth of a god, his astral associations, birth among cattle, imprisonment, death, descent to the underworld, disappearance for three days, resurrection, and the exaltation to heaven" (Innis *Bias* 117). Or, in the Christian narrative, Patrick's journey follows the movement from heaven, creation, incarnation, death, descent into hell, harrowing of hell, resurrection and ascension into heaven, the mythopoetic structure of the novel. Patrick has a kind of virgin birth—he has only Hazen, his father; there is no mention of his mother. There are astral associations to the savior's birth in the bible, and *In the Skin of a Lion* opens with the sighting of "six stars and a moon." Christ is bom amongst cows; when we are introduced to Patrick, he is amongst cows (Ondaatje 7). Patrick, like Christ, is imprisoned (179) and then released (209). There is a death: when Alice the anarchist dies Patrick descends into the "underworld" of Harris' water filtration plant (227). The chapter heading of the section on the water works is called "The Palace of Purification." The savior disappears for three days; Patrick sleeps and then is resurrected (243). And, finally, there is a kind of ascension out of the material world of labour when Patrick's quest ends in his return to Marmora, which he reaches at daybreak. Marmora is the site of not only the rock that builds history but the place of Clara, his lover, or "light." Clara's disappearance inaugurates Patrick's journey. She

reappears after Alice, her friend and Patrick's lover, has died. Clara is a kind of angel of history in this mythical tale:

> The inference for the reader seems to be that the angel of time that man clings to until daybreak (Genesis) is both an enemy and an ally, a power that both enlightens and cripples and disappears only when all that can be experienced has been experienced. (Frye *Great Code* 198)

The West's preoccupation with history comes from its biblical foundations (Grant *Time* 6). Harold Innis claims that many myths were supplanted by Christianity, which has the syncretic elements of them all, and so enabled colonial expansion. Innis echoes this—in the fully spatialized bureaucracies of the last men, time is organized "in relation to religion to meet the demands of an organization of space in relation to Empire" (Innis *Bias* 117).

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that beliefs like Christianity become "fixed ideas and universal recipes" *(Dialectic of Enlightenment* 224). This temporal ideal is very much reinforced in the bible, and as narrative myth, its events anchor historical sense in patriarchal wisdom. The bible's time is linear, masculine, civilizational and obsessional. And in a contradictory move, it enforces homogeneity in a given place, a form of static embodiment Freud considers hysterical (Kristeva "Women's Time" 447 and Moi *Kristeva Reader* 191). While Harris waits for daybreak in the water works, Patrick—the sleeping character of the deluge—is released from the monument builder's gaze and is finally free. Harris looks upon the sleeping Patrick and recites from *Giligamesh:*

> He lay down to sleep, until he was woken from out of a dream. He saw the lions around him glorying in life; then he took his axe in his hand, he drew his sword from his belt, and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string. (Ondaatje 242)

The story of creation begins with the separation of the firmament from the waters above to the waters below. Harris is the Creator—his water works and viaducts divide water. In the Mesopotamian myth, Marduk creates a world in which the disk of the earth rests on an abyss of water over which arcs the starry sky, divisions later reflected in Genesis. Heavenly bodies figure throughout *In the Skin of a Lion,* including the penultimate chapter where Patrick confronts Harris in his office. The office is structured like Marduk's world: "He had to survive till the first hint of morning colour came through the oculus above him, eight feet in diameter, made up of eight half-moons of glass" (Ondaatje 237). Water, of course, invokes baptism: Patrick drowns in the old world and wakes up in the new. This world is built by immigrants who become Canadians in between the first and the second world war. Throughout the novel, Patrick hums along to the popular music of the new world, alive during the birth of jazz.

One half century after its building, Ondaatje resuscitates not so much the politics of the time, but lives lived. Monuments are built and through them what Marx calls

the practical language that ground thoughts and feelings, hence consciousness. Even if the novel is read as a *mise en abime* of referential impossibility, the laborers live on in the architecture of Toronto precisely because Ondaatje revealed the conditions of their labour. No longer monuments to the vision and power of municipal leaders, the Bloor Street Viaduct and the R.C. Harris Water Filtration Plant are re-reappropriated, first by Ondaatje and secondly through the actual site as an international art exhibit, an homage to both the novel and the workers.[16] *In the Skin of Lion* is the impossible message in a bottle that rescues the Bloor Street Viaduct and the R.C. Harris Waterworks from history. Anchored in their place, these structures are appropriated as referents for the popular memory of the workers. This is not "real history," but rather a point of reference in that Ondaatje's art has forever conferred on it symbolic consistency.

Harris the patriarch reinscribes Europe in the new world; Patrick the anarchist wants to tear down Harris' monuments to civilization and, as pure drive, create an entirely new space. Harris organises his space in relation to Empire and re-works the codes of European civilisation into a new form. He wants to build the new world, but this is a notion that nevertheless depends on the past as remaining continuous, an obligation to the tombs of history. In contrast, what the anarchists attempt to do is to build something *ex nihlo;* they want to eradicate their attachments as subalterns in the old world and become citizens in the new. The labourers inhale the putrid smell of flesh-death — labour embodies the radical potential of the drive.

Narcissus and Caravaggio

> The notion of the role of spatial symmetry in man's narcissistic structure is essential in the establishment of the bases of a psychological analysis of space.
>
> —Jacques Lacan, "Aggressively in Psychoanalysis" *Ecrits*

> Negative dialectics leads nowhere.
>
> —Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse on Modernity*

The novel begins with Patrick telling stories to his step-daughter, Hanna, during their night drive to Marmora. And it ends as it began, in this darkened space, performing the diagetical loop of all mythopoetic narratives. However, *In the Skin of a Lion* is not one universal story but many particular stories. Hanna thinks that Patrick could say "'In that field is a castle,' and it would be possible for her to believe him" His speech and her listening are rituals of faith performed in the dark. But once stories are revealed in the light, are they inevitably dominated by the visualising practices of

[16] The Special Waterworks Issue in the Canadian periodical *Art Views* (14: 1988) covers the international art exhibit held both on the grounds and inside the waterworks, and event inspired by Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion.* The on-site exhibits were an homage to the workers.

power that separate subjects from objects, and turns subjects into objects? For Lacan, vision separates and spatializes. The labouring bodies are necessarily absent in Harris' vision for the logic of visualisation ensures that he only has one point of view. But in *In the Skin of a Lion,* nuns fly off bridges, thieves go about their business, conversations are exchanged, lovers meet, the radio is listened to and clandestine meetings are all held in the dark. Many tales told in the dark construct Patrick, and not one of them is a master narrative. But Patrick does not heed interpellations blindly, so to speak. A specular interpellation of Patrick will not hold, and even the frame of Ondaatje's book, *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* is just one story amongst many from the "old" countries that inform Canada.

The death drive is represented by immigrants who view the new world as wholly unmarked, a place of possible creation, pure drive free from the burdens of history, but the aggressive potential of vision is always shared — Patrick has to destroy what has been built to start anew. The builder and the anarchist are coterminous, they are complicit in ocularcentrism, the evil eye that kills life. Anarchy and capitalism are produced by the same logic, and as such "pure" anarchy does not logically exist. The psychoanalytic lesson to anarchists is to *not* privilege the eye at the cost of misreading the gaze. For we are not only beings who see, but also beings who are looked at.

Negative dialectics is an instance of the drive operating as a return of the repressed, in that otherwise subjugated identities are moved into play, into view. Caravaggio, the thief in *In the Skin of a Lion* represents this negative dialectical movement in the novel for he is described through metaphors of light and dark, identity and anonymity. Caravaggio is the opposite to Harris, who shares Narcissus' problem; Harris cannot control the aggressive potential of vision, and he fails to distinguish himself from others and his creations. Caravaggio, the theif, enlists Patrick to blow up the water works. The thief is a creature of the dark—he must be able to disappear into unmarked space. Because he is rarely seen, Caravaggio knows that "demarcation" is essential to identity (Ondaatje 179). Caravaggio's namesake is the Baroque painter famous for his chiaroscuro method of painting sharply lit figures emerging out of darkness. The historical Caravaggio lived on the fringes of society and of painting; he was indifferent to the high Renaissance style of painting popular at the time. He also had a lengthy police record, principally for assault. In contrast to decorous Renaissance art, the models for his realistic paintings were plebeian and criminal types, scandalously representing high religious themes. His method of illusion, *tenebroso* or the "dark manner," forces the eye to acknowledge what is well lit — the visual reality of what it sees. Usually the light comes from a single source that theatrically splinters the dark, lighting the figures.

Both the shimmering mirage of the ideal city envisioned by Harris and the memory of the workers who died to build it are brought into relief throughout Ondaatje's Baroque, tenebristic style. Like Caravaggio's contribution to painting, Ondaatje brings those who live on the margins of society and power forward as virtuous, true and worthy of being seen and ultimately heard. The style of Ondaatje's prose chimes with his themes, which oscillate between a depiction of the capital and labouring classes—the

oscillation of alienation and belonging that immigrants suffer in the new world—and shuttles imaginatively between novelistic representation and actual structures in the city of Toronto. The elaborate play of shadow and light reflect the themes and scenarios in the novel and present the reader with stories of labour or a version of time (ear) and representations of monumental architecture or space (eye) biases.

Ondaatje's Caravaggio wields much power in the novel, and he illustrates a form of negative dialectical thought specific to Canadian political economy. Harold Innis' reading of empire and margins is similar to Theodore Adorno's aesthetics of culture and the abrogation of nature. Adorno attempted to "free dialectics from affirmative traits" (Negative *Dialectics* xix). The Frankfurt School's negative dialectical strategy employs the power of margins to critique modernity's tendency towards positivity and objectivity. Negative dialects dismantle the rigid form of reasoning in which all things return to a metatheory, a sublation of all differences to the same or what Adorno calls "identitarian" thinking. And, perhaps in the Frankfurt School's most radical move, they shift from a class analysis to an analysis of the conflict between man and nature. The Canadian Innis' historical analysis of empire and margins argues that history is not a progressive overcoming of obstacles and that empire does not reflect the growth of civilizations as a result of European genius and, its corollary, the infantilism of the new world and the designation of indigenous peoples as primitive. Writing in the 1950's, Innis saw that single approaches to an object of inquiry would inevitably overlook other parts of it, and so Innis endeavored through interdisciplinaity to develop a philosophy based on limitation, which became the route to his negative dialectics (Stamps 68; Innis *Political Economy* viii-ix). Innis knew that if the new world was to be perceived as having no history, then the more in danger its environment would be. The natural world is killed in a wholly spatialized, staples economy—Innis was worried that Canada would become a kind of Heidegerrian "gas station" for human, or more specifically, American use.[17]

Nothing is flat or diffuse in Caravaggio's painting. During the European Baroque period, especially during the 1600's when Caravaggio was painting, a "new" interest in space was evident in the development of the mariner's compass and the lens. According to Harold Innis

> in Florence the new conception of space was translated into artistic terms as a counterpart of the modem notion of individualism. Its immediate effect on architecture was evident in the Baroque. In philosophy Leibniz was the first to explain space as pure form, an order of existence, and time as an order of succession. *(Bias* 128–9)

[17] I am indebted to Judith Stamps' *Unthinking Modernity: Innis, McLuhan and the Frankfurt School.* Stamp's comparative study argues that European critiques of modernity have been privileged at the expense of Canadian political economy and communications theory. Stamps marks their striking similarities through an analysis of the two school's negative dialectical method, a strategy that fits Canadian history for it represents and occasions intense self-reflectiveness and offers the margins a voice.

For Leibniz, space and time are equal; neither one is more fundamental than the other. What is liberating here—and what explains Innis' historical use of Liebniz to emphasis the rise of individualism and the rise of democracy—is that Leibniz's theories allow for a plurality of distinct spaces, understood via multiple perspectives. Innis, like David Harvey, argues that an emphasis on architecture, art, the space of novels and poetry, although all very different, nevertheless each create space. The problem for both Innis and Harvey is that there is a radical "incommunicability" between those spatially and temporally ordered worlds (Harvey *Justice* 253).

Jean Baudrillard argues there is no dialectical play of light and dark in the "obscenity" of our current epoch, where everything is revealed, where there are only centres and no margins, no beginnings, and no endings.[18] What kind of politics can one forward if all identities and spaces are equal? While Ondaatje's Caravaggio depends on the shadows—a different space—for identity, he is flexible. He knows from experience that when you do not have power, it sometimes helps to *not* have historical or referential plenitude. Invisibility can save you; leverage is politically useful. And, if you do not have a beginning, perhaps you can choose your end. Patrick helps Caravaggio escape from jail by painting him blue, the colour of the jail's domed roof, so when guards look up, they will see nothing there (Ondaatje 180).[19]

Unlike Caravaggio who survives—who is flexible—empires collapse because they are inevitably formed by either a bias of space or time, and these limiting biases marginalize competing groups and knowledges. And, surpluses come back to dismantle power.[20] A form of the return of the repressed, Innis' negative dialectical method is illustrated by his general claim that whatever is marginalized from a bias of Empire is always and inevitably the site of critical innovation. Innis calls this movement *efficiency*. Because the margins inevitably subvert the centre, any bias of communication is efficient to the degree that it enhances creative and critical thought (Stamps 71; *Empire* 9). In a similar vein, Henri Lefebvre claims that abstract space carries within it the "seeds" of a new space, and because of the contradictions found in capitalism, global production is inevitably shattered by local particularities. What Innis calls efficiency resonates with Henri Lefebvre's notion of centrality:

[18] In *On Seduction*, Jean Baudrillard remarks on the obscenity of the contemporary phenomenon of flat visual art, of light from no direction, of light that does not cast shadow, a light in which objects are very well seen but rendered without depth. He names this light "obscene" in its blankness. (156).

[19] In *Television*, Lacan mentions Caravaggio's painting, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (15951600). Caravaggio's representation of the angel who holds back Abraham's hand from cutting off Isaac's head is for Lacan an instance of the symbolic value of death that haunts all life. The angel stands in for the Name of the Father, whose name cannot be uttered: "The angel, the angel is there, the presence of him whose name is not pronounced" (91).

[20] Harvey describes crisis of surplus in capitalism as "typically manifest as a condition in which the surpluses of both capital and labour which capitalism needs to survive can no longer be absorbed {but from which] new political forms and ideologies can spring ("The Geopolitics of Capitalism"132).

> The notion of centrality replaces the notion of totality, repositioning it, relativizing it, and rendering it dialectical. Any centrality, once established is destined to suffer dispersal, to dissolve or explode from the effects of saturation, attrition, outside aggressions and so on...it also means that a general figure (that of the centre and of "decentering") is in play which leaves room for both repetition and difference, for both time and j uxtaposition.(/ Vo¿focrion 299–300)

Unfortunately, as David Harvey points out, oppositional movements are better at organizing and dominating place than they are at commanding space:

> The "otherness" and "regional resistances" that postmodernist politics emphasize can flourish in a particular place. But they are easily dominated by the power of capital to coordinate accumulation across universal fragmented space. Place-bound politics appeals even though such a politics is doomed to failure ("Space to Place" 22).

Patrick is always already abject regardless of what sort of radical political action he takes. But in a contradictory move, if there is always the possibility of a free space, unrationalized by colonial and capital expansion as Innis and Lefebvre maintain, then why, Lefebvre asks, do the users of these spaces remain silent? *(Production* 51). As representation, *In the Skin of a Lion* retroactively depicts the users of space as anything but silent. But they exist in a kind of acoustic shadow in the landscape, in psychotic space where no one in power can hear them.

Once Caravaggio and Patrick are trapped in Harris' gaze, are their stories inevitably dominated by the visualising practices of power that separate subjects from objects? Space is linked to tropes of vision which are, as Martin Jay reminds us, as ubiquitous as the infinite mirroring of perception and language.[21] Visual metaphors perpetuate the notion that the viewer's eye is the apex, and that the object seen at a distance removed is necessarily subjugated to the defining eye. Blindness is the flip side of sight and indivisible from it. When Harris needs vision to create, he invokes blindness; he must not see those things that would make his constructions impossible, especially slave labour: "The night allowed scope. Night removed limitations of detail and concentrated on form" (Ondaatje 29).

In Marshall McLuhan's language, Harris' monuments are extensions of himself, and as such he is "numbed" to the material conditions of his society, he can see nothing but himself in his creations. And Patrick performs as a kind of Echo to Harris: the voice of the Other that Harris cannot hear and cannot control:

> The youth Narcissus mistook his own reflection in the water for another person. This extension of himself by mirror numbed his perceptions until

[21] *See Martin Jay's* Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought. *Berkely: U of California P, 1994.*

> he became the servomechanism of this own extended or repeated image. The Nymph Echo tried to win his love with fragments of his own speech, but in vain. He was numb. He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system. (Understanding *41)*

The point of the Narcissus myth is that he does not merely fall in love with himself, he misrecognizes the image *as* himself. When we fall "in love" with technology, what we are falling in love with are unrecognizable extensions of ourselves.[22] Narcissus becomes fascinated with an extension of himself in whatever material he finds other than himself, an articulation of the spatializing bias of the imaginary register, an interpellation into our wholly visual techno-culture. This idolatry of technology encourages psychic numbness.

We become servo-mechanisms of our machines, responding to them only in the mechanical way that they demand of us. Narcissus, upon seeing his image for the first time, must recognize something in it other than what he thought was himself in order for it to captivate him. For Lacan, the individual's relation to an image has meaning because what the mythic figure Narcissus is identifying with is prior to the image; in Lacanian language, this identification with the ideal is the symbolic order, or the Big Other. In other words, narcissism is not merely an imaginary identification that fills up lack, but a structure that includes the symbolic, for the imaginary is ultimately an effect of our symbolic world. Even though ears are the only orifice that cannot be closed, Narcissus still cannot hear Echo's speech, for he is visually transfixed by the world of images. What is troubling *vis a vis* narcissism, then, is that the symbolic order that calls all subjects is understood to be totalizing. Writ large in the capital system as the world of advertisement, one can understand why Marxist critics such as Henri Lefebvre claim that only a universal theory can combat the universalizing tendencies of capitalism.

McLuhan was worried about typographic man's ocularcentrism, a kind of "selfamputation [that] forbids self-recognition." *(Understanding* 43). His reading of Narcissus and what he calls the "outering" of consciousness into technology shows that, in this instance, visual sense can be separate from the body, a notion not unlike Lacan's notion of the gaze and the *objet a.* The psychoanalytic notion of desire is left out of the Canadian project where the emphasis is shifted onto much more empirical ground. But in McLuhan's writing especially, a kind of psychology of space is invoked. McLuhan taught that we tend to see ourselves in our creations and warned that our creations do not accurately reflect who or where we are.[23] The mirror stage, which produces

[22] McLuhan argues that Narcissus' inability to recognize himself was because of the relatively the low tech medium of water, a "cool" medium because Narcissus would have to fill in much of his image, an effort that shuts down the nervous system to block the pain of a new environment. The results of this technology were fatal for Narcissus.

[23] McLuhan's aphorism, "the medium is the message," is a mixed metaphor. The "medium is [also] the massage," because of the numbing effects of a given medium has on the human sensorium: the

the imaginary, is first rooted in the body, or the subject's relationship to her/his own body. It is abstract space that is created by the subject's violent severance from the Real, a castration that places the phallus outside the body, and vertically fixes it in space.

The object cause of desire is also separate from the body and as such something that we invariably seek and create in something other.[24] Harris believes he can find a mirror image of himself in the world, either through the monuments he builds or in the people he controls. The mirror stage makes any understanding of human identity through an analysis of an autonomous ego impossible. In Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, selfconsciousness can only be achieved through the awareness of an other. The master must acknowledge his dependency on the slave, who through agency as worker has identity in the world. The slave in turn must recognise that the master needs her or him. Lacan applies this struggle for mutual recognition in his metaphor of the mirror stage. A specular mirroring image of the self is the "matrix and first outline of what is to become the ego." (Ecrits *1–7).*

Patrick proves his worth as a man of vision to Harris because he risks his life for what he believes in—an individual can prove to the other that he is a transcendent subject only if he is willing to risk his life in conflict with another subject: "And Hegel says that the being that is incapable of putting its life in danger in order to attain ends that are not immediately vital—ie.: the being that cannot risk its life in a fight for Recognition, in a fight for pure prestige — is not a truly human being" (Kojeve 41). Unlike the slave in the dialectic of desire, the master can only affirm himself as subject by means of his desire for death. Death in this instance constitutes both man's freedom and his "absolute master." Hegel's notion of how self-consciousness can only be apprehended through consciousness of death informs Lacan's claim that human desire is the desire to be loved as a desirer, in which recognition is a fight unto death:

> The concrete field of individual preservation [...] is structured in this dialectic of master and slave, in which we can recognise the symbolic emergence of the imaginary struggle to the death in which we earlier defined the essential structure of the ego. *(Ecrits* 142)

Recognition and vision structures the ego. When the child enters into the contract of language, the signifier puts him beyond death: "the signifier already considers him dead, by nature it immortalises him" (Lacan *S3* 180). Desire, then, is never merely a subjective need in the face of a love object. As in Hegel, true reciprocity in Lacan can

"medium is the mass age," because it is more important than ever to read the medium rather than merely interpret content in our mass age because of this total field numbing. And the "medium is the mess age," indicating that information technologies expansion has brought about a debris of contents to be read. McLuhan argued that even mud gives the illusion of depth, pointing to this explosion of interpretation and the futility of analyzing it without paying attention to the affects of the media.

[24] Lacan designates the *objet a*, anchor of the real, as the breast, the feces, the (imaginary) phallus, the urinary flow, the phoneme, the voice, the gaze, and "the nothing." (*Ecrits* 315).

only ever be an illusion, a necessary illusion to democratic belief or an individual's desire to get along.

Patrick Lewis is an English Canadian, "bom into a region which did not appear on a map until 1910, though his family had worked there for twenty years and the land had been homesteaded since 1816" (Ondaatje 10). Without a map and therefore with an identity complex, Patrick discovers his geography and identity in the labouring class of multicultural Toronto. He moves from the country to the city—from the hinterland to capital — taking to the city as "if it were land after years at sea" (53). In Patrick's many watery journeys, he is faced with the crucial choices found in any quest romance and, through his quest, hopes to understand himself. The people Patrick shares the city with both benefit from and are harmed by Harris, but Harris is numbed and cut off from people. In the end, he lives alone in the water works and remains unaware of either effect.

When Patrick enters Harris' office, all falls dark. In the dark, the building is no longer Bentham's panopticon. Under Patrick's control, sight is banished and Harris' monument no longer reflects Foucault's "unimpeded empire of the gaze" but rather a mythic, acoustic leviathan of sound. The building returns Patrick's voice in the dark and is received as wholly autonomous from the sender. In Harris' office, when Patrick asks him to turn off the light so that he cannot be seen, the object gaze is exchanged for the object voice. The object voice resonating from within an inanimate object — in this case, a building — is one metaphor for the birth of subjectivity. Both the object gaze and the object voice drive language, but at a level that is neither only linguistic nor only phenomenological:

> When we are talking, it is as if whatever we say is an answer to a primordial address by the Other —we are always already addressed. But the addressee is blank, it cannot be pinpointed to a specific agent, but rather it is a kind of empty *a priori,* the formal "condition of possibility" of our speaking; so it is with the object returning the gaze, which is a kind of formal "condition of possibility" of our seeing anything at all. (Zizek *Gaze and Voice* 90)

The voice necessarily precedes the subject's misrecognition in the mirror; Lacan divides the gaze and the voice into the scopic and "invocatory" drives respectively. And he means invocatory in the strongest sense of the term. The voice is an appeal, call or summons from the superego. But the strength of Narcissus' fixation is such that does not hear Echo, for she speaks to him in his own words. The voice and the mirror are narcissistic technologies that serve as support for self recognition. The *objet petit a* is any object which sets desire in motion and acts as the source of anxiety, or *angst,* for no objects are representable in the unmediated Real. The voice and the mirror are the two principle embodiments of the *objet petit a;* they are remainders left behind by the introduction of the symbolic in the Real.

Lacan's notion of voice is not identical to Jacques Derrida's claim that the phonocentric enterprise is biased in favour of the voice and writing is an auxiliary supplement.

However, Lacan's interest in the voice does not represent a return to naive phonocentrism and he does not understand language in a strictly figural or metaphorical sense. Metaphysics is, in effect, enabled by the banishment of the voice, that "the phonocentric voice is just one part of the story, its narcissistic fulfillment, the illusory pledge of the presence, reduction of its inherent ambivalence and its part of alterity" (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 24). Lacan does not make the simple assertion that the voice is the basic element of language as naturally embodied and hence accesses a presence that makes identity possible. Whereas Derrida alerted us to the illusory presence of the voice, Lacan claims that the voice, as object, makes even this illusion of self presence impossible. The notion of the Real, located beyond the imaginary and the symbolic, cannot be made present, and yet every other object's existence including the voice and gaze is constructed in relation to it.[25]

Whereas making oneself seen is structurally understood as a movement back toward the subject from the object in the gaze of recognition, the direction of making oneself heard is understood as a movement toward the object. The ears always turn toward sound that they cannot tune out (Lacan *FFC* 195). Narcissus' story involves both the gaze and the voice. But his curious affair with the nymph Echo, who could only echo his words and couldn't speak by herself, is a story of failed love and failed narcissism — the voice returned is not his own voice and he would rather die than abandon himself to the other. And when the nymph dies, only her voice is left, a voice without a body, the remainder, the trace of the object (Dolar, *Gaze and Voice* 14).

And so, like Harris who at first cannot hear Patrick, Narcissus cannot hear Echo's speech. In the Lacanian scheme, the emitter receives from the receiver his own message in an inverted form, a silent message that one cannot hear with the ear. The voice as object is the voice that remains silent; the gaze as object is the eye that cannot see. The tension between the voice and the gaze corresponds to the tension between the life drive and the death drive. Knowledge antecedent to words (language and the mirror stage) poses truth; hence the truth can only be revealed without speaking. The history of the voice as the "safeguard of presence" is not the only one — there is also the history of the voice as "dangerous, threatening and possibly ruinous" made evident in western metaphysics' fear of the feminine voice without sense, singing without words (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 16).

The voice as music must not stray from the sense of words lest it lead people astray. Throughout *In the Skin of a Lion,* Patrick is associated with music, specifically the popular music of the day, jazz. The voice in western metaphysics is also associated with the wild card of femininity, anchoring the negative side of the dichotomies voice/femininity/absence and Iogos/masculinity/presence. The singing voice expresses an en-

[25] Whereas the symbolic opposition between presence and absence implies the permanent possibility that something may be missing from the symbolic order, the real "is always in its place; it carries it glued to its hell, ignorant of what might exile it from there (Lacan *Ecrits* 25), and "Unlike the symbolic, which is constituted in terms of oppositions such as that between presence and absence, "there is no absence in the real." *(S2* 313).

joyment beyond the signifier, which Lacan represented as explicitly feminine *jouissance.* The knowledge revealed as truth without speaking is found in a feminine receptacle. In a bid for authority, the feminized laborer Patrick instructs Harris to turn off the light.

But the voice that makes presence possible is the voice of the Father. The Law is epitomized by the voice, for the covenant of the letter of the Law can only acquire authority from this remainder of the dead Father, that part of him which is not quite dead: "The object voice bears witness to the rest of that presupposed and terrible Father's *jouissance,* which couldn't be absorbed by the Law, that reverse side of the Father that Lacan calls *leper e-la-jouissance,* his ultimate deadly cry that accompanies the instituted Law" (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 27). This "part" is never quite absent, nor entirely present; rather, it creates the ground for imaginary recognition, for one recognizes oneself as the one who is addressed by the voice as well as the one who has a voice. In the Lacanian scheme there is a battle between the feminine voice (of music, of sound separate from words) and the symbolic voice of the Father. The voice, then, is one example of the space of Lacanian *extimacy,* an object both inside and outside the subject. The voice breaks through the skin or surface, and in this way, its status is that of the Real.

What happens in the darkened ark of Harris' monument to water is that Patrick sounds his authority, even though from Harris' point of view, he doesn't understand power: You don't understand power. You don't like power, you don't respect it, you don't want it to exist but you move around it all the time. You're like a messenger. Think about it Patrick...No answer. I'll keep talking. But turn the light on before you decide to plunge that thing. Allow me that. (Ondaatje 236)

This scene can be effectively linked to Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* When the son is faced with the ghost of his father, he comes up against a signifier in the Real that brings him close to psychosis. In the dark, both men lose the guardrail on reality that the ocularcentric symbolic order structures and it plunges them into inaction. When Hamlet hears his father, he stops speaking and listens. In the end, he acts only when he knows that he is close to his own death. Harris, too, is afraid of the dark and the ghostly voice that it contains, for Patrick speaks in the name of the dead—he gives voice to those who died in the construction of the Water Works. Harris knows he will have to wait until early morning before he can escape from Patrick for then "a column of sunlight would fall directly onto his large desk, the pad of grid paper, his fountain pen" (Ondaatje 237). When the voice is quiet, he will act. Harris is constituted by the gaze as "that which makes us consciousness" — and Patrick's uncanny, invisible voice sounding through the darkness of the water works strikes fear in him. Harris thought Patrick was, like him., a man of vision. Mladen Dolar shows that in stories about doubles, the subject must get rid of the girl who is "the spoiler of narcissism" (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 14). And so Alice Gull must necessarily die before Harris and Patrick can meet.

The voice in Lacan is an a *priori* object of the Other, which, because it is autonomous, is also deferred, and as such "narcissism crumbles." (Dolar 14). Whereas the gaze fulfills the desire to be seen—which Lacan equates with consciousness—the voice calls up this gaze in which we constitute ourselves, the gaze that gives us our place in our fantasies. Mladen Dolar asks: Is the voice of the persecutor different from the persecuted? The lure that plays between the gaze and the voice is visual and verbal. But in this masquerade, what we want to hear or see is never "it." In the novel, the two voices in a battle unto the death define each other. There is only one voice. Harris says, "You must realize you are like these places, Patrick. You're as much of the fabric as the alderman and the millionaires" (Ondaatje 238). And yet, is this not still a truth reduced to the logic of the visible, the illuminated world in which things look as one, whole? Harris needs to identify with the illusion of the same rather than the reality of lack to maintain his sovereign consciousness, enabling what Nietzsche calls a will to power, or in George Grant's Canadian version, a will to *techne.* As Patrick talks, he becomes more and more fatigued, "If he were writing this down, Harris thought, his handwriting would be getting smaller and smaller." (239). As a man of diminished "vision," Patrick has a completely different relationship to the real than Harris does, even though they are both structurally constituted by it: "Life plays between the voice and the gaze, yielding deception, frustration, the domestic quarrel, the disembodied voices droning on and on..." (Ragland *Reading Seminar XI*202).

According to Henri Lefebvre, the voice, sound, offers a profound means of experiencing monumental space:

> Monumental qualities are not solely plastic, not to be apprehended solely through looking. Monuments are also liable to possess acoustic properties, and when they do not this detracts from their monumentality. Silence itself, in a place of worship, has its music. In cloister or cathedral, space is measured by the ear: the sounds, voices and signing reverberate in an interplay analogous to that between the most basic sound and tones; analogous also to the interplay set up when reading voice breathes new life into a written text...it is in this way, and at this level, in the *nonvisible,* that bodies find one another. Should there also be an echo to provide a reflection or acoustic mirror of presence, it falls to an object to supply this mediation between the inert and the living. *(Production* 225)

The immigrants meet in the Water Filtration Plant for *agit prop* theatre where Patrick is first captivated by Alice's voice (Ondaatje 117–21). When Patrick and Harris meet in the darkened space of the plant, the truth of their shared history finds its receptacle. Nonvisible and mediated by a monumental structure, they find each other. The object voice supplies the mediation between what they both built and their individual lives.

And yet, in the dark it is Patrick's voice that tells Hams a disquieting truth. He tells him that his consistency of consciousness is an illusion. No longer able to see

his reflection, Narcissus hears Echo. The gaze mortifies and the voice vivifies—Harris' encounter with Patrick absolutely must change him. And Patrick's voice necessarily must pass through the building — a kind of mediating Other — for sounds are never understood in an immediate way. When Harris, alone at the centre of his creation, experiences the emptiness of the world that he has built, he experiences the uncanny. His symbolic ordering of things, written as the smooth surface of buildings concealing the labour of the immigrants, is shown to be an illusion. Hearing for the first time, Harris via Patrick's voice encounters the hole in his being, and he lets the man who would have killed him and destroyed his life's work go free. The anarchist does not blow up the building. Rather, this final scene is the death of narcissism, and the beginning of the stories of labour.

Conclusion: Hey Canada!

> *Arbeit macht Frei:* Work will make you free.
>
> –Sign over the gates at Aushwitz.

> Each civilization has its own methods of suicide.
>
> *–Harold Innis,* The Bias of Communication, *140–1.*

> A country, after all, is not something you build as the pharaohs build the pyramids, and then leave standing to defy eternity. A country is something that is built every day out of certain basic shared values.
>
> Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Memoirs.*

In the epigraph that begins *In the Skin of a Lion,* Ondaatje quotes John Berger who argues "never again will a single story be told as if it were the only one," invoking our current post-modern condition, wherein history has become a series of vanishing presents. But in a more socialist utopian vein, the epigraph articulates the possibility of the multiplicity of stories reflecting the lived reality of different people in a given place, a reality that has the power to subvert official history. It is only through art that the workers will be remembered, and one can easily argue that this does not help the dead. Like Antigone, who desires to bury her brother, the labourers need to be symbolically immortalised in order for their lives and labour to mean. "Man invented the sepulchre" for the very fact that in order for a name to mean, it has to be preserved by funereal rites (Lacan *S7).* Ondaatje writes, "only a dead name is permanent" (165). The spaces of the underclass are constructed via the phallic verticality of the city — they are the city's unconscious. Unseen and unheard except in the dark, they remain untheorized by the logic of visualization that separates objects from subjects and that kills nature and marginalizes labour.

And yet, *In the Skin of a Lion* depicts Innisian democratic dialogue through the building of time-biased—or what Innis calls time-heavy—architecture. Innisian negative dialectics is not Derridian deconstruction—Innis' notion of biases in history does not reflect Derrida's argument that the phonocentric enterprise of western metaphysics is biased in favour of the voice, and hence writing is denigrated as an auxiliary supplement. Derrida has shown that all metaphysical divides (the interior from the exterior and the subject from the object) derive from the privileging of the voice which, because it is embodied, is thought to represent self-presence *(Of Grammatology* 20).[26] And, although there is no proof that face- to-face dialogue is ultimately more democratic than more mediated forms, Innis' historical writings have a different task. Innis shows how the west began with an oral and time-bias, and predicts that it will end with a spatial and visual one, and (perhaps in a typical Canadian gesture) he argues for balance. Harold Innis' negative dialectical method of writing history as political economy attempts to show how, through his analysis of either spatial or temporal biases in history, what is marginalized in the formation of empires must be brought back into play in democracies.

One of Ondaatje's principle intertexts is Joseph Conrad's writings. Patrick makes the journey from hinterland to capital, only to find that power does not reside in its heart. What resides there instead is Harris, who, like Kurtz, indiscriminately kills workers for his own glory. In *The Heart of Darkness,* empire is entirely indifferent to what action may or may not be taken against Kurtz—the colonies are the obscene area outside of Empire where all manner of degradation occurs and, unseen, is tolerated. In Conrad's *The Secret Agent,* the agent Verloc is ordered by his superior, "The Professor," a brilliant, alienated bombmaking anti-technology terrorist, to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, the symbol of Victorian high technology. In the preface to *The Secret Agent,* Conrad indicates that his novel is in part based on the 1894 incident of an anarchist named Martial Bourdin, who attempted to bomb the Greenwich Observatory, but blew himself up instead. In yet another, and more recent, return to the world of actual buildings, the mathematics professor Ted Kaczynski, the anti-technology "Unabomber" (1998), waged an eighteen-year bombing rampage inspired by Joseph Conrad's novel and its alienated professor. Once caught and controlled within the precincts of the Law, the Unabomber was dismissed in the press as a paranoid, if not psychotic, criminal.

Patrick chooses to not blow up Harris' monument to power, for he learns that power does not reside there. Harris' secret is revealed; his architectural *trompe-l'oeil* is that the building as power is no more than an perspectival effect. And if Patrick,

[26] See M. Dolar's comparative reading of the voice in Derrida and Lacan: "So if for Derrida the essential of the voice lies in auto-affection and self-transparency, as opposed to the trace, the rest, the alterity, and so on, for Lacan that auto-affection is where the problem starts. Derrida's deconstructive turn deprives the voice of its ineradicable ambiguity by reducing it to the ground of the illusory presence, while the Lacanian account tries to disentangle from its core the object as an interior obstacle to self presence" ("The Object Voice." 16).

trapped in Harris' specular gaze, killed the other to gain ascendancy, then like the Unabomber he would be pathologized. The novel does not resolve the contradictions of development. The The people of the city, even though their families died to build it, would not want their supply of water cut off and what their ancestors built with their own hands destroyed. Patrick's choice to succeed or fail is not unlike Lacan's drastic example of choice in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.* The subject is presented with the choice, "Your money or your life." But there is no choice in this demand, for one must choose life over money, for if one does not and chooses money over life, the subject loses both. "Choice," then, is an illusion within the ideological field. This illustration shows how the subject enters into the social, for everyone has to undergo loss to be included. If one chooses society, one chooses love and hence gives up choice, versus choosing choice over love and thus losing society. As in Lacan's example, by choosing absolute choice over love, one actually gives up both–one cannot have choice in a social vacuum. The moment of subjectivation is a suspension of subjective agency, an Hegelian deference to the Other. Harris lets Patrick go without persecution. He submits to the necessity of the Real or what was hitherto senseless for him—who built the buildings, what lives were at stake—and, a narcissist, he thinks he recognizes Patrick as a man of vision. Like both the characters of the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* Harris and Patrick must come out of the wilderness of the autonomous individual and intersect with each other and the new society.

But the illusory *objet a*, the pure void which functions as the object cause of desire, remains. Each of the men has a cause that does not, in the end, exist; or rather, it is present only in effects in the world. Freedom for Patrick is an example of this Real-impossible, the cause of social antagonisms. Antagonism, or more broadly class struggle, reveals itself as an *objet petite a* or negative limit, the traumatic nothing which prevents closure of a given social field. Every attempt to fix designations in the social field, to assign a definite place within social structures, seems doomed to failure in the novel. The Real is impossible, but its absolute necessity is understood through its effects such as bodily trauma and social aggressivity. The social contract gives you the illusion of choice, but in the end Patrick and Harris merely choose that which was given them. Nothing changes.

When Patrick first sets eyes on Clara, he falls in love. Their meeting is described with heavenly bodies of the sun and the moon as its backdrop, in light that aids the gaze (Ondaatje 62, 63, 64, 71). Later, Clara is looking into a mirror, and Patrick gazes at her, catching her eye in the mirror. Patrick's subjectivity is constituted by the recognition of himself both in the mirror and through the eyes of the other reflected in the mirror — by his sight and the return of the gaze. It is an encounter that will change Patrick's life forever; it is an encounter that Mladen Dolar describes as mythical:

> 'Their eyes met' is nevertheless the paradigm: there is an exchange of the gaze, *the real has returned the gaze,* even if the other person didn't respond, or was unaffected by it, or even aware of it. The lack of sense of a contingent

> fate, the haphazard string of events, was in that moment suddenly filled up by the gaze, that Lacanian paramount evocation of what he called the *objet a.* (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 134)

The gaze is so strong that at first Patrick does not even see Alice, his future lover. Every other body falls off into darkness in favour of Clara who is depicted *a la chiaroscuro,* a figure of light against ground. However, Patrick later meets Alice in the dark and, through the voices of the Macedonian actors and their *agit prop* theatre, comes into mythic, Canadian history.

Slavoj Zizek argues that mythical, mystical understanding stands in for an encounter with the Real. In the Canadian context, Tony Wilden warns that if Canadians continue to define themselves in opposition, then an imaginary symmetry between Canada and, for example the United States, is enacted, a move that can only ensure that Canada is always the subordinate second term. And worse, the us/them equation obscures the real hierarchical, material relationship between the two countries. This Imaginary stasis ensures that Canadian "identity" is always a symptom—a psychical working out of the problem of not-being. If we focus on the symptom, while ignoring the Real, we do so at our peril. For it is the social, historical and economic problems that underlie the quest for "Canadian" identity that are the real obstacles to Canadian nationhood *(Imaginary* 51). All of the interpretations of identity can only result in an agonistic clash of ontologies, an infinite regression of misrecognition.

While mythic representation stands in for an encounter with the Real, mythic orality does not create a national identity. The mythical quest Patrick undertakes in Ondaatje's epic does not result in any sort of authentic homeland. Adorno warns,

> The quintessential paradox of the epic resides in the fact that the notion of homeland is opposed to myth — which the fascist would falsely present as homeland. Here there is a reminiscence of history, in which the domiciled and settled life, the prerequisite for any homeland, followed the nomadic age. If it is the fixed order of property dependent on the settled life that grounds the human alienation in which originates all homesickness and all longing for the lost primal state of man, it is nevertheless the settled life and fixed property (Only in which the notion of a homeland can appear) to which all longing and all homesickness are directed. *(.Dialectic* 78)

While Harris, the nostalgic conservative, is interested in homeland and the settled life of fixed property that would give him identity, the choice for Patrick is between Harris' version of official nationalism's "lie" and his own story or "myth" (Anderson 161). In his pluralistic world, Patrick experiences his freedom through his association with other immigrants, or an example of what Gianni Vattimo names the continual oscillation between belonging and disorientation, the motion sickness of our times.

Innis claims that the future of democracy rests in the city, for that is where there is the most pluralistic engagement—the many diverse voices which can either turn to

cacophony in a kind of Tower of Babel created by spatializing mass communications—or be heard through sharing what has been built. The voice that remains silent is oppressed but nevertheless builds the city—the voice vivifies—and those who possess power show us where the graves are—the gaze mortifies. But what is a truly democratic voice? Is it one *heard* and not silenced by the crude materialism of the "last men," or those that hold and manage paper? Innis' choice is revealed to be Lacan's as well—there is no choice. Patrick's choice is whether to blow up Harris' monumental buildings or not but it is a choice decided in advance. Given his class position, he has to choose that which has been given him. The evidence lay in the fact that if he did blow up the building, nothing in the symbolic structure, nothing in the regulating Law, would change.

The Real as cause is also the remainder, a kind of surplus enjoyment or the "scraps of symbolization" which escape symbolization and points to the lack at the centre of Harris' monument: the death and lack at its heart that gives it monumentality. Ondaatje's achievement is that the city we read about, finally, is a city in which people live rather than merely buildings designating the power of the symbolic order. A city is created in the death zone. It is created by the death drive of the labourers who desire to be free from the burdens of history and the elite, who harken back to Europe for inspiration of how to build. However, the traumatic end to Ondaatje's tale is that the story of the workers, like all ancient deluge stories, can only be re-constructed backwards, and so freedom in this diagetical loop can only be understood from the perspective of the fixture as if it "will have been." The death drive creates things in the world, but the return of the repressed as a form of history can only work retroactively; in other words, long after the labourers are dead. Class antagonism in *Skin* is an example of the Real-impossible, the traumatic Real that prevents the closure of any social field, or any narrative that attempts to describe it. Ondaatje's auditory democracy, revealed in the novel through Benjaminian details or emphera, does not resolve the tensions between ocularity and orality, between space and time or between memory and history. It does not resolve the dialectical struggle between capital and labour. The dialectical struggle between the master and the slave is not resolved in the novel because Patrick does not face the interdiction of the Law. There is no radical *pere-version* in *In the Skin of a Lion.* Patrick does not refuse the Law; he completes it negatively. The novel does, however, give voice to the abject in negative space. In the end, *In the Skin of a Lion* is not historical in any utopian sense, but simply because the novel tells us where the graves are.

Part 3: Nature

The Northern Thing: Glenn Gould's The Idea of North

Introduction: Where is Here?[1]

> Human Nature crept stealthily from the south and now it has infected the north with its contagion.
>
> —Wally MacLean in Glenn Gould's *The Idea of North.*

> I am an Arctic buff; my own notion of isolation involves, at the very least, a
>
> Helsinki-like latitude.
>
> —Glenn Gould, qtd in P.W. Powe "Noise of Time."

The North is the silent, snowy background of any definition of Canada. This negative sublime is a productive metaphor, for such ideals appear to overcome ambivalence and enable identity. In Glenn Gould's radio production *The Idea of North,* those who go north perceive themselves as outlaws and adventurers. They find human contact in the south too close. The northern traveller makes a daring journey to the limit, with the desire that a new space will be constructed in which to conjure a new identity. In other words, the North exists in the minds of the travellers on Gould's train long before they get there. The Canadian North is the defining limit of masculine, romantic individualism reflecting the conceit of the vast northern expanse as a Nowhere that makes Somewhere in the South possible — it is Canada's Northern Thing.

However, this is only one possible reading of Gould's work, for *The Idea of North* does more than represent north as a reflective dead space *a la* modernist geography, "undialectical and immobile — a world of passivity and measurement rather than action and meaning" (Soja *Postmodern* 37). When listening to Gould's *The Idea of North,* psychoanalysis is a most productive tool for it enables a conceptualisation of what is at stake in the drive to colonise negative space. Gould's northern space erupts as a cacophony of sound. The listening result is a kind of malady of space that the subject endures when in the tundra, lost in space, where the margins between external and internal space, and between the internal and external voice are confused, where

[1] Frye, Northrop. "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada," (213–51).

meaning and real objects are confounded. Radio technology addresses us via a kind of super-egoic voice, a voice that is not attached to anything, which takes over bodies and so prevents the subject from achieving self-identity. This disembodied, displaced voice marks the unidentifiable point of the Real.

Gould's north is a heard, not a seen place. The foreclosed referent North returns in many voices, for radio as heard space does not follow the propositional logic delimited by phallic law — the colonial mapping of north by vision. And yet, ultimately *North* is not really about individuals or nature of any kind, imaginary or material. Influenced by Marshal McLuhan, *The Idea of North's* subject is technology, and so Gould's radio production is more accurately an example of the post-modem sublime. Marshall McLuhan would agree with Lacan that, unlike vision, which keeps things at a distance from the body and so enables an illusory protection and defence against our environment, sound offers no distance between what you hear and what you think you are. According to McLuhan, sound is so intimate it goes right through the body.

And so Gould's imaginative, sublime North is much more likely to invoke the feeling of isolation than what we perceive to be the actual or seen place, and it is in this imaginative solitude, not the solitude of real space, that Gould was most interested. In an interview with Tim Page, Gould said that north is a "handy metaphor for the idea that anyone who chooses to live in an isolated way undergoes a kind of metamorphosis...even in the heart of Manhattan" (456). Gould knew that this metaphorical manipulation of north is suspect, for people living in any big city can suffer a much greater isolation, and so the northern community would be much too close for comfort for Gould. What is important about North as a metaphor is explicitly political in Gould: in his view, the federal government was destroying the Canadian north. This deeply upset him for he very much liked the non-conformity of outpost communities and he knew that the Canadian north, its place and people, would ultimately be managed by the same calculus of interests as the south.

On first listening, Gould's work can be said to be the result of sublimation— Gould's enigmatic sexuality redirected into some of the most remarkable artistic achievements of the 20th century; still, it would be more accurate to read *The Idea of North* as a representation of a kind of psychosis.[2] The Real erupts in many sounds and voices in Gould's production, and so, arguably, it is not entirely un-signified. At the same time, *North* philosophically insists on negation and so elevates the sublime object North as the ideological Thing that constructs Canadian identity. North in Gould exerts the power of fascination that gives the Thing its pull—a death drive which can only result in the destruction of Northern communities and for Gould, the death of the imaginative isolation that only actual remote communities can provide. But out of this push towards the ideological Thing Glenn Gould creates a version of the post-modem community: a

[2] In *The Psychosis,* Lacan tells us that the term "paranoia" makes its first appearance in 1764. R. A. Vogel, a "disciple" of Kant's, coined the term which covered all forms of madness (4).

wholly spatialized community without place but which nevertheless needs an idea of place—in this case negative sublime space—in order to mean.

The voice, unaccompanied by music and unanchored to a specific source and not localised in a geographical place, is "a threat that lurks everywhere" (Zizek *Looking Awry* 127). While Gould's production is a dialogic sound poem, it is not, strictly speaking, dialogic according to Mikhail Bakhtin's definition. Constructed by radio technology and analogically spliced together, *North* is completely disembodied, and aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, utterly spatialized. As such, it neither fulfils Mikhail Bakhtin's criterion of embodied utterance nor represents the place necessary for democratic dialogism. Indeed, Gould was called "the conductor as dictator" by one of the participants in his CBC radio documentaries, charged with controlling and perverting meaning. One of Gould's interviewees, the Mennonite economics professor from Manitoba, Roy Vogt, whose voice is heard in the third production of his *Solitude Trilogy: The Quiet in the Land,* complained that

> my ideas would be used not as the expression of an individual but as a foil for the ideas of others. You can't abstract an individual much more than that, even in a totalitarian society... each person becomes a note in a larger symphony, which in social terms is perhaps as good a way as any of describing the underlying assumptions of a totalitarian state. The dictator is a social composer. (Friedrich 199; Ostwald 241–42)

Arguably, Roy Vogt is falling prey to the conceit that there is something such as completely free individual expression. Yet what Gould created was a uniquely Canadian version of what I call techno-dialogism, a radically democratic form of utterance. Individuáis, their utterances and communal spaces must be continually retheorised in consideration of the problems presented by spatializing technologies. Vogt does not recognise his conversation when listening to the sound poem, in part because meaning in communication is always derailed, always perverted. The sound poems must not be controlled; but rather, they should remain in some instances hard to listen to. Gould complained that people did not know how to listen, and so he presents a listening challenge that does not leave any conceit of intentionality intact.

Vogt wants one sovereign voice sounding separate from Gould's many voices. But actually hearing *The Idea of North* is much more challenging and more democratic effort than being heard above the din of community. *The Idea of North,* profoundly dialogic, expresses the problem—and the potential—of psychosis. Gould's version of north, in its need for the Real of the northern communities to be simultaneously both the traumata (the Real that resists symbolisation or the negative sublime) and an actual place filled with the clash of voices, "politicises the relation between language and the Real" (Butler 207). *The Idea of North* at once maintains the illusion of no-where—the conceit of the infinite natural world—and "sounds" north as a bustle of voices. The production is a kind of psychotic "word salad" analogically spliced together without the

dialectical tension necessary to make meaning. Gould's production is unbound from the Law and as such represents the freedom necessary not only for artistic creation but also for radical democratic politics.

These voices do not construct a diagetic reality so much as they get "pinned" to a source, in this case, the Canadian north.[3] Because the disembodied radio voice does not have a ground — it is neither part of the actual north nor, in most of Gould's sound poem, accompanied by music — the disembodied voice more properly belongs to what Lacan designates "the zone between two deaths." The object-voice is a threat or the feminine sublime. In this manner, the imaginary North retains its scintillating pull even while the actual north, structured by the same calculus of interests as the south, may not. And, Lacan explains that the death drive is destructive for it expresses the "will to create from zero" *(S7 212–13).* Gould's complicated radio sound poem is revealed to be as contradictory as the psychoanalytic notions of sublimation, the death drive, and the Lacanian Real. But I do not want to read Glenn Gould through the matrix of psychoanalysis; rather, I want to illuminate how Gould's production troubles the Lacanian notion that the Real, because it is not controlled by the Law of the Father, is necessarily beyond signification. Gould's sound poem represents North as both a sublime object *and* a version of dialogism very much in contrast to the solitary figure "Gould." The North as the sublime object of ideology, or the Northern Thing, is both lack *and* substance: it is both no-where and outside of signification and simultaneously filled with sound, its psychotic voices pinned to the Canadian north.

The Idea of North represents the contradictions that inhere in the Lacanian death drive, understood as stasis and an instance of creative destruction as it relates to the Lacanian Real. In Freud, the death drive is propelled by nostalgia for harmony (a compelling notion, given Canada is historically a conservative nation with a politics that is, arguably, bolstered by nostalgia). However, the drive is also linked to the suicidal tendency of narcissism. In Freud, destructiveness is always first self- destructiveness which deconstructs unconscious ideals of identity. Lacan argues that the death drive describes how the subject's attachment to his or her symptoms is much greater than the will or desire to change them, and so binds every desire, every drive to the drive for death.

Lacan's "second death" is a description of castration, or how the subject is alienated from the Real, stranded in the symbolic order. In this manner, the death drive is behind the "mask" of the symbolic order *(Ecrits* 146–78).[4] The inexpressible Real is understood

[3] Slavoj Zizek, in his reading of Alfred Hitchcock's films, appropriates Michael Chion's notion *la voix acousmatique* or the idea that the uncanny voice without a bearer, hovering in indeterminate space, can be "pinned" or attributed to any subject. See Zizek's *Loooking Awry,* 126.

[4] The first instance of the second death occurs the Bible. In the apocalyptic texts of the Bible, the second death is understood as eternal punishment, the parallel of eternal life. To partake of the Eucharist means that one shall not die but shall have eternal life (John 6:50). However, those who do not follow Christ are deprived of eternal life and suffer a second death, an antagonistic symmetry in keeping with the dynamic of the death drive and Eros and Thantos at the heart of psychoanalysis:

as a radical negation or loss. In the first essay of *The Glenn Gould Reader,* Gould's "Advice to a Graduation" instructs students that all learning is contingent on negation, with the related idea that human creativity can only occur in solitude. These ideals are found in the iconographic Gould—overdressed, encumbered by heavy sweaters, wearing a scarf and overcoat year round, his gloved hands never reaching out to humans but only to telephones, the knobs of consoles and the keys of pianos. Gould, more than any other famous Canadian, calls up the image of the brilliant and idiosyncratic artist in solitude, the artist on the margins of empire and power. Indeed Gould, who preferred his relationships be mediated, is emblematic of both the technoalienation that marks our media age and 20th century technological artistic achievement.

Glenn Gould argues that negation is indispensable to creation, but there is a contradiction between this indispensable negation and the "fullness" of his dialogic sound poems. His poems do not fill up the North. Gould's voices do not attempt to make North more rational or to make North mean *(Glenn Gould Reader 4).* Rather, the death drive in Gould's *The Idea of North* is insensate and incoherent. It kills off nature or north in its quest for freedom from the Law—which in Canadian terms is the southern most part of the country and its constitutive outside, the United States—while at the same time giving Canadian identity its symbolic consistency as a northern nation. Culture does not arise out of a turn toward the symbolic but, rather, is a response to the loss of the mother, to primary objects, to the Real (Ragland *Pleasures* 104). Gould's *The Idea of North* represents both radical negativity—the absence of a limit in language found in psychosis—and the Law of the Father, the paternal "no" that puts distance between the "unthinkable nothing," or north as a primary object and the subject. We must have distance from such imaginary objects, not only for them to retain their sublimnity but also for us to represent or symbolise North. If the Real is unmediated, psychosis results. The radio production represents the death drive as fixity or the consistency defended by symbolic representation or repetition. However, the creative/desfructive principle of the death drive is also linked to suicidal narcissism and as such brings us to the limit of psychoanalytic law.

This tension of the death drive makes *The Idea of North* a compelling version of Canadian or marginal identity. Gould's production shows us what is at stake in our drive to identity as ranged against and lorded over the Real of nature.[5] The northern

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (20:14); "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolotars, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which bumeth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (John 21:8; Apoc 2:11, 20:6).

[5] In Freud, organisms need a release from tension; in other words, they drive to return to an inorganic state. Death instincts are directed both inwards (self- destructive) and aggressively outwards. The death drive as a dyonisyian creative force becomes central in Lacan, especially in its later incarnation when it is linked to narcissism (the imaginary) and when it is finally understood via the symbolic register or culture. In each of these registers, the death drive is marked by the subject's tendency to repeat trauma. However, in Lacan, every drive moves towards extinction and every drive involves the subject in repetition — the symbolic order is the mask of the death drive — and so there is less and less

travelers in *The Idea of North* need North; they need the Thing in the Real which is the "beyond of the signified" (Lacan *S7* 55) and impossible to imagine *(S7* 125) and hence beyond symbolisation but exists nonetheless. They are on a quest, and so the Thing that calls them is both terrifying and alluring, but to remain sublime it must keep its distance. For when the Muskeg Express reaches its destination, when one arrives in the Canadian north, all the government issued homes and furniture are identical and the extreme weather insulates one within a small community. The village in the north can be much more suffocatingly close than most urban communities. In other words, it reflects the mundane fixity of the death drive. Identities in the north are not different; they are merely re-iterated and entrenched by the same sorts of social groupings and mores as those found in the south.

Wally MacLean, a retired government surveyor, is Gould's narrator. He warns us that when Man travels north he brings a "contagion" —which is to say the metaphysics of death — with him. On the margins, from a distance, Gould's production represents Canadian identity through such timeless metaphors as landscape, snow and the Northern Thing. Northrop Frye's infamous question regarding Canada—Where is Here?—reveals that in terms of empire all colonial spaces are absences, blank spots on the map, their very negativity enabling both exploitation and creation. The Northern territories are still considered blank spots on the map, defined as sublime space by their marginal status to history. In the Canadian North, time does not appear to exist. In this manner it reflects the Lacanian Real, something which does not exist in individual memory but which must exist for it has effects in the world. This timeless northern nation is re-visioned in the writings of George Grant who, looking back to Europe, laments the future that Canada will never have because it has no uncolonized "past," an idea that, in part, explains the very specific concern Canadian thinkers such as Harold Innis and George Grant have with North America's spatial bias. Its metaphorical timeless resonance works precisely because it is difficult to get to and its weather is too brutal for most. In Gould's sound poem, the travellers on The Muskeg Express are attracted to the North because few Canadians ever go there — they desire solitude and need negative space in order to create—but Gould gives voice to these outpost communities on the fringes of Canadian confederation, technologically constructing the imaginary nation. In contrast to 19th- century nation building, made by the transcendental, masculine ego that needs the feminine negative sublime in order to create, Gould realises another version. On the cusp of post-modernity, the Canadian nation is made— and may be undone by—both this sublime nothing *and* of many human, individual and different voices. In *The Idea of North,* these voices replicate the cacophony of democracy as well as the need for the solitude essential to creation.

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difference or separation between the death and life drives; or rather, there is less distinction because the drives — in the imaginary and symbolic registers — are untethered from biology. Lacan focuses on how the subject repeats relations to objects—voice, gaze—in order to fill up the traumatic void in being.

The Death Zone

> Sometimes one must try to invent a form which expresses the limitations of form, which takes as its point of departure the terror of formlessness.
>
> —Glenn Gould, "Radio as Music." *The Glenn Gould Reader.*

> The conflict leaves an empty place, one might say, and it's in the empty place of the conflict that a reaction, a construction, a bringing into play of subjectivity, appears.
>
> —Jacques Lacan "The Other and Psychosis" *The Psychosis: 1955–1956, Book III*

Wally MacLean, the principal voice in *The Idea of North,* tells us that the north is something most Canadians will never have access to—north for many merely means northern Ontario. Glenn Gould was terrified of flying, yet one must fly to go to the northern reaches of Canada one—or go by dog-sled—for the train reaches its limit in Churchill Falls. Otto Friedrich remarks, "From a southern perspective, Churchill is almost at the end of the world"; however, Churchill is still south of the sixtieth parallel and "barely the beginning of the Canadian North" (Freidrich 176; Hjartarson 68).[6] Gould did go to Churchill, but *The Idea of North* is also arguably about Toronto. The unseen North, like any space, is *a priori* in the service of such apparatuses as the state and ideology. Gould's train may only take us to Churchill Falls, but it traverses the much greater distance from absolute to abstract space, from hinterland to capital, from the law of the Father in the south to the sound of the uncanny feminine that is North.

Gould's notion of negation–his terror of formlessness-can be rethought as one of Lacan's objects of desire: the phallus, the voice, the gaze, and formlessness or the "unthinkable nothing" *(Ecrtis* 315). Culture, or the symbolic order, arises as a response to the loss of these primary objects. The North as an unthinkable nothing is just such a primary object. Gould here echoes Lacan: he argues that negation is a kind of frame that operates as a creative restraint; therefore, negation is also necessarily a philosophical measure of ourselves. And, perhaps more comfortingly, it acts as a "shelter" from all the "antithetical directions" in the world from which the subject desires protection. For Gould, negation

> is the concept which seeks to make us better to provide us with structures within which our thought can function-while at the same time it concedes our frailty, the need that we have for this barricade behind which the

[6] Peter Dickinson reminds us that Gould, who was terrified of airplane travel, ended his northern trip where Heame had begun his, 195 years earlier. Gould, like most Canadians, never went north. ("The Sound Documentary" 105–122.)

> uncertainty, the fragility, the tentativeness of our systems can look for logic *(Glenn Gould Reader* 5).[7]

On this reading, the sublime North is the *objet* void, the traumatic hole in the symbolic order, a void where life is marked by death, the death that is at the heart of civilisation and its discontents. North is Gould's object, and as such it inevitably falls prey to instrumentality for the "true" north must not only be productive as natural resource, but as ideology. The North as "strong and free" is the metaphor that makes Canada as a national space signify. However, the subject is at once protected by the void and undone by it; belief in a unified identity manifested as the civic, masculine citizen is not undercut by Canadian's infamous identity complex, an obsessive insecurity. For like the co-dependence of Eros and Thantos, non-identity is merely the coterminous flip side of identity. This symptom, the problem of Canadian non-being, is by repetition or iteration conceptualised as eternal and natural but, like any identity, is more accurately a retroactive illusion. Illusory identities or such truths of being are extremely dangerous, and concentrating on the inverse or the problem of non-being does nothing to forestall its damaging effects. In psychoanalysis, the symptom of non-being—"the more in us than us"—keeps us sick. But, it is a sickness that no-one wants to be cured of, for it is repeated and hence fixed in the symbolic or the language and landscape of the nation state. As symptom it stabilises the shifting ground of any identity.

Lacan's Thing is appropriated from Freud's *das Ding.* It is the precursor to the *objet a* which belongs to the order of the Real. The *object* is "a pure void which functions as the object-cause of desire" (Zizek "Object" 104).[8] Lacan's *das Ding,* the Thing in mute and dumb reality outside of symbolisation, is also an object of desire or what Slavoj Zizek names the sublime object of ideology. Between being somebody and being nobody there is a kind of "death zone" and its limits are demarcated by, on one margin, the symbolic and on the other, where the imaginary fails to cover over the Real. As sound poem rendered via radio technology, *The Idea of North* fails to cover over the Real and so prevents the subject from achieving self identity. But the pull of the Thing, the sublime North—a symbolic and ideological notion—nevertheless engenders the impossible desire for authenticity or lost origins. And yet to succumb to the normative expectations of symbolic Law—which is to say the south—is to take on the death mask of the symbolic order. In Canada, the death mask of the symbolic order is known by repetition, or Canada's infamous insecurity complex. The expectation that one can

[7] Glenn Gould's convocation address was delivered at the Royal Conservatory of Music, University of Toronto, November 1964.

[8] Lacan reads Freud's *die Sache* as word or thing presentations represented in the unconscious or the thing in the symbolic order and *das Ding* as the thing in its "dumb reality" or something beyond signification. In German, the feminine *die Sache* is a more formal or refined term than the neuter *das Ding,* which is more colloquial, even vulgar.

have referential plenitude on either extreme of this zone can only lead to masculinist, "narcissistic horror."[9]

This is the death zone: the death drive ensures that we cling to what we know—Canada's national obsession with the problem of non-identity—rather than succumb to the terror of formlessness, or Glenn Gould's *Idea of North.* Much is at stake when the human desire for civic and political identities coupled with a belief in technology conspire to define nature. This is a notion which, ideologically, includes women. The Northern space like the women's "secret" is a masculinist fantasy to which the only proper critique is to make clear that neither Woman nor North exists, thereby forestalling the negation that is inevitably imputed to woman and north by the questing man. The drive north, then, is a socially acceptable sublimation; it is not a perverse drive.[10] This is the North: in Lacanian terms it must be written with the article barred to forestall essentializing its nature. But like the Woman that gives the man something he does not possess in himself the North, too, has something that man does not possess in himself. As such our desire for North speaks of the essential loss underlying any identity. Read this way, North reveals the hole in the social order that marks being with loss and reveals all identifications as imaginary or as a problem of misrecognition. The Real emanates from the void that is at the heart of being and projected onto nature—we know we encounter it when we suffer the terror of sublime space or the uncanny. The Real, understood as Thing, places the North, like the Woman, beyond language. This enables north to be easily colonised or pathologized according to symbolic law or normativity.

On this reading, what signifies as nature is the north as resource. According to symbolic power, the Real understood as unthinkable, is irreproachable. Judith Butler argues that there is no way for psychoanalysis to interrogate those exclusions that make and stabilise signification. And, excluded identities are a threat to signification *(Bodies* 220). Gould's example of such a threat are the "antithetical directions" that pull him. In terms of the nation state as Northern Thing, there are many exclusions—North (vs the south), the First Nations, The United States—which are at once limits and mysterious Things or *objets* that give English Canadian identity its consistency. We pursue such sublime objects for they sustain our fantasies about ourselves, and so the drive North on The Muskeg Express is also the drive to map and secure an imaginary, impossible identity. People go north to find freedom from the Law, and this

[9] Butler quotes Lauren Berlant in "The Female Complaint," (237–59) underscoring that while Zizek and Lacanian psychoanalysis are quite correct that identity constitution is necessarily an instance of failed recognition, the flouted expectation of which results in "narcissistic horror"; she argues that, instead of focusing on this inevitable *meconnaisance,* one must rethink the failure of recognition as "the point of departure from a more democratizing affirmation of internal difference" (*Bodies That Matter* 219).

[10] However, as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* shows, this fascinating draw to the margins of empire entices the worst sorts of people. It attracts those who ignore local customs and laws, murder indigenous peoples, steal resources, and degrade the land. Lacan insists that Freud's dream that a "cultured people" could realize complete sublimation is impossible.

desire to escape and create new space is part of the destructive/creative potential of the death drive as well as its ground or constancy.

The Idea of North's narrator, Wally MacLean, describes this impossible will to identity. He tells listeners that the travelers who go North will not find what they are looking for. Although freedom can be found in the act of going North for the first time, as Wally who has traveled north many times knows, the second or third time going north becomes mere habit. And so, pleasure is turned into death, Eros into Thantos. The relation to the unthinkable void is a semblance to fill up the void and it does nothing to secure identity. Indeed, one of the speakers in *The Idea of North* says, "if this doesn't turn out I will go to Africa," reiterating the repetitive, colonising impulse engendered by the sublime Thing. There must be somewhere for the masculine imaginary to start anew; there must be a new space in which reinvention can occur.

The transcendental ego lords over a hostile nature it needs in order both to be and to create. This is a dangerous notion, for it institutes the sovereign masculine subject against which all other identities must be ranged and must defer to in order to signify. The death defying act in the Canadian imagination would be to give up such a notion of identity and its inverse—the infamous Canadian identity complex—in favour of difference, or, in Judith Butler's words, "to interrogate the exclusions by which political signifiers mean" *(Bodies* 222). In Lacan's early work, the imaginary order is linked to the pleasure principle. Experience is lost—the word kills the thing—in the effort to represent it. This demand for illusory consistency or perceived oneness drives the subject toward homeostasis or balance.[11] By the 1950's, Lacan's notion of the Real precedes the symbolic order (a temporal designation that is more properly an imaginary effect). The symbolic structures our perception of reality, the imaginary gives our perceptions illusory consistency, and the Real that does not exist must nevertheless exist for either of the first two to occur.[12] From this notion, Slavoj Zizek argues we must accept the Real is beyond signification, otherwise we are doomed to both endless interpretations of nature, the body and hence to irresolvable agonistic arguments about organic or corporeal existence and utility.

Butler reads Lacan against Zizek. She reminds us that in Lacan, the real appears first in the symbolic order and is excluded later, arguing that Zizek implies the Real is always already excluded from the symbolic. It is quite a different thing if the Real appears

[11] The symbolic register troubles the subject's desire for homeostasis or balance, a balance upset by the entrance into the social and the aggressivity that entails. In later Lacan, the symbolic order is also linked to the real and is understood as beyond the pleasure principle. Unlike the pre-oedipal or pre-totemic father, the Father of the Law does not enjoy. The letter of the law does not represent *jouisscmce,* it represents death. When the subject is trapped in the insensate mechanism of the symbolic order, it has what Zizek calls a "mortifying" effect: the subject begins to repeat the traumatic event (repetition compulsion) because of this automatic order which disturbs balance. The pleasure principle was first linked to the imaginary. In later Lacan (1950's), it is also linked to the symbolic order.

[12] Slavoj Zizek invokes the *sujet suppose savoir* as a means of explaining how the real is a "real" entity. "He" does not exist, he does not know, but nevertheless must exist in order for transference or the decisive moment in the psychoanalytic cure to occur.

prior to its refusal and then reappears in the symbolic in psychosis (Butler *Bodies* 204). It is more politically efficacious—and adding to Butler, more environmentally sound— to argue that North is Real *before* it is excluded by the symbolic. The Real of nature is the generative principle that defines this imaginary, northern nation because it materially exists. Bodies and nature may be disenfranchised and exploited *because* they are expelled from the symbolic order; they nonetheless absolutely, necessarily exist.[13]

In Gould's reading of the idea of North, all these excluded identities, these voices, sound through in the dialogic structure of his radio production. A reading of the Real as outside of signification or a pre-symbolic substance ensures the hegemony of a "rational" symbolic order. On this reading, when excluded identities attempt to signify —to make the mute real speak—they are pathologized as psychotic. And so the Real understood either as unutterable lack or undigitalized substance ensures that women and nature remain forever excluded as political signifiers, hence Lacan's enigmatic claim that the Woman (and hence Nature) do not exist. But in Gould's production— which, again, is ultimately about technology, not nature—the North is filled up with voices, and so the Real of North is not so much a Kantian sublime object or a stand in for physical nature but, via analogic technology, very much *real.* These voices are not easily understood—they are a word salad or *non-sens*—and one has to listen to them with keen ears. They may be difficult to understand, but they are not outside of rational meaning. Lacan's fascist subject is he who cannot admit any of these exclusions—all those antithetical directions that pull Gould—for they threaten his imaginary consistency. Gould's solitude marks the very edge of the tolerability of the inclusion of these barely audible voices. Gould, notoriously apolitical, has nevertheless made a radical production for it does not represent a consistent or whole civic subject but rather a fragmented body politic. In a nation state that suffers from the problem of non-being, this is a difficult message to hear.

At the end of the sound poem, Wally MacLean considers North in light of Henry James' idea that "there is no moral equivalent for war," that there is "nothing quite like war for providing something for you to be against. Apparently, few of us can be for something, but we can all be fellow men when we know what we are against." Desire depends on such a profound obstacle. If there were no obstacles, then desire would disappear. The Real of nature, unmediated, would be an extimate space wherein

[13] Judith Butler's "Argument with the Real" takes issue with Zizek, who claims that the Real, as both lack and substance, is pre-discursive. Butler sees a slippage between the Real as lack and substance, for it conflates "the law that institutes the lack and the lack itself' (198). This entrenches Zizek's insistence that the signification of woman and nature is a traumatic impossibility. Butler argues, rather, that they are a threat to signification, and so are ideologically controlled so that they stay out of discursive exchange. In Gould, it is exactly this slippage that is interesting —the point of departure enables more democratic exchange—for he needs both the law of negation and its dissolution in order to create. According to Lacan, unlike the symbolic which is represented in terms of presence and absence, the Lacanian Real is plenum. There is no loss or absence in the Real.

subjects are objects. Wally MacLean understands that when Canadians bind together against the North they are united against nature and the fight against it makes them men. The Northern Thing, the sublime object of ideology, binds Canadians together. We believe we are not alone against its terrible expanse and, because we are together against the same obstacle, we are Canadians.

And so, the being of the subject is more properly its *objet a.* North is "real," insofar as the Real gives rise to our cultural reality and our northern identity. The Thing or *objet a* is a real semblance not an imaginary lure. For *"something* is present in the incomprehensible repetitions that mark the reality principle with a part of the death drive...the death route is loving their symptoms — the familiar — more than themselves" (Ragland Sullivan "An Overview of the Real" 198). Identification with the specular image fills up the lack in being. The sublime pull of the North is ultimately narcissistic, a characteristic of the imaginary order. Narcissism protects emptiness as idea; indeed, it causes the latter to exist: "Without the solidarity between emptiness and narcissism, chaos would sweep away any possibility of distinction, trace and symbolisation, which would in turn confuse the limits of the body, words, the real and the symbolic" (Kristeva "Women's Time" 242). When these limits between subject and object are confused, psychosis results. Narcissism, then, works as a screen over emptiness. The narcissistic relationship is the first instance of the experience of death, which is to say the unspoken fourth term in the Oedipal relation., for the Father is not omnipotent. He is incapable of sustaining his symbolic function (and so the family is often riven with jealousy, etc). This inability to sustain a symbolic function is re-visioning in Lacan via the Hegelian "struggle for pure prestige," a dialectical struggle that depends upon an imaginary or second death. In Hegel's story of lordship and bondage, the participants cannot actually die. One cannot be recognised without the other.

In *The Idea of North,* four men and one woman go North into isolation, and in so doing become what Gould calls "purveyor[s] of the questing spirit." They do not seek solitude so much as the "morbid narcissism of self-alienation" of bourgeois modem man (Wilden *System* 47). These "questing spirits" give the north reflective significance, but the North does not necessarily reflect back what they seek. In Gould's compelling production, the spoken word and music aurally confound the limits of rational meaning, and dismantle the colonizing law that makes North mean. The counter point speech of the travelers confuses the limits of individual bodies. The body and words, the Real and the symbolic, and the North as emptiness *and* as plenitude are all confused. Gould's production does not protect its own emptiness as an idea.

The Real in the imaginary register is represented as fixity of the ego. Aggressivity is the affect of the imaginary-it inevitably results when the body is threatened with fragmentation—a result of the pressure exacted by the unrepresented, a deconstructive supplement or constitutive outside. How, for example, can Canada have an identity without resorting to a kind of fascist subject formation? And yet, how can a nation state protect the environment, especially given Canada's condition as a staples economy, without having an identity? When the death drive is sublimated in the symbolic

register, it can break up fixed, imaginary identifications of the ego, and in this manner can be creative. But it can also be experienced by the imaginary as symbolic violence, a threat to identity, reified as the fear of the fragmented body, or the fascist body politic.

The Idea of North is in part about the drive to destroy an old space in order to create a new space for identity; however, Maclean and Gould both state they are deeply troubled by this notion. Gould once lamented that if he were made a hero it would kill him, understanding that a static identity kills creativity. The production is also about Gould's hope that the north could be uncontaminated by the south, that the north could remain as absolute space, a pre-symbolic substance, both terrifyingly and exhilaratingly sublime. *The Idea of North* reflects the paradoxical movement of the death drive. The scintillating North, as sublime object, leads the subject on a drive to destruction. The life or pleasure drive (Eros which moves towards unity, coherence and stasis), is predicated on the threat of the death drive which dismantles unity. Gould's production places us somewhere in the death zone between being nobody and being somebody, between being an excluded identity and being someone with a voice that is heard.

You Must Enjoy!

> It's a difficult area — one where aesthetics touch upon theology, really — but I think that to have technology's capability and not to take advantage of it and create a contemplative climate if you can — *that* is immoral!
>
> —*Glenn Gould,* The Glenn Gould Reader

Wally MacLean is worried about the collision of morality and geography, or the idea that identity can only be forged by hostile nature. Wally, following Henry James, knows "that there is nothing quite like war for providing something for you to be against [...] we can all be fellow men when we know what we are against." But in *The Idea of North,* the North is the moral equivalent to war. Nature will not survive quasi-religious or moral Kantian notions of nature or our contemporary faith in *techne.* Glenn Gould rephrases Wally MacLean's question. Instead of conceiving of the sublime north as a moral force forging the moral subject, what if the use of technology is conceived as a moral act?

This reading of Gould is troubling, for the notion that there is a moral use of technology also triumphs the idea that we are no longer ruled by biology but by the insensate abstraction of the symbolic, universal language that constructs technology. The dead geography of modernity is the legacy of Immanuel Kant, who, along with the Marquis de Sade, made way for the path of psychoanalysis and the death drive. Privileging technology over sublime nature is a form of morality on the Sadian side of the death drive, the language of the second death. And yet, North, as a sublime object

of ideology or negative space also reflects Kant's dead geography, an *a priori* concept of space. The ascendancy of science and the annihilation of nature inaugurated the death drive which, against the backdrop of the French Revolution, marks the ethical break between Kant and Sade, between revolution and terror, between sublimation and perversion, between the notion of the transcendental subject and the death drive that undoes him.

The death drive, understood via this tension between Kant and Sade, explains central psychoanalytic subjects such as anxiety, castration, masochism, *jouissance* and the superego. At the heart of psychoanalysis is the notion that enjoyment beyond the law is ethical. Freud was genuinely confused regarding masochism, a phenomenon he considered to be one of the most paradoxical tendencies of the subject, and so theorized that all destructiveness must first be self-destructiveness. Masochism arises from the interdiction of the superego which contains "a pure culture of the death instinct" (Freud *SE* 19:52–53). However, Lacan makes clear that the superego is not ranged against the id, rather, that its hostility is directed towards the ego and as such makes *jouissance* possible:

> I point here to the reserve implied by the field of the *rigfat-to-jouissance.* Right is not duty. Nothing forces anyone to enjoy, except the superego. The superego is the imperative of *jouissance—Jouisl* (Lacan *Encore* 10).

The superego internalizes self-destructiveness or aggressivity, serves libidinal interests, and is part of the matrix that makes sublimation possible. The superego's interdiction to enjoy dismantles imaginary identifications, introducing "into the subjective economy a symbolic revival of the *corps mórcele* of prematurity" (Boothby 172). What accompanies the subject's fragmentation in the imaginary register is anxiety; however, at the same time, because castration marks the "No" of the father's law structuring the social subject, once the subject is temporalized in the signifying chain by symbolic law, the subject suffers the guilt that keeps anxiety at bay. This guilt that keeps anxiety at bay is, as Freud argues in *Civilization and Its Discontents,* at the core of law abiding, civilized society.

Sade kills off the Kantian idea that sublime nature, apprehended with reason, forges morality. Instead, Sade's imperative bears the seductive idea that one can cause living things perpetual pain without causing death, one definition of the death drive that underwrites the psychoanalytic project. Gould's paradoxical production is at once Sadean and Kantian, for it both dismantles and upholds the Law. The superego is at once the Law and its destruction It has a relation to the law but also has a senseless, blind character (Lacan *SI* 102). In *The Idea of North* sublime nature is clearly threatened by those who go north. The unbound voices in the sound poem operate as a kind of Lacanian object, a superegoic voice from nowhere that threatens consistency. Kant's fundamental moral law is that one must act in such a way that one's will can only be valid according to the principle of universal legislation — whatever I do is moral

only if I take into account everyone else — creating what Lacan calls "the terrible logical machine" wherein everything must be defined in regard to this universal ideal. Kant's moral law is tyrannical because his logical criterion can only be applicable in a transcendental or ideal space. Kant's categories are formal law emptied of experience — it is impossible to always act according to everyone else's will or ethics.

Lacan understands Kant's *a priori* categories of thought in terms of the law of language. Symbolic law provides a matrix for social mores and behaviors, but these same laws are also continually challenged and reformulated: "In both cases, the ethical act is opposed to the subject's self-definition in terms of its own good. In Freudian terms, the ethical emerges in what is beyond the pleasure principle, in service to what is wholly other to the narcissistic ego" (Boothby 174–5). Sade annihilates Kantian formal, empty moral law — the sadist does what he chooses and in so doing inflicts pain on others — marking the point at which the very cycles of nature are killed. Sade clears the way for the post-modern sublime; now art expresses the sublime (in Kant, understood exclusively through nature) by a refusal of beauty, a move made possible by Kant's aesthetic, but which becomes a moot distinction when taken to its extreme in mechanically reproduced forms. This, according to Jacques Alain Miller, is how Sade is the literary precursor to psychoanalysis and the death drive. The death drive insists that satisfaction can be found in aggression—aggression against life or nature for aggression's sake (Miller *Reading Seminar I and II*220).[14]

One may harbor unconscious wishes to be fragmented or dismembered, to go back to prematurity, or in its most perverse turn, to dismember others. Gould's disgruntled economics professor Vogt prefers that the integrity of his conversation not be tampered with. He prefers the illusion of wholeness. Instead, Vogt finds himself dismembered by Gould's psychotic word-salad. Contrary to Vogt, Gould considers his creation of a contemplative space against the will of all others to be a moral act. In keeping with the paradoxical movement of the death drive, Gould depends on negation as a creative force, a notion that chimes with Kant's sublime, where all that distinguishes man from nature is human freedom realised through 'his'accomplishment of reason.

For Kant, Nature is either an incomparable magnitude (Kant's mathematical sublime) or ferocious and unconquerable (dynamical sublime). Emotion is integral to the sublime and the beautiful. If the relation between imagination and understanding is an harmonious one, a feeling of the beautiful and harmony with nature arises. Imagination when linked to reason, however, is based on conflict and so the encounter with

[14] Jacques Alain Miller reminds us that Kant and Sade, contemporaneous with the French Revolution, show us the division between the Rights of Man and the Terror. He argues that Edmund Burke was the most intelligent analyst of the French Revolution, for "he knew that if you break with tradition — if you try to begin anew — you upset everything, and the death drive triumphs" (*Reading Seminars landII*220). In comparison, the Canadian McLuhan, on the margins of Europe, argued that traditions are really instances of frozen time: "Tradition, in a word, is the sense of the total past as now. Its awakening is a natural result of radio impact and of electric information, in general" *{Understanding Media* 301).

nature is discomfiting or terrifying, offering a kind of negative pleasure. Ultimately, it is through this experience of imagination and reason, or an apprehension of the sublime, that we become aware of ourselves. But this sublime is also the uncanny feminine voice that destabilises narcissistic, masculine identity. Kant and Gould both agree on the importance of negation as a limit to freedom. Negation marks the psychotic limit of the sovereign subject. Kant goes so far as to claim that the apprehension of the sublime in solitude prepares us for moral sacrifice. And so, rendered by radio technology, Gould's North is not merely a nowhere, a blank spot for unbridled creation, but a space free from the Law. Following Lacan's reading of Kant's *a priori* categories, the North is free from the law but also wholly constituted by it. But Gould goes further than Lacan: on the cusp of the post-modem sublime, *The Idea of North* is a moving force only as *avant garde* art. It is realised via technology and, in this sense, has nothing to do with forging morality in the face of hostile nature.

Gould's train is not sublime. In the 18th century, the sublime transports the spirit enclosed in a motionless body. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the sublime spirits away bodies—the body moves and experiences the dynamic force of machine technology; for example, the celebrated velocity of Marinetti's futurist images of machine gun fire and his own sublime death in a sports car (Jameson 36; Schnapp 4). Jeffrey Schnapp reminds us that, while trains transport bodies, trains are not sublime machines. In a train, the body is lulled by the clickety-clack of the wheels and the subject is not shocked into hyper-awareness of the train's velocity. One does not feel the bodily rush of speed as one does in Marinetti's sports car; rather, the body is lulled, protected and controlled. A train moves from station to station marking linear time. It moves through territory and collapses space. Human passengers are not sublimely transported, they are managed like carefully carried packages (Schnapp 58–9).

But Gould's train, rendered by voices and constructed by electro-magnetic technology, has sonic sublimnity. The train rolling on its tracks— the Muskeg Express that takes the travellers to Churchill on the south-western shore of Hudson's Bay—is the musical bass line of the piece. Gould tells Tim Page that the audience is inclined to "zero in on the primary voice or voices and to treat the rest as a sort of basso continuo;" the voices become the train that pulls the listener north *(Gould Reader* 457). At the end of *The Idea of North,* the final movement of Jean Sibelious' Symphony No. 5 transports the listener to the end of the line. Ultimately, Gould creates both a polyphonic social world and the internal, constructing world of the individual in the face of sublime nature. Gould's version of the sublime is both the sublime of the natural world as understood by Kant, Schiller, and Burke—which is to say it is a force that creates terror and awe in its threat to crush human life altogether—and a technological re-visioning of nature. Gould maintains Kant's links between the sublime and morality, for it is technology that creates the space-and ever more isolation- necessary for contemplation and utility, or what Gould calls morality. In this way, the conceived North rather than living nature is not only more sublime, but, unlike in Lyotard, it is precisely *because*

it is technological that it maintains a kind of Kantian moral imperative. Gould, in an interview with Tim Page, argues that

> technology has the capability to create a climate of anonymity and to allow the artist the time and the freedom to prepare his conception of a work to the best of his ability, to perfect a statement without having to worry about trivia like nerves and finger slips. It has the capability of replacing those awful and degrading and humanly damaging uncertainties which the concert brings with it; it takes the specific personal performance information out of the musical experience. Whether the performer is going to climb the musical Everest on this particular occasion no longer matters. And it's for that reason that the word "immoral" comes into the picture. *(Gould Reader* 452)

When ranged against the Real of fragile nature, Gould's privileging of technology appears perverse, not moral. But the creative potential of the death drive occurs in symbolic life. If it is unmediated, the death drive is destructive in the imaginary register (Boothby 184). In short, the world of images kills off nature, not paternal law. What constitutes morality in Lacan is an invocatory demand from the tyrannical super ego: "the superego is an imperative;" which is to say, a Kantian categorical imperative or Lacan's law of language *(SI* 102).[15] The paradox is that Lacan stresses both the pathological function of the superego and its moralistic character in that it demands that the subject enjoy. Like Sade's "supreme being in evil," Lacan's superego is obscene and ferocious (Evans 201). In Freud, it is linked to conscience and the formulation of ideals. In Lacan, it is linked to the law but is never benign. The superego is especially censorious of that which it does not understand *(S2* 127; Evans 200).

But what kind of space is created by Gould's techno-representation of North? What is created by this destructive, moralising imperative, a voice emanating from an *a priori* empty, formal law? Space understood as the Real is an appropriation of Freud's *das Ding* and Kant's "thing-in-itself." Things-in-themselves are absolutely apart from any cognitive apprehension of our representations. They are negative and unknown. They are only reductively understood and as such are beyond our experience. Kant's conception of space is distinguished by *a priori* formless-ness. The Lacanian Real, understood as Kantian *das Ding,* is full or plenitude without lack. In Kant and Lacan it is impossible to represent the absence of space, for one's sensation of space must first be referred to externally, and so the existence of space is presupposed. Space and time, then, are transcendentally ideal, from which it follows that all objects of knowledge from the perspective of the human subject are also transcendentally ideal. For example,

[15] Kant's categorical imperative implies that what ought to be done follows from the perspective of pure reason. It is categorical because it is not contingent — it cannot be overridden by other values. For Kant, the basic principle of moral action is a rational agent (Kant "The Canon of Pure Reason" 735–746).

Kant argues that only the pure intuition of space, *a priori* knowledge, is what makes geometry possible. Space and time are spatial and temporal because of limits, which for Kant reside in the standpoint of the human subject via "sensible intuition." How else, he argues, can any proposition or mathematics apply with certainty to all of the objects of our experience?

Gould's subjective autonomy depends on isolation from people but is nevertheless mediated by technology. To some extent, the authoritarian *cogito* lives on in its neo-Kantian form in Gould and Lacan. But there are differences. In Kant, for example, it is not that space and time are not empirically real; but rather, space and time are guaranteed by the human standpoint and known only through what Kant calls inner sense, the form of which is time (i*Critique* A25/ 38/B40/B41/B50): "Time is nothing but the form of inner sense, ie: of the intuiting we do of ourselves and of our inner state. For time cannot be a determination of outer appearances, [because] it does not belong to any shape or position, etc., but rather determines the relation of presentations in our inner state" (B50). For Kant, inner space structures our outer representations. In Lacan, the imaginary is the domain of this opposition and identity — in other words, it results in aggression or Kantian discomfiture, for the creative subject is ranged against a hostile world. And so, he creates the illusion of subjective autonomy and dead geography—the space in-between.

The whole purpose of going north, enabled by technology, is Sadean in the sense that one desires to get away from the Kantian directive or universal Law of the south. On this reading, how can Gould argue that the use of technology, exactly that which can destroy north, is nevertheless moral? Sade completely reverses Kant. Sade's maxim is that one must act according to one's desire even if against the will of others. But Glenn Gould reverses Sade. It is my argument that Gould's construction reflects the tension of the drives: the Northern Thing is "good" for human identity, while the Sadean impulse via technology appears to be "bad" for nature. When Gould speaks of morality vis a vis technology, he is no doubt in keeping with enlightenment notions of morality and the contemplative subject—he is not speaking of ecology. And, the natural world is not the referent of *The Idea of North* Radio technology is the referent of north, and its language is the universal, formal language of mathematics, or what Lacan calls "the syntax of the second death." Radio technology enables McLuhan's Tower of Babel. Radio creates the space where every one lives according to their own desires and will, a notion that is at once an example of democracy—or dialogism—*and* a silencing of lived difference in the world, for discreet voices can be drowned in an incoherent chaos of sound.

However, the Lacanian Real or absolute space according to Ellie Ragland is not "language, not merely a genre, figure, trope or philosophical problem" {*Pleasures* 101). Butler argues against such a notion of a Lacanian Real because the Real allows for the permanent structure of heteronormativity. It is the cause than enables the differentiation of the sexes in relation to their loss. It is out of this impasse between the sexes that culture arises, and it is this culture that is invariably, as Wally MacLean says, a conta-

gion carried north. Unfortunately for the north, those who desire to go North become philosophers (a virtue according to Gould *The Glenn Gould Reader* 392), illuminating philosophy's tendency to colonise space in its chase for the inexpressible Thing. Henri Lefebvre argues that even more current philosophers (especially Foucault) do not bother to bridge "the gap between the theoretical (epistemological) realm and the practical one, between mental and social, between the space of the philosophers and the space of people who deal with material things" *{Production* 4). Lefebvre calls this application of "epistemological" thinking to "acquired" knowledge a further entrenchment of Cartesian logic, for it does nothing to dismantle the oppositions between the subject and the space the subject apprehends and therefore all that this space excludes. This is a notion now given, it would seem, everlasting life in our current virtual world. This is not the space of what Lefebvre calls the "collective subject;" in other words, the people in communities who create their own lived and vibrant language and places. Lefebvre and Butler are critical of Lacan's idea that the unconscious is structured like a language—that language is at the bottom of subjectivity—for this sort of theorizing privileges the synchronic language system of linguistics over dialogism or the differences found in lived experience.

At the level of radio language as a synchronic system, Gould is a conductor as dictator because he reconfigures once-embodied voices in electro-magnetic technology and hence transporting them outside of their communities. However, Gould creates a new collective subject and a new techno-dialogic community. This new community is represented in the counterpoint form via the relatively new medium of radio, the medium of re-tribalisation according to Marshall McLuhan *(Understanding* 297). The cause and effect conversation that is so dear to the economics professor who criticised Gould is overrun by unbounded dialogism, its linearity subverted in an environment of sound.

But by making technology the referent of north—privileging language systems over lived experience—Gould, who never went north because of his fear of flying, in a sense helps to save the actual north. Arguably, the only way to not damage north is to *not go there*—to divorce ourselves, our morality, our economy and our identities from the natural world.[16] Rather than the colonising eye (all those government employees, geographers and surveyors who go north and in so doing become philosophers) Gould uses his ears and stays in Toronto.

However, even if the transcendental, deep structural subject of Kant has vanished, this elision does not resolve the problem of man's continual lordship over nature. Gould's use of radio technology—the medium of the tribe ruled by the ear— creates the "ground" of the *Idea of North.* Gould's North is the only "place" in postmodernity that the North can both retain its sublimity in the face of its actual disappearance. It

[16] I am influenced here by Martin. W. Lewis' book, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism,* wherein Lewis argues that the only way to save nature is to stay away from it, to quit relying on it for our goods. Lewis claims that the use of synthetic materials will entail far less environmental destruction than the continual use of naturally limited products such as wood.

is the only space that represents a northern dialogic community without destroying it. Unlike the geographers and surveyors on The Muskeg Express, all those whom Gould claims "become philosophers" when they go North, Gould's dialogical sound poem is not dialectical. Gould uses technology, not to husband wealth from nature but to stand in for nature. Here and now at the start of the 21st century, this very well may be a moral act.

Go North Young Wo/man!

> Gould said he was "the last puritan," and shrugged off the sex-charge. His ideal, he said, was to speak to a universe of idealised audiences, and to find a true performance of a piece. He sometimes seems to have wished that he didn't have a body at all. He appears to have willed the absence of sex from his life — though every recording he made vibrates with tension.
>
> —B.W. Powe, "Noise of Time."

> We cannot allow the vibrations of death to continue to drown out the vibrations of life, if I may use terms which are rather too dichotomised for my taste.
>
> —*Luce Irigaray,* French Philosophies in Conversation: Derrida, Irigaray, Levinas, Le -Doeff, Schneider, Serres.

Gould's ambiguous sexuality has been the subject of much speculation. In psychoanalytic or phallogocentric terms, it would be easy to infer that he sublimated his libido into art. However, neither Gould's sexual persona nor his sound poems are so easily reduced to such phallogocentric logic. The magnetic North gets its metaphorical pull precisely because, like the Woman, it is known because it strikes desire, fear, and loathing in the hearts of men. In Gould the sound of North is a feminine voice. The sublime strains of Sibelius' Symphony No. 5 that bring *The Idea of North* to its close expose the western metaphysician's fear of music without words or a cacophony of words without music—sound without sense. North as music not only places Gould on the cusp of the post-modern sublime understood as a fiilly technological phenomenon, it is also what makes north much more uncannily Real in the sound poem. Whereas the object gaze in psychoanalysis is *mortifying,* the truth of the real through the object voice heard is *vivifying.*[17] After Sade, unlike in Kant where the ethical person follows a universal voice from nowhere or from his conscience, the object voice is a primary

[17] The voice as object is the voice that remains silent and the gaze as object is the eye that cannot see. The tension between the voice and the gaze corresponds to the tension between the life and death drives; therefore, Zizek declares that the voice vivifies and the gaze mortifies ("Grimaces of the Real" 47). Knowledge antecedent to words (language and the mirror stage) poses the truth. Hence, truth can only be revealed without speaking.

object, an instance of the invocatory drives. It is a siren/superego call to the subject to go beyond the pleasure principle, to *jouissance* (Miller *Reading Seminar land* 7/ 223). To my ear, it is not Wally MacLean the surveyor/narrator that is Gould's voice in the sound poem, but the nurse Marianne Schroeder. She shares Gould's enigmatic sexuality and his desire to *hear* North.

Narcissism is described by Lacan's conception of the mirror stage, in which the recognition of the self occurs first in images outside the self.[18] However, there is a tension between narcissism and the identification with the image and voyeurism or vision that distances the subject from the image. This tension between voyeurism and narcissism is important when considering geography psychoanalytically, for the metaphor describing landscape is invariably feminised, a negative sublime. Nature is constituted visually, understood both pleasurably as natural beauty as well as known through its uncanniness, a terrifying landscape that must be penetrated in order to be known: "implicit in the metaphor of land-as-woman [is] both the regressive pull of maternal containment and the seductive invitation to sexual assertion" (Rose 67). In feminist politics, to have a voice means to speak a new language. But to be heard, the tyranny of the narcissistic/voyeuristic male gaze must be dismantled. The desire for a voice is also always the desire for new ways of seeing.

Lacan links sublimation to the death drive, and argues that the very concept of the death drive is itself a result of Freud's sublimation (Lacan S7 *212;* Evans 199). In Freud, sublimation involves the re-routing of the drive to a different object that is socially acceptable, but Lacan insists that the object does not necessarily change; rather, what shifts is the structure of the fantasy, for all objects are marked by the signifier. Lacan denies that there is an object-in-itself or an essential object, so one object cannot be more socially acceptable than another, at least not in any sort of moralizing sense. But, nevertheless, there are limits, and they cause pain to those abjected from the system. Lacan moves from a phenomenological view of language to a structuralist one in that the subject is not a being but rather a discontinuous effect of the symbolic order that structures all social life. Lacan emphasizes this shift from speech to language, from dialogic utterance to a synchronic system that is insensate and mechanistic.

In comparison, Gould invokes the principle of negation as essential to the North but his contrapuntal sound poems are dialogic, unruly *parole,* not a version of synchronic, universal Law. In Gould's *The Idea of North,* phallic law or the synchronic system that attempts to regulate all social life is not entirely subverted by polyphony. Counterpoint structures the sound poem and, although the voices in Gould are dialogic, the voices speak within counterpoint law. Or rather, the counter point form reveals both the potential and the limit of any improvisation. In the double discourse of *The Idea of North,* the characters on the train escape the south but they endlessly speak of the

[18] Antony Wilden reminds us that the mirror stage cannot be thought of without referring to Hegelianism, which "smells of the graveyard: the existential anguish of individual being-for-death" (Wilden, *System and Structure* 462).

south for it is their reference point—it is what structures their understanding of North and hence their identity. In the end, the masculine identities in *The Idea of North* do not seem interested in freedom from the Law or the south. Instead, the government surveyor, geographer and two writers, merely erect phallogocentric Law in the north.

The last movement of the Sibelius symphony that accompanies Wally's doomed vision of north is also the end point of the drive to identity *via* the object North — the distance is bridged, the north is no longer sublime. North is now materially as well as imaginatively colonised. All of the travelers, except the woman Marianne Schroeder, speak of the north *vis a vis* utility or their own quest for identity.

Schroeder laments that she is seen by others as a bit odd—why isn't she married?—and that by going north, she intimates that she may step out of her gendered role. But she merely steps out of one discursively regulated field into another as authoritatively defined in advance of her arrival. However, while the other travelers speak of a freedom *from* the south (and ostensibly the family and other socially regulated fields), Schroeder, unmarried, dreams of freedom *to* north exactly because of how she is perceived in the south. Schroeder is not seeking narcissistic, morbid selfalienation — she is not like her existentialist fellow travelers, for whom freedom can only be achieved when they are against something, which in this case is North as the moral, identity-binding equivalent of war. A life spent in rivalry and opposition can only be truly free in death. Schroeder does not so much quest as enjoy. She does not appear to fall prey to the sublime object of ideology, the illusory idea that the impossible object, the obstacle North, will help her to forge an identity. Instead, she reflects on the beauty of nature. She is the only speaker in *The Idea of North* who tells us what colour the lakes are when viewed from a plane, what birds sound like on a northern lake, what it feels like to be north.

The voice is that of the sadistic super ego, the subject's own voice that commands it such that the subject turns back on herself. Gould's vision of North is realised aurally, and so his text must be read through the ear, the orifice that cannot close on its own and that cannot be shut against the hypnotic, seductive and disarming invocative voice. Music without words in western metaphysics is associated with the wild card of femininity, anchoring the negative side of the dichotomies voice/femininity/absence and logos/masculinity/presence: "It presents carnality at its most insidious since it seems liberated from materiality, it is the subtlest and the most perfidious form of the flesh" (Dolar *Gaze and Voice* 21). This music expresses an enjoyment beyond the signifier, which Lacan represented as feminine *jouissance* (Lacan, *Encore).* The knowledge revealed as truth without speaking is found in the maternal or feminine receptacle, for the voice precedes the subject's misrecognition in the mirror. In *The Idea of North* there is a battle of *logos* versus the voice or a battle between the polyphonic feminine voice (of music, of sound separate from words) against the symbolic law of the Father or reason. The voice marks the space of Lacanian / *'extimite,* because the voice is an object both inside and outside the subject, and because it can break through the skin or the symbolic surface. In this manner, the voice has the status of the Real as

well as an extimate object. In Lacan's later work the death drive is related to the Real, the site of the troubling Thing which troubles the subject's ability to determine the limits of identity, what is inside, and what is outside, and so homeostatic balance is thwarted.

In a documentary interview, when Gould is asked why he did not live in the music capital of North America, New York, he answers with an anecdote. When a young boy, he would listen to the New York philharmonic on the car radio on the family's Sunday drives north. He remembers listening to Beethoven while snowy lakes and silent fields rolled by within the frame of the automobile window. Gould is describing vision seen through the ear—hearing visualized—a synaesthetic version of seeing Beethoven and hearing the Canadian north. Like Gould, Schroeder's version of the north is not entirely ocular.[19] The surveyor and geographer who go north also map North. But Schroeder's heard version of north flouts their instrumentalist view of nature by simply enjoying what it sounds like. Like the musician Gould, for whom music overwhelms the law that structures it—overwhelming a structure that it nevertheless depends upon—Schroeder's consciousness is not reached solely through the eye. It is this heard version of *The Idea of North* that marks the place of the Real and makes it sound. The death drive at once dismantles the subject and pulls the subject together. Through his techno-dialogic word salad, Gould is, paradoxically, remembered. Via the ear, the disembodied intellectual is given a body, albeit synaesthetic (or psychotic) body that is not ruled by phallogocentric logic.[20]

But, outside of the ocularcentric phallic law, through the ear, the sound poems nevertheless make sense. While the drive north may very well be a socially acceptable sublimation for the desiring travelers, Gould perverts their drive in his radio performance. It is now vivifying, transgressive music. The castrated subject is marked by the loss of the Thing or *jouissance.* The Thing must be lost, for subjectivity implies the attempt to regain it on the circuit of desire. This double bind of the impossible lost object can be used to read Gould's paradoxical production. Gould's North is filled-up with dialogic or contrapuntal sound but, paradoxically, the North as negative sublime looms ever larger when there is a foreclosure of phallic law. His sound poem is a transgressive rendering of the sublime, which subverts any notion of the natural sublime while managing to keep a techno-version of it in play.

In *The Idea of North,* no-one suffers debilitating psychotic symptoms, but perhaps Glenn Gould wished that he could move to a different time (to the time of music instead of, for example, the stock market) and to lose him self in space, one of the

[19] However, like all objects—animals and nature—Marianne Schroeder is necessarily constructed by the visual paternal function that is at the heart of the rift between animals and humans. See the incest taboo *(Ecrits* 66).

[20] Gould is often described in the popular press as being disembodied. The most recent instance of this is in James Kudelka's choreographed homage to Gould for the National Ballet of Canada, entitled *The Disembodied Voice,* which premiered November 27th' 1999, at the Hummingbird Centre, Toronto.

liberating and uplifting effects of listening and playing music.[21] Gould's refusal to take sides, to keep ambivalence at play in *The Idea of North* can be said to be a kind of psychosis. The sound poem, overflowing its own polyphonic structure, is a production heard rather than seen, undifferentiated by phallic law. This chaos of voices, in short, is ranged against civilisation as the Law of the south.

Lacan notes that there are two poles to psychosis. At one pole, the language of the psychotic does not refer to another meaning. Rather, words have "the property of referring to meaning as such." This meaning that refers only to itself—or what Lacuna calls a "delusional intuition"–has an overwhelming character, for the word "is the soul of the situation" *(S3* 33). This is the language of Judge Schreber's autobiography, a metalanguage capable of constructing great theories. At the opposite pole, meaning refers to absolutely nothing at all, which is Lacan's definition of autism wherein words are sounds that carry no meaning. Lacan says that this autistic form is repeated; he calls it variously the "refrain" or "neologism." And these two forms, the fiillness of metaphor or metasystem and the empty neologism, bring the usual deferral of meaning--which is to say meaning that incessantly refers to another meaning—to a halt. The psychotic speaks the language of the "god of dead letters" (Lacan *S3 69)*. In psychosis, a malady of space, the symbolic function of the master signifier is foreclosed. The subject, reduced to an object, is now directly connected to the primary objects which should remain mediated—there is no inside or outside, no seen or obscene space for the psychotic. In the case of Gould's negation, the primary object is the inexpressible nothing of the void. The psychotic suffers from a lack of perspective in that, as object, she abandons herself to the gaze of the Other. She is lost in space, outside of inner time. The ego of the psychotic is not constructed dialectically—indeed, the paranoid psychotic demands that the world keep away.

Anthony Wilden offers a liberating, cultural reading of psychosis, which is, of course, a serious illness. However, read as a problem of communication and culture, Freud's famous paranoid psychotic Judge Schreber becomes an emblem of emancipation, for he is released from the image systems which imprison him in exchange for his own, liberating cosmology. Schreber believed that mankind had vanished and that it was up to him to give birth to the new world. In his autobiography, Schreber brings together masculine and feminine, digital and analog. By bringing together the two poles of meaning and non-meaning, Schreber is thought by Wilden to be a kind of prophet who reconciles the yin and the yang of the world, and so troubles such notions as the outside and inside, space and time; indeed, the whole binary universe.[22]

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[21] Or, play the stock market as conductor, for Gould very cannily played the market. In a sense, those who manipulate stocks are also conductors as social dictators. And, Gould's hypochondria is well known, becoming according to some a self -fulfilling prophecy given his correct guess of the time of his death, a scenario reenacted in *32 Short Films About Glenn Gould.*

[22] Judge Schreber is unmanned. He is, according to Lacan's description of the highway as a paternal metaphor, off track and unsignifiable. He is lost in the "infinity of minor pathways" *(S3* 294). In a world without borders, bars and signs or the collective psychosis created by spatializing technologies. Arguably,

In Lacan, the psychotic subject is abject, feminine. Judith Butler reminds us that this is an ideological designation and Wilden would no doubt agree, but argues that Schreber is nevertheless the very embodiment of radical feminine potential. The psychotic forecloses the master signifier or that which marks the internal time of the transcendental subject; which is to say, the narcissistic being unto death who claims everything external to him according to his own utility. Driven by lack, the transcendental or totalitarian ego creates and governs space. But Schreber does not know where the inside and outside begin and end. In a state of "blessedness," he enjoys a condition of "voluptuousness," a kind of plenum of the Real, a state that even Schreber understands not only to be distinctly feminine, but also as holy or God-like.[23] What is liberating about Schreber's psychosis for Wilden is that he refuses to be "split into the subject of the analog and the subject of the digital in his desire" (Wilden 301). Schreber is vivfyingly alive.

In Gould's production, the syntax of the second death-radio technology—does not annihilate the Real. Radio technology amplifies its existence. The men want to escape the network of demands placed upon them in the social field of the south, a field in which the mere presence of others is perceived as a kind of violence. But in Gould's text, sound overwhelms this discursive regulation. *The Idea of North* is at once the Canadian North as dead geography, the corpse *par excellence* upon which the sovereign individual and national identifications are built— the Northern Thing — and the real of nature: material conditions of an actual community of lived experience. This is not something inexpressible, but perhaps, as in Glenn Gould's radio documentary, difficult to listen to, hard to hear.

Although nature in the south no longer represents a limit to human destructiveness, nature in the north is considered a threat. Those who refuse the social order and go north do so at their peril. One desires to be free from the Law, but this freedom also puts one's life in danger. One can suffer mirages in the limitless space of the desert north and, in a paranoid-psychotic state, become lost in space, outside of time. The Real in this instance is an object of anxiety. If the symbolic order is broken down, the subject is unmediated and undifferentiated, because Real ruptures through the symbolic order and causes hallucination. And so when the imaginary consignment of phallic law is deconstructed, and no longer centred on the ego (narcissism) or a proper love object, the result is psychosis, a phallogocentric idea.

Schreber's cosmic metasystem is analogous to McLuhan's fantasy of a global village without borders or limits between the human sensorium in a world governed by the logic of objects.

[23] In his autobiography, Schreber writes: "Since I have wholeheartedly inscribed the cultivation of femininity on my banner..., I would like to meet the man who, faced with the choice of either becoming a demented human being in a male habitus or *Geistreiches Weib,* would not prefer the latter" (178). However, Wilden remarks that Schreber understands that this distinctly feminine state puts him at peril: "As it appears to Schreber — and no doubt to women — the problem with being even half feminine in our society is that, no matter what you do, you may get into situations, where, like God himself [in Schreber's cosmology], you "let yourself get fucked" (System and Structure *300).*

But if one actually *could* move outside of imaginary phallic law—go Northland live, then psychosis would be liberating, not an illness at all.[24] Psychosis results because of a foreclosure of the master signifier, a disavowal of the Law, exactly that which radical democratic politics or a politics of difference would like to achieve, that is without being pathologized as psychotic or perverse. Freud theorised that the cause of paranoia is the fear provoked by a "homosexual wish fantasy," a reading Freud imposed on Judge Daniel Schreber's autobiographical account of his descent into psychosis. The function of the father in the analysis of the oedipal triangle in psychosis's gives rise to Lacan's paternal metaphor and its subsequent foreclosure in psychosis. Freud reads Schreber's desire to be un-manned as a psychotic symptom, because Schreber makes the "wrong" choice of love object. But Schreber also desires "voluptuousness," something beyond genital organisation of sexuality. The foreclosure of the phallic signifier and identification with the mother introduces what Lacan called the "real father" or the stasis of the death drive (Ragland *Pleasures of Death* 70). Marianne Schroeder and Schreber do not desire right or wrong objects, they enjoy the whole world, an ecology of sensation. Schreber especially enjoys the sun, which in his cosmology is a feminine and creative principle and so also a whore, the source of all life (Schreber S.384; Wilden 300–1).

Gould certainly depended on solitude and isolation for creativity and posited that the creative artist must resist the siren's call to community, but his ears were not stopped up with wax. At every opportunity Glenn Gould talked to people, even though most of his conversations occurred on the telephone, and he prodigiously communicated through music, writing and radio. *The Idea of North* is a feminine production because radio time is time that has space-like qualities. It is present-minded, dialogic, and in the case of Gould's production, analog rather than digital. The psychotic's inability to say no, the inability to withstand all the antithetical directions that pull the subject, means that she dwells on the edges of society locating the limits of both freedom and rationality in psychosis. For Marianne Schroeder and Glenn Gould, to go North is to go beyond the pleasure principle where feminine *jouissance* is understood as aural pleasure. The sadistic superego's imperative is to enjoy not to desire. This invocation is linked to the second death and its insensate abstraction and so, on this reading, comes from technology. For the Real of nature can only exist without threat when it

[24] In "The Morphological Imaginary," Judith Butler analyzes Freud's notion of narcissism to interrogate the metonymic slide of the penis giving way to the iconographic "phallus" narcissistically installed as an imaginary origin. Butler reveals this ambivalence, both to argue for the fundamental transferability of the phallus and for the notion of "erotogenic transferability" or the idea that any body part could be conferred power: "We must not accept the priority of the phallus without asking into the narcissistic investment by which an organ, a body part, has been elevated and erected to the structuring and centering principle of the world." Butler goes on to argue that "if one must either love or fall ill, then perhaps the sexuality that appears as illness is the insidious side effect of such a censor" (*Bodies* 139). Butler underscores the important point that the materiality of the body is constituted in and through iterability. The subject is both an insidious effect (the entrenchment of heteronormativity) and a possible site for liberation (by revealing its imaginary constitution).

is enjoyed instead of desired.[25] But Gould's vision in actual space may be impossible. Face to face, he is very much Lacan's paranoid, fascist subject *par excellence.* Gould, who is mortally afraid of contact in a world where contact is always much, much too close, living in a chaotic world that threatens to pull him in antithetical directions, is also the conductor as dictator.

Canada, as performed by CN Rail.

> Supposing that our railroads, even at our present simmering rate of traveling, were to be suddenly established all over England, the whole population of the country would, speaking metaphorically, at once advance en masse, and place their chairs nearer to the fireside of their metropolis...as distances were thus annihilated, the surface of our country would, as it were, shrivel in size until it became not much bigger than one immense city.
>
> —W. Schivelbusch, "Railroad space and railroad time."

> Simultaneously violent and impotent, the contemporary evolution of the contrapuntal spirit offers us the paradox of a multivoiced music without a community.
>
> —Theodor W. Adorno, "The Function of Counterpoint in New Music."

> Just as the speculative eye sees things together, so the speculative ear hears things together.
>
> —Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or.*

Glenn Gould once said that he thought that he was more "message" and Marshall McLuhan more "medium." Is Gould's message that the solitude of the individual is preeminent? In other words, is there a kind of residual Kantian ego at work in *The Idea of North,* a solitary being moved by the sublime force of nature that forges the creative and moral masculine subject? If so, the Kantian, transcendental ego formed by North is summarily dismantled by the very electro-magnetic spatializing technology that Gould utilises to create his production. If Gould's work is an example of Bakhtinian dialogism as many have argued, if his radio sound poems are examples of oral and democratic utterance—a notion rejected by some participants—then where is the place

[25] There is a marked difference between the oedipal superego and the sadistic superego. The former, a superego of lack, demands that the subject's desire is the desire of the Other. The latter calls the subject to enjoy the other, a notion that does not depend on sexual difference: "the contours of the Sadean world are not markedly gendered" (*Feminism and Psychoanalysis* 187).

of reception crucial to dialogism and notions of civic democracy?[26] Where is here? Is there something called technological dialogism and if so, where is its ground? Did Glenn Gould invent it? —

The use of radio technology complicates the accepted assertion that Gould's radio documentaries are dialogic. While at the formal level Gould appropriates the contrapuntal form for his sound poems, if one considers the mediating and spatializing effects of electromagnetic technology, then the ground or embodiment necessary for dialogic utterance cannot be so transparently claimed. For Glenn Gould, all music was fiigal in that it does not so much represent form "but [is] rather an invitation to invent a form" *(Glenn Gould Reader* 16). Gould's was called a "recomposer" by some who disagreed with his dramatic interpretations of composition, especially his shifting of tempo. Further, in *In the Idea of North,* the voices heard are not speaking to each other face to face, they are spliced together in the CBC recording studios. These voices are not examples of embodied speech. These individual voices displaced into technology are not unlike the agonistic discourse in Marshall McLuhan's Tower of Babel, for whom the effects of spatializing technology are potentially dangerously incoherent, while at the same time radically democratic.

The Idea of North as a radio sound poem elide the human body and expunge it from the social. Or, more accurately, whatever social space Gould represents is entirely abstracted from lived experience and bodies. The isolated figure of Gould represents the individuation essential to subjectivity, the isolation necessary for creativity, and the technology to mediate notions of subjectivity with a vast land and link an imaginary community. His crowd of voices created in solitude work as a kind of social glue for the nation. Canada, which was linked together by the railway and later held together by the CBC, is reconstructed in the recording studios and given life on the airwaves. In this manner, Gould's North, a stand-in for Canada, can be said to be a post-modem nation. It is a paradoxical community without community, a fully spatialized, present-minded community technologically abstracted from the ground of geographical place, which it nevertheless absolutely needs in order to mean.

Gould's radio productions are recorded by analog, not digital, radio technology. Anthony Wilden considers masculine space/time as verbal, analytic, abstract, rational, objective, active and digital. Feminine space/time is pre-verbal, synthetic, concrete,

[26] Gould's radio sound poems have been read as an example of Bahktinian dialogism. Peter Dickinson, for example, invokes Bakhtin for a dialogical definition of the sound poem: "Bakhtin uses this term *in The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* to describe the extralinguistic forces governing the operation of meaning in any utterance, that 'set of conditions — social, historical, meteorological, physiological — that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (Dickinson *Canadian Writing* 112 and Bakhtin *Dialogical* 428). Dickinson goes on to include Edward Said's notion of "worldliness" of a text—an historicized, mediated document in order to ground Gould's radio documents as specific to a place (112). And in the same issue of *Essays in Canadian Writing,* Kevin McNeilly reads *The Idea of North* as not presenting a "coherent thematics, a philosophy of North...but a site at which many voices and "ideas" coalesce, antagonize, support, subvert, mingle and separate" *(*87104).

emotive, subjective, passive and analog. If *The Idea of North* is an example of both analog technology and the dialogic form, according to Wilden's model, it is then also pre-verbal and synaesthetic, the opposite of masculine time. For Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, masculine time is a neo-Kantian inner time linked to autonomy—the time of the transcendental subject.[27] In contrast, Kristeva describes feminine space/time:

> The feminine, because of the womb and the maternal function, is associated with space, in the sense of both a place from which something is produced, and one in which something is received, enclosed and held [...] it is not that women and space are not time, but that their time has space like qualities [...] feminine time is cyclical and monumental: it is, therefore, akin to analytic time-time that carves out space. ("Women's Time" 446)

Kristeva adds that linear time is also the time of language or syntax "and that this time rests on its own stumbling block, which is also the stumbling block of that enunciation-death" (Kristeva 446). This is masculine, obsessional time in psychoanalysis. It is time that masters us and so the time of the enslaved. And, arguably, it is the time of the stock market, the syntax of the second death in the 21st century. In Lacan, the phallic symbol stands in for the norm, for the social. Women and others who refuse the sociosymbolic contract are outside of time, for they refuse death (hence history) and, abject, are stranded in the Real. This version of the Real, understood as fullness without end, is the space of feminine time, or time that has space-like qualities. It is both an oppressive and productive space.

This space is, as Kristeva reminds us, not limited to femininity. It is also mystical time, and Gould repeatedly described his radio documentaries in mystical terms. Leonard Bernstein spoke with Gould about his idea of north, and he came away thinking that Gould's production was "a kind of cosmic exploration. There was something spiritual about it. Elements of magic, having to do with the magnetic pole [sic]." Bernstein was moved by this, for he knew that Gould, wearing his two overcoats and gloves all year round, was terrified of the northern cold. He goes on to say that "I'd thought the only explanation would be to seek out the thing that hurt you the most and confront it, in a sort of good old-fashioned Freudian way...[Gould's confrontation] was something much more magical and mystical" (Friedrich 177).

Gould's analogic sound poems have space like qualities, for radio, like all spatializing technologies, is present minded or frozen, but the digital mode has a mighty colonising force, and it easily subsumes the analog within its binaries (Wilden *System* 276–7).

[27] Luce Irigaray claims that in the west time is proper to the masculine subject for he has interior space, whereas space associated with femininity is thought to be external to the masculine, transcendental subject. See *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Throughout her work, Julia Kristeva has argued that in order to not be defined by the logic of objects, women especially need a sense of interiority, of inner time.

In Kant, time reads as an effect of space—so too in Lacan. The phallus marks the time of the subject onto death as an effect of the primary object in the real— "the mother as *Das Ding* splayed into partial objects-cause of desire if he or she is to live in the domain of the social as lacking, that is, capable of reciprocity and exchange" (Ragland-Sullivan "An Overview of the Real" 199). Subjectivity in Kant "inwardizes" external, spatial, and temporal external reality, and in so doing brings it under control as a totality. This is one version of the life of the spirit. Alterity finally disappears, resolving in self-consciousness.

The electro-magnetic space of radio does not so much empirically exist as ground but nevertheless must exist for it has effects in the world. For example, in Canada, the time of CBC radio once carved out the space of the nation state. Gould was fascinated by radio, not only in the sense that it presents voices as music. Gould said he felt radio replicated "original human contact, that incredible, spine-tingling sense of awareness of some other human voice and persona" (Friedrich 178). McLuhan thinks that radio does not only modulate acoustic space, but that it literally populates space while at the same time is being taken in by the listener in a very intimate manner:

> Radio affects most people intimately, person to person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer-speaker and listener...The subliminal depths of radio are charged with the resonating echoes of tribal horns and antique drums. This is inherent in the very nature of this medium, with its power to turn the psyche and society into a single echo chamber. (McLuhan, *Understanding* 299)

Unlike the extreme visuality of television which dismantles communities into niche markets, radio, especially in its public form as the CBC, is *the* medium of community. And it is also an example of / *'extimite,* for the borders between the internal, psychic listening subject and the rest of community are not clear. Sound penetrates the subject; vision keeps objects at a distance. According to McLuhan, we do not take in the world via radio dialectically and therefore do not resolve alterity into similarity or identity. McLuhan's "echo chamber" of the mind is not Kant's. While radio contracts the world to a village, it does not appear to homogenise it—here McLuhan gives the example of the resurgence of ancient languages world-wide as coinciding with the rise of radio (306). But one need not look farther than the CBC's mandate for an example, where regional broadcasting is understood to be the most important means to achieve a national imaginary. Indeed, McLuhan argues that Hitler's broadcasts and Orson Wells's *War of the Worlds* prove that radio is heard as "real." But radio also provides individuals with insulation. McLuhan's example is that peculiar invention of the 1950's and 60's — the teenager: "The mystic screen of sound with which they are invested by their radios provides the privacy of their homework, and immunity from parental behest" *(Understanding* 303). And for Gould, who growing up was a compulsive radio listener, with his morbid fear of being touched, radio technology enabled a release from society

while at the same time representing the very building of society. In the case of Canada growing up in the mass age, his experience is writ large in our spliced together nation, a wholly technological construction.

The present-minded tendencies of spatializing media are exacerbated because sound, unlike vision which enables categories and dividing practices, does not have borders. Michael Chion explains that acoustic or sonic space is elastic and has the potential to open up into ever more polyphony:

> The space defined by sound is not the same as the one constructed by the image. It abounds in details; it is polyphonic but vague in its outlines and borders; it is, in other words, acoustic. Sound suppresses the notion of a point of view that can be localised. Where do we hear from? For the ear, the equivalent of a point of view would be a listening point. But if we are dependent on sound alone, without the confirmation of sight, a listening point is very vague. Consider a point source in the middle of a room. A faithful reproduction will not even tell you, with your eyes closed, on which side of the room the microphone was placed. Sound does not indicate the outlines of the object from which it emanates. Nor does sound know Euclidean perspective, however hard we try to make it do so. (Chion "Quiet Revolution" 73)

For Chion in film, it is not the image that establishes space, but sound. The image merely selects viewpoints from within an acoustic space. Chion argues that in contemporary cinema, because of the proliferation of images, the image "has ceased to be the domain of invention" (75).[28] Glenn Gould in his interview with John Jessup in "Radio as Music," adds to this, recognising that radio has to be more inventive in its use of sound:

> the sense of space and proximity in the technology, is just not being used at all. But it is used the moment you say to someone, "But this has dramatic significance"...because the moment you define characters as doing something— the moment you involve them in action—people assume that they ought to be more or less close, more or less distant from the auditor. The moment you give them only thoughts to express, the attitude is "why don't they just sit there and tell you that?" And that's been the whole problem with documentary radio, you know. Thoughts have been disengaged from action and movement, and I think that that's one barrier which should get dissolved. (*Glenn Gould Reader* 382)

[28] Indeed, the film version of *The Idea of North* captures neither this sublime acoustic space nor the dialogic polyphony of the character's voices. The image demarcates and structures the idea of north, killing off the sublime aura enhanced by radio technology.

This problem of mediated sound—that it seems disengaged from narrative action and therefore time—is resolved in Gould's piece. The dramatic significance through action or movement in *the Idea of North* is the *basso continuo* of the train going North. In other words, the *basso continuo* expresses the narrative, the syntax of desire, the linear time "whose stumbling block is death" (Kristeva "Women's Time " 446). However, as sound and not an actual train, it does not indicate the outlines of an object: sound in *In the Idea of North* is an environment; it is a dynamic or harmonic field. Marshall McLuhan's notion of acoustic, social space is in agreement with Chion. Acoustic space is not Euclidean space, it does not have a perspective; rather, it presents discontinuous sounds that are simultaneously heard:

> We are living in an acoustic age for the first time in centuries, and by that I mean that the electric environment is simultaneous. Hearing is structured by the experience of picking up information from all directions at once [...] At this moment, the entire planet exists in that form of instant but discontinuous copresence of everything. (McLuhan quoted in McCaffery, letter to R. Murray Schafer 80)

For McLuhan, acoustic space is not physical space—it is not a container— space is modulated, given its contours by sound. Music for McLuhan is the art form of the 20th century for it best reflects the dominant condition of the acoustic age: which is to say that music is environmental, it is not de-limited by the insides/outsides of phallic law.

The Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer writes, "Today all sounds belong to a continuous field of possibilities lying within the comprehensive dominion of music" (5). Slavoj Zizek argues that it is the hallmark of the post-modern man to move to the margins, to the frontier, for the increasing density of the human condition demands it. McLuhan remarks that it is vision that makes density impossible. His neologism for this phenomenon of proximity through sound is "audile-tactile," arguing that because our era is characterised by dense human contact ruled by the eye, there will necessarily be a compensatory replacement of visual communications with the aural. Schafer picks up on McLuhan's theme when he reminds us that, in places where human crowding is most intense, "music is found functioning as social mucilage." Shafer appropriated this idea from Adorno, who complained that popular music, the sound of the culture industry, is really just "social cement" for it increases susceptibility to outside influences thereby enables the promotion of goods and services.

Schafer names Adorno's concern—this musical mucilage is realised in its worst form as Muzak in the crowded mall. However, McLuhan's retribalization—the close contact of bodies of an overcrowded, technologically mediated world or the global village-needs accompaniment just as any tribal world needs drums. However, whereas the fear of being touched guarantees individuality—which in Gould and in modernity is conflated with creative genius—its opposite, the tribal contact with other bodies, removes the will for independence and creation; hence, we are flooded with mass articles. What

the Northern outpost affords, then, is extreme individualism, far from the deadening, over-visual world-as-adverti sement. Gould counteracts this visual density of urban life with sound.

Spatializing technologies are "present-minded," as George Grant says, and arguably the complexity of the fugue, its counterpoint and contrapuntal forms that inform *The Idea of North,* would have been impossible without notation. Music exists in time and is aurally perceived. Notation describes music—an aural sensation—and preserves musical ideas. For music passes out of time "through a spatial screen (notation) and back into time (performance)" (Schafer 34). The spatial screen or notation creates the ability for repetition or iterability—the law of syntax and music. Gould did not chart *The Idea of North.* He was influenced by Marshall McLuhan's ideas on non-linear or "mosaic" spatial thinking and creating, and he insisted on the importance of simultaneous speech in his sound poems for he felt that human beings tended to underuse their ears and was unwilling to make the piece easier to listen to *(Glenn Gould Reader* 233).[29] In Gould we can hear the resonance of Innis' rationale for oral democracy. Innis privileged negative dialectics as a means of not only reading the margins over the centre but also to balance visual bias—to wrest the ear from the bias of the eye.[30] He insisted that democracy depended on hearing or dialogue for shared memory or lived history.[31]

However, as the above quote from Kierkegaard suggests, the ear with all its potential to be liberated from phallic law is not necessarily a dialogic ear, keenly tuned to utterance, tuned to difference. Just as the speculative eye sees things together, so too does the speculative ear hear things together. When making music, the players must listen to each other in order to play in time. Counterpoint, realised in the fugue, results in voices sounding against one another without one unifying theme; however, the pieces of a fugue are mutually constitutive, for they constitute a form "in which every voice leads its own rather splendid life and adheres to certain parameters of harmonic discipline" *(Glenn Gould Reader* 457). "Contrapuntal radio," the five voices,

[29] Gould was disappointed with radio documentaries, for they were too linear: "You know, they very often came out sounding — okay, I'll borrow Mr. McLuhan's term—linear [...] I wrote the script, for instance, for a program on Schoenberg in '62...one had to accept a linear mold in order to pursue any kind of career in radio at that time. So I was very dissatisfied with the available techniques, and in 1967, for the first time, I got a chance to try my hand at producing something on my own" ("Radio as Music" 374–75).

[30] I am using the term *wrest* both in its sense to wrench something away and in its more archaic and apparatus sense; that is, the wrest or key used for timing a harp or a piano. Piano strings are attached to wrest-pins.

[31] Nietzsche admonishes us to listen with small, keen ears, not "ears as big as an ass." The longer one's ears are the less attuned they are to difference. Derrida, *The Ear of the Other,* infers from Nietzsche's text that the signature of the text — the contract the reader agrees to in order to make meaning — takes place on the side of the "listener." The truth of the text, then, is polyvalent. In listening there are many ears not just one, canonical version. Derrida claims this listening ear is feminine, ranged against the phallogocentric eye of western philosophy.

Gould's prologue and finally the *basso continuo* that represents the train underlying the piece, reflects counterpoint in music, or what Theodore Adorno defines as "the simultaneous fitting together of relatively autonomous voices" *(Sound Figures* 124). The formal effect of Gould's counterpoint is at once a subversive dialogism crowding solitude and drowning silence—filling up Gould's terror of formlessness—as well as a piece that resolves itself into the coherent whole of harmonic discipline. This is Theodor Adorno's definition of contrapuntal music as it arises out of counterpoint:

> As a unity in diversity, the idea of counterpoint was essentially, in a true Hegelian sense, the identity of the nonidentical. With the arrival of total counterpoint, the nonidentical element begins to evaporate. It is true enough that even though the different voices are heard simultaneously, their tones and rhythms never coincide, and hence they are absolutely to be distinguished from one another. But this very absoluteness makes the differences between them problematic. Not only does everything go back to a unified, identical basic material, so that distinctions collapse into sameness; but also the all-inclusive nature of the distinguishing principle turns everything into one single thing. Differences are eroded into complementaries; the antithetical nature of counterpoint, the representative of freedom, is submerged in synthesis without retaining its identity. (*Sound Figures 123*)[32]

Gould echoes Adorno when he describes his sound poem to be like "Anton Webern as distinguished from those of Arnold Schoenberg [...] it has a kind of Webern-like continuity-in-cross-over in that motives which are similar but not identical are used for the exchange of instrumental ideas" (Friedrich 184). Both Gould and Adorno privilege Schoenberg (vs. Stravinsky) as the "democratic" composer of the 20th century, for Schoenberg attempts to realise this representation of difference. As in Kant's conception of space, throughout much of *In the Idea of North* no two voices in Gould occupy the same sonic space any more than bodies can in the experiential world although at times it is very difficult to hear these voices separately. And, like pre-verbal space, the contrapuntal form upon which Gould bases his sound poem creates its own space from

[32] Both Glenn Gould and Adorno privilege Arnold Schoenberg, who revolutionized counterpoint in his twelve-tone, "dodecaphonic" music over Stravinsky. Schoenberg's counterpoint form has been called the most "democratic" art of the 20th century, for no note holds tonal or harmonic superiority over any other note. The twelve-tone row becomes the musical material for the entire piece, and so the composition is created within an already existing form — a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Stravinsky used the twelve-tone row in a much less strict manner, and Webern, Schoenberg's student, used an even more limited form than his teacher. However, akin to Adorno's notion that the only possible end point of liberalism is totalitarianism, Slavoj Zizek underscores how twelve-tone, atonal music, arising out of its own structure, ultimately represents a conservative revolution (*CTHEORY*1/24/98). I am indebted to Andreas Kahre for sharing his knowledge of twelve-tone music as well his recordings of Theodore Adorno's compositions.

within itself. While the negative sublime is the inspiration for *The Idea of North*, in its realised form, the space of the radio documentary is not an *a priori* reference point for a thematic work, rather its product *is* space. Adorno outlines the sonic space of contrapuntal music as that which creates unity, the reference point of all simultaneous sounds. This propels the new music out of linear time and into simultaneity or polyphony (Adorno *Sound Figures* 132).

Or, in Lacanian language, new music creates a psychotic space. Contrapuntal music compares with the linguistic notions of *langue* and *parole* in Lacan. *Langue* is harmonic discipline; *parole* can be said to be the notes played in time within these laws — *langue* is synchronic and *parole* is diachronic. Vertical composition on the page is synchronic and harmonic; horizontal composition represents the linear notes in rimp conceptually rendered in *The Idea of North* as the train pulling North, as time annihilating space. The *basso continuo* of the train is on the horizontal axis. It represents a linear movement pulling across the metaphorical page, pulling the listener across the northern expanse. The repetition of a vertical theme is displaced horizontally, anchored by Gould's *basso continuo* to which the listener returns, akin to Kant's "phenomenal world" defined by space and time as perpendicular axis.[33] In Lacan's definition of psychosis, at one pole meaning is a metalanguage capable of constructing elaborate cosmologies. At the opposite pole, "meaning" as such refers to nothing at all. In its most debilitating form, autism, the speaker makes sounds that carry no meaning whatsoever. Lacan calls this the refrain, for as in music, these sounds do not "make sense" unless they are played in time or displaced horizontally.

The radio sound poem enacts quite clearly what Lacan calls *lalangue:* or the non-communicative aspects of language, "the primary chaotic substance of polysemy out of which language is constructed" (Evans 97). Lacan states that language is itself made out of *lalangue.* Metonymy is horizontal — it is a diachronic movement from one signifier to another along the signifying chain denoting the movement of desire but only in so far as each signifier *refers* to the other (*Ecrits* 7). In counterpoint, the elements of the piece are non-identical and do not refer to each other. Metaphor occurs vertically, denoting substitution of one signifier for another. In this way, paradigmatic metaphor is linked to identification; for example, the all important substitution of the maternal body for the Name of the Father that marks the subject as a social being.

However, in psychosis the phallic signifier is foreclosed and no substitution occurs. Gould's North has metaphorical significance and symbolic consistency only as the sublime object of ideology, the Northern Thing essential to masculine and Canadian identity. And yet the piece does mean—we are, through music, hearing *jouissance.*

In order to mean, polyphony needs a listener. Not unlike the fugue or contrapuntal music, speaking parts have meaning only in the context of a conversation. But

[33] For Lacan space is neither a "thing-in-itself ' nor a relation to things-in- themselves but the *a priori* form of outer intuition. There is much agreement that space is understood by experience and as such is, in part, the subject of psychological investigation.

psychotics refuse community; they do not dialectically constitute their ego, they are adrift in their created metalanguage—*lalangue*—or senseless autism. Meaning for the psychotic arises out of the structure itself. Again, in Bakhtinian dialogism, utterances and music can only mean if one anticipates a response:

> As we know, the role of the others for whom the utterance is constructed is extremely great. We have already said that the role of these others, for whom my thought becomes actual thought for the first time (and thus also for my own self as well) is not that of passive listeners, but of active participants in speech communication. From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response. (Bakhtin *Speech Acts* 94)

Psychotics do not expect a response; or rather, they do not hear it for they are enclosed, like Schreber in his cosmology, in their own hermetic but creative world. Musicians who play Bach or Schoneberg know the score but, like dialogic communicators, they absolutely must listen to each other to play in time—the role of the other listener/player is great.[34]

The voices in Gould's sound poems are an original re-working of Bakhtinian dialogism. While psychoanalysis points beyond the pleasure principle, beyond meaning, Gould, with his imaginary train, takes us there. His voices are wrenched out of context, and so we the listeners of *The Idea of North* must act as analysts. We must listen to the limits of the psychotic world, to ask how wrenched away from phallic law and from linearity and identity in the south can one go and still mean. Ranged against the United States of America, this is *the* Canadian question.[35]

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[34] Lacanian psychoanalysis is not interested in linear time. Following Freud and Saussurian linguistics, the time of the psychoanalytic subject is synchronic or nonexistent. There is no time in the unconscious. However, in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan explains that the unconscious opens and closes in a kind of "temporal pulsation." Timing is extremely important to transference for the analyst must glean when the unconscious is "closed" or open. For it is in the Other that the subject constitutes "himself' in his imaginary reality. In this manner, one is always experiencing the time of the Other. Gayatri Spivak, in her explication of Hegel's notion of time, describes that "time grasped as Law manipulates history seen as timing in the interest of cultural political explanations" (43). On this reading, Hegel reads as a kind of authoritarian Lacanian analyst listening to "temporal pulsations" of the colonized creating imperial history. Referential reality under late capital conditions is outside the body — there is no inner sense to intuit time: "Time is a word to which we give flesh in various ways" (Spivak *Towards a History* 37).

[35] Edward Said in "The Music Itself; Glenn Gould's Contrapuntal Vision," writes: "Music is fundamentally dumb: despite its fertile syntactic and expressive possibilities, music does not encode references, or ideas, or hypothesis discursively, the way language does. So the performer can either be (or play) dumb, or, as in Gould's case, the performer can set himself a great deal to do" (*GG: Variations* 50).

Conclusion: Lend me your ears

> Perhaps the real Canada is an ideal with nobody in it... one of the popular derivations proposed for the word Canada is a Portuguese phrase meaning nobody here...the etymology of the word Utopia is very similar.
>
> —*Northrop Frye* The Modern Century

> The taking-place of things does not take place in the world. Utopia is the very topia of things.
>
> —Giorgio Agamben

The destiny of desire is bound up with the subject's profound experiences of fear, not so much a fear over the loss of wholeness as a fear of chaos and dismemberment, or Glenn Gould's fear of formlessness. The effect of the Northern Thing is that it makes nature a necessary limit to discourse. As a sublime object of northern identity, it gives the subject consistency. But as Butler warns, if psychosis, chaos, and incoherence are the result of a refusal of such symbolic limits, then there is no way to articulate difference, thus forestalling the potential of a radically democratic political subject. However, Gould's techno-dialogic sound poem, with radio technology as its referent and with solitude as its topic, brings these excluded differences back into play. The insistence on aurality in Canadian thought is an insistence of the ear over the eye in Western thought—a circumvention of visual, phallic law. Perhaps psychosis heard is quite a different thing than psychosis seen.

Marshall McLuhan has a much more hopeful view of the social consequences of acoustic space than does Theodore Adorno, who argues that neither society nor art can reflect the dialogic goals of contrapuntal music:

> Subject and object cannot be reconciled in art as long as they are not reconciled in the real world and the present state of affairs is the straight opposite of that, increasingly antagonistic, despite the illusion of unity that is created by the overwhelming power of objective relations over each other and every subject *(Sound Figures* 142)[36]

For Adorno, art creates the illusion of similarity while not resorting to identitarian subjectivity. But in social life, differences must be reconciled because they are thought to be politically dangerous. The democratic potential of polyphony is thwarted within its own structure; in psychoanalytic language, this is an effect of imaginary alienation. The death drive understood via the imaginary is motivated by the illusion of unity

[36] It should be noted that Gould's decision to create the overlapping sound in his contrapuntal radio was not informed solely by aesthetic or ideological reasons. Gould simply had too much material, and so expeditiously constructed the programmes by having the speakers talk simultaneously rather than in sequence (Ostwald, Peter F, 232 and 376).

and the inevitable aggression that results because of its impossibility. In keeping with my thesis that Gould's documentary is both a representation of the negative sublime and an example of dialogic discourse, *The Idea of North* is, then, hopeful and nihilistic. Gould does displace voices from their places—he disembodies and warps the speech of his participants. However, he also re-works them into a new, techno-dialogic form, the space of which best represents our current mediated age and at the same time insists on nature and community as absolutely essential to this creative work. Wally MacLean, the retired government surveyor, who liked to remind Gould that Kafka and Thoreau were both surveyors thereby insisting on the connection between the mapping of ground and the production of literature and art, is on the side of Adorno. MacLean sees the North as being destroyed by its antagonistic outside, the Canadian federal government and the limit of that power, the United States. MacLean has gone north many times, he has met many men travelling North and has listened like the Ancient Mariner to their quest romance of North. Wally knows that it is a mistake to think of the North as merely a discursive construct or a trans-historical geographical fact. The North exists for the men he meets on the train as freedom—or enjoyment in psychoanalytic terms—and this is what gives the North its ontological consistency.

But in Gould's rendering, we are left with the impression that these sound poems are not so much about remote communities banding against the vast expanse of a ruthless natural world, but rather that they invariably point to the isolated figure of Gould; he is alone with technology and his hopeful imagination, far from the crowd, in flight from the bureaucratising and homogenising forces of the south on which he nevertheless depends for his art. But, as Theodore Adorno writes, "what artists do involves more than the impotent desires springing from their own isolation" *(Sound Figures* 143). What artists do is create something that is read/heard in the world; what they create are speculative fictions that do not exist in "reality" but that are veiy much materially real for they have effects. What the ear hears when listening is informed and implied by a reality or a point of reference conferring on the art work symbolic consistency, which in turn structures the world. So the idea of North as negative space is not only absolute and abstract but also, produced by the CBC studios in the South, an acoustic space outside of phallogocentic designations. Acoustic space opens up into more and more polyphony, thereby offering more and more potential for a radically democratic dialogism. However, according to McLuhan, the success of Hitler's radio broadcasts prove that the "ear is hyperaesthetic compared to the neutral eye. The ear is intolerant, closed, and exclusive, whereas the eye is open, neutral and associative" because all of the gestural qualities that print technology eradicates from language and reason come back into play, "in the dark, and on the radio. Given only the sound of a play, we have to fill in all of the senses, not just the sight of the action" *(Understanding* 302). MacLean is worried that the North will be entirely codified, written over, divided into centres and into peripheries, upper and lower spaces, the space of the government and the space of the governed. He worries that the north will be dictated by the tyranny

of the eye. And Marianne Schroeder and Glenn Gould want to hear what it sounds like on a northern lake.

Marshall McLuhan, a converted Catholic, has too much faith in God for Adorno. His global village, a simultaneous field of relations whose centre is everywhere and nowhere, will not be realised on the ground. But Gould's dialogic sound poem speaks to the present state of affairs. It reflects the Tower of Babel that McLuhan predicted would be created by electromagnetic and digital technologies; it reflects how technology brings communities together. *The Idea of North* reflects both the impossibility and the lie of the negative sublime that is the backdrop of any vision of the North and its absolute necessity. MacLean says, "In listening, I am able to synthesise, to have these different rails melt in infinity that is our conscious hope." MacLean's ear is Kierkegaard's speculative ear. These divergent readings that Gould so desperately wanted to forestall by invoking his theories of negation, are completely in keeping with psychoanalysis where the voice is the object of schizophrenia and the gaze is the object of paranoia. Glenn Gould, the paranoid subject *par excellence* would rather be heard than seen. All of this undermines reading the poem as strictly dialogic, of reading into its structure the absolute power to subvert authoritarianism, or that it represents "the linearity of imperialist discourse with the counterpoint of a technology turned back upon itself' (Cavell "His Master's Voice" 14).[37]

And yet, like the silence that enables notes to be heard in music, the North in Gould's fugue or sound poem is the negative space that makes meaning and a future possible-the rails of the imaginative train do melt into infinity, though the actual one stops in Churchill Falls. We may be servile in the face of sublime nature, and yet creative because of its isolating force; we may be enslaved by technology-as-superego demanding to be pleasurably used; however, if Gould is right, it would be aesthetically and morally wrong not to use even such an ideologically dangerous technology as radio. Gould is indebted to his own creative isolation—a death drive— but he does not harm the north. For Gould's antipathy towards the federal government whose employees he interviews for the piece points to the paradoxical problem that those who drive north will destroy the isolation he dearly loved in their creation of new spaces, new communities. And yet, without the reality of this free space, Gould believed collective imagination would fail.

Gould utilises sound and music to describe the imaginary, limitless space of the North. And, after Marinetti's motor car, it is sound that allows him to represent the train going North as sublime. In contradistinction to the solitude of the artist in the face of the productive is Gould's polyphonic fugue, the mapping of the North as a necessarily a social act. The fugue and contrapuntal form are all about process. By

[37] Arthur Kroker notes that Canadian discourse is "a way of seeking to recover a voice by which to articulate a different historical possibility against the present closure of the technological order... in reflecting on the relationship of technology and culture, and this in the double sense of the relationship between technology and civilization and between technology and power, Canadian thought forces the question of what is the most appropriate response to the technological dynamo" (Technology *12).*

their very structure, they can be said to be infinite for they do not have a specific end. However, it is the physical, technological, economic, and social constraints—or the limits engendered by Gould's terror of formlessness—that create North. North is materially real, a fact to Maclean's dismay that people travelling North in their quest for themselves seem to forget. This materiality of the north that exists both in discourse and as ground makes the Muskeg Express' ribbon of steel read as a kind of locomotive moebious strip. The journey North is insistently both inside and outside, both imaginative and material, both through space and in time; in other words, it is heterotopic. The train, like Michel Foucault's example of the ship, is a perfect heterotopia: it is also a space without place ("Other Spaces"). The train trip North in Wally's version is a counter-site or enacted utopia, a real site that is simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. It is a space where, for a short while, time and its stumbling block death can be suspended. This is neither Northrop Frye's Utopia of a people-less Canada nor Margaret Atwood's future dystopia created by the politics of scarcity. And once the travellers reach their northern destination, the train becomes a heterotopia not of illusion, but of compensation —not of something that he or she has found, but an understanding of what he or she lacks.

Julia Kristeva calls all aesthetic practices replies to the eternal question of morality, a question of increasing importance, for only art can counterbalance our current glut of uniform information disseminated by the mass media ("Women's Time 459). Glenn Gould uses the mass media to the same aesthetic end. The question of being somebody and being nobody—the death zone—is a moral one. The desire to be someone up north versus no-body down south—to be nobody in a sea of voices or to be heard above the din—is linked to the problems of freedom and responsibility. But for Gould, not using technology to create art would be immoral. By using technology, he creates a new form of dialogic discourse. In Gould's utopian Canadian community, there are many voices wrestling with the terror of formlessness, but all of them are technologically mediated. There must be much space between people for creativity to flourish. And so, he constructs a post-modem community wherein people commune on the airwaves. Unfortunately, the actual north and nature remain the battleground of the twin problems of the Enlightenment—of Kant's revolution and of Sade's terror, caught between sublimation and perversion. Nature is the abjected term, the lack around which the symbolic order is structured, a lack that is, however, absolutely necessary for this battle to persist. The North is an impossible Real that ensures the actual north remains utterly compromised and endangered.

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