The Impressive City Cantos: Death and Life amid Urban Materiality

by

Derek John Simons
B.F.A., Concordia University, 1979
M.A. (Communication), Simon Fraser University, 1986

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Name: Derek John Simons

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Examining Committee:

Chair: Dean of Graduate Studies (or designate)

_____
Dr. Robert Anderson
Senior Supervisor
Professor, Communication

_____
Dr. Nicholas Blomley
Supervisor
Professor, Geography

_____
Dr. Sarah Lochlann Jain
Supervisor
Associate Professor, Anthropology
Stanford University

_____
Dr. Ian Angus
Internal Examiner
Professor, Humanities

_____
Dr. Ron Burnett
External Examiner
President and Vice-Chancellor
Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Date Defended: June 25, 2010

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Abstract

The Impressive City Cantos (hereafter the *ICC*) examines the interplay of material and image in urban form. It addresses a specific question: what is the role of the material in the impact upon development of influential urban representations? To answer this question, the *ICC* examines one particular image of city streets taken from Jane Jacobs and its effect on North False Creek (NFC) in Vancouver, a large urban redevelopment project that is internationally renowned for its liveability.

The *ICC* pivots around a collision between a pedestrian and an automobile that took place in NFC. How does such a catastrophic event, which resulted in severe injury, fit within the liveability attributed to the street on which it occurred? The ICC unpacks the material conditions that made the collision possible, such as the speed of the car, the sidewalk off which the pedestrian stepped prior to being struck, and, somewhat more abstractly, the fungible nature of subjectivity that shrouded the event, shepherded by such institutional players as the police, insurance company representatives, and doctors. The *ICC* also links the event to photographs of the city commonly used to characterize the liveability of urban developments such as NFC. The *ICC* describes the collision and its effects as an interconnected series of masks and launches from that insight into an investigation of the origins of such masks in antiquity. It carries this historical investigation forward into modernity and the rise to prominence of concrete and photography. The *ICC* concludes by "unmasking" Jacobs' image of idealized urban form with which we began. This image is compared to photographs taken by Walker Evans, a colleague of Jacobs, and is thereby linked to the rise of a professional-managerial class and in particular the planning experts and their ideas responsible for the design of NFC.

Perhaps the most innovative and important aspect of the *ICC* is its narrative, semi-fictional structure. The theoretical framework outlined above is revealed through the observations of a semi-autobiographical figure and the characters with whom he interacts. This novelistic approach presents a new means of reconciling the minutiae of personal experience with theoretical syntheses.

Dedication

To Srh Lochlann and Jerry

Acknowledgements

In her wonderful book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard writes about the ichneumon fly, a wasp-like parasite. After mating, the female ichneumon fly searches for a certain type of caterpillar whose soft tissues are the breeding ground of choice for the young flies that will emerge ravenous from her eggs. The newborn flies are so hungry that they will devour the mother if she fails to find a suitable caterpillar victim in a timely way. Having carried around for many years the ideas that inform the work that follows—ideas which have often seemed to me to be driven by some kind of primitive and heedless inner compulsion to be born while I mostly fruitlessly searched for receptive ground—I think I may share with the ichneumon mother doubts over whether bearing these offspring has been an unambiguously good thing.

Be that as it may, I am indebted to those who supported me during this work's long period of gestation. I should thank Simon Fraser University (SFU) first of all for its Special Arrangements program. In my experience most academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pay a kind of lip service to interdisciplinarity but in practice they each tend to permit interdisciplinary research only in their own narrow way. The Special Arrangements program gave me an academic home that allowed me to explore the ideas I did without disciplinary baggage. I know the time students like me take to finish is sometimes frustrating to SFU, but it was this luxury of unfettered scholarship that enabled this work to emerge on its own terms.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council provided funding for three delicious years of research, a small miracle of support that I still cannot quite believe happened; this couldn't have happened without the active encouragement of SFU's former Dean of Graduate Studies, Jon Driver (now Vice-President Academic), for which I am very appreciative. Speaking of my SSHRC fellowship, I thank anonymous juror #2 at SSHRC for believing enough in my proposal to overlook serious weaknesses in my background to give me a grade high enough to win the fellowship; I hope he or she would not be disappointed with the eventual outcome. Most of all I thank Wendy Strachan at SFU's Writing Centre for

the many hours she spent helping me craft a credible SSHRC proposal—the most detailed and constructive critique of my writing I have ever received—which I'm sure was the key to winning the grant. Perhaps the most fruitful part of those three years of SSHRC support was the few months I spent on Cortes Island where the ideas in the dissertation were first born, and I thank the overworked staff at Hollyhock for permitting my delightful time there.

On a more personal level, I am in particular debt to my wife, Ann McDonell, and my daughter, Fiona Simons, for tolerating this whole quixotic process. I suppose putting up with tears, recriminations, gnashing of teeth and threats of suicide is pretty much standard for anyone close to a grad student writing a dissertation, but I was lucky to have such firm support.

I have also been fortunate to have some very smart people read and comment on my work. Joy Parr and Linda Smeins read early drafts of the dissertation and provided helpful suggestions. Richard Pinet was a deeply loyal and supportive friend throughout the long process and made very encouraging comments about my draft version of the prologue when I first included fictional elements and was very uncertain about their value, and Richard helped me restructure the introduction to be much more accessible to the reader. I am also grateful for Andre Fatona's supportive reading of my prologue.

My dissertation committee was incredibly tolerant of my slow progress. Nicholas Bromley at each stage read my work very carefully and gave me thoughtful responses both as to detail and the overall structure. My senior supervisor, Robert Anderson, was always insightful, patient and encouraging, and he unfailingly provided good advice when I requested help. I feel blessed to have had such a mentor and friend.

I also want to thank Arlene Tigar McLaren and Jim Conley for inviting me to present an early draft of chapter six at *Autoconsequences*, the conference on automobility they organized at SFU, and for then being wonderfully supportive and constructive editors when I modified my presentation for publication in their volume, *Car Troubles*.

Finally, there are two people without whom this project would have never happened. One of these is Sarah Lochlann Jain, who was also on my advisory committee. Her rich and challenging ideas and scholarly approaches have had a profound impact on me, as students of her work will recognize in what follows. Lochlann encouraged me to pursue a doctorate and she read everything I produced as a doctoral student with unfailing enthusiasm and in a spirit of detailed engagement with my ideas even when, more often than not, my writing was terrible. Beyond the academic services she so generously rendered, Sarah has been a wonderful friend to me and a model of personal courage and grace. The second crucial supporter of this dissertation was Jerry Zaslove. Jerry for many years has been an intellectual and moral inspiration to me as well as providing concrete support for projects I have undertaken in the past. Most critically, Jerry invited me to write a chapter for a book—*Unfinished Business: Photographing Vancouver Streets 1955 to 1985 (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery and West Coast Line, 2005)* —he co-edited, which became the genesis of Part One of this dissertation. For their support and friendship, I dedicate what follows to Lochlann and Jerry.

Despite the best efforts of all those who helped me, errors remain; unlike everything else in what follows, these at least have the small distinction of being wholly my own
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Introduction. Ceci n'est pas une dissertation

> Every body continues in its state of rest, or of uniform motion in a straight line, unless it is compelled to change that state by forces impressed upon it. Newton's First Law of Dynamics[1]

1.

If *The Impressive City Cantos* (hereafter the *ICC*) had to be located by academic discipline it would fall into territory triangulated somewhere between technology studies, urban planning and visual studies. In particular it considers the effect of Jane Jacobs—especially her celebrated book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*[2]—and certain technically-mediated materials such as sidewalks or photographs upon one specific urban built environment, namely North False Creek in Vancouver. The central question of the dissertation is, how did Jacobs's work convince people about the way cities should be built? As will be discussed more thoroughly in the third section of the *ICC*, many feel Jacobs's ideas were very influential on the newly-built forms of North False Creek. What made such an *impression* possible?

Let me strenuously warn the academic reader right off the bat: the *ICC* tackles these questions through an *aesthetic* rather than a *heuristic* lens. The work has a clearly fictional narrative focus, constructed around a character named Ray. This character is semi-autobiographical; me in some ways (the father in the prologue is my father; Ray's research interests are mine too; the city referenced throughout is Vancouver, my home city), not-me in others (all the interpersonal relationships Ray has are almost wholly fictional; I was never a planner) or in-between (like Ray I do have a wife and a daughter, but they are not at all like the characters portrayed in my work; I made up most of Ray's often rancorous or atrabilious—or both—interior monologues, but I admit that I did so with a great deal of pleasure).

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[1] Cited in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 20.
[2] Taken from a seminal work, Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 182 (hereafter referred to as *The Death*).

At the centre of the work's narrative is Ray's wife, Janice, who while crossing a street is struck by a vehicle and subsequently dies. The ICC explores this fictional event as a kind of prose poem, propelled by a series of written and visual images about injury, death and loss occurring on the built forms of urban streets. The central thrust of these images is contemplative rather than argumentative, aesthetic rather than academic. These images present recurring and deepening themes, which conclude in a series of speculations about the character of liveable streets vouchsafed for by their *interior* plausibility rather than *exterior* empirical observation. The central empirical quality of streets is how they are taken for granted, and it is their nature as obvious that is refracted through the *ICC*'s concluding discussion.

The formal literary aspirations of this work reflect my frustration over my inability to harness more traditional scholarly language to address what I perceive to be the incredibly complex technocultural context of liveable streets. There is of course a huge literature on streets in more traditional voices that forms an intellectual background to the *ICC*. This literature includes more or less straight historical recountings of the development of roads;[3] a sometimes-more and sometimes-less critical take on the aesthetics of streets;[4] and works that grapple in varying ways and to varying depths with the social and cultural implications of roads.[5] To move beyond this literature, I needed a means of making the reader share my

[3] John Copeland, *Roads and Their Traffic* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley); *Roads and Their Traffic*, ed. by Ernest Davies (London: Blackie & Son Limited, 1960); John Walter Gregory, *The Story of the Road: From the Beginning to the Present Day* (London: A & C Black, 1938); Edwin C. Guillet, *The Story of Canadian Roads* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966); Geoffrey Hindley, *A History of Roads* (London: P. Davies, 1971); Brian Richards, *Transport in Cities* (London: Phaidon Inc. Ltd., 1994); Brian Richards, *Moving in Cities* (Toronto: MacMillan Publishers); Michael Southworth and Ben-Joseph Eran, *Streets and the Shaping of Towns and Cities* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2003); Joseph Trigoboff, *Streets* (Peterborough, N.H.: Windy Row Press, 1970); James Winter, *London's Teeming Streets 1830 - 1914* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[4] Allan B. Jacobs, *Great Streets* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995).

[5] *On Streets*, ed. by Stanford Anderson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986); Donald Appleyard, *Livable Streets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Urban Space*, ed. by Zeynip Celik, Diane Favro and Richard Ingersoll (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Planetizen Contemporary Debates in Urban Planning*, ed. by Abhijeet Chavan and Christian Peralta (Washington, D.C.: Island Press); Edward Dimendberg, 'The Will to Motorization: Cinema, Highways and Modernity', *October*, 73 (1995), 91 - 137; *Cultural History of Early Modern European Streets*, ed. by Ritta Laitinen and Thomas V. Cohen (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2009); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997); Alex Marshall, *How Cities Work: Suburbs, Sprawl and the Roads Not Taken* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Stephen Marshall, *Streets and Patterns* (New York: Spon, 2005); Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York:

sense of *awe* at the complex workings of what is typically considered mundane materiality, which I chose to render via a kind of critically descriptive voice not typically found within social scientific or humanistic scholarly traditions, although it can be situated in an emergent stream of narrative-based social research methodology.[6]

2.

I began this introduction by asking what made Jacobs's arguments about streets so impressive, and the *ICC* explores the history and nature of impression-making. To that end, the narrative superstructure of the *ICC* wraps around the following resolutely interdisciplinary analytic base, which draws from archival research and exegesis of theories and secondary sources taken from military history, cultural studies, philosophy, urban design, architectural history and art history, in addition to the visual studies, urban planning and technology studies already mentioned. It has three parts, according to which the thesis is divided:

- In the first part, I provide an introductory analysis of the interrelationships of the human and the material found in my specific site of interest: North False Creek in Vancouver. In particular I consider the impact of injury (a particularly violent form of impression) in the first chapter; I provide a preliminary description and critique of liveability via injury in the second chapter; I consider in the third chapter the specific history of North False Creek as an example of what I call, in summary of the ideas of Wolfgang Schivelbusch,[7] projectile economics, in which technical hardening is a central feature; and I conclude the section with an analysis in the fourth chapter of concrete as a key element in North False Creek's built form as well as certain photographic images that reveal important aspects of the

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Columbia University Press, 1994); Karl Raitz, 'America Roads, Roadside America', *Geographical Review*, 88 (1998), 363-388; Mary Soderstrom, *The Walkable City: From Haussmann's Boulevards to Jane Jacobs' Streets and Beyond* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 2008); John Stilgoe, 'Roads, Highways, and Ecosystems', *The Use of the Land: Perspectives on Stewardship, National Humanities Center* <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/ntuseland/essays/roads.htm> [accessed 7 March 2010].

[6] Mary Lou Fulton Institute and Graduate School of Education, Arizona State University, '2011 International Conference: Narrative, Arts-Based and "Post" Approaches to Social Research' <http://naparconference.asu.edu/> [accessed 8 March 2010].

[7] Schivelbusch, pp. 52-69.

social and material mechanics of impression underlying North False Creek's reputation for liveability.

- In the middle section I review key episodes in the history of Western modes of technically-mediated impression from classical times to the present. It is certainly no big insight to suggest that Western ideas about individual presence first emerged in classical antiquity, but what I add is that this seminal sense of self was an initial and in some ways particularly clear manifestation of the broader phenomenon I am seeking to uncover: *the emergence of identity,* of an internally-coherent subject, via *impressive materiality's ability to transmit presence over time and space* and thereby to dominate even where and when it is absent. I study this phenomenon of transmission in detail in two specific time periods, its genesis in ancient Greece (fifth chapter) and its more abstracted manifestation in classical Rome (sixth chapter), and I speculatively sketch in some aspects of its importance in the medieval period and early in the twentieth century (seventh chapter). The relationship of technologically-inflected bodies and evolving senses of the self that I examine in these three chapters is linked directly to military applications where the relationship of bodies and things is pitched to its most extreme, just as accidents are the most intense form of everyday interaction on modern streets. These emerging militarily-inflected senses of the self tied to impression are also related to and further traced in key aesthetic practices, including antique Greek statuary, imperial Roman architecture and more recently the emergence of photography and concrete architecture.

- Finally, bringing us back to the point where this introduction started, as a kind of case study of my ideas about material impression I examine in detail the multi-layered role of impression within the ideas of Jane Jacobs. I will situate Jacobs's contribution—her singularly and difficult-to-explain powerful *presence*, especially as I will detail her *imagistic presence*, in the planning literature generally and in the discussion of North False Creek in particular—within a broader social re-alignment vigorously advocated for by Henry Luce

in whose flagship journal, *Fortune*, Jacobs's seminal ideas about urbanism that ultimately were to become *The Death* first appeared. Luce famously argued for a kind of benign, American-centered, more or less unfettered capitalism run by a professional-managerial class; the core of Luce's method of advocacy on behalf of those views was aesthetic, primarily to be accomplished through his publishing empire. That aesthetic heavily favoured realism, drawing on classical veristic traditions in which the *impress of the real* is key. In my eighth chapter I explore in detail this realist aesthetic in the work of another famous American who like Jacobs was employed by Luce's *Fortune* magazine and whose work, as I will show in the ninth and final chapter, closely paralleled Jacobs's: the photographer Walker Evans,. As I will conclude in that last chapter, the formal fit of Evans's and Jacobs's aesthetic within Luce's agenda helps explain the political ambivalence some writers have detected in Jacobs's work. Her work simultaneously appeals to both neo-liberal urbanists[8] and more leftist urban-based community activists[9] and, I argue, the ambivalence many of us feel in neighbourhoods such as North False Creek built in part on her precepts. Jacobs had great success marrying community-based common sense to a sort of laissez-faire urbanism that fit well within Luce's vision; the key point I make about Evans's, Jacobs's and Luce's aesthetically-based complementarities is that these aligned with material formations—especially in concrete—that were just starting to become dominant in cities in the period when Jacobs first moved to New York and would have been starting to formulate her soon-to-be-famous ideas about cities. It is this synchronicity between material and literary form that, I conclude, lent Jacobs's analysis in *The Death* its extraordinary power, not, as is usually assumed, her resistance to inner-city freeways based on colloquial observations. Jacobs impressive or realist techniques used to describe urban formations, especially concrete ones, mirrored rather than fundamentally critiqued emerging building forms that were themselves impressive. For

[8] By "neo-liberal" I mean those commentators who typically argue for positions such as the merits of smaller government, less regulation and taxation, the creative energy of private enterprise and so on.
[9] More leftist advocates typically argue for the necessity to counter market failures or the importance of social justice and overcoming barriers to effective social or economic or cultural participation.

> example, the first three chapters of *The Death* all have the phrase "the uses of sidewalks" in their titles, a literally as well as metaphorically *concrete* context that is virtually never taken up critically in assessments of Jacobs's work. Jacobs's impressive take contributed considerably to her success, the impression she made as a writer, most notably in North False Creek, consideration of which was the starting point for this project.

Through my analytical framework I will demonstrate that considering the quotidian relationship of people and things in the street both synchronically and diachronically is helpful in better understanding the processes by which apparently simple ideas about cities such as Jacobs's could be so influential in the development of large urban structures such as those found in North False Creek, which will affect many lives—in significant part through what the people passing through those structures can touch and how they will touch those things—for generations.

3.

A central motif of the *ICC* will turn on a double meaning of the word "impression" and its cognates. On the one hand impression can refer to a cognitive impact, as in "Jane Jacobs impressed many with her ideas." On the other hand impression can refer to the more physical act of one body or thing leaving its mark on another, as in "concrete is impressed into place." My working hypothesis is that these two dimensions of impression are importantly related and that by understanding the nature of materials that impress themselves on human bodies or minds and vice-versa we can better understand how ideas about cities, such as those espoused by Jacobs through drawings and writings in *The Death*, were so influential, so impressive. I will investigate recursive impressive relations between, on the one hand, *human bodies* and *consciousness*—including, to a considerable degree, our very self-identity as human—and, on the other hand, *technologies in which impression is central*, involving any *technical* means of stamping or pressing.

While I think it is important for readers to keep that broad image of impression in the back of their minds as they read the *ICC*, of course the phrases "technologies in which impression

is central" and "any technical means of stamping" cover an impossibly wide range of things: variously-shod feet creating a trail in the dirt could fall within such definitions; so too could the act of hammering in a nail.

To be manageable within a single text then, this field of vision needs to be narrowed. Let me first do so by noting that I will consider only forms of impression that are the result of or that anticipate forces the origins of which are out of view, i.e. motive forces which are experienced as abstract (the locomotive for example which moves passengers without any apparent contact versus, say, the direct physical experience of walking on foot or riding a horse). This approach modifies and expands an idea propounded by Wolfgang Schivelbusch,[10] Schivelbusch was writing about the passenger experience at the dawn of railway travel but the base idea of what might be somewhat anthropologically termed as exogonous forces of impression. This expanded category would include a broad range of impressive technologies such as the automobile (the driver experiences herself propelled down a strip of material which is pressed in place in anticipation of her passage) or electrically-motivated devices such as the telegraph or the computer (I press on a keyboard and expect the result on the screen to be meaningful).

This is still pretty broad, so to further refine my focus I will consider impressive technologies in which material transformation is enacted through the anticipation or projection of exogonous forces onto a *specially-prepared surface that is transformed as a result*.

Even for this narrower definition there are numerous examples of impressive technologies: coins (generally imprinted with the face of a sovereign and thus symbolically awarded a small part of his or her authority); seals (to this day the impress in ink or wax of a representative symbol assures that the legal presence of the persons affixing the seal accompanies documents of obligation such as contracts wherever they may travel); plastics; or asphalt (the special surface that has been a key ingredient in the modern dominance of the automobile).

A crucial example is armaments, which are a kind of special case; projectile weaponry certainly transforms material (often but not always prepared in advance) in a particularly

[10] Schivelbusch, p. xiv.

influential fashion, the impress of explosive projectiles on a soldier's body or a fortress wall undertaking a kind of research and development on behalf of impressive technology, about which Virillio's observation that the sightline of a gun barrel for a long time was called the *ligne de foi*, the line of faith,[11] points to importantly *metaphysical* aspects of weaponry that can be carried over to other impressive technologies as well.

Even this cursory overview indicates that human relations with impressive technologies are complicated. Analysis is made even more difficult because intimate relationships with imprinted things have become so customary and commonplace that they tend to be given a special weight, to the point where the real is conceived of as *that which makes an impression*. This is however a convention or habit, some of the possible origins of which will be explored in the *ICC*, where I demonstrate through my examples of impressive technologies that their current ubiquitous relations with humans may be mostly relatively modern developments, albeit with deep historical roots.

Along with taking impressive materials for granted as inevitably important, conventional thought usually conceives of them in terms of their *substance* or content (coins are for exchanging; plastic dishes are for eating; artillery is for killing), but in the work that follows I ask a more Nietzschean question, transvaluing form and content as he so often did:[12] what if the *form* of these materials is importantly causal; what if, that is to say, it is the forms of impression *in themselves* that society is after and the effects merely provide *an excuse*? What if impressive forms are the message? Then the question becomes: *what exactly is sought* through deployments in impressive forms?

In search of answers I focus on two impressive technologies in particular: concrete and photography. These are in obvious ways very different technologies, but there are important similarities: both are self-evidently ubiquitous (the cement maker Lafarge claims that concrete is the second most heavily used substance on earth, with one tonne consumed

[11] John Johnston, 'Machinic Vision', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (1999), 27-48 (p. 30).
[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Walter Kauffmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974); *Untimely Meditations*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); *The Will to Power*, ed. by Walter Kaufmann, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

annually for every man, woman and child on the planet;[13] photography, or at least the mechanically- or electronically-reproduced image for which photography is the parent, is of course everywhere); both share similar historical developmental trajectories that occurred at roughly the same time; both of these trajectories were significantly amended in similar ways by wartime experience, especially in the First World War. Underlying these other similarities, both are impressive techno-material processes. By thus focusing on the *form* of these technologies, hitherto unexamined overlaps in their *content* become apparent.

It may be protested that despite the superficial similarities I just described, concrete and photographs are utterly different. But think of how concrete is prepared and laid according to detailed prescriptions in anticipation of countless footfalls or wheel rotations on its surfaces, its surface hardening into fixity when exposed to air. Photography, at least in its pre-digital forms, also features surfaces—first the film, then photographic paper—prepared according to rigorously defined standards and upon which upon which light rays are then projected over a specified time such as $1/25^{th}$ or $1/60^{th}$ of a second. These prepared surfaces in film and concrete then become fixed in a specific deployment—and only that deployment—as a result. For example, a photographic page becomes an image and only that image or a concrete sidewalk becomes a sidewalk and only that sidewalk, albeit infinitely reproducible in both cases. This preliminary comparison suggests deeper entanglements between the two.

For the benefit of readers with an art history or cultural studies background, I should acknowledge that linking photography to concrete through the physicality of their set up and deployment—particularly around the notion of impression—takes us close to longstanding debates about the indexicality of photography. The central issue in these hotly-contested arguments is to what extent ontology and epistemology intersect, occlude or defeat each other in the photographic image;[14] all I will say concerning these debates is that for the

[13] Michael Kesterton, 'Social Studies', *The Globe and Mail*, 20 October 2000, section A, p. 26.
[14] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Wang and Hill, 1981); Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997); Ron Burnett, *How Images Think* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2004); Umberto Eco, 'Critique of the Image', in *Thinking Photography*, ed. by Victor Burgin (London: MacMillan, 1982); Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, 1992); Oleg Gelikman, 'After Aura: History of Photography and

purposes of the work that follows I am an agnostic: the material context for the points I want to make regarding impressive technology is that anticipations or projections of human activity traced by the development and use of photography and concrete, whatever their ontological status, have often been treated *as if* real in important and understudied ways, and some of these ways are the focus of my study.

To return to overlaps between concrete structures and photographic images, it is important to emphasize that the *specificity of deployment* differentiates the impressive materials I want to consider from materials that are simply moulded into standard shapes, as in bricks or concrete blocks among building material examples or plastic Lego blocks among imagistic ones, and which keep their potential to be re-used in many different applications after they have achieved their final forms. This is unlike a concrete overpass say, or an image of a city, for which the final form of the material and its application are indivisible.

There are other material technologies, such as glass and steel, that fall between the impressive materials I am studying and the standardized moulds of bricks or blocks that I am not; in the interests of space these fascinating and understudied materials are also excluded from the present work. I am also excluding smaller impressive objects such as coins or plastic or pottery because my interest is in the impact of impressive materials in the built topography of cities.

What can these impressive technologies tell us about the impact of urban arrangements such as those proposed by Jane Jacobs? What, it may be asked, can the study of the use of impression in concrete and photography and other similar materials tell us about street forms such as she proposed and their impact on a neighbourhood built in significant part on her precepts such as North False Creek in Vancouver, famous for its liveability, to use a word with rich currency these days?

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the Writing of the Original', *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 8 (2003), 43 - 60; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Mary Price, *The Photograph: A Strange, Confined Place* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); Allan Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning', in *Thinking Photography*, ed. by Victor Burgin (London: MacMillan, 1982); Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977); John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (London: MacMillan, 1988); Ian Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2002); Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Before I answer that question directly I should acknowledge that for many urbanists—including I am sure Jane Jacobs herself if she was still alive and willing to consider it—my proposed exploration of concrete and other impressive materials as a means of understanding liveability would be dismissed as an unnecessarily complicated detour. I think they would argue that the core issue I am raising about Jacobs's influence can be explained fairly simply: the ideas typified by the drawing are successful *because they work*; arrange things as Jacobs suggested in her influential work and people will be more pleased with their urban surroundings. Why, they would say, should we over-interpret the situation?

In this view, deciding *which* of Jacobs's and others' ideas are best and *how* to implement those best ideas may certainly be difficult, but if these best ideas are taken up good results will usually prevail. There is a large literature based on exactly this assumption.[15] And, closer to the specific research interests of the *ICC*, that is what is widely maintained—in the media,[16] in a small but influential section of the planning literature[17] (with a parallel body of more critical approaches[18]) and among planners themselves—to have happened in North

[15] Emilie Buchwald, *Toward the Livable City* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2003); Jenn Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*, trans. by Jo Boch, 4th edn (Bogtrykkeriet, Skive, Denmark: The Danish Architectural Press, 2001); Herbert Giradet, *Cities, People, Planet: Livable Cities for a Sustainable World* (Chichester, New York: Wiley-Academy, 2004); George Hazel and Roger Parry, *Making Cities Work* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Academy, 2004); Alex Marshall.

[16] Frances Bula, 'Larry Beasley's Simple Plan', *Vancouver Magazine*, 2008 <http://www.vanmag.com/News_and_Features/Larry_Beasleys_Simple_Plan> [accessed 9 March 2010]; Brendan I. Koerner, 'Cities that Work', *U.S. New and World Report*, 1998, pp. 26-36; Jennifer Langston, 'Vancouver planners say taller buildings just a start', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 2005 <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/235793_downtown09.html> [accessed 9 March 2010]; Carol Lloyd, 'Blame It on Canada / Vancouver urban planning guru preaches high-density tower living in San Francisco', - *SFGate*, 2003 <http://articles.sfgate.com/2003-09-09/entertainment/17506453_1_housing-prices-affluent-population-mission-bay> [accessed 9 March 2010].

[17] Larry Beasley, 'Vancouver, British Columbia: New Urban Neighbourhoods in Old Urban Ways', in *Making Cities Livable*, 2007; Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005); Ann McAfee, 'Vancouver's City Plan: People Participating in Planning', *Plan Canada*, 35 (1995), 15-16; John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

[18] Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Trevor Boddy, 'Plastic Lion's Gate: A Short History of the Postmodern in Vancouver Architecture', in *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City*, ed. by Paul Delany (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994); Jill Grant, 'Mixed Use in Theory and Practice: Canadian Experience with Implementing a Planning Principle', in *Dialogues in Urban and Regional Planning* (New York: Routledge, 2005); D. Gutstein, *Vancouver Ltd.* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975); L. Lees, 'Urban Renaissance and the Street: Spaces of Control and Contestation', in *Images of the Street: Representation, Experience and Control in Public Space*, ed. by N. Fyffe (London: Routledge, 1999); L. Lees and D. Demeritt, 'Envisioning the Livable City: The Interplay of "Sin City" and "Sim City" in Vancouver's Planning Discourse', *Urban Geography*, 19 (1998), 332-359; David Ley, 'Liberal Ideology and the Postindustrial City', *Annals of the*

False Creek: some of the best ideas of Jane Jacobs (along with other influential urbanists) were incorporated into the design of the streetscape of North False Creek through a complexly politicized planning process leavened by much planning expertise and lasting many years, resulting in a neighbourhood that is internationally admired as liveable.

Whether or not one agrees that the streets of North False Creek unambiguously work well (as will become obvious I tend to be sceptical), such assertions about what works tend to end critical examination just where it should begin: who gets to defines what "working" means and to what ends? My approach builds on actor-network[19] and social constructionist[20] approaches to technology studies, where how technology asserts itself is a foundational issue. In particular, my critical stance follows crucial aspects of anthropologists of science and technology such as Bruno Latour[21] or Steve Woolgar[22] who have critically questioned the

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Association of American Geographers, 70 (1980), 238-258; Kris Olds, 'Producing the Pacific Rim Consumptionscape in Vancouver, Canada', in *Globalization and Urban Change: Capital, Culture, and Pacific Rim Mega-Projects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Kris Olds and David Ley, 'Landscape as Spectacle: World's Fairs and the Culture of Heroic Consumption', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6 (1988), 191-212.

[19] Some sources from the STS literature include Michel Callon, 'Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay', in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. by John Law (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, 'Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Bath School! A Reply to Collins and Yearly', in *Science as Practice and Culture*, ed. by Andrew Pickering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); H.M. Colins and Steven Yearly, 'Journey into Space', in *Science as Practice and Culture*, ed. by Andrew Pickering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, Swerve Editions (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Jonathan Murdoch, 'The Spaces of Actor-Network Theory', *Geoforum*, 29 (1998), 357-374; Jonathan Murdoch, 'Inhuman/Nonhuman/Human: Actor-Network Theory and the Prospects for a Nondualistic and Symmetrical Perspective', *Environment and Planning D*, 15 (1997), 731-756; Dick Pels, 'The Politics of Symmetry', *Social Studies of Science*, 26 (1996), 277-304; Trevor Pinch, 'Turn, Turn, and Turn Again: The Woolgar Formula', *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 18 (1993), 511-523.

[20] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966); Wiebe E. Bijker, 'Do Not Despair: There Is Life After Constructivism', *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 18 (1993), 112-139; Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelite, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociological Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995); *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Soiotechnical Change*, ed. by Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992); *The Social Construction of Technological Systems*, ed. by Wiebe E. Bijker, T.P. Hughes and T.J. Pinch (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987); Philip Brey, 'Philosophy of Technology Meets Social Constructivism', *Society for Philosophy and Technology*, 2 (1998); Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); Hughie MacKay and Gareth Gillespie, 'Extending the Social Shaping of Technology Approach: Ideology and Appropriation', *Social Studies of Science*, 22 (1992), 685-716; Hans Radder, 'Normative Reflexions on Constructivist Approaches to Science and Technology', *Social Studies of Science*, 22 (1992), 141-174; Sergio Sismondo, 'Some Social Constructions', *Social Studies of Science*, 23 (1993), 515-554.

[21] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); *We Have Never Been Modern* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993);

processes by which taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the designation of a technology as successful, as something that works, come to be. My interdisciplinary framework focusing on *form* is necessary to identify and address the nexus of technical and cultural networks that structure the *meaning* of streets in such ways as to render them as technical arrangements that "work," as is implicitly suggested in the phrase "liveable streets."

My approach is however modified from technology studies, which in the interrogations I just identified has often relied on ethnographies of technical or scientific decision-making. Instead here I will focus on how exactly technically-mediated materials—specifically materials found on the street, especially concrete—are *used*: how do people assign importance or significance to mundane urban things such as curbs or sidewalks? I ask how people most fundamentally—at, that is to say, the most quotidian, taken-for-granted levels—touch urban materials and how do those materials touch them? How in other words do people in the everyday lives literally *impress* themselves on material and materials on them and what is the history of such impressions?

Again without losing touch with its broader implications, this focus needs to be further narrowed. The specific kind of contemporary touching or interaction of human and material that I explore in the work—it is really the launching pad for all the reflections that follow—is the traffic accident. As already mentioned, one particular fictional accident is given considerable prominence in the *ICC*, especially in the beginning.

'When Things Strike Back: A Possible Contribution of "Science Studies" to the Social Sciences', *British Journal of Sociology*, 51 (2000), 107-123; *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); 'Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World', in *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Study of Science*, ed. by Karin D. Knorr-Cetina and Michael Mulkay (London: Sage Publications, 1983); 'On Technical Mediation: Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy', *Common Knowledge*, 3 (1994), 29-64.

[22] Steve Woolgar, 'The Turn to Technology in Social Studies of Science', *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 16 (1991), 20-51; 'Some Remarks About Positivism: A Reply to Collins and Yearly', in *Science as Practice and Culture*, ed. by Andrew Pickering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); 'The Very Idea of a Social Epistemology: What Prospects for a Truly Radical "Radically Naturalized Epistemology"', *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 34 (1991), 377-389; 'Why Not a Sociology of Machines? The Case of Sociology and Artificial Intelligence', *Sociology*, 19 (1985), 557-572; Steve Woolgar and Geoff Cooper, 'Do Artefacts Have Ambivalence? Moses' Bridges and other Urban Legends in STS', *Social Studies of Science*, 29 (1999), 433-449.

This choice of focus derives in part from my belief that accidents present a particularly compressed form of the rich interaction of people and impressive things in cities. It also derives from the likelihood that urban dwellers in general and liveable city dwellers in particular will experience an accident.

To illustrate how common a misfortune that is, in 2004, the year the fictional accident took place, 29,625 people were killed or injured out of a population of about four million in British Columbia.[23] At that rate of injury over the course of 67.5 years, well less than an average lifetime, one out of every two people in the province will experience a car-related injury or death.

This in my view is a stunning statistic: *fifty per cent* of population in the *normal course of their lives* is liable to injury or death at the hands of automobiles. Admittedly this holds true only on a crude statistical level; in actuality traffic injury is distributed much less evenly than such a statistic would suggest and doesn't correlate very exactly with the kind of streets prescribed by the tenets of liveability such as those promoted by Jacobs. Nonetheless, the reality of injury on streets and especially the *material circumstances*—and here Jacobs's influence in urban development plays a central role—in which both this accident rate and the apparently concomitant social obviation of critical inquiry about it take place are central.

Now we can turn to what my comparative study of photography and concrete will yield. Underlying the *ICC* is the idea that what we might call the ruling regime of the impression of urban things—by which I mean the set of circumstances under which touching urban of materials takes place; how a walk on a sidewalk or being hit by a car for instance is enabled, permitted or constrained, or how a photograph is used to record an architectural or infrastructural arrangement—assigns significance or meaning through complicatedly looped *exchanges*, not just interactions, of form and content, between for example a person who gets hit by a car and the sidewalk she steps off before being struck, or the widely-distributed materteral image of a woman (I am here referencing Jacobs) and the planning theories she influentially espouses.

[23] ICBC, 'Traffic Collision Statistics' <http://www.icbc.com/road-safety/safety-research/collision-statistics> [accessed 21 August 2006].

A central metaphor used in the *ICC* for these looping exchanges, sometimes called translations[24] in technology studies, between form and content is that of the *mask*. The mask is a redolent concept. Conceived broadly, it references the impression of volatile contents—including interiority and exteriority, subjectivity and objectivity, personal identity and social formation—on stable material form. In the *ICC*, the idea of the mask is used to explore and problematize key relationships in the work's narrative: the face of Jane Jacobs for instance, or the person crossing a street, or the lay of a sidewalk.

The common *formal* core of varied processes of human/material interaction thusly conceived as masked is a *naturalizing* of interactions between subject (the individual) and object (impressive technology) that seemingly transforms these heavily culturally-mediated relations into what philosopher of science Ian Hacking might describe as *inevitabilities*,[25] like laws of nature, which most believe can be ignored only at great and usually ultimately futile cost. Liveability is just such an apparently natural force, a compelling unity of subject positioning and material arrangements.

The *content* of masking processes is the projection of force itself; the now taken-for-granted but actually historically-situated *social and technical mechanisms of transmission,* shafts of force for which impressive techno-materials form the sharp points. My analysis reveals crucial aspects of the historical emergence and current manifestations of power defined as precisely *the ability to transmit or project over space and time*, thereby both creating and resolving paradoxes of masking work in which the absent becomes present and the present absent, processes alluded to in the next chapter and elsewhere through the Heideggerean gerunds *absencing* and *presencing*.[26]

My investigations into absencing and presencing through masking or impression in current urban forms such as those seen in North False Creek are necessarily speculative because it is methodologically difficult to get at what people are thinking and feeling when they perform mundane interactions with materials in such acts as pushing the walk signal button at an

[24] Callon.
[25] Hacking.
[26] Martin Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971), pp. 143-162.

intersection or putting their feet onto concrete in the moments before they are struck by a vehicle. Perhaps my approach could be described as participant-observation, but that seems a bit perverse to describe pondering what it means to get hit by a car or to know someone who has been. Methodological problems only become more acute when we turn to historical examples of how people impress themselves upon or touch each other through technology.

4.

A reference from art history might help the reader initially better understand the spirit in which my approach has been undertaken. The Surrealists (whom of course the title of this introduction references) often characterized the dissonance arising from slight fissures in the tightly-woven fabrics of reality—which the Surrealists arguably succeeded more than anyone in encasing in permanent scare quotes: "reality"—as uncanny. I have tried to attune my analysis and writing to this subtle but important quality in urban form.

Figure 1 – The Uncanny

I like to imagine that the *ICC* describes a parallel universe, one where the interaction between humans and the material world generates something like waves. These waves are constantly at work in this parallel universe, reflecting back to impress themselves upon urban inhabitants in significant ways. However their importance is overlooked there because it is thought that things such as sidewalks or overpasses or photographs are things-in-themselves so obvious in their effects—in, that is, the consequences of their forms—that they should just naturally be taken for granted. But what I imagine to be actually going on is that these waves, whatever their nature, are oscillating at a different frequency than the brain waves of human consciousness are generally able to register. Like high frequency sound or X-rays these waves operate outside of human consciousness until they impress themselves upon a receptive surface, like a sidewalk or an overpass. It is something like the different rates of

oscillation of these imaginary waves that the critically fictional work that follows attempts to synchronize.

Whether I have succeeded through my unorthodox aesthetic approach in truly confronting some of the important problems arising from understanding urban forms or merely have gone to great lengths to evade them is of course for the reader to decide.

The Impressive City Cantos

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those blooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land V

Prologue. An Impressive Photograph

Bibliographic Entry :
Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*.[27]

1.

Ray often found himself stopped for a few moments in mid-action, frozen. His eyes would lock onto some insignificant thing, or sometimes he would stare out a window, really looking at nothing at all. But whatever he was ostensibly doing or looking at, he was momentarily mentally snagged by some microscopic past event that he relived in his mind's eye with total clarity. When after several seconds he snapped out of these arrests, Ray often felt literally washed up, as if he was a small piece of human flotsam left stunned and slightly resentful on the shore by some fast-breaking but now receding line of surf.

His thirteen-year old daughter used to laugh when she caught him staring blankly out the window in the after-tow of one of these moments of almost blinding recall. When Ray's friends were over she sometimes would mock him by suddenly freezing mid-sentence and staring blankly off into space; people would ask her what she was doing and she would happily respond, That's what my dad does. She would smirk and everyone would turn to look at Ray bemusedly. Oh well, he thought to himself, he probably deserved her little digs after all the boneheaded lectures he had given her and the tired, exasperated yelling at her he had done over some tween crime or other. He would grin sheepishly at his friends and shrug good-naturedly.

But the frozen moments continued. Ray could not shake the feeling that he was haunted, haunted by his own life. He was old enough now that his existence was starting to take on a definite if still ephemeral shape, with a beginning, middle and end. He had always been conscious of—and sometimes thrilled, sometimes tortured by—the course of his life but he could never quite make out its actual contours. And now completely unexpectedly to Ray its end was hoving into view.

[27] Barthes.

There was no imminent danger; oh sure his prostate made doctors cluck, but not enough to actually do anything, and he had a couple of carcinomic spots removed from his face (I'm a cancer survivor, he thought to himself sardonically, wondering if he could wear some kind of little twisted coloured ribbon after having endured a total of about sixty minutes being treated in the dermatologist's and then the plastic surgeon's offices; in the latter case he had waited for his little surgery in a waiting room with several women in very early middle age, all seeming to Ray to be happily yakking away with each other while waiting to have their boobs done or their faces tucked), but he didn't feel particularly life-threatened. Just the opposite in fact: forced by his demanding dog to spend at least an hour every day briskly marching along the miles of seawall near where he lived, he felt pretty healthy—not too overweight, more or less happy, generally energetic.

But Ray's life had become *measurable*. Ray often thought to himself how friggin' fitting it was that instead of wisdom age had handed him this one lousy… what? not even an insight but a *perspective*. And this hard-won perspective was simply how finite his life was. For example, his daughter was thirteen. In one more similar span of her life, when she would be still cocooned in immortality at twenty-six, he would be almost seventy, an age that Ray looked forward to with a mixture of bemusement and dread.

This perspective of finitude followed Ray around. When he was younger he would periodically look up from his immediate circumstances and reassure himself that anything was still possible. Now when he looked up he could only see how little time remained to him no matter what. And that fact increasingly took on a ghost-like quality, a spectral character by turns chiding, comforting, bitter or humorous.

One of the things that perplexed Ray, which often stopped him in those instants of frozen staring paralysis, was the weird makeup of this ghost, composed as it was of things that *were* in his life once but *are* no longer, what *might have been* but *was not*. The ghost of his life was a curious *presence* of *absences*.

2.

Presence. Absence. One such element of ghostliness for Ray was his father, who had died of heart failure in 1999. Ray kept a picture of him on his desk, taken when Ray's father was a young man, newly-commissioned as a flight lieutenant in the Canadian air force in the early part of World War Two. In the picture, Ray's father has a slightly self-mocking half-smile on his lip and his peaked officer's hat is jauntily if perhaps just a tiny bit too perfectly perched at an angle on his head. His sparkling eyes (bright blue, like Ray's, although that was insider knowledge hidden in the black and white photograph) regard the viewer honestly and intelligently.

Figure 2 – The Father

Ray often stared at the photograph like it was some kind of key, a Rosetta stone, to his own life. Part of his fascination with his father's image was that he looked very much like his dad and often acted like him too and this seemed to lift the photograph above the taken-for-grantedness that was probably a more typical fate for these kinds of old family pictures. This patrocliny gave the photograph an uncanny quality, not-Ray and almost-Ray and Ray-to-come visibly reflected in this young man, his father in his early twenties in a stiff martial pose that was completely impossible in Ray's life.

In one of his periodic compulsive fits of self-improvement a couple of years earlier Ray had spent a few afternoons in the library reading Jacques Derrida,[28] the French philosopher, trying to make sense of him. Ray started off each time determined but ending up dozy; as with earlier attempts at fitness or surfing or eating five helpings of fruits and vegetables daily

[28] Jacques Derrida, *Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994); *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

or reading more poetry, Ray mostly failed at this effort to be better. And what, he had thought to himself after his Derridean spurt faded away, could be more pathetic than a failed attempt at post-modern self-improvement? But alongside Ray's self-reproach, as he had skimmed over Derrida's impenetrable but lyrical prose, he did take notice of recurring references to death and spectres. Ray was especially struck by Derrida's descriptions of the absent presences of the dead within those who survive them as ghosts. He jotted down some notes: "the concept of the other in the same … the completely other, dead, living in me." Ray added his own comment: "The presence within each of us of the other who is absent through death—the resolutely, irreducibly not-us, not-anything, the dead at the very core of our being alive." This was referred to by Derrida, Ray noted, as the "unbearable paradox of fidelity."

That phrase struck a chord with Ray and it often came to him as he later looked at his father's photo. His fidelity to his deceased father was enforced in some fundamental ways because of that uncanny similarity between them. Ray felt his father's lurking genes encoded in his own DNA staring back at him every time he looked in a mirror: the same smile as his father, Ray's middle-aged body bulging and sagging in exactly the same ways as his father's once did (as a boy Ray used to smirk secretly at his father's sad decrepitude), the shared physical awkwardness.

And Ray also noticed his father often manifest in the behavioural commonplaces of his life, rendering him in some ways a mere palimpsest of his father: compulsively turning off of lights whenever leaving a room, an absolute inability to tell a joke, an inclination to mulishness, discomfort in social settings, gentleness. This long-absent young man of the photograph was *impressed* upon Ray in countless ways, cellular, physiognomic, behavioural and social, much as the light rays reflected off of his father were impressed on the film in the camera that photographed him, the light rays themselves actually visibly at work in the photograph in small spots on his father's eyes.

Figure 3 – The Impress of Light

Another part of the "paradox of fidelity" for Ray was that it took his father's death to make fully apparent his important contribution to Ray's life. This had in fact been for him one of the more enduring lessons of his death. Absence had revealed essential aspects of his father that his presence never did. Ray had come to see in a sadly new and barren way how his father had mediated among other people in Ray's family and Ray now realized the ways he had quietly but importantly offered his support. These qualities only became apparent to Ray after losing his father and Ray ruefully thought now that in a way his father's living presence had *hidden* something of his essence, his fidelity to Ray, revealed to Ray only in his absence, after his death.

This working-through of Derrida's unbearable paradox was usually overlooked in the normal fairly cut-and-dried adjectival use of the words *present* and *absent* drilled into everyone since elementary school roll calls

Figure 4 - Presencing

wherein a person is either there or is not. But Ray now realized that these routine uses had not acknowledged the ways presence and absence were much more complexly layered states, such as in how some part of his father's

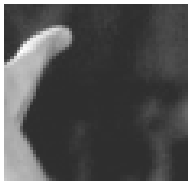


Figure 5 – and

essence had been hidden by his presence, just as his absence was far from equivalent to his not-being and instead turned out for Ray to have been a kind of revealing. Presence and absence, Ray thought, were more active states, closer to Heideggerian gerunds: *presencing* and *absencing*.

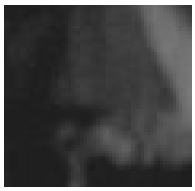


Figure 6 - Absencing

3.

Absencing. Presencing. Ray's mother, devastated by the hole his dad's death had left in her life, wandering her newly emptied house in despair, had found the image of him that Ray now pondered so much. She had it copied and modestly but nicely framed and sent one each to Ray's brothers and to him. It was pretty clear that she did so because the image took important aspects of the multi-dimensional being that was Ray's father—his humour, intelligence, modesty, willingness to do his duty, potential, and so on—and condensed them. It was a kind of short-hand reference to all the reasons that he was so loved by those who knew him to which Ray and the rest of his family could continually refer, a place-holder for the lost man.

For all that careful bereaved attention Ray thought ruefully that the photograph also subtly trivialized his father. In part this was because it was after all only a photograph self-evidently worth at most a couple of bucks.

This tiny implicit condescension was amplified a little by careful examination of the details of the photo, a task to which Ray brought his insider knowledge. Most crucially for Ray there was the slightly self-mocking smile, which bravely both opened and closed the curtain on a social awkwardness that Ray's father and he shared.

Figure 7 - Awkwardness

There was a tiny but unmistakable touch of something almost cruel or taunting there: Ray's father's awkwardness, like his own, was often captured by photographs that repeatedly showed his dad slightly ill at ease however much otherwise happy with friends and family. This awkwardness caused among those who loved him a tiny and indulgent but nonetheless real wincing. The smile acknowledged his father's own acceptance that the web of awkward images in which he would participate was in fact inescapable.

The minor and subtle cruelty at play here originated in part from a distaff side of the vast universe of photography itself, which is its gift for capturing aspects that its subjects would often prefer go unnoticed. Ray, like his father he was sure, generally hated to be photographed, always aware of that vexed gift. Ray felt the tiniest pangs of annoyance at this memorial photograph dressed up in its little gilt frame; insofar as it referenced his father's awkwardness it complicated however subtly intentions of homage.

But that raised a bigger question for Ray: why was this complicated kindness chosen by his mother? Ray didn't want to be critical of her, bereft as she was, but her choice of a photograph nagged at him, pointing he thought to a broader social failure. Ray irritably wondered why out of all the ways to remember his father did his mother, so typically of the wider culture, choose a photograph when it was bound as a form to subtly trivialize the dead man? Why could she not have had a choice of some form of representation that paid homage to his father's more unambiguous capabilities such as his wonderful carpentry skills or his prodigious powers of organization?

Ray knew there were plentiful historical examples of alternative funereal iconography and not just that provided by the wealthy; Ray had since university art history classes and his one trip to Italy always loved the simple stone reliefs used by many middling-affluent ancient Romans to proudly point to successful lives spent behind a fruit stall or as a charioteer. Ray wondered why such forms of homage, considerably less alloyed than photographs, were not available to us. There are headstones of course, but the unembellished stones mostly used today tell us no more about the deceased than how relatively wealthy they or their surviving families were and that the person named on the stone was indeed dead. Carving like the Romans did is expensive, but can it really be that the modern grieving family prefers to allocate its resources to new cars or DVDs, part of some pervasive lack of willingness now to honour the deceased more fittingly than through cheap photos? Ray doubted it.

He tried turning these questions on their head. What was it exactly being imaged in the photograph of his father that had made *it* the thing to which Ray's mother and he and the other members of his mourning family turned as have so many others in their time of loss? Ray wondered if somehow the triviality of the photograph reassured the culture as a whole at its most extreme moments when it was reconciling itself to Derrida's unbearable paradox.

Ray had spent another afternoon at the library running his fingers down the spines of countless books in the photography section. He finally pulled out *Camera Lucida*[29] (infinitely more digestible than Derrida; Ray found himself when he got back home sucking this book up compulsively, almost like he was drowning and that book was air), where Roland Barthes wrote that photographs were images of disasters that had already happened.

Ray thought that line was amusing because of course it achieved its melodramatic effect by flying in the face of what was obvious especially to so acute an observer as Barthes: that photographs also reassured the viewer that each moment was recouped in a greater human project, foreclosing disaster precisely through the size of the reproductive enterprise. In his father's case, even in 1940 or so when he was photographed, image-making already had a vast industrial, social and technical capability. Thanks to this no matter what one had done or how one looked or what emotions one felt millions of others were *evidently* doing, looking

[29] Barthes.

and feeling in almost exactly the same way. "Be reassured," the imagistic apparatus said to Ray's father and his loved ones in 1940 as he embarked on an industrial war of unprecedented savagery, "this young man is doing nothing that tens of thousands of other young men are not doing identically."

When Ray looked at the photograph he saw his father's pride and awkwardness almost but not quite submerged by the triviality of his look amongst millions of similarly-constructed martial faces: soldiers, sailors, airmen sucked into militaries around the world, gazing out of their frames hopefully or warily or happily. In this light his father's small smile was a wonderfully brave human-all-too-human effort by Ray's father to modestly acknowledge his own puniness.

Barthes devoted a lot of attention to this phenomenon of the individual caught in the glare of the gargantuan photographic imaging enterprise. Its long reach attempted to suture itself perfectly closed in its most famous examples such as pictures taken of models or movie stars. There was no room for individuality in these star images, only *images* of individuality, not individuals in any human sense at all, individuality *idealized*, emptied of all content except that which could be bought and sold.

In the case of the photograph of Ray's father however a gap had been left between the abstract imagistic apparatus and the specific image of the individual into which the uniqueness of Ray's father in his twenties and all his pride, youth, awkwardness and future promise—and his gently ironic smile—could rush.

It was not only because of this specificity that Ray and his family would turn to the photograph—replete as it was with the markers of his father's connections to the world; he is in an air force uniform after all—but such details as his awkwardness or his slightly too big ears that had escaped the apparatus's suturing self-image from wholly taking over Ray's father's photographic reflection rendered his image heartbreakingly personal to those who knew him.

Figure 8 – The Punctum

Barthes described this gap as the *punctum*, a wound, a small visual stain on the periphery of the image that unpredictably but viscerally ties a viewer to the significance of a specific photograph out of an almost-but-not-quite-overwhelming suturing imagistic abstraction or idealization, which Barthes labelled the *studium*.

The *punctum's* wound or gap in the *studium* was not just internal or psychic nor just external or social but ontological. It was perhaps better conceived of Ray thought as an intersection, an imagistic one in this case, of how things are seen as *being interior* and *being exterior*, the intern*ality* of the subject and extern*ality* of the object. Ray's dad was out-in-the-world in ways that the photograph captured and he resisted that world in his specific, awkward ways also captured there. And that potent, roiling combination years later helped to define Ray, his father's look-alike son, who was not the man in the photograph but who unmistakably partook in him as well. Tiny but crucial aspects of Ray's being and that of his father's both intersected and diverged in the photograph, at least partially creating both—and neither—of them.

4.

And bang, suddenly, there it was: Ray ensnared once again in a labyrinthine intermingling of memory and speculation. And as usual Ray snapped back to consciousness feeling both as if he had just washed up on shore and slightly truculent. Yes, yes he knew that he had spent all this time pondering the minutiae of a photograph, which most people would ignore as too insignificant. What after all, they would say, was the big deal?

Bang. Ray remembered a long time earlier reading with fascination a description of the *big* bang, the moment of formation of the universe.[30] The article raised lots of issues of theoretical physics that soared completely over Ray's head. But he had read the description of waves suddenly flipping from nothingness into somethingness as a kind of wonderfully mysterious poetry, an epic description of not just the coming into existence of worlds but the formation of the possibility of being, the making of worldmaking. At some almost incomprehensible specific moment amidst timelessness, at some almost incomprehensible specific location in nothingness, some small variation had occurred whereby all the vast mass of everything that is everywhere suddenly came into being, a moment and place away from which everything that ever existed or exists now or will ever exist spends all its time madly rushing to who knows where. Physicists insist that dim echoes of this moment of über-genesis can perhaps be heard in every moment of becoming and unbecoming, in every splitting cell or dying star.

Like the background noise of the big bang, Ray felt the click of the shutter of the camera that had been trained on his father and the way it opened and closed on a moment of being, those light rays hurtling from his father to their tragic collision with that prepared celluloid surface, was an example, albeit on an almost infinitely tiny scale, of worldmaking. But the "noise" in this case, Ray thought, was the triviality of the photograph, which was a kind of work, a politics really, endeavouring to erase its own importance, the imagistic apparatus absencing itself in its own plenitude. One of Walter Benjamin's most famous aphoristic observations was that a photograph was like a return to a crime scene; the triviality of imagery, Ray thought, in its sheer actual and implied scale of reproducibility acted like a cop at the officially roped-off and gilt-framed area of the image waving viewers on: "Move along folks, nothing to see here…" But there *was* something to see: a wild, long, fruitful, harsh and sad dialectic of the presencing of the photograph and the myriad personal, social, cultural and political connections precisely traced in the impress of its form and content.

The content of the photograph in one direction included the war, in which Ray's dad, shortly after this photograph was taken, flew huge Wellington bombers in the Middle East, doubtlessly hands sweating and heart pounding, while people shot fucking bullets at him,

[30] Steven Weinberg, 'Before the Big Bang', *The New York Review of Books*, 44 (1997).

trying to kill him and he—the gentle, warm, awkward, ironically smiling young man—tried to kill them, emerging amazingly unscathed from that murderous experience, at least as far as Ray knew: dutiful, stubborn, shy, a good providing father, a little distant from his sons, unwilling to talk much about the war, patriotic, angry at the Quebec nationalists who were active in Ray's hometown of Montreal when Ray was a romantic, naïve teenaged sympathizer; and all of the millions of other aspects of the young airman's life-to-be and his convoluted, lively relation with the world and (of particular interest to Ray!) his look-alike son, key aspects of which were in formation at that particular frozen moment in a military photographer's studio.

Content in the other direction was Ray's dad, tightly pressed in his uniform, squeezed into the prescribed framing of the official photograph with his slightly sad and ironic smile like a lighthouse sending its complicatedly bright alternating signals to Ray almost seventy years later over the dark gulf of his father's death, including those terrible last days of unconsciousness in a hospital bed in his fatal collision with the shoals of the life-support system and its electronic rhythms of inevitable end, measuring out his father's last moments, Barthes' disaster already happened.

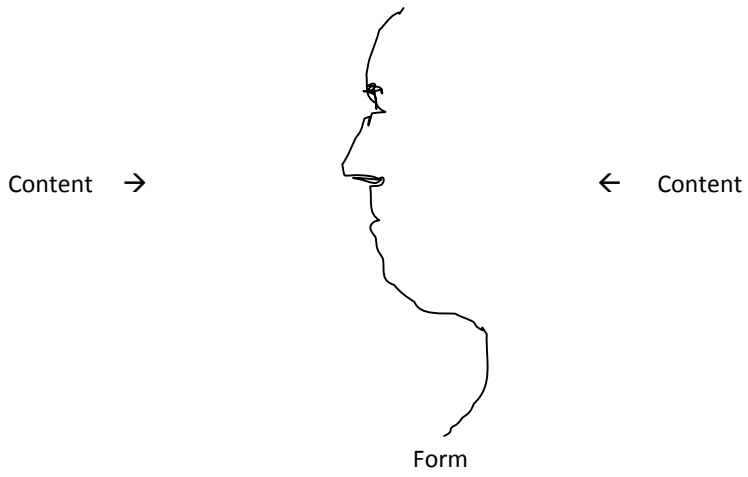


Figure 9 – Form & Content

All this was played out in the form of micro-chemical reactions of light and dark on the treated surface of a sheet of cheap photographic paper, tracing an indelible impression of that pregnant dialectic of form and content; the formation of the visage of Ray's father, the

man himself and Ray too both growing literally and figuratively out of the nascent picture – not only disasters to come, but full lives as well.

Figure 10 - Disaster

Fuck it, Ray thought to himself, this *is* important. Ray looked up to see his daughter silently watching him emerging from yet another lost moment, one of her eyebrows arched in dismissive amusement. He turned to her slowly and said with a soft mock fierceness, It is the small things that deserve our best attention. She rolled her eyes and walked away.

Part One. A Phenomenology of Impression

One. Impressive Technology at Work

Bibliographic Entry:

Heidegger, Martin. "…Poetically Man Dwells…"[31]

> "…[I]nstead of the familiar process of substantiation in which the observer certifies the existence of the thing by experiencing the thing in his own body (seeing it, touching it), the observer instead sees and touches the hurt body of another person (or animal) juxtaposed to the disembodied idea, and having sensorially experienced the reality of the first, believes he or she has experienced the reality of the second. So, for example, a city, though invented, is real; a blueprint of the city is still experienceable through the senses but much less so than the built city, and thus is judged less real, is more immediately recognized as invented; but finally the city might exist only as a verbal assertion that on this very ground a city will next year exist. The prophet may, as he speaks these words, cut open a body and read in its entrails the exact date on which the city will appear: the coming of the city may be believed, received as compelling truth, because the open body has lent its truth. So, too, an idea of god, or an explanation of lightning, or the asserted power of a ruler over the winds, could be juxtaposed to a body part that 'demonstrates' or 'substantiates' the truth of the assertion by having itself indisputable 'substance' that is somehow read as belonging to its counterpart. It is as though the human mind, confronted by the open body itself (whether human or animal) does not have the option of failing to perceive its reality that rushes unstoppably across his eyes and into his mind, yet the mind so flees from what it sees that it will with almost equal speed perform the countermovement of assigning that attribute to something else, especially if there is something else at hand made ready to receive the rejected attribute, ready to act as its referent. … [I]njuring … provides, by its massive opening of human bodies, a way of reconnecting … derealized and disembodied beliefs with the force and power of the material world"
>
> Elaine Scarry[32]

[31] Martin Heidegger, '...Poetically Man Dwells..', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971), pp. 213-229.

1.

The day that Janice was struck started like any other. It was November, usually a time of unrelenting gloom but that morning the rains had let up and as the dawn unfolded the sun tentatively sent out dim rays for the first time in weeks. Ray took their dog down to the beach. By the time they got back Janice was in the shower. She had been busy; the table was set and toast was sitting warming in the oven. The smell of coffee filled the kitchen as Ray used an old towel to rub down his soaking dog, who panted happily with her nose pointed at the stairs in anticipation of Janice coming downstairs.

But, as Ray supposed was typical enough for any long marriage, these homey touches were almost provocative, their very presumptions of domesticity slyly picking at the scabs of old resentments. He couldn't help but feel a twinge of resistance to Janice's business-like efficiency in the morning, so unlike the ineffectuality of his own slow-to-warm-up and uselessly gloomy disposition. Often this led to little squabbles: he would bark at her because he felt she tried to push him around while she complained back with an air of slightly chagrined resignation that he seemed unresponsive to the point of being obtuse. More often though Ray just swallowed his prickly feelings when Janice would cheerfully demand to know if he had finished repainting the coffee table in the rec room yet or if he had changed the handle on their bedroom door or some other task she seemed to feel was his, not hers, to do by some divine assignation. Or when she sat at the breakfast table with her head buried in some business report, her attention only surfacing briefly to snap at their daughter or at him for some failing noticed out of the corners of her otherwise preoccupied eyes.

But Ray knew these typical little marital scraps could quickly turn ugly. Janice had a temper that he now knew so well he felt he could almost ascribe a personality to it, give it a name. Janice's anger seemed to Ray to be like a computer virus; it swarmed out of nowhere, as if some outside malevolence had taken over her body, causing her to spew out streams of random hostility, almost breathtaking in their force. Early in their marriage he had been almost overwhelmed by these sudden rages, which he sometimes almost suspected she released with some kind of perverse pleasure. He would often sit bewildered after these

[32] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 125-26, 128.

tsunamis of fury, trying to figure what he might have done to deserve such treatment and marvelling that he had survived. But after watching her lash out at friends or co-workers he had come to realize that her anger was just part of her psychic make-up, constantly seeking an outlet, for which purpose he had done nothing more criminal than having allowed himself to be close at hand. And over time he had grown tougher, so that when she rose up in anger he now struck right back just as hard and they would often find themselves suddenly almost toe to toe, both spewing a torrent of rage at each other, until one or the other of them stormed off, leaving the field to the temporarily gloating victor.

Win or lose, Ray was always half-stunned and half-amused to come across Janice happily humming shortly after these bruising sessions while she sorted out the laundry or painted her nails. She would turn to Ray with her big generous smile and they would often fall down together in bed and spend the rest of the day in happy harmony.

But however happy the moment when he was with her, Ray was always watching her face for the slightest sign of impending trouble, like a tracker in hostile territory, and thus Ray greeted Janice with a mixture of wariness and tentative fondness when she came downstairs in her business suit briskly towelling her wet hair, still close to its original youthful blonde although now dyed to cover the intervening grey. On this sunny morning the emotional forecast seemed quiet.

How is it out? she asked. Nice, nice, he had replied. It looks like it's gonna be sunny. She smiled and pulled toast out of the oven as she asked, Can you drive Elaine to school this morning? I have a meeting at 9. No problem, he replied. Ray actually relished the idea of a drive in the sun before he settled down in front of his laptop in his little office at city hall. He watched as Janice had bustled around the kitchen. She said, We're invited to Sarah and John's for drinks Friday night. Casual thing, just us and maybe Roger and Bill. We can go after we stop at the plant store, she concluded. Ray just nodded, ignoring her assumptions that he was as happily determined to buy tomato plants at a nursery and visit with her friends as she was. What? she asked. Nothing, he replied, opening the paper as he started on his toast. She disappeared in response, and a minute or two later was leaning over him to kiss him good-bye. Don't you want to go? She asked. Hmmm? he hummed in response absently,

by now engrossed in his reading. He finally looked up, To Sarah and John's? Oh no, that sounds good. K, she said leaning over to kiss him, Well, bye then, see you tonight. Ray smiled at her as she crisply marched out the door, her high heels clicking smartly on the wooden floor.

2.

Early in the afternoon he answered his phone at work. Mr. Simpson? Yes. My name is Samantha Newers, I'm a nurse at Saint Paul's Hospital. I'm calling about your wife Mr. Simpson. There's been an accident. She was hit by a vehicle while she was crossing the street. Ray felt his chest collapsing. Oh God. Is she all right? I can't really tell you too much right now sir, except that she is resting and is stable right now. Shit, shit. I'll be right down. Where did you say? St. Paul's sir. Is she in Emergency? Yes sir.

Ray had raced down to the hospital with a million thoughts roaring through his head, like all the mental notes in his head had spilled out of the flimsy containers in which he normally stored them and were now flitting in and out of his consciousness, blown around by the calamity he could still not comprehend. Had he paid the credit card bill? Why do SUVs park in stalls marked "small cars only"? If Janice was in hospital when would he find time to help Elaine with math homework? And shouldn't there be some kind of trumpet fanfare accompanying him as he arrived at the hospital? Shouldn't everything come to a stop, with uniformed attendants running alongside him, saying that everything else would be looked after, just worry about your wife? Like in the movies: perhaps a small gaggle of professional people in suits clearing a path while giving him a briefing on his wife's condition; This way sir; everything's been taken care of...

But no, Janice's accident was buried amongst all the other small-change activities of the street: the other people parking their cars just like he was and for whom he had to wait in line while they got their tickets at the vending machine while he wondered to himself how long he was going to be parked: an hour? two hours? a day? Or the people waiting for the bus on the street outside of the hospital that he had to thread his way through or the old man pushing an equally ancient woman on a wheelchair into the hospital that forced him to wait impatiently as they creakily manoeuvred through the doors in front of him; no one paid

him the slightest attention as he threaded these obstacles and at last ran through the doors and followed the signs to Emergency.

He was a little taken aback by the numbers of people on beds and stretchers everywhere in the hall, with gaggles of nurses and doctors looking grey-faced as they quickly pushed their way seemingly unheedingly among their patients under the bright fluorescent lights. Ray stopped at a central intersection of halls at the back of a crowd of people around the admittance desk at the center of which a tired-looking older woman was trying to get someone who apparently didn't speak English to answer some basic questions [Sir, I am going to need your wife's address. Silence. I need your wife's ADDRESS, where you live sir. No, no. No address. No to give. Please sir, you *have* to tell me where you live…] while the others around them pressed in impatiently, each obviously having their own anxiety that somehow only this woman could alleviate.

Shit, shit, shit, this could take hours; Ray decided to look for Janice on his own. He started looking at the ashen faces of the people lying in their hallway stretchers, feeling self-conscious about invading their privacy as they lay vulnerably open, struck down by injury or illness, almost on public display, many with intravenous tubes plugged into them. He walked further down the hall examining each prostrate figure until he was about to give up and fight his way through the crowd at the admittance desk when he heard his name called weakly. He looked down the hall and realized it was Janice calling to him from a stretcher.

He rushed up to her, shocked to see her head encased in some kind of a large Styrofoam-looking box. She lay in torn clothes, her high-heeled shoes tucked under the bed. Her face was white and she was absolutely still. Jesus Janice, he blurted out, oh my god... Tears welled up in her eyes in response. What the fuck happened? Janice just slightly shook her cradled head and said nothing. Where is the doctor who is looking after you? Are you in pain? Janice nodded wincingly. Ray asked a couple more questions and had soon determined that Janice had only received rudimentary attention. Fuck, I'm going to try and find a doctor. This place is a nuthouse. I'll get back quickly. Ray took one of Janice's hands and gently squeezed it, Hang in there sweetheart.

Ray marched down the corridor. He finally found two nurses sitting in a small alcove calmly chatting, and Ray went up to them. Excuse me, my wife has been in a car accident and she's just being left in the hall. One of the nurses stood up tiredly and said, Where is she? Ray led her back to Janice, and the nurse said to him, I'll be right back. Ray watched her disappear in exasperation but she soon returned with a chart. She told Ray that Janice had received a preliminary exam that indicated there wasn't any brain damage and she was waiting for a doctor to give her a more thorough exam. Ray pleaded with her, She's in a lot of pain, isn't there anything you can do? I'll try, she responded. Again the nurse disappeared. About ten minutes later, just as Ray was again about to set off in search of her, she reappeared with a syringe. This is morphine, she told Janice, it'll help with the pain. She injected Janice and then straightened herself tiredly. Someone will be along to help you as soon as possible.

Janice visibly relaxed as the drug took hold. Ray found an abandoned stacking chair and pulled it up next to her. He reached out to hold her hand while he gently stoked her hair. Christ sweetheart, he whispered to her, what happened? Janice had slowly been able to croak out her story from her cracked lips.

I got hungry about noon and I decided to go to the diner on Beach Avenue. I remember thinking how beautiful the water looked in the sunlight. Anyway, I always cross at the pedestrian crossing at Thurlow. I can't remember exactly what happened but I'm pretty sure I always look both ways before I cross Beach because cars tend to go pretty fast down there. Nobody seemed to be coming. But a pickup somehow appeared suddenly out of nowhere from around the corner. Perhaps he was blinded by the sun, I don't know, but he didn't see me and he ploughed right into me.

Janice had gone on to describe how the force of impact into her hip and leg caused the front of her head to smash down on the truck with enough force to dent the front of the hood. My strong bones saved me I guess, she said, smiling mirthlessly; I always told you I was

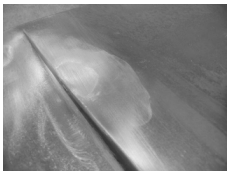


Figure 11 – A Dent

hard-headed. She rebounded off the truck onto the road and her head struck the pavement. Soon after an ambulance and fire truck arrived on the scene but Janice was in such a trance of shock that she could only stare blankly up at them. The ambulance staff recognized

Figure 12 – Medical Help

that Janice had suffered head trauma and rushed her to St. Paul's.

About an hour after Ray had first arrived, a nurse came up and announced to them in a brisk voice that Janice was being taken into an exam room and a doctor would be along shortly. Another long wait ensued before a cheerful young intern, his smile showing bright white teeth sparkling next to his dark skin, rushed into the room and looked through Janice's chart, mumbling slightly to himself as he did. Well, well Mrs. Simpson, he said in a voice with the slightest British accent, you're lucky to be alive. How is the pain? After considerable questioning of her and Ray he had then launched Janice off on a series of tests. Ray was left standing idly in various hallways while she was wheeled from place to place, appearing one time with her Styrofoam head packing gone and another time with her clothes replaced with hospital garb and a clear plastic bag filled with fluid suspended over her head with tube plugged into her arm.

Ray used the time to call Elaine and let her know what had happened. Oh my god Dad, she had cried, should I come down there? No, no the hospital is hard to find, he had replied, trying to sound calm; wait at home and I'll come get you as soon as I can.

He found a chance to duck out about an hour later, so both he and Elaine were standing over Janice when she was rolled into an examination room and the young intern joined them again. He described to them how Janice must have reflexively turned toward the oncoming truck and her left upper leg and hip were the points of first impact. Mrs. Simpson, he continued, you are very lucky that the head trauma appears relatively minor, nothing that shouldn't heal fairly quickly on its own. But your left leg was severely damaged. You must have very strong bones because your leg didn't break. But, because it didn't, all the muscles and ligaments and soft tissue in your leg have split apart under the strain, so we had to reset them. As I said, there doesn't seem to be any neurological damage; you have some serious bruising and I don't like the look of your eye, but I think your leg is your biggest problem and that is simply going to require time to heal. We will keep you tonight. Barring anything unforeseen you can go home tomorrow but you should get to your GP as soon as possible for follow-up.

That night had passed in a blur for Ray; picking up his daughter, making sure she got some food, long hours sitting in Janice's hospital room with various machines and intravenous tubes hooked up to her, taking Elaine back home to bed. Janice seemed to slip in and out of sleep, only occasionally opening her eyes a crack to acknowledge her daughter or to ask Ray to see about getting more morphine. At about three in the morning Ray had slipped out and gone home for a couple of hours sleep.

3.

Although Ray was full of misgivings, Janice was released the next day, confined to a wheelchair. She was obviously relieved to be going home. Ray sent her and Elaine off in a handi-taxi while he brought the car home, stopping to fill a prescription for painkillers on the way. Elaine and Ray had struggled to get Janice into their bed but she said it was too painful to try to get up on the high bed, so they wheeled her into the living room instead and eased her onto the couch.

Janice had slept for a week, stranded on her couch. She would awake moaning and crying out and Ray kept plying her with her medication. Ray had called her GP, who urged him to

make sure she got enough fluids and to continue on the pain killers and to bring her in as soon as possible.

Ray took some leave time from his job as a mid-level planner with the city while Janice struggled with various agonies on the couch. The pain was constant, periodically forcing a loud moan out of her, which prompted Ray to coming running to her side with a glass of water and he would ply her with morphine, forcing the pills into her dry and cracked lips. Often she would lie still on her back, complaining that she couldn't focus her eyes. At one point about three days after she got home she started to shake uncontrollably. She had finally fallen asleep in Ray's arms as he had lain with her helplessly. For a time she had seemed unable to speak, helplessly croaking out her pain; only later—when the ominousness of her suffering had become, too late, apparent—did they find out she had suffered a minor stroke from a cerebral blood vessel haemorrhaging. Her speech returned after a worry-filled day but she kept complaining about dizziness and being unable to read or even watch TV because she still couldn't bring her eyes into focus.

After several days of intense suffering Janice had finally felt well enough to be bundled into a handi-taxi by Ray to see her GP. Over the next few days Ray struggled with her in and out of various doctors' offices and laboratories, while Ray alternated between half-heartedly stabbing at the piling up work that he had brought with him and absently picking his way through the out-of-date magazines that seemed wash up in these lobbies in startling numbers. But out of the whirl of appointments a series of treatments had started to emerge and Janice slowly improved. At first wheelchair-bound, her ability to walk had partially returned. After the cast was removed she was given an elaborate brace to strap on and she was then able to hobble around on crutches and soon had graduated to a walker.

Much else remained difficult. Her self-confident determination only slowly revived. Her memory, once so sharp, was now unreliable. Ray was sometimes shocked by how quickly Janice forgot things until she finally took to carrying around a notebook and started writing down little reminders that she consulted periodically. Her speech was slurred, one cheek was numb, her eyes drooped and her head wobbled, all accompanied by many drugs – nerve blockers, muscle relaxants at night and anti-depressants. At night she was often wakened by

nightmares about the accident. She could no longer drive and for a long time would throw up her arms and scream whenever another car approached too closely or a pedestrian appeared in front of them. Ray found himself driving almost gingerly when she was in the car, at an almost painfully slow speed, trying not to trigger Janice's panicked reactions.

Two police officers had shown up at their door soon after the accident, and one sat with them asking questions while the other officer filled in a report. They seemed almost to have pre-determined that Janice was at fault: Did you cross on the red light? Why didn't you see the truck coming? Did you look both ways? Only after did Janice remember that there is no light at that crosswalk and that she had been struck more than half way across the intersection so she couldn't have unwittingly stepped into traffic. Ray, angered, tried to follow up with the police but when he eventually connected again by phone with the officers who had interviewed them they seemed uninterested in any clarifications of what had happened and Ray had finally slammed down the phone in frustration.

Her insurance company was worse; it had at first been helpful but turned brutely uncooperative—the friendly woman initially assigned to them was replaced by a cold, grudging man, phone calls stopped being returned, payments stopped arriving—when Janice and Ray, after the insurer offered them a laughably small amount of money as settlement, hired a lawyer who laughed cynically and told them that this was typical behaviour of the insurer if you didn't just accept what they were prepared to offer, however unfair. He warned them that, even though Janice's case was relatively straightforward and there was no doubt of a fairly large settlement, the reality was that years of litigation loomed.

But in between all the police and doctors and physiotherapists and lawyers they had slowly settled into a new routine. Ray and Elaine would sometimes share furtive surprised glances as Janice reacted in some completely novel way to circumstances—disorganized, given to long periods of depressed introspective stillness punctuated by short bursts of mostly irrational anger, but no longer with any happily humming coda—as if she was a stranger suddenly sent to live among them. Janice complained to Ray her own body was so alien to her now that sometimes she felt like she was an operator learning how to manage a new and not very well-built machine.

4.

Ray awoke with a start. Janice was lying on her side with her back to him as she often did, but she was shaking. As Ray lay for a moment trying to orient himself after waking so abruptly Janice started to moan. He quickly leaned over her. Her fists were tightly balled into her eyes. Sweetheart, what's wrong? he asked. She seemed barely able to talk. My head, my head, she groaned, I have the worst headache ever! Shit, said Ray, hang on, I'll get your morphine pills. Ray leapt out of bed and ran to the bathroom. When he got back Janice was thrashing on the bed, making gurgling noises. Janice, are you OK? She continued thrashing, drool running out of her contorted mouth. Ray ran over to the dresser and grabbed the phone and punched 911.

Within ten minutes Janice lay unmoving in an ambulance as it flashed through the streets, as Ray and Elaine watched her face worriedly, tears running down Elaine's cheeks. It looks like a stroke, the ambulance worker had told them as they had bundled Janice out of their bed onto a stretcher, we have to get her to a hospital as fast as we can.

There was no hanging around hospital hallways this time. Janice's stretcher had been pulled swiftly into an operating room surrounded by nurses and doctors. One nurse had politely but firmly turned Ray and Elaine away at the swinging doors of the operating room. You'll have to wait here, I'm sorry. We'll let you know what is happening as soon as possible.

They had been tortured by the wait. Elaine was distraught; her young mind couldn't comprehend the sight of her mother moaning and rocking her head back and forth as the ambulance attendants struggled with her down the stairs and then Janice's awful stillness, her mouth a slack scar across her face, as the flashing lights of the ambulance reflected through the opaque windows. Ray tried to be as patient as he could, but he found it impossible to keep a note of exasperated fear out of his own voice. After what seemed like an eternity Elaine had finally settled down and was cuddling a hot chocolate Ray had managed to coax out of an uncooperative vending machine while nestling herself in Ray's shoulder under the arm he kept around her as much as the hospital's perversely uncomfortable chairs allowed.

A doctor in operating gear approached them. Mr Simpson? he asked. Yes. How's my wife? Both Ray and Elaine had bolted to their feet and stood facing the tired-looking doctor as he pulled his operating mask down his neck. Your wife suffered a severe ischemic stroke. A blood clot traveled to her brain and caused massive damage. She was in an accident recently? he asked Ray, who nodded, ashen-faced. The doctor gave a sad little answering shake of his head. Yes, I noticed her leg and some scarring on her head. The accident may have contributed to or caused the formation of the clot. In any event, we tried every technique within our power but we were unable to save her. I'm very sorry.

There was a long silence as both Ray and Elaine stared in open-mouthed disbelief at the doctor. She's dead? Ray's voice seemed to be coming from somewhere outside of his body. I'm afraid so, the doctor confirmed. Elaine's shoulders were hunched closely and her back was painfully curved. A groaning No! emerged from her shivering lips. Oh god Elaine, said Ray reaching for her. She half-collapsed into his arms. Mummy! she cried out as big sobs pulled themselves out of Ray. The two of them clutched at each other. After a few moments the doctor said quietly, I'm afraid I have to go. Nurse Williams here will be able to help you. She will take you to see Mrs. Simpson if you wish. If it's any consolation, she didn't suffer very long. Again, my sincerest condolences.

He walked away with a sadly small and tight smile on his lips after a glance toward the nurse who had appeared unnoticed and waited patiently as Ray and his daughter stood in their wracked embrace.

Two. The Liveable City

Bibliographic Entry:

Vancouver, City of. *Vancouver's New Neighbourhoods – Achievements in Planning and Urban Design.*[33]

> The ghastliest sacrifices and pledges, including the sacrifice of the first-born; the most repulsive mutilations, such as castration; the cruellest rituals in every religious cult (and all religions are at bottom systems of cruelty)—all these have their origin in that instinct which divined pain to be the strongest aid to mnemonics.
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche[34]

1.

Ray had coped reasonably well with the aftermath of Janice's funeral, winding up her affairs, filling in the dreary paperwork of mortality for the various arms of government and insurance companies and banks.

He had less success handling Elaine, who had become sullen and withdrawn. At first after Janice had died she had cuddled with Ray each night, sobbing quietly as she tried to cope with her loss. But after the initial shock had worn off Ray found himself emotionally and physically drained and he would fall asleep with Elaine still in his arms, after which she, too depressed and jittery to sleep, would slink off to her computer, staring forlornly into the hypnotic blue light of the screen as she sought solace from cyber-friends late into the night.

She seemed to fall increasingly under the computer's spell and before long became reluctant to be with Ray, preferring the cold but never-sleeping comforts of Facebook and Twitter. Sometimes Ray would awake with a start at two or three in the morning and would see the ghostly light emanating from Elaine's room. She would snarl angrily when he forced her to log off and go to bed, her eyes heavy with black bags underneath darkly-lined mascara balefully accusing Ray as she stamped to her bed at Ray's repeated proddings. After a few

[33] City of Vancouver, *Vancouver's New Neighbourhoods - Achievements in Urban Design* (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2003).
[34] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Geneaology of Morals* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co. In.), Francis Golffing trans., p. 193.

weeks she was finding excuses to come home later and later and sometimes when she did Ray was sure he could smell cigarettes or alcohol on her breath, which she testily denied.

Ray found it harder and harder to rein her in; in fact he was himself withdrawing more and more anyway. He found himself out on the street, just wandering with no clear memory of when he had started out. His brain and body seemed to crave pointless perambulation and his will to resist only diminished over time.

2.

On some of his happier days after losing Janice Ray would sometimes sit outdoors on a bench or a concrete parapet, very still, his eyes closed, just listening to the city. He found it soothing to let his mind swim in the breathless cacophony of sound: the growling humming of engines, the odd discordant honk, the loud rubbery throat singing of tires intermingled with the gurgled chirping of children or the self-confident barking of men into their cell phones. There was a music of the sidewalk; Ray had only to tune into it, focusing his ears on it like zoom lenses, like electron microscopes of sound.

Ray particularly liked to do this downtown where the audio mix was richest. He would try to keep his eyes closed as long as possible and then pop them open, seeing his surroundings as if for the first time. He was always a little surprised when he did this. People seemed to float down the street; more than a few feet away and they swam out of aural range, their individual small noises drowned in the larger bustle. He would also be surprised by how fresh the materials around him suddenly appeared. They were almost musical themselves: the flinty rumble of concrete, brick's softer passions, the percussive tinkle of glass, wood like warm strings.

But then as Ray's eyes acclimatised older disappointments would set in. The fresh promise of materials quickly congealed into what since Janice's death had seemed to him to be conceits; what the fuck was really up with all this stuff that people walked over, into and around? Why do people accept it so unquestioningly? This sort of thinking forced Ray to smile ruefully to himself, since he was after himself a city planner. He had himself helped coax many of these conceits into being.

When growing up Ray had always thought it would be wonderful to have what he imagined to be the enormous power of planners: deciding what things looked like and where they went, putting this park here, or that sidewalk there. Although a certain almost martial earnestness evident in planning schools had always discouraged Ray from pursuing the usual credentials, several years ago he had nevertheless snared a job as a manager for the City's planning department based on some lucky breaks he had received running a small urban design studio that gained him some local notoriety.

He was hired to work on a major new development just outside of downtown on the north shore of False Creek. This job in North False Creek had seemed to Ray like some kind of miracle when he was hired, and for a long time he had happily contributed to the widespread enthusiasm for the new developments he was overseeing. In fact he was a bit of a star in the department, referred to jokingly as the "artiste" although the self-evidently weak humour was sometimes tinged with malice; the City's top management, obviously and contemptuously mistrustful of the sclerosis of long-established planners with seniority and an accompanying sense of battle-scarred entitlement, had brought Ray in as a fresh outsider to the plum job of managing what in their view was a marquis planning initiative. This planned redevelopment along North False Creek was a centrepiece project for the city, a major part of a broader bid to re-brand itself, turning several hectares of formerly decrepit post-industrial wasteland into a hip and creative node in what the rhetoric of planners referred to as the global knowledge economy. And why not? The city's traditional role as a port city for hinterland raw materials was in seemingly permanent eclipse.

The new North False Creek development was endlessly and breathlessly trumpeted as densely urban and cosmopolitan but nonetheless highly liveable. Liveable; this word had always, even when he was most enthusiastically mouthing planning certitudes, stuck a little in Ray's craw. It was bandied about as the highest form of praise of North False Creek seemingly everywhere: in breathless reports on each new tower in the local news media, in glossy brochures by the City's media department extolling the virtues of the new developments produced, in books and reports and articles from planning delegations, academics and media from around the world who had begun to arrive to study and praise

what was being done and of course in much of the advertising that accompanied all the new building.

Ray had started to grow more and more sceptical. His role in particular increasingly seemed to him not actually to be about planning, at least not in any meaningful sense of that word, but to be part of a parade; he was, he had started to suspect, supposed to be a promoter, a cheerleader for the new developments.

His scepticism only grew in intensity after Janice's death. What exactly, he started to ask out loud, did liveability *mean*? More shopping, as the devotion in to street-level and mostly high-end retail seemed to suggest? More views, as per the ubiquitous new towers in North False Creek with floor-to-ceiling windows cladding the often tiny living spaces? Sending real estate prices, already stratospheric, even higher? Was liveability about the street with its landscaped architecture of trees and cute street furniture and busy sidewalks connecting all the happy consumerism? What about the endless parade of the homeless shuffling down those same streets with their noisily hopeless shopping carts? What about *die*-ability? How did Janice's death, struck down after all on these very liveable streets, factor into all he happy verdicts on North False Creek?

At first Ray thought these were innocent enough questions, asked with the certainty that there were robust answers, but as he persisted with them, fuelled after his loss of Janice by grief and unchannelled rage, he found himself starting to grow out of sync with everyone he with whom he worked. At first his colleagues had been sympathetic to Ray and responded kindly and chirpily to his challenges Yes, shopping is good, they replied, with an unspoken but strongly implied, *of course*. Yes, views are good, *of course*. But why are they good? Ray persisted. What do you mean, they would ask; *isn't it obvious*? And anyway *what does it matter*? People want them and *our job is to provide them*. There seemed to be a collective digging in of heels around the question of liveability: it is, Ray was told repeatedly, *a good thing because people want it and people want it because it is good*. End of story.

But Ray persisted in his increasingly contumacious questioning. Some of his colleagues became condescending in their responses, alluding openly to his lack of professional training:

you should read Andres Duany[35] or Lawrence Halprin[36] or Edmund Bacon[37] Alan Jacobs.[38] One woman that Ray had been friendly with pressed a copy of Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*[39] into his hand after a meeting. Read this, she had whispered confidentially, it will help you understand.

But finally his colleagues grew impatient; in meetings after Ray spoke there would be uncomfortable silences around the table as people stared at him apparently either completely baffled or insofar as they understood his comments somehow offended by them. Ray began to feel he was behaving toward them just as Elaine was behaving toward him. And just like her he had changed tacks after a while and tried to stay within a small defensible space within his work where he could paddle around solitarily and more or less brainlessly. But that too fell apart as the shark-filled upper echelons of city management sent down almost every day it seemed some new wave of regulation and make-work tasks that swamped his little avoidance boat.

Figure 13 - Avoidance

Finally after months of increasing rancour he had quit – no one was sorry to see him go – and found piecemeal work as a project manager in construction. It wasn't ideal, but dealing with garbage delivery or arranging liability insurance or some other piece of minutiae felt relatively honest compared to the smoke and mirrors of the bureaucracy. And it left him free to indulge in meandering.

So feeling casually spun off by the centripetal force of the high-speed developments that motored along quite happily without him Ray was content to wander the streets sampling

[35] Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zybeck and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2000).
[36] Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1963).
[37] Edmund N. Bacon, *Design of Cities* (New York: Viking Press, 1967).
[38] Allan B. Jacobs, *Making City Planning Work* (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1978); Allan B. Jacobs, *Looking at Cities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).
[39] Jane Jacobs.

the sounds and sights they offered. Sometimes he would sit on a bench and pull out his copy of *The Death* his former colleague had given him and read passages. He found the tone of the book—its self-conscious straight-talking common sense with an undertow of anger that only occasionally flashed into the open—oddly unsettling. He would look with some bafflement at her sagacious and honourably aged face on the back cover.

And he would wonder at how all the folksy observations and prescriptions Jacobs made had somehow transformed themselves into the strangely uncanny built forms before him, each carefully placed brick and wooden beam and cement slab self-consciously referencing other times and other places. It all added up to a kind of anodyne pleasantness, but this same happily liveable environment had killed his wife. And even for those untouched by tragedy, Ray couldn't help feeling that all the supposedly-warm referentiality of the city before him—alluding, he knew from his planning experience, to European plazas and Athenian agoras and eastern temples—had something to hide, that Jacobs's straight-talking panaceas were somehow a kind of cloaking. But no one else shared his views; not just his former colleagues, but so too his friends would look at him askance when he started to question the shape of the city around them. The worst response was a kind of pitying sympathy some people would get in their eyes when he started to say that he found North False Creek to be oppressive or the city was turning into a death trap that everyone happily accepted. That look was inevitably followed by silence and changing of the subject.

But Ray couldn't stop his illicit thoughts. Ray found his solitary excursions seeking out the sources of his discontent were becoming increasingly involuntary. And he wasn't always walking either. Sometimes he would suddenly find himself behind the wheel of his car driving down a freeway miles from his home with absolutely no memory of how he had gotten there. At other times he snapped into consciousness sitting in his car pondering the intersection where Janice's accident had occurred. He would realize he had been there for some time, completely lost in gazing over every nook and cranny of the intersection, every bend and texture of the concrete, the streetlights, the small bumps in the asphalt, the wispy strands of grass nearby, the minutiae of the space where Janice had been struck. Like a soundtrack to a movie, one question was replaying over and over in his mind as he sat lost in contemplation: How had this happened? he asked himself. How the fuck had this happened?

He was of course angry at the driver of the truck: probably going too fast, inattentive for a moment, maybe he had forgotten his sunglasses, whatever. But it wasn't just him at fault. The built form of the intersection and the whole apparatus of causation—the car manufacturers and marketers, the urban planners—and the indifferent institutionalized reaction to Janice's accident—the hospital, the insurance company, the police—all pointed to a massive inter-locked system which seemed to enthral almost *everyone*, not only the driver, pulling them one way or another into the tangled web. How had this happened? How could so much social energy go into setting up one vulnerable woman on a firmly resistant platform where hurtling metal could tear her apart?

Ray looked down at the copy of *The Death* lying beside him on the passenger seat. Jane Jacobs's face looked up at him beatifically. Ray thought to himself with a small surge of anger that she too had played her role in setting Janice up in that intersection; the "liveable city" was the platform for what had happened. But it seemed impossible to hold Jacobs to account. How could Janice's accident be to any degree Jacobs's fault? And yet that small spring of anger bubbling up inside him would not go away.

Ray looked again at the intersection. He looked at the windshield of his car, his hands on the steering wheel, the dashboard, his feet on the pedals. He looked at his own face reflected in the windshield of his car. Fuck, he whispered to himself, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck.

Three. A Projectile Economy

Bibliographic Entry:

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. The Railway Journey[40]

> The emergence of the modern metropolis inaugurates a new regime of experience in which the mechanism of collective memory becomes indistinguishable from the differential modes in which the material physiognomy of the city replicates itself. The material substrate of the collective unconscious, the seat of memory, is not a sum total of individual brains, but the material reality of collective psychic life itself. In other words, the metropolis can only *signify* the structure of collective experience and collective memory by virtue of the fact that in some senses it *is* this same structure.
>
> Max Pensky[41]

1.

A set of train tracks ran behind where Ray lived. These tracks were a vestige of the old interurban trolley cars that once had connected towns up and down the coast. A few years ago a dedicated group of amateur train enthusiasts, mostly elderly white men who apparently had some residual pull on the authorities, managed to resurrect a couple of old trolley cars and get a short service running along the vestigial tracks. On summer week-ends vintage conductor and train engineer uniforms were dredged up out of closets and attics by these buffs and they played at running a train. They would avuncularly welcome slightly-overwhelmed but excited children and their bemused parents and the odd uncertain tourist; happily ringing the train's bells, calling out the destinations in a deep sing-song ("GRAN-ville IS-land!") and waving to bystanders as the half-full old trolleys jangled and creaked merrily up and down along the short stretch of old track bed.

The modest ambitions of the train buffs had been recently supplanted by the city as it prepared to host the Winter Olympics. The old trolley trains were now being integrated into a state-of-the-art transportation demonstration project: sleek new trolley cars were being

[40] Schivelbusch.
[41] Max Pensky, 'Memory, Catastrophe, Destruction: Walter Benjamin's Urban Renewal', *City*, 9 (2005).

imported from Belgium; crisply new stations were being constructed to accommodate them; the rails were being completely replaced. It was all part of an effort to make the city more liveable, less car-dependent, with multiple modes of transit, which Ray of course applauded. But Ray also feared huge gobs of money were being thrown at an undertaking that was certain to glisten brightly as the world gathered then, as with much else inspired by this coming sports spectacle, almost equally certain to deteriorate and fester expensively amidst much recrimination after the world's back was turned.

Ray watched with these mixed feelings for many weeks as the old tracks and their wooden ties still visibly infused with creosote were torn up and replaced by newer versions resting on thick concrete biers engineered precisely onto an extensively prepared earthen bed. Ray marvelled at the time and expense this transformation entailed, fascinated by the surreal railroad-building machines—weird amalgams of various over-sized industrial tools incongruously melded together, vaguely insect-like, with great prickly mechanical carapaces painted a yellow that somehow managed to be both cheerfully bright and firmly no-nonsense—that noisily lay the new rail bed.

Figure 14 - Laying Rail

Sometimes Ray would get up at dawn and walk on the tracks where the great machines sat mutely waiting. The tracks ran through an earthen channel cut deeply into the ground beside the road next to Ray's home, in some places creating a deep impress into the gently undulating streetscape surrounding the tracks, creating a kind of nether space half hidden from the streets high above it. As he walked on the tracks along the cut he passed under a bridge, with scattered evidence of homeless squatters: dirty rags, sodden cheap sleeping bags, pieces of cardboard. Ray stopped and knelt down to run his hands along the steel tracks. The cool metal seemed to evoke something almost like a sense memory; as a child, train

tracks had run close to his home and the feel of the cold tracks brought to mind faint recollections of lying in bed, listening to the distant roar of trains rushing through the night, a sound somehow both slightly unnerving and reassuring, an alien howl of power and freedom and transformation.

The city where Ray now lived, like many others in North America, had been in significant part created by the railroad. At a time in the mid-nineteenth century when the city had been comprised of not much more than a few sawmills and squatter shacks huddled around a magnificent but barely-used harbour, the Canadian Pacific Railroad, the CPR, had decided to place there its western terminus of its newly-established national rail line, one of the major transportation backbones of North American nation building. The nascent city had exploded in size as a result and nowhere had the new city been more strongly affected than the False Creek neighbourhood where Ray now lived.[42]

In order to convince it where to set its western terminus, the railroad was granted as incentive vast tracts of property, the whole as-yet undeveloped west side of the city of which False Creek formed a northern edge, in exchange for building its terminus downtown and it busily set out to pull profits out of the rough bush it inherited. Ray remembered a long time ago reading a fictional account somewhere, maybe in Jules Verne's *Voyage to the Centre of the Earth*, of an intrepid group of explorers trying to escape from an alien, hostile and cold world who were confronted by an impassably vast body of water; in a gesture of improbable science one of the trapped team threw a piece of ice into the water and then watched with upper-class British imperturbability as the lake was suddenly transformed into a great frozen sheet on which they could all swiftly skate on their way. A singularity: "a moment when order spontaneously emerges out of chaos."[43] Ray felt that the railroad arriving in his city was just such a singularity; a twin set of steel tracks, just like the ones Ray was running his hands over in the early morning, laid for the first time through the mountains and dense rain forest had in a historical instant transformed the forbiddingly bottomless darkly-treed landscape into *real estate*. Neatly subdivided gridlines suddenly ran through the bush infinitely

[42] Graeme Wynn, 'The Rise of Vancouver', in *Vancouver and Its Region*, ed. by Graeme Wynn and Timothy Oke (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), pp. 69-148 (p. 87); Chuck Davis, 'A Brief History of Greater Vancouver' <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/story.html> [accessed 10 March 2010].
[43] De Landa, p. 15.

in all directions, confidently anticipating open lawns and brightly-leafy streets to come, supremely, even contemptuously heedless of the geography or any contrary circumstances in its way.

The railway cut Ray walked down was short. It ended at a coffee shop built over a section of the track bed many years earlier when no one thought the old interurban trains would ever be resurrected. The shop was just opening for business when Ray arrived, and he went in to buy a muffin and took his breakfast down to the water where he found a spot on a grassy knoll. After he finished eating he lay back and felt the warming morning sun on his face. He closed his eyes and slipped effortlessly into sleep. He had a vivid dream about being part of a great flock of some kind of bird-human amalgam, drifting high in the air over the part of the city where he now lay sleeping, only it was at some point in the far past, before the railroad had come, and all of them marvelled at the quiet, forested space beneath them, in which only small knots of people were visible. He later wrote notes in his journal about the dream he had, vigorously underlining key images or feelings that came back to him, thinking that he might work them up later into a story of some kind or a poem:

> *They dreamt of* ***floating*** *through the air; they laughed as they effortlessly rolled over. They looked down on a very innocent and different world.*
>
> *They cooed over the silence: no great machinic hum of cities, no monotonous banging of endless armies of pistons; no plangent hissing of many thousands of tires in ceaseless revolution; no great black billows of smoke pumped into the air. Except for a very few special occasions,* ***no things flashed past.***
>
> *They were thrilled by the haunting geography not yet moulded to* ***explosive needs****: no long, ruler-straight cuttings and embankments rammed through valleys and mountains; no linked tunnels, bridges and viaducts; no network of steel lines connecting every point to every other;* ***no machine ensemble****, intervening everywhere between exponentially-increasing hordes of travellers and the land they traversed.*
>
> *They loved not only what they saw, but* ***how*** they *saw it: there was no* ***panoramic vision****—the commonplace of looking at a world passing at such high speed that telegraph poles, the new*

electronic fences of the regime of speed, were turned like everything nearby into a translucent blur while the far distance smoothly glided by at a stately rate—such did not exist here.

They listened to the people below them chattering as they travelled; the world they drifted above did not seek the diversions of newspapers or penny novels from the monotony of the world panoramically flashing by; every rut in the road, every farmer they passed, every new building was an absorbing event.

The people below them had a kind of innocence; they had not yet built up psychic blockades, what Simmel called a cosmopolitan crust or what Freud called a ***stimulus shield****, which were soon both to elevate a very old social formation into one of the defining characteristics of modernity:* ***the stranger****.*

Nor had anyone in this dreamworld yet experienced the catastrophe of massive machines going fatally ***awry****, killing and injuring hundreds at a time, the first mass deaths outside of wartime or disease,* ***machinic death****; the horror of accidents such as the collision on the Paris-Versailles line in 1842 had not yet reverberated throughout Europe; and just as after 9/11 in our own time, much was to change in response to these calamities: the development of insurance schemes, standardized time, new business structures, the medicalising of trauma: the first bureaucratic* ***aftershocks of modernity.***

They marvelled at the silence; no groans or winces came from those experiencing the smaller and often mysterious hurts brought on by primitive high-speed technology, such as "railway spine," the back injuries resulting from ceaseless mechanical jarring of bodies sitting in crudely suspended train cars with steel wheels as they flew down the unforgiving tracks. No distance had grown yet between ***speed*** *and* ***experience****; few techniques of suspension had evolved yet to cushion the bodies of travellers in softness.*

They laughed at the stillness. Only by ***water*** *were* ***things*** *uprooted; on* ***land*** *things—all things—were not only slow, they were like dumb brutes: solid, tied to a place, mostly immoveable, implacable. They had nowhere to go! Not* ***every thing of value to anyone*** *had yet been uprooted from the ground and spewed great distances overland to become—they giggled over the thought!—****commodities.*** *What, after all, distinguished all* ***the commodities to come*** *from the things over which they floated in their dream world if not their becoming* ***things that move****? Things had not yet become strangers, for whom aspirations to be ephemeral objects of* ***interior*** *fantasy and desire were soon to made made possible by their exterior* ***placelessness****,*

their value almost wholly ***arbitrarily*** *connected to where they were to be created or the work that would create them or the means that would soon put them in someone's hands many miles form their origins; there were no shopping centres, no department stores, outside of harbours they had no vast* ***overflow*** *of things transformed into goods.*

The places they floated over (at least those that were not harbours) had not themselves yet become commodities, abstract ***spatial*** *nodes in a monotonous geography of ever-accelerating exchange. They wondered at how the small gatherings of people below them remained* ***distinct*** *from their surrounding hinterland and passage overland* ***between*** *cities was rare.*

Few cities they saw beneath them, except some old Roman *vestiges or bastides or New World ports, were yet laid out in* ***grids****—streetscape to the imperium; the urban form of choice for Greek,* Roman, European *and American slave empires as they blazed their stamps across the world—the most rationally efficient arrangement of roads, best able to handle vast flows of strangers.*

There was, except on tiny boats scuttling across vast oceans, no machinically-induced reciprocity; little metal interacting with flesh for instance; no abstract relationship of space to time; no correlation between speed and accident;, little dependence on protective mechanisms such as shock absorbers or insurance schemes to stand between bodies and injury.

Everyone they watched on land moved at their own pace; walking or pulled by animals; ***physical power was directly, visibly traceable to its source****: to running water or muscle. As a result, the animals they saw were still king: no space for the people they floated over but animal space and no time but animal time; every distance measurable by the number of paces a person or an animal required to cross it, all their time and space was exertion and blood and sweat.*

The coming machines, they knew sadly, would "annihilate"[44] *both time and space; it would* ***slaughter*** *them like the dumb animals they are in the dream world over which they float, their carcasses would be pushed roughly to the side. In this slaughter's aftermath people would soon experience* en mass *the addictively liberating sensations of being* ***hurled****, they would liken the experience to being a* ***projectile****; those hurtling through space would be given a name taken from nautical usage, the source of the closest comparable sensations:* ***passengers.*** *Soon these people plodding below them were going to take flying through space for granted and, just as projectiles do,*

[44] Schivelbusch, p. 33.

they would experience the groaning world ***shifting and hardening against them***, the *world as a vast* ***stimulus shield***.

They watched with growing dismay as they thought of the angry crowds that would soon be mobilized by the hurtling machines to kill each other on a scale that the innocent people beneath them could not yet imagine, however terrible wars had theretofore been; technology would hoover millions of men up off the farms and out of the villages they floated over into killing conflagrations, the explosive power of projectiles focused on a scale which to this day still cannot be properly comprehended.

And thus they fell to earth….

They knew that ***a*** *key, if not* ***the*** *key, to the coming apocalypse was* ***power that emanates from sources that are out of view****: power thusly redefined would bring* ***a new regime in the nature of things: the projectile economy.***[45]

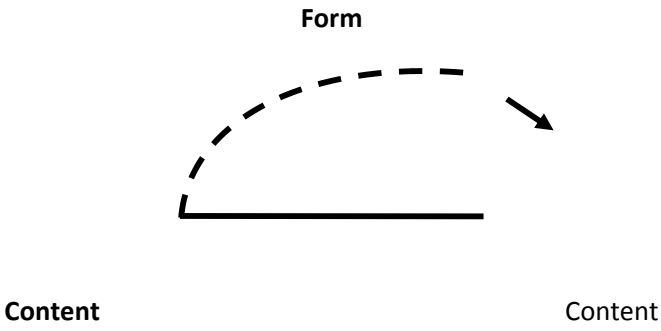


Figure 15 - Form & Content

3.

Ray awoke on his grassy knoll, feeling the sun gently caressing his face. He let his eyes open slowly, not wanting to break the spell of his vivid dreaming, his sleepy gaze drifting over the urban slope that rose up the steep south bank of False Creek not far from where he lay, a patchwork quilt of tightly interlocked three and four-storey buildings wrapped over its surface.

[45] The preceding is a summary of Schivelbusch.

As he let consciousness slowly seep back in Ray lazily remembered when he was a young man in the early 1980s and had a girlfriend who had rented a small house on those same slopes, one of many clapboard cottages that still dotted the neighbourhood before the wave of condominiums that stood there now had completely taken over. Ray fondly remembered lying in her tub in her small home looking out the big bathroom window at the then-vacant field next door, a view that except for the odd modernist office tower hulking in the far distance could have been found in some small town in the rural hinterland.

Ray had heard somewhere that this cottage, which along with several others dotted through the neighbourhood had somehow managed to survive until then in a state of seemingly perpetual slow decay, had been originally erected by the CPR at some earlier point to house its workers who worked in the roundhouse repair shed and warehouses in False Creek below their houses. As Ray had reclined soaking in his girlfriend's tub, he had felt like he was soaking up not just the hot water but the last warm embers of the railway's slow-motion big bang, enjoying the final rays of heat emitting from a technological supernova just before it finally faded into blackness.

4.

Ray had learned some details about the history of the city in which his girlfriend's modest cabin had been ensnared because late in his now-aborted bureaucratic career he had researched the history of the new developments that he was managing as a planner. He had volunteered to do this task originally solely as a means to get out briefly from under the increasingly minatory weight of his planning department's politics but he had typically enough gone overboard, his burgeoning interest bordering on obsession, pushing him to spend long hours trolling the archival records.

He even found himself standing outside the half-buried concrete bunker-like municipal archives in the gloomy early mornings at the end of that winter awaiting the unlocking of the doors, then spending the entire day rummaging among the card indexes and computer terminals and microfiche machines, endlessly writing out his requests for material in the arcane numerology of archivism and spreading the contents of various boxes patiently

provided by the staff out over the wide tables. Ray often lingered until closing time when he re-emerged into the darkness.

After some weeks his boss, who had demanded to see what Ray had produced and who had then reacted with some disbelief to the scribbled notes and snippets of poems and pencil sketches that were the only product of Ray's long absences, had angrily reined him back in.

5.

Ray, in his archival seclusion before he was forced to curtail his searches, had found clippings and photographs and newspaper articles about how the lives of those in the nascent city were transformed by the railroad's arrival; by the 1920s it fed relentless industries that were well established around the bay where Ray now lived with Elaine in their small sad apartment and across from which rose the sparkling liveable towers of North False Creek.

Ray found old black and white photographs of the smugly fat and darkly roiling smokestacks almost as dense as the forests they had swept away, belching thick black smoke, literally an inferno, while thick pipes below ground oozed permanently poisonous effluent into the bay, making False Creek into a blackened and toxic crater. Ray imagined the water with oily scum and wood chips floating in it, a toxic open air sewer, its putrid waters mocking the hot and thirsty men who toiled away in what Ray guessed were sweltering, airless factories.

The 1920s and '30s were, Ray thought, a black and white time, grainy like the photographs that documented where the noxious industries around the inlet where Ray now lived had jostled for space with railway buildings along with decaying abandoned dockyards and such liminal land uses as an Indian reservation.

As he rummaged around in the archives Ray had come across some beautiful but terrible photographs of the reservation taken in the 1930s as part of a murder investigation. He imagined hard white detectives striding loudly up cheap wooden decking among people they derided as fat squaws and dirty squalling children wrapped in rags, unhesitant about kicking the shit out any Indian who gave them grief. The photographs were, Ray thought, darkly literal evidence of Benjamin's comment that photographs were returns to a crime scene

("Does not the photographer—descendent of augurers and haruspices—uncover guilt in his pictures?").[46] Surely, Ray had thought as he pored over these pictures, whoever were the victims and whoever the perpetrators of the crimes that motivated the cops to take their crude photographs, the furtive slums clinging to the bay were the real criminality; none of the oyster feasts that once must have been common along these shores now for their hopelessly impoverished Indian denizens, their ancestral middens (Ray had read that the middens were once so vast that early settlers had used them as paving material for their early roads) now scattered and buried; only poverty, recrimination and fear left for them, seemingly forever.

The Indian shacks were not the only problem the by-then-festering False Creek inlet presented to white burghers of the city. Some politicians, business groups and citizens' committees saw the toxic brew of rapaciously sprawling industry—by 1918 more steel ships were produced in False Creek than anywhere else in the British Empire[47]—savaged slum dwellings and decaying old bridges built on rotting wood pilings hammered more or less capriciously around the bay as a provocation. They pressed for drastic reform, wanting False Creek somehow to be cleaned up or, if beyond hope like the Indian shacks, washed away.

City Beautiful planners such as Thomas Mawson were brought in from Britain to scold the roughly provincial patricians, telling them the quickly-growing city should turn its back on the unpleasantly festering industry of the bay.[48] Their Arcadian plans looked back through Chicago's White City to a mythical classical past. They wanted streets to provide moral instruction in the good life. But such stucco-clad dreams seem to have been too saccharine for the hard-nosed burghers of the city who were probably, Ray imagined, closer in spirit to those cops who swaggered around kicking native ass.

Except these guys were rich, their pinched necks and tightly wan faces under slicked-back hair staring pugnaciously out from society columns and obituary notices, and their fortunes were mostly tied one way or another to the boom and bust industries such as those around

[46] Walter Benjamin, 'A Short History of Photography', *Screen*, 13 (1972), 5-26.
[47] Bruce Macdonald, 'Southeast False Creek, History', *City of Vancouver: Creating a Sustainable Community*, 1998 <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/southeast/history.htm#1800s> [accessed 11 March 2010].
[48] Wynn, pp. 69-148 (p. 118).

False Creek. It wasn't moral instruction these guys wanted in the end, Ray guessed, it was higher and more consistent profits.

And where better to learn to hunt for profits than from the Americans? In the late 1920s the legendary urban planner Harland Bartholomew from St. Louis was hired by the Town Planning Commission to advise on future developments.[49] Bartholomew promised to be guided not by nostalgic harkenings to a mythical European past but by a toughly modern North American functionalism: how can this city be made *to work* best? Ray wrote little imaginary scenarios in his notebook. He had tough, fat politicos sitting around in smoky rooms drinking scotch and sucking on fat cigars: enough fucking around already, he had them saying to Bartholomew, a meek man Ray guessed, standing nervously sweating in his suit while these businessmen in shirtsleeves barked at him, we want to make some real fucking money.

Oh yeah, Ray had them add, when you're drawing up your fucking plans put in some drapes or something to make our wives happy. Ha-ha-ha. Fucking women, Ray thought of them saying, please get them to shut the fuck up. Ha-ha-ha.

Ray snapped out of his film-noirish fantasies to pore over the planning study that Bartholomew produced. Only a few aspects of it were ultimately implemented but the plan had an ambitious scope: Bartholomew showed not only streets but schools and recreation and the location of civic amenities and businesses; how, that is, to make money and how to make the city look nice and how to look after the kids and everything in between. As well the plan presciently and often surprisingly poetically pointed to the surging importance of the automobile and it planned a streetscape intended to integrate the pleasures and practicality of the car more completely into daily life.

As he slowly worked through the report, it seemed obvious to Ray that Bartholomew recognized False Creek's importance and wanted to revamp it completely: he sketched a magisterial new city hall on the downtown side of the Creek's headlands with sweeping staircases leading down to a grand new bridge behind which massive new and rationally

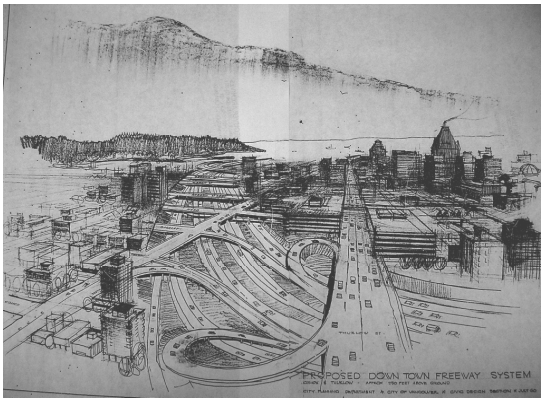
[49] Harlan Bartholomew, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver British Columbia, Including a General Plan for the Region* (Vancouver Town Planning Commission, 1928).

rectilinear industrial docks around the Creek would provide the firm foundation to the city's industries, washing away the ragged cacophony of helter-skelter and boom-and-bust production and replacing them with hard and sure industry relentlessly pounding out the city's wealth, the industrial heart from which the newly mobilized arteries of the streetscape would flow. The looming city hall, the acres of stairways and parade grounds, the hulking bridge screening off False Creek's martially ordered and presumably now relentlessly productive docks from the hundreds of motorists who Bartholomew assured the city fathers—correctly as it turned out—would soon be zooming by; together all these projected ideal forms made a kind of apotheosis of False Creek

6.

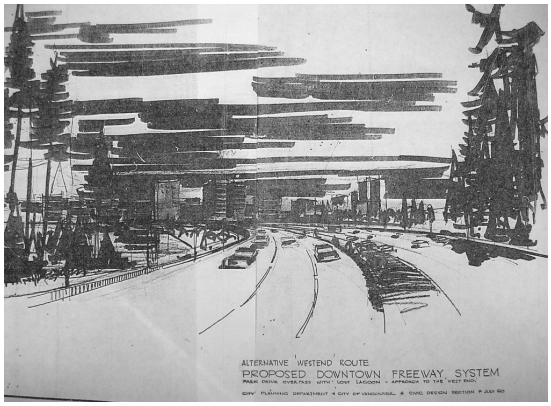
Except for one bridge, most of these central aspects of Bartholomew's vision never came to pass, at least in part because they were too expensive as the city was overtaken by depression and world war. But Bartholomew's vision of a vital core of industry in False Creek fed by a vibrantly pumping lattice-work of streets connecting the necessities of life and work seemed to remain alive in the background of the city's hopes.

To Ray's eyes, post-war attempts at modernization segued neatly from Bartholomew's ideas, only rendering them at a vastly increased scale. The most striking example was whereas Bartholomew had proposed a modestly efficient central connector road as a downtown boundary of the little inlet and its industry, city engineers in the 1950s—Ray looked at their photographs and wrote out in his notebook a new scenario for them: still in smoky rooms, still all men, but now with military-style brush cuts kept from their service in the Second World war and small mouths and hard, calculating eyes and slide rulers instead of scotch, still disdainful of women except as secretaries and hookers and housewives to keep the kids out of their hair when they got home—started to dream in their peculiarly parched ways of a massive concrete fortress of driving, with four or six lanes of traffic in each direction with prodigious overpasses guarding the approaches, elevated sections cincturing the waterfront and long trenches driven deep through downtown; in sum a freeway. *This*, Ray wrote out the engineers saying, is fucking art.



© 1960 City of Vancouver , by permission[50]

Figure 16 – A Work of Art



© 1960 City of Vancouver , by permission[51]

Figure 17 – A Work of Art

As a step in this direction in the 1950s the city built a new steel-girded bridge towering over False Creek, with massive cloverleaf approaches, high enough to accommodate the ocean-going tankers the planners envisioned to be soon plying a deeply-dredged inlet. Similarly a collapsing old viaduct at the Creek's southeast end was used as an excuse to nonchalantly sweep away Hogan's Alley, a messily vibrant black community, replacing it with stolid and sterile concrete overpasses, the first

[50] Archives 137-F-2 1960 B 1469-6
[51] Archives 137-F-2-1960 B 1469-11

Figure 18 – The Viaduct

link in the long-hoped-for freeway chain. Fuck them, Ray imagined the engineers scoffing at the residents of Hogan's Alley whom the police probably rousted out of their shacks and pushed onto the unwelcoming streets, fuck them, these people stand in the way of what *works*, the fucking art work of progress.

Ray looked with fascination at the countless studies engineers had used to buttress their beliefs that freeways were a form of road needed badly enough to justify their exorbitant costs; these images seemed to him to form a kind of art history: some hand-drawn versions of the spaghetti interchanges seemed to Ray to hearken unmistakably back to William Harvey's 17th century drawings of the human circulatory system, suggesting through this analogy not only the healthiness of good circulation but the firm connection between the proposed highways and a venerable *past*; other images tried create a robust link to the world as it really was in the *present*, using careful counts of traffic as the basis for projections forward; and finally the swooping images that with titles like "1976 Desire Lines (non-directional)" pointed to the abstract possibilities of the *future*.

The vast trove of these drawings in the archives suggested a certain nervousness among the engineers, as if they were obligated compulsively to render repeatedly the future as they wanted to imagine it, hoping to find the magic image that would eventually move their ideas forward. And it seemed the engineers hoped to find in these images the compelling impression, the mark of the reality of auto transit, which would both motor the transformation they saw as inevitable, and determine its form, the long sweeping concrete arms of the freeway and its many intersections.

But it was not to be. Ray had heard the story of what happened next repeated so often in planning circles that it took on the overtones of a morality play. Those brutish engineering

men schemed and planned and tried their hardest, but all their evil and once seemingly inevitable plans came to naught. Senior governments hesitated for years over ponying up the cash and when they were finally on the verge of giving in, local protesters started to stir. Ray looked at the earnest faces of the protesters in newspaper clippings and he thought their anger had a touching innocence, like characters from a Manichean novel provoked beyond endurance. Merchants, academics, progressive planners, drug-smoking hippies and the residents of parts of town threatened by the engineer's planned demolitions banded together to fight the proposals. Leaflets were printed, rallies were held, marches were undertaken, petitions were signed. And incredibly, miraculously, the plucky little bands of hippies and Chinese-Canadian business people and frizzily grey-haired professors had won. A newly formed group of progressive politicians, many of whom had emerged from the freeway debates, swept to power in the early 1970s and scuttled the inner-city freeway plans forever.[52]

Left to its own devices, False Creek suffered a slow decline after these plans for its radical reformation were defeated, and it was the tail end of that decay Ray had seen when he had first moved to the city in 1981. The sun had definitely set on these industries along its shores; they had closed their old and battered doors one by one or moved away, leaving forlorn and collapsing empty buildings amidst the toxic soil and waters as sad reminders of its industrial glory, such as it was. The federal government had some success in the 1970s in reclaiming a small island off one shore of the Creek as a marketplace and in encouraging some social housing nearby. The provincial government, desperate to resuscitate an economy gripped by recession, organized a small world's fair along the north shore in the mid-1980s. After that short effluence, the eerily empty acres of still-polluted soil in the heart of the city sat barren while the land's ownership was squabbled over and developers and planners and other urbanists jockeyed for position around what should happen next. Finally in the 1990s, after the province sold off the lands to a Chinese billionaire for next to nothing, new buildings in North False Creek started to emerge, including the seawall that Ray now so often walked.[53]

[52] Ken MacKenzie, 'Freeway Planning and Protests in Vancouver: 1954-1972' (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1984); V. Setty Pendakur, *Cities, Citizens and Freeways* (Vancouver: s.n., 1972).
[53] Olds.

7.

Ray, with his pants rolled up, stood up to his knees in the water of False Creek early one morning just after sunrise. His dog waited uncertainly at the water's edge still hopefully gripping her ball but confused by this reversal of roles. But Ray ignored her and stood facing the massive concrete structures, some still under construction, rising before him, transfixed. What powered these structures, what enabled *them* and not something else to stand there? Bartholomew's vision of False Creek had been quite different in its specific details and while it too had projected massive change for False Creek it had never been implemented. Those hard-eyed engineers had plans for False Creek too, surrounding it with freeways, plans which also never came to fruition. Instead, these concrete behemoths stood in their place. What had changed? Why did one happen and other not?

Ray knew that central roles had been played by the various ebbs and flows of global capital intermingling with local politics and markets. Blah, blah, blah, whatever; Ray got impatient thinking about those approaches to what had happened in False Creek. It wasn't that they were necessarily wrong. But any analysis—economic, sociological, political—of what had caused development on False Creek to embark on its present direction seemed to him to overlook the *specific* types of forms found in these buildings. Why were *these* types of forms built here?

Or, conversely, if specific buildings *were* considered, as in architectural criticism, they were considered *only* as forms, as if their content somehow *didn't matter*, lost in what Ray found to be that curiously anthropomorphic language of architects: "public urban rooms" that "civilized" the city and were handled "with aplomb" if the buildings were "relating well to each other" or "turning their backs on the street" if they were not.[54] Architectural criticism[55] seemed to Ray to be like a kind of neutron bomb of language, obliterating the people while leaving the buildings intact, an impression confirmed by the photographs that sometimes accompanied this writing.

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[54] Punter, pp. 71,250,70,50.

[55] Berelowitz; DA Architects + Planners, *Placemaking: The Creation of Social Spaces* (Vancouver: DA Architects + Planners, 2008); Harold D. Kalman, *Exploring Vancouver: Ten Tours of the City and Its Buildings* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1974); Christopher MacDonald, *A Guidebook to Contemporary Architecture in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2010).

Of course, Ray told himself, trying to be reasonable, nobody can do everything. Still, he wanted to think somewhere between these two poles of explanation, neither letting the content of what had transpired obviate the form of building that took place around False Creek nor considering the forms as ends-in-themselves. What *exactly*, Ray wondered, did these buildings have to say to say to us? Of what impulses were they the traces?
Ray suddenly realized that part of the answer lay obviously in front of him if only he could bring it into focus: the ubiquitous use of concrete.

Figure 19 - Concrete

Concrete was the missing ingredient in Bartholomew's plans; when he did his report in the 1920s concrete had only been in widespread usage as a building material for about a decade; it had not yet worked its transformative magic on the cityscape. But it was the implicit medium necessary for all the massive plazas and new city hall and rationalizing of an industrial dockland in False Creek. Absent a Haussmannian will, no other material made those plans practicable. Concrete was also the implicit material underpinning of the freeway plans, making it possible even to imagine the vast changes that the engineers envisioned while at the same time inevitably creating the spectre of aphotic acres that so aroused the neighbourhoods that stood in the engineers' way. Concrete was what made possible too the massive changes that had recently taken place in North False Creek. What then was peculiar to concrete that allowed it to become so prominent yet so under-acknowledged in considerations of urban form? How did it work? What made it so ubiquitous?

Four. Impressive Sites

Bibliographic Entry:

Shelley Rice, Parisian Views[56]

> He who Builds without passion or courage will seek respite for his duties in precedents, habits and calculation tables, and will find in them reason for his decisions as foreign to his own sensibilities as they are to the requirements of the problem. A work so conceived can have no emotional power; it is bound to be dull and sterile. It may turn into something shocking and aggressively ugly, if it breaks with pre-existing harmonies, or if its author tries to conceal its paucity with artifices that will only further reveal his want of sincerity, his vanity and his insignificance. In the Song dynasty, there was a Chinese painter famous for the subtly of his art in conveying the poetry of morning mists. He was once asked by a disciple what was the secret which made his work as moving a nature herself. The old master replied: "It is because I do it with a pure heart and all the forces of my soul".
>
> Eugène Freyssinet[57]

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. Hs eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.
>
> Walter Benjamin[58]

[56] Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997).
[57] Eugene Freyssinet, 'On the Sublime', *Architectural Review Quarterly*, trans. by Andrew Saint, 5 (2001), 249-253 (p. 253).
[58] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 257-258.

1.

What makes concrete so ubiquitous? Why is this material so common? As he pondered this question, Ray sometimes feared that maybe he was becoming slightly autistic. He would be on one of his usual walks when suddenly it seemed that all he could register was his feet falling on the sidewalk, slapping step by slapping step. He felt as if he could only look down and, like a spectator of his own bodily movements, dumbly watch his feet plodding along the hard concrete walkway. It was like his brain became as rhythmically and flatly moronic as the soles of his shoes as he went—flap, flap, flap. Often when Ray was lost like this in his walking feet, he felt like a machine whose output was this small repetitive slapping of the soles of his shoes on the sidewalk.

Ray would often have similarly dislocated feelings when he drove his car. As he sat in his old Honda and performed the various routines of driving, he would become obsessed with the thought that he was in some vast factory, operating a machine that contributed in the creation of some massive but invisible product for which, for reasons Ray could not comprehend, his rote manoeuvres were essential.

But what most fascinated Ray was how human action and reaction interacted with the materials upon which he did his little rote operations: the hard slabs of concrete that utterly resisted the small slaps of his feet, or the smooth ribbons of asphalt. And this was how he approached his questions on concrete. In theory, he and millions of others could perform their little marching or driving operations—inscribed with their narratives: "I'm going for some food;" "I'm late, I'm driving very fast around this corner;" "I'm being hit by a truck"—over the same sidewalk or overpass or bridge for many thousands of years and if the concrete had been well made and hadn't been targeted by jackhammers or bombs or some other minor or major catastrophe it could remain impervious to daily wear and tear, insofar as we know, forever.

There was no other structural material capable of this; hard-packed dirt, wood, even asphalt or brick or stone all would, if left in place long enough, eventually show the impress of passing feet or rolling wheels, like those ancient buildings in Europe or Asia whose steps—marble or granite or whatever—gently curved from centuries of feet plodding up and down

them. Similarly, Roman stone roads were deeply etched with grooves from centuries of passing of countless wagons.

Concrete, on the other hand, was immutable, imperturbable. And concrete was almost unique in its protean plasticity. Most building materials—brick, say, or stone, or wood—were essentially piled up. When their usefulness as part of that particular built thing had ended, they could be disassembled and, often, used again somewhere else in some other thing. But concrete, unless it was used in blocks, was shaped to be one thing only; its form and its material were indissoluble. To remove the concrete structure—the overpass or the office tower—the concrete had to be destroyed as well.

Moreover, concrete is, to an extent that is as yet unknown, highly reproducible. The first modern concrete structure, a small lighthouse off the coast of England, was like a kind of material big bang, an explosion from which rushes all the subsequent millions of concrete structures.

And no wonder; concrete can be expanded in every direction, including up. The tallest concrete structure in the world at present is the Burj Dubai, at some 818 meters. This is roughly the height of a modest mount ain range, say the Laurentian Mountains north of Montreal, where Ray had spent many happy hours skiing as a boy. Of course, no one thought the Burj Dubai was the end of skyscrapers' climb skyward; new towers in the works already planned to exceed it and perhaps building would someday reach a virtual Himalayan level of urban peak or even beyond. So far only lack of will, rather than material constraint, seemed to limit how high up concrete could be piled.

In a way, Ray thought, concrete has similarities to a photograph, at least the old-fashioned pre-digital kind of photography that used film stock and chemicals. Like a massively heavy photographic plate, the surface of concrete is prepared for a steady barrage of human passage—the slapping footfalls on the sidewalk or the rolling wheels on the concrete bridge or overpass—just as rays of light gently but indelibly barrage photographic paper. Both processes centre on precisely mixed ingredients, kept in carefully controlled darkness, sealed

off. Both photographic sheet and wet concrete mix are then "exposed" in very specific circumstances; affixing one particular activity, and only that activity.

Figure 20 – Concrete Bridge

The specific array of the barrages that fall upon both film and concrete are densely layered with narrative meanings. Once the light is captured on the photographic surface, thereafter it is no longer a sheet of paper exposed to a toxic stew of chemicals but a photograph of a father or a picnic; the sheet of photographic paper is that picture and only that. Similarly, the formed concrete is not a hardened aggregate of water and minerals but a bridge or a condo tower or a prison. The structure is that and pretty much only that.

But in both photography and concrete construction these narratives are *ex post facto* to the basic formative act: that quick exposure to a time and place, frozen. Ray was struck by how a newly-laid sidewalk resembles a movie film, its panels ready to register the activity that it was formed to project, like a spooled out movie film, across which imagistic narratives flicker and flitter, everyday stories of life and death, sometimes compellingly urgent but much more often mundane, the routines and disasters of daily life that have already happened.

Figure 21 - Sidewalk

In another way of course, at the very centre of their respective processes the concrete sidewalk or overpass and photography almost mirror each other, each the exact opposite of

the other. Each photographic image captures a singular moment when a unique combination of rays of light collides with the photographic apparatus, indelibly impressing that moment in time. Every photograph is individual; as children are told about snowflakes, no two photographs are exactly alike. The concrete structure on the other hand congeals into a form which is everywhere almost exactly the same and which is precisely the point at which individual human action does *not* register. The concrete sidewalk in its near-universal design for example is constructed so as to utterly *resist* the footfalls of passers-by, marking the exact point at which the impress of human walking *stops*.

Ray had read once in a book by Lewis Mumford a glancing reference to the phrase "negative production," which Mumford used to characterize the destructive work of war.[59] Mumford suggested uncontroversially enough that war revolves around *erasing* value, but Ray liked how the phrase dispassionately suggested that war was in some—admittedly terrible—ways a *creative* force.

Ray thought there was a certain rough congruence between that idea of warfare's negative production and what happened—albeit much more innocently, fortunately, than in warfare, except when something goes wrong of course and injury results—on a sidewalk or overpass. The concrete sidewalk or bridge was like a mould, the negative space built around and singularly enabling the positive activity of walking and driving. But the negative concrete mould erased any the traces of individual contributions as much as it enabled them. It thereby seemed both to channel energy and to dissipate its force.

But like in photography, a double resonance takes place. Each iteration of concrete or photography centripetally *condenses* a facet of being human. In photography the varied activities of a father become condensed onto a four inch by six inch sheet of paper. A four foot wide sidewalk similarly condenses the urges of many, many people to walk, or a nine hundred square foot slab condenses the dwelling needs of a family, prescribing where specific actions can occur, and ensuring for the most part that only that action (walking or driving or dwelling) could occur there, almost nothing else, and almost nowhere else. But

[59] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins. Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1961), p. 362.

both photography and concrete construction render that condensed facet *infinitely reproducible*; the sidewalk or the condo tower, like the photograph of the father, is inherently centrifugal; it can go anywhere, anytime, theoretically unlimited in number and scale.

And what is that ability shared by both photography and concrete to open up vast new horizons of where things could go or some action could take place, wondered Ray, if not *power* at its most basic? And did not such power indicate, as did the transformative force of the railroad, massive change? Was concrete like the railroad too in that it wasn't just a means to another end (as in how the railroad ended up was much more than just a technique to make things go faster), but rather it somehow literally and figuratively remakes or reshapes *us*? But how?

2.

Perhaps then, thought Ray, understanding better how photographs of cities work might reveal some aspects of how concrete works and vice-versa. Was there some common process that pointed to why both were so ubiquitous?

Ray had already been long fascinated with a series of images that the City's planning department had put up on their website a few years earlier and he searched these out on the Internet. They were a series of quite beautiful wide panoramas of various parts of the city, including a couple of sets of pictures of False Creek. What gave them an extra punch was how the panoramas were paired: the first of each pair was shot in 1978 and the second was the identical scene shot from the same spots but photographed twenty-five years later in 2003.

Figure 22 - "West from Cambie Bridge"

Figure 23 – "West from Cambie Bridge"

The website allowed Ray to scroll back and forth between the two eras with a click of a mouse; the scrolling electronic eraser quickly and methodically replaced the crumbling warehouses and sunset industries on their last legs with gleaming new condo towers or vice-versa. The two images seemed to capture perfectly the changes around False Creek that Ray found so intriguing and disturbing.

There was undoubtedly a certain triumphant air to the photographs, which was why, Ray was sure, the planning department so proudly broadcast them, only too happy to have the credit reflected back on them. It is only now, the web photos seemed to claim, at least to Ray who in his usual semi-autistic way was probably scrutinizing them way more closely than most, that such a sweeping—not only spatially but temporally—vista was possible, available to anyone with a computer: in short, these photographs claimed, we have achieved a novel visual mastery and this technological triumph was completely congruent with the gleaming new towers everywhere apparent in the newer photograph.

The images then both *projected* and *traced* a vector of rational ordering, the technology of the effortlessly rolling fades not only mirroring but embracing the newly rebuilt False Creek; in the more recent photos, in which the clever current digital technology erases earlier, less imaginative, less replete analogue photography, the dazzling scenic beauty of the new developments prevails over thoughtless ugliness in the older shot. The imaginative replaces the stubbornly antiquated: the intelligence of refined knowledge-based work replaces the crude exploitation of resources; environmental stewardship of the Creek, now home to water taxis and racing sculls and sailboats, triumphs over wanton pollution; even the sky seemed dirtily smudged in the old photographs, replaced in the later versions by pure azure.

Figure 24 – "East from Cambie Bridge"

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Figure 25 – "East from Cambie Bridge"

The photographs seemed to Ray to preclude dissent over the new developments except perhaps over details. Of course objections could be raised over the number of yachts now dominating the shoreline or the height or architectural merit of the towers rising on the Creek's edge and yes, yes, the housing tends to be quite expensive, mostly out of reach of all except the upper middle-class or those willing to live with or without families in a few hundred feet square feet. But surely no one would want to debate the value of a sensitive and attractive resolution of the form of False Creek, would they? Could anyone seriously suggest a return to the random and ragged development seen in the photograph from the 1970s?

But Ray couldn't help but feel some disturbing undercurrents lurking in the pictures. While the panoramas happily showed pellucid forms shimmering on the cleaned up shoreline, having swept away the old industrial wasteland, couldn't they also, he asked himself, engender just a tiny frisson of anxiety beyond the breezy disregard of those unable to afford the often five-hundred-dollars-per-square-foot or more price tags?

Those towers and the sexy seawall indeed may feel like, finally, a graceful end to a long, convoluted and often unhappy history of the Creek since the first hardscrabble European settlers had asserted themselves there. But, Ray wondered, might not every phase of that history (each roughly a generation long: 1886-1906, timber clearing and first urbanization; 1906-1946, industrialization; 1946-1966, industrial saturation and then decline; 1966-86, fallow decay, and first residential land-use; 1986 to the present, dense "mixed-use" redevelopment)[60] have seemed as permanent and final? Wouldn't the massive forests or the thickly smoking industries or the abandoned warehouses all have seemed as permanently

[60] Wynn, pp. 69-148.

immutable, as resistant to change as the present concrete towers, each phase seeming in its own way to be the end of the road?

But of course each iteration of False Creek's development had faded in its turn. Couldn't a viewer plausibly feel then that the panoramic photographs not only showed the past but also portended a future when the gleaming towers too would be swept away by god-knows-what, perhaps nearer in time than anyone could imagine? What, Ray wondered, guaranteed that the present gleaming forms were any more permanent than their predecessors? And again concrete seemed to loom at the centre of the changes he saw recorded in the photographs. The city had in the intervening years been washed in concrete, underpinning almost all the other changes the two sets of panoramas tracked.

3.

Many years earlier Ray had read Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*. He been fascinated by the story at the dawn of modernity of the young man moving to Paris to become entwined in the cynical materialism and grasping for prestige he found there. But what kept attracting Ray to the book, urging him to pull it down from his bookshelves repeatedly and to ponder it, was its cover, which showed a sweeping vista of a city, but one taken much earlier than the Local examples he had been studying: Louis Daguerre's image of the Boulevard du Temple in Paris. The image showed an apparently deserted Parisian street. Only close examination reveals a top-hatted man standing with one foot raised on a box and kneeling before him, only barely recognizable as human, a bootblack who polishes the upright man's shoe. He had even given lectures on it to students at a small American university just across the border.

Ray had always loved Shelley Rice's reading of this famous image in her book, *Parisian Dreams*.[61] Rice sets the scene: the street, seen from a window in Daguerre's studio (he was at the time already famous as a panorama painter) at approximately 8:00 A.M., a winter morning (no later than March, when his studio burnt down) in 1839. The street appears deserted except for that the two barely perceivable figures. Although of course the

[61] Rice.

daguerreotype process itself would not endure, this picture is among the first photographic images ever created, and may be the first of a human subject.[62]

Rice, for whom a major theme is how modernity often revolves around tropes of transparency while at the same time creating a world in which things are never quite what they seem, goes on to discuss how this very early photographic image misleads us: what Daguerre's invention enables us to see is a central Parisian street at the start of a busy business day. As Schivelbusch notes, the railroad had by this moment in history delivered vast new crowds to cities such as Paris and hence the street we see in the photo would in fact have been crowded with people. But since Daguerre's process required a long exposure time, almost twenty minutes, only the top-hatted man having his boots shined lingered long enough to imprint himself, like the immobile city around him, on Daguerre's carefully-prepared and slowly-exposed plate.

Ray thought that this photograph was thus, as much as the pictures of those native shacks along False Creek, a perfect specimen of Roland Barthes's comment that photographs were always disasters that had already happened; surely the bourgeois man's image was something like a disaster, a fleeting glimpse into a moment between a medieval past and a modern present in which the central character oscillates, unaware of the fate overtaking him: to be the first person recorded in such a way that his presence would remain visible long after his death. But we who look at the top-hatted man's image are only too conscious of what is to come for him. "Get out of there!" Ray wanted to call out to him. "Save yourself!" The light rays emanating from the top-hatted man were freighted with a visual innocence of his fate that only Daguerre's new machine could register.

Of course there were no survivors; Ray was looking at the last twenty minutes or so of this innocent man—innocent because so poignantly unaware of what is to come; oblivious, that is, to both his personal fate (his disaster now already happened) and to the history the light rays bouncing off of him are making—before he too is swept away into the past.

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[62] 'Louis Daguerre - Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Daguerre> [accessed 11 March 2010].

But the disaster is curious; it is precisely a technical projection—in this case light rays racing their way onto a chemically-soaked plate—that is sweeping everyone away, an absencing symbolically represented by the invisible crowds on the street; the camera annihilates time, just as the railroad annihilated space, creating what hadn't existed for even one second before the first photograph: time as an infinite number of discrete moments out of which some chosen few can be brought forward. The past becomes a material presence in photographs; time there is *re*-produced, and thereby destroys more medieval temporal unities forever. Photography was, Ray thought, thus both cause and effect of this disaster, like a pleurisy victim who drowns in the fluid created by her own lungs.

But what of the apparently indurate city forms that sit unperturbed in the background of Daguerre's image? Ray knew they too were doomed and by the same process. The prefect of Paris, Baron Haussmann, was soon to sweep away the haphazard stone and brick buildings seen in Daguerre's image. In their place Haussmann created a rationalized streetscape based on an *image* of what Paris *in its entirety* should be: long, straight boulevards lined by neo-Classical building facades built to his exact specifications (as Rice notes, he didn't care at all about interiors and his grand new neo-classical fronts often hid squalid living quarters inside). Haussmann, in short, *flayed* the city; mercilessly evicting residents (a cavalier dismissal hearkened back to in Ray's city by the engineers who had evicted the poor black residents of Hogan's Alley) and demolishing its medieval quarters, opening up the arteries of the city to the projectiles of the army if they needed to combat insurrection (a possibility soon to come true with the Paris Commune) as much as to the new bourgeois crowds provided by the railroad, the same newly-urbanized spectral hordes that Rice points out to us to be invisibly peopling Daguerre's image.[63]

So, like the top-hatted man, Paris too at the moment Daguerre photographed it was also a disaster that has already happened. Paris, capital of the 19th century, was in its radical rebuilding a kind of paradigmatic prediction of the modern city and its residents, like the top-hatted man, were the original Benjaminian angels, able for the first time to look

[63] Michael Carmona, *Haussmann: His Life and Times and the Making of Modern Paris* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2002); J.M. Chapman and Brian Chapman, *The Life and Time of Baron Haussmann: Paris in the Second Empire* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1957); David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

backward, if not in horror then surely with at least some strong emotions, at the wreckage piling up around them.

4.

Ray wandered around his house lost in his reflections. Surely, he thought, it was this sense of disaster (although doubtlessly interpreted as wonder, or perhaps even triumph by those not displaced by the massive demolition) that prompted photographers to meticulously record every aspect of Haussmann's project of reconstructing Paris in scenes of the city taken twice: once as Haussmann's wrecking machines tore down the old organic medieval structures and again from the exact same spots to show his magnificently modern boulevards. The panoramas of Ray's city, with their own mixture of triumph and foreboding were a soft echo of these early before and after pictures.

Both the North False Creek panoramas and Daguerre's image of Paris shared a kind of nervous uncertainty in which it is precisely the novel forms of the present, with their vexed engagement with the past, that reinforce a sense of imminent doom to come in the future. Being in the present is now a wholly contingent *presencing*: the *subject* or *content* in both cases—the top-hatted man on the Parisian street in the one and the False Creek shoreline in the other—is not only *what is* but a kind of trace or outline of erasure by the *form* of representation, an absence at the very centre of the image's ostensible presence.

Ray walked morosely around his house picking up, randomly picking up things: a towel, a bed sheet, a shoe, a clock. Each was inscribed with the energy of Janice: the many fights they had over Ray's habit of leaving towels lying on the floor or leaving dirty dishes in the sink; the bed suffused with richly-textured memories of their bodies variously united in repose or in the throes of pleasure or pain; Janice's stylish and crisply polished shoes, which Ray hadn't been able to muster the energy to deal with, still standing in neat rows next to his own haphazardly-thrown and scuffed wear-worn versions; each loud tick of the clock announcing his repeated failures to conform to her strict demands for timelines, neatness, generally being on the ball. These items were replete with traces of Janice that were invisible when she was alive. But Ray felt her weight in them now constantly bearing down on him. Sometimes he felt they formed almost a shrine to her character, her energy, her determination, her

accomplishments; at other times he felt them to be an indelible stain which he could not remove or avoid. Even if he were to throw these things out or take them down to the Salvation Army, as he had done with much of her belongings, that electrical charge of her absent presence would remain to roll over him without warning, triggered by a door-knob she had sniffed at when it was sticking or a brick in a walkway she had tripped over, or a kind of psychic branding that marked him as either blessed like angels were once said to have done or, a more certain historical precedent, as a slave or a criminal. It was as if he was constantly confronted by a mask of Janice, entwined in her image, in countless markers of her being, which were only accelerated by her absence, from which he could not escape.

It occurred to Ray that city spaces played a similar role, only on a larger scale. The concrete cityscape he pondered so long was a material testament to the invisible presences of the crowds that have stepped over them—passengers of the projectile economy (the Latin etymology of the root word *pass* refers to stepping)—rendered in permanence by the very structures that enervate any trace of them to the point of oblivion. Those invisible hordes were embedded in the mask of the cityscape, like the invisible crowds of Daguerre's image, but which no one could bring into clear focus. They were gone, yes; forgotten mostly, yes that too, but still a presence with real effects.

Part Two. A Theogony of Impression

Five. First Impressions

Bibliographic Entries:
Hanson, Victor Davis. *The Western Way of War*[64]
Fischer, Matti. Portrait and Mask, Signifiers of the Face in Classical Antiquity[65]

> War is the father of all.
>
> Heraclitus[66]

1.

A young woman friend of Ray's, determined to salvage him from the long funk of mourning he had been sunk in since Janice's death, pulled him out one Saturday evening to a local church hall to see a band in which someone they both knew was playing. Come on, it'll be fun! she had chirped over the phone to his weakly-bleated protests about how young everyone would be and he hadn't danced in years and, and … Feeling tired of his becoming increasingly reclusive and curmudgeonly life, Ray had given in and now found himself thrown amidst laughing throngs of young people. After several beers Ray was starting to enjoy himself a little, as his young friend happily chatted with various pals and he was able to throw in the odd comment or small joke that kept him feeling at least minimally belonging in the partying going on all around him. The music was kind of fun, so when his friend grabbed both his hands with a long look and pulled him to the dance floor he only momentarily resisted. It was fun after all these years to, well, not exactly dance, but wiggle awkwardly around anyway, amidst all these young and energetically writhing bodies showing off their healthy allures.

One young man near Ray was almost overcome with giddiness and his dancing got increasingly wild, almost launching himself into the air to bounce off any dancers unfortunate enough to be near him, laughing riotously with a small group of friends. A

[64] Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
[65] Matti Fischer, 'Portrait and Mask, Signifiers of the Face in Classical Antiquity', *Assaph: Studies in Art History*, 6 (2001), 31-62.
[66] Nietzsche, p. 145n.

couple of times he glanced off Ray, who tried to manoeuvre himself out of the way, but the young man, who had his back to Ray, seemed inadvertently to follow him. The young man, still oblivious, still laughing uproariously, launched himself particularly hard and whacked fully into Ray. Ray started to get irritated. The young man jumped off yet again and in a swelling moment of anger Ray this time pushed him away hard and the man spun around as his big smile turned to annoyed surprise at Ray's aggressive push. Ray was about to bark at him to fuck off, but the young man's eyes slipped to Ray's dancing partner and opened wide with happy recognition just as she also first saw him. She squealed, Joel! and threw her arms around him. She turned to introduce Joel to Ray, who was still scowling slightly, and there was an awkward moment—what's your problem? both of them thinking at the backs of their minds—as the two men somewhat tentatively shook hands. Joel and Ray's friend were soon happily shouting at each other; they had worked together on some project a few years ago apparently. He was in fact a very humorous young man and the tension with Ray quickly dissipated in beers and the the dark throbbing hall.

But later, as Ray was getting ready for bed, his muscles aching slightly from the unused-to exertions of the night, his thoughts went back to that moment and how the contact between him and Joel had shifted with quicksilver speed: the aggressive, if inadvertent, dancing clash, Ray's angry shove in response, possibly a prelude to something more, maybe even fists thrown at each other, but instead the interpolation of his friend and her happy hugs followed by the slightly wary shaking of hands by the two men and then the momentary tension was gone and they were all new friends barking loudly in each other's ears and laughing over the music about work and kids.

The next morning Ray kept thinking about the significance of how people touch each other: pushing, punching, hugging, shaking hands. Each gesture that brought people into contact was fraught with significance. In fact, going overboard as usual, he started to have a hard time stopping himself from thinking about pushing and its significance as he went about his day, his apparently semi-autistic sensibility increasingly ignited. He pushed his fork against his plate, swirling the coagulating remains of the eggs. He pushed against the door and watched as it swung open. He pondered himself pushing against surfaces with his feet: floor, stair, concrete walkway. He pushed against the brake and gas pedals of his car. The car

pushed him down the long ribbons of asphalt, which honking giant machines had impressed into place along the road bed, pungent oily hot steam rising from the machines as they pushed the thickly viscous black syrup of asphalt into place. Ray got out of his car, and his feet pushed against the concrete sidewalk, once pushed into place by men in dirty overalls and hardhats using trowels, kneeling over the wet concrete as they pushed it against wooden moulds into its final flat shape.

Ray pushed the walk signal and when the light changed he pushed onto the asphalt while the waiting drivers pushed down on their brake pedals. Or occasionally, as he knew so well, failed to push properly and their cars pushed hard into another car or into a hapless pedestrian who splatted harder still onto the road. Not this time at least.

Ray went home and pushed on the lights and pushed up the stairs to his work room. He pushed his fingers over the keyboard of his computer. The digital signals he thereby conjured up dimly harkened him back to an ancient time when the act of writing was literally pushing into soft material, clay or papyrus. He tapped on the keys randomly until his eyes ached and he finally was able to get down to work.

2.

Ray was still absorbed with pushiness when he attended a lecture the next evening. Ray had known the speaker, Barry, for a long time. Barry was an interesting if odd character; an academic who seemed to have been ensconced in the ivory tower forever. He was considerably older than Ray, over seventy, but as intellectually active as ever. His eyes, magnified by the thick glasses on the end of his nose, still lit up with excitement when he latched onto something he found interesting and he was quick to laugh.

Barry had a very manic kind of energy; he was very thin, with shortly clipped grey hair, a xanthodontous smile hidden somewhat under an incongruous long silver moustache that appeared almost stuck on Barry's face like some cheap costume prop. Barry was liable to lean very close to someone when he was making a point and bug out his eyes, or to suddenly spin away and fold his arms with a great fanfare of snorted breath, apparently swept away by

his own brilliance or the astounding dullness of any audience that failed to submit unconditionally to his arguments.

His scrapegrace exterior masked his circumstances; despite his appearance of permanent residence, Barry's position in the academy had always been precarious. He was deeply committed to an esoterically radical politics, an impenetrable and bombastic brew of Marxism, Foucault and a Benjaminian-inflected Jewish messianism informed by a mournful interpretation of modern twentieth century literature, most of which, from what Ray could tell, Barry seemed to have read.

Barry as a young man had been, incredibly it seemed to Ray, a priest until he was defrocked over some radical crusade in the late 'sixties under murky circumstances to which Barry would sometimes allude with a kind of laughing bitterness but upon which he refused to elaborate, his face growing darkly forbidding if he was pushed on the subject. After leaving the church he had eked out a living for many years as a teacher at the local university. Apparently too louche to ever rise above low-paying adjunct status, he had not put much money aside for retirement and so was forced to continue lining up for course assignments semester after semester along with the eager twenty and thirty year-old grad students competing for postings. "Post-lumpen-proletarian" was how he wryly characterized himself. Ray would sometimes happen upon Barry in the cafeteria downtown or in a kiosk in the public library hunched over some thick book of criticism of Kafka or Joyce, immersed in his reflections, periodically stopping angrily to jot down some caustic retort to what he was reading in the notebook that he always carried with him.

Ray had a graduate student friend, Norman, a darkly serious man in his mid-thirties, with whom he was quite close for a while, who had managed to get Barry set up as his senior supervisor, and this friend had invited Ray to sit in on some of Barry's lectures. The first one Ray had found pretty boring; Barry, muttering inaudibly the whole time, had scrawled on the blackboard in tiny script what appeared to be an attempt to explain how all literature and politics in the twentieth century had been connected, interrupted only by the occasional whirl when Barry would turn to his audience and gesture and nod his head somewhat frantically with his big eyes almost protruding through his glasses as if to say, You get it?

Right? Right? Ray was ready to give up after that but Norman insisted he try again. When he told Ray that Barry was lecturing on W.G. Sebald, an author that Ray loved and after whom in fact Ray modelled his own occasional scribblings, he decided he would give him another try.

Barry had unpromisingly begun again to throw out apparently random thoughts in an almost incomprehensible whispery shy voice, but as he had proceeded he started to weave ideas together. His voice grew stronger as his ideas congealed into what Ray thought was a brilliant and completely unexpected argument about memory and loss until finally Barry was almost thumping his desk as he barked out his conclusions while his audience sat stunned and amazed. Norman had turned to him with a "You see?" expression on his face. After his lecture Barry, like an addict coming down from a high, had retreated somewhere deep inside himself. He was soon responding almost in murmurs to questions, as though he had dismissed his audience. Ray was surprised in fact when, after all the others had left, Barry nodded his assent to going for a beer with them.

While Ray found Barry too idiosyncratic and too burdened by slightly toxic intellectual and political swamps to really think of him as someone with whom he could be a friend he nevertheless was taken by Barry's lively and often brilliant thoughts and, once his guard was down, his warmth, and they had kept in touch ever since. Barry even sometimes sat in on friendly poker games that some of the grad students in Norman's department had started and that Ray had sometimes joined, more for the drinks and companionship, playing for pennies and nickels. Barry, although he respected the amateur tenor of the games, was a surprisingly adept player. Invariably when he was playing the night would end with Barry having the largest pile of coins in front of him, and though he would affect surprise at the outcome, Norman told Ray after that periodically when he was particularly broke Barry would play professionally and was generally able to win modest sums; not a fortune, but significantly more than the small pots the students played for.

Divorced, Barry lived by himself in a small apartment outside of the city. Each day he loaded his bag with books and set off to teach courses on "business communication" or "sociology of the city." He invariably got in trouble with the administration because he would use his

assigned curricula, which he saw as infuriatingly anodyne, to launch into weeks-long critiques of Derrida or theories of the flâneur or other esoteric paths into his real interests that left many of his students baffled and even enraged. Barry always acted with astonishment—whether it was feigned or real, Ray could never quite tell—to the stern lectures he received from various department chairs about his propensities to wander off the curriculum, responding with some variation on the argument that his approach was only sensible given the realities of post-modern capital. Apparently the dean had some soft spot for Barry, or perhaps respect for his flashes of brilliance, because Barry was never actually fired although he knew that some chairs had tried to get rid of him. He continued to be assigned one or two courses per semester, just enough to allow him to scrape by.

But in the last couple of years the university had gone into yet another fiscal crisis and a new breed of brusque, results-oriented administrators had moved in. They demanded that departments raise more revenue and cut costs. Barry had finally been caught in the crosshairs of this creeping rationalization. A cheerful young new dean had taken over, sporting the kind of smile, Barry recounted to Ray one time, frighteningly like the slightly vacant and mildly crazed look that one sees in scientologists or—as Barry gathered steam his analogies got more vituperous—that he imagined might have been on the faces of Stalin's guards as they dragged another soul off to execution for some minor infraction of the prevailing orthodoxy.

Ray thought the gods must have been laughing over the Faustian bargain the new dean offered Barry: he didn't just kick him out, as he could easily have done; instead he told him he could teach one course per semester and on any topic he wanted but he had to receive enough enrolment for the course to pay its own way. If he didn't get the numbers the course, and with it Barry's teaching career, was dead.

Ray found it quite excruciating to watch Barry wiggle on this hook. Of course in the end Barry couldn't resist the urge to propound his often obscure politics. Oh sure, he had started out consulting with friends and colleagues on reasonably attractive course topics that might be suitably blandly inoffensive. Over a series of sessions in various dark bars his advisors exhorted him to go one direction or another, to which Barry had seemed slightly stunned,

looking helplessly at his interlocutors with big eyes as if, while he was grateful for the help, his intelligence was simply unable to accept what was being asked of him. He had an almost child-like air, like someone suffering from a mental illness anxiously needing to do some simple but crucial task that was beyond him. With a kind of forced eagerness, nodding vigorously, his eyes protruding dangerously far out of their sockets, Barry had made notes on courses that were suggested to him on social networking sites on the Internet or on public art in cities such as Berlin or New York where Barry had spent considerable time.

But it was obvious that underlying Barry's plaintive eagerness to be shown some winning formula a silent but deep reluctance remained and so all who had helped him had been unsurprised that when his course syllabi finally came out they bore titles such as "Anarcho-Syndicalism Redux: The False Dialectics of Speed and Interiority in de Certeau and His Followers" or "Lukaçs's Critique of Realism and Metropolitan Disasters of the Twentieth Century." It was easy to imagine Barry spending late nights in his apartment muttering to himself as bit by bit he scratched out the suggestions his friends had made, replacing them with his own increasingly obscure projects; in the end blocked by his profound inner morality from making the smallest concession to what he saw as power's baleful dictates as his inner compulsions drove him to craft an almost crazed masterpiece of learned resistance. It was also easy to picture his dismay when the enrolment numbers came in: six or seven per course and probably at least one of those there by mistake.

And now at last the axe was about to fall. Barry had mournfully emailed Ray and some other friends that the university had told him that his one remaining course was being cancelled and he was being relieved of his lecturer spot after tonight. Although Ray thought it almost unbearably sad, he felt like he had to attend this last lecture to show his small support for Barry, whose life was even more marginalized than his own.

3.

The setting late fall sun cast grim long shadows as Ray drove [still in a semi-autistic register: pushing back and forth on the gas pedal and then on the brake of his car, the car pushing against his back, pushing footsteps on the concrete, pushing open the door, pushing into his seat…] to the downtown university campus to hear Barry speak. The small, dark and airless

room where Barry had to lecture, smelling faintly of cheap cleaning fluids and the sweat of undergraduates writing exams, was as expected mostly empty. As Ray made his way next to Norman, who was already seated and looking glum, he nodded at another acquaintance, the editor of a small literary magazine, formerly one of Barry's students, who presumably had also responded to the morose email. A prettily nondescript woman also waited with a bored look on her face. At the far side near the back sat a somewhat worryingly pasty and unblinking young man dressed entirely in unseasonably heavy black clothes and an Asian kid was face down in his arms at another desk, apparently fast asleep. A couple of very young men sat to the side half-reclining next to each other with contented expressions, looking as if they had just gotten out of bed. And that was it. Barry marched in a few minutes late, heaving his plump bag of books onto his desk. Barry always dressed as if he had just run into Sears and had randomly grabbed clothes on sale; tonight he wore a crinkled long-sleeve brightly-striped shirt the fitted contours of which highlighted the little potbelly that protruded from Barry's skinny frame, black jeans that were about an inch too long and bunched around his ankles and a pair of glossy but scuffed black oxfords. He had a device in one of his hands that soon revealed itself to be a digital projector and he pulled a laptop out of his bag and quickly set it up to project PowerPoint images, although initially the screen he pulled down remained blank,

After he had finished setting up he leaned back to sit on the front of his desk. He half-mournfully, half wryly surveyed his tiny audience. Well, he began in a barely-audible whisper, a sarcastic smile rippling across his face as he sat at the edge of the desk and began apparently to study his shoes, I am thrilled you could all be here tonight. As his tiny audience leaned forward, straining to hear, he twisted back to his bag where he rummaged a bit to pull out some books, one of which he lifted up one to show his listeners. What I want to talk about mostly is a book I am reading right now on Greek hoplite battles: *The Western Way of War* by Victor Davis Hanson.[67] Have you read it? he asked, holding the book up and pointing it first at Ray and Norman, then at others, as if completely expectant that this ragtag group would be like him excitedly reading about ancient Greek warfare. Ray slightly shook his head. Barry nodded slightly, it is an incredible book. I want to tell you why, but you will have to bear with me a little bit, because it is after all military history, or to be a bit more

[67] Hanson.

blunt, it's about how ancient Greek men killed each other. He looked up at the class with a small smile at his completely unfunny jokey characterization, then went on, but I think his argument has much broader ramifications and so, after I go through Hanson's ideas a little bit, I will finish up by talking about how his work might have some intriguing applications to western culture as a whole.

Ray had expected the worst tonight; that Barry would be—understandably enough, given the crisis he was facing—at his most incoherent, either inaudibly mumbling or ranting hysterically. But instead he seemed almost preternaturally calm and from the start his talk was cogent, albeit barely audible at first.

Let me tell you a little bit about Hanson, Barry said in almost a whispered drone. I should mention, just in case you may have heard of him, that Hanson is a right-wing American political commentator[68] as well as a scholar. I think the lessons he suggests for our current circumstances based on his research on the Greeks—very gung-ho about invading Iraq for example, and now he wants the U.S. to go after Iran, he wants to get all the Mexicans out of California,[69]—are provocative, but they're not really relevant to the suggestive power of his writing. His scholarship has also been attacked on academic grounds, perhaps unsurprisingly because he has been a very iconoclastic figure among classical scholars, but I'm not going to go into these criticisms very much either – if you're interested I can give you some places to start after the lecture.[70]

Hanson's scholarly approach as a military historian comes out of what I have seen referred to as the "Face of Battle" group of military historians,[71] who drew their inspiration from a book by that name by the British historian John Keegan.[72] The Face of Battle approach

[68] 'RealClearPolitics - Authors: Victor Davis Hanson', *Real Clear Politics* <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/author/victor_davis_hanson/> [accessed 12 March 2010].
[69] Victor Davis Hanson, *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003).
[70] Hanson, pp. 235-249.
[71] Gregory Daly, *Cannae: The Experience of Battle in the Second Punic War* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War, 100 BC - AD 200* (Oxford); Adrian Keith Goldsworthy, *Caesar's Civil War, 49-44 B.C*, Essential histories (London: Routledge, 2003); *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[72] John Keegan, *Face of Battle, The: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1976); *A History of Warfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); *The First World War* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1998).

centres on imaginative reconstructions of the realities of historical battles. These reconstructions are informed by very close readings of contemporary accounts by people who were there, artistic representations such as paintings, poems or photographs, as well as research on geography and terrain, physiology, technology, psychology and so on. What, they ask, was the *experience* of battle actually like in different battles and in different epochs?

Barry again rummaged among his books and pulled out the Keegan book, and held it up. *The Face of Battle*, he said with certainty, is a must-read book for military historians. In it, Keegan described in stunning detail some famous battles, such as Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme, using very precise calculations of where men stood and what they likely faced to understand how and why they behaved as they did. Keegan asked, what would these men have felt, seen, heard, smelled? How close together were they, what kinds of wounds would they have suffered from the weapons in use, how close was the enemy to them, how much weight were they carrying, and so on. From the answers to such questions he was able to construct in very compelling fashion how men were able, or not able, to endure the horrors of battle and how in the end one side won and the other lost. It's a kind of historical anthropology.

Hanson used this approach in *The Western Way of War* to understand ancient Greek warfare. The core of his argument is that the Greeks developed a truly terrible form of warfare in which serried ranks of armoured spear-carrying infantry, tightly knit into phalanxes, crashed together. Barry rushed over to the black board to write the word "phalanx." He turned back to the class and continued, Hanson argues that the Greeks thereby invented a completely novel form of battle, the true dimensions of which have not really been appreciated by modern scholars but which Hanson claims has underpinned western war-making, and by extension western culture, ever since.

Ancient Greece, as you know—here Barry glanced up smiling ironically again at his listeners, who probably didn't know the first thing about ancient Greece—or can imagine, was an agrarian society and so most Greek warriors made their living by farming and took up arms

as necessary. In an earlier book, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*,[73] Hanson had started from a widely accepted theory that Greek war making was centered on "laying waste," the devastation of farm land, which of course was virtually the whole of the ancient Greek economy. The ferocity of Greek warfare has long been recognized as relatively novel historically but it was generally thought that its development was accounted for by the understandable urge of farmer-warriors desperate to resist the destruction of their means of livelihood.

Since the staples of Greek agriculture were grapes, olives and grain, presumably these would have been the crops invaders would have wanted to destroy if devastation was their goal. But Hanson knew the devastation or "laying-waste" thesis was flawed. His scepticism originated from his own background as a farmer growing grapes in California. Hanson knew that vines are very difficult to destroy permanently. Their branches can be hacked off but the next year they will actually grow back thicker as a result. Intrigued, he discovered that olive trees are even more resistant to lasting harm. Even with a modern bulldozer it is very difficult to uproot an olive tree, so destroying orchards was probably beyond what an ancient invasion force could muster. Grain too is also very difficult to damage unless it is caught just before it is ready for harvest, when it can be burned. But this would have required much luck and careful co-ordination to ensure the invaders would beat off the defenders and torch the fields in the short period when the grain was fully ripe but still unharvested and it would have required the invaders to pull their farmers off their fields to fight just as their own harvest was coming due. Since most fertile terrain in Greece is surrounded by monadnocks and has been since ancient times walled off into sections it was not easily manoeuvred by armies, i.e. not quickly overrun. That made it unlikely that a rival city-state could spare right at harvest time the numbers of farmer-warriors that would be necessary to first defeat the defenders and then to 'lay waste' to their lands.[74]

Hanson proposed an alternative theory that is the core of the *Western Way of War*: that the farmers of Archaic Greek city states, between roughly 700 and 500 BCE, came to a *collective*

[73] Victor Davis Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, Rev. ed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[74] Victor Davis Hanson, *The Wars of the Ancient Greeks* (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 118.

agreement that *decisive battles* should decide the outcome of wars. Let me emphasize that: *a collective decision to fight decisive battles*. Barry punched one fist into the palm of his other hand as he emphasized these two points. He went on. Unlike all previous warrior cultures, for which feint, subterfuge, skirmishing and individual contests were central in warfare and in which most of the fighters except for mounted elites were probably there unwillingly, the Greeks through *mutual agreement* sought a brief and brutal face-to-face contest between highly motivated farmers formed into armoured infantry and virtually *no one else*—little cavalry, few archers or skirmishers; mostly just armoured foot soldiers—until the contest was decided, after which the survivors on both sides could return to their fields. Hanson contends the Greeks quite sensibly wanted to minimize the time and effort required to wage war so they wanted conflicts resolved relatively efficiently without disrupting the overall economy or society too dramatically.

The phalanx evolved out of this collective preference for decisive engagements between infantries. The phalanx consisted of columns of men arranged in rows, typically apparently about eight men deep. The first three rows would have levelled their spears to face the enemy while the back rows, whose spears would not have been able to reach far enough, kept theirs upright. Everyone wore panoplies of bronze armour: breastplates, greaves and helmets that in the most common versions such as the Corinthian helmet covered most of the face and head. They also carried heavy round, convex shields, called a *hoplon,* from which the name *hoplite*, which was the Greek word for soldiers of this type, is taken. Barry wrote these new words on the board. These heavy shields were made of thick moulded wood, covered on the front with a layer of decorated bronze and fabric strips attached strongly on the inside to assist in gripping. Their convex shape allowed soldiers to often rest the top of the rim on their shoulders

The front row of the phalanx would have held their shields closely together to form a solid wall of armour. The opposing phalanxes would have clashed together, armoured wall colliding with armoured wall. The soldiers in their phalanxes probably usually ran the last few hundred feet to try and get enough momentum to pierce the opposing side's bank of shields. After the initial clash, if one or the other side had not collapsed on impact, the two forces would literally *push* at each other. The ranks behind the first ones used their shields to

press into the backs of their comrades in the rows ahead, trying to urge the whole mass forward. Hanson suggests this pushing was the a significant part of the reason for their shields' peculiar round convex shape, which could have been pushed into the back of the man ahead to propel him forward without knocking him off balance. The soldiers in the front rows, their spears probably shattered by the initial impact or stuck into impaled victims, would have fought with any means left at hand: the shafts of their broken spears, their swords, even their bare hands and teeth. This pushing phase of battle was such a normal characteristic of Greek battles that they had a distinct word for it: *othismos*. Barry added this to the list of words on the blackboard. This pushing forward of the solid front rows was the core of innovation the Greeks brought to warfare.

Remember that these battles took place in the hot Greek summer between men who were each carrying seventy pounds or more of armour. So they couldn't have lasted long at this extremely physical demanding kind of warfare before they became exhausted; a half hour maybe, more or less. When one or the other of the two sides in this furious collision of armies finally collapsed they could be slaughtered by their opponents since individuals stood very little chance against a bristling intact phalanx. If the losers tried to run they were easily speared in the back. The Greeks also had spikes fitted on the butt ends of their spears to enable the ranks further back to stab wounded or stunned enemy who lay on the ground as the phalanx advanced over them. So the losing side could suffer appalling losses.

Hanson adds a lot of horrific graphic detail to this basic structure of Greek battle: how classical accounts mention men involuntarily urinating and defecating in terror in the moments preceding the battle; how some accounts describe the curious rattling of bronze armour as whole phalanxes trembled in fear at the approach of the enemy; how, as the running phalanxes collided, the warriors in the front rows speared each other in areas that were most vulnerable, which were the unarmoured parts of the body exposed above and below the shield such as the neck, the thigh or the groin, and accounts repeatedly relate images of wounded men clutching their bloody necks or testicles in agony; how men in the centre of the battle could be suffocated to death by the mass of the opposing phalanx pressing relentlessly against their own forces pushing them from behind; how the men were sometimes so packed together that the dead were kept upright; how men fought hand to

hand so closely that some armies shaved off their beards and hair so their opponents could not grip them as they struggled; how when one side collapsed, the other would chase the losers down and dispatch them, one by one, with cavalry and archers joining in for the first time in the battle for this final slaughter; how sad the sight was of dead men speared in the back as they had fled. From beginning to end the whole thing might have taken a couple of hours.

Barry's voice had grown perversely stronger as he rhymed off the murderous brutality of Greek warfare. But now he stopped, calmly surveying the group who, apart from the one young man still obliviously asleep, watched him with wide eyes.

After a long moment he continued. This form of warfare evolved of course. Hanson says the pure form of phalanx warfare was a characteristic of the Greek Archaic period, roughly 700 to 500 BCE. By the dawn of the Classical age, when the Persians invaded early in the 5th century, Greek cities were using more varied tactics although the phalanx formation long remained central. Think of Themopylae for example—there was a sort of cartoonish movie made about this a few years ago—how three hundred Spartans there were able for days to thwart a massive Persian invading force. Themopylae was a stark example of a tightly-knit group of committed men able to slaughter their mostly enslaved opponents who tried to wash over them in loosely structured waves. An interesting touristic aside is that, after the Greeks were overwhelmed through betrayal and the battle was over, Xerxes, the Persian commander, arranged for boats to bring people to view the bodies of the dead Greeks (Xerxes having first discreetly disposed of the vastly higher numbers of Persian dead); apparently sightseeing battlefields before the bodies were buried was a common ancient past-time.

Anyway, roughly a hundred and fifty years later the Macedonian Alexander the Great still used the phalanx formation when he conquered the entire world known to the Greeks in the late 4th century BCE using longer spears along with cavalry and archers and his own reckless courage to face down and mercilessly kill any adversary. The Romans meanwhile were developing their own successful variant of the phalanx, although they were to have a lot of trouble defeating the vestigial Greek versions. Hanson suggests—and this is really one of his

key conclusions—that the basic notion of the decisive face-to-face battle between massed armies has remained at the centre of Western warfare ever since—think of Agincourt, Waterloo, the Somme, Stalingrad—only held in check now by the endgame of nuclear power on the one hand and the success of guerrilla and terror tactics on the other. The contempt with which we in the West hold terrorism or guerrilla fighting (which we almost always see as "foreign," "sneaky," "cowardly") derives from this Western tradition of a preference for men openly facing each other as they kill and are killed, a preference which Hanson traces back to its Greek roots.

Barry stood up again and smiled wryly. OK, that's enough military stuff for you I'm sure. But let me emphasize again two points. First, the very centre of Hanson's description is the long front line of the shields of the phalanx facing their adversary, the basic military form necessary for the effectiveness of the *othismos*—Barry pointed to that word written earlier on the blackboard—which you will remember is "the push." Second, let me also point out again that there was a general agreement among the Greeks to fight this way. We know this in part because Hanson did a rough calculation of the size of Athenian armies and correlated it to what is known about the size of the free male population, and found there was a very rough correspondence between the two. To muster the size of armies that these small city states apparently did, almost every eligible man would have had to join in. There is also a lot of evidence that *every Greek citizen* between the age of 18 and 60 (and in exceptional cases even younger men or ones as old as 80) was expected to fight in the phalanx and most did so as often as two out of every three years. Warfare for the Greeks, says Hanson, was "incessant."[75] Surely the horrifying and murderous experience of the phalanx warfare, experienced so frequently, must have weighed heavily on the world view of Greeks as long as they survived.

Barry picked up a piece of chalk again as he said, let me re-state that first point like this. He stepped up to the board and wrote in big capital letters: FORM = IDENTITY. Form, he said musingly while pondering what he had just written, equals identity. He twirled around, here's what I mean by that: being Greek—which meant being one of the free Greek male citizens of whom their armies were composed—was dependent on the phalanx formation;

[75] Hanson, pp. 31, 89-94.

that form was shaped in response to the enemies of the Greek city-state; the unsuccessful phalanx meant defeat and some form of disgrace at best (Hanson says the Greeks actually fought mostly to expand alliances and to receive payment of tribute rather than to destroy or enslave)[76] and at worst, very often, death or disfigurement; what made possible the *identity* of Greekness, of being a free and independent Greek man in other words, was the ability to muster the *form* of that bristling bright line of the phalanx, which got its aggressive punch—its military *content*—against the enemy whom the phalanx was formed to meet, from the relentless pushing of the troops arrayed behind the front rows. We can imagine that, besides sex perhaps, it was the most *important of all forms of physical human contact* for Greek men, upon which *all their other relationships ultimately depended*. To use slightly different language, the *content* of Greekness—its culture, its agoras, its democracy and so on—was dependent on the *form* of the phalanx, a massed line of shields and spears. Barry drew a little diagram and waved his arms over it as he spoke.

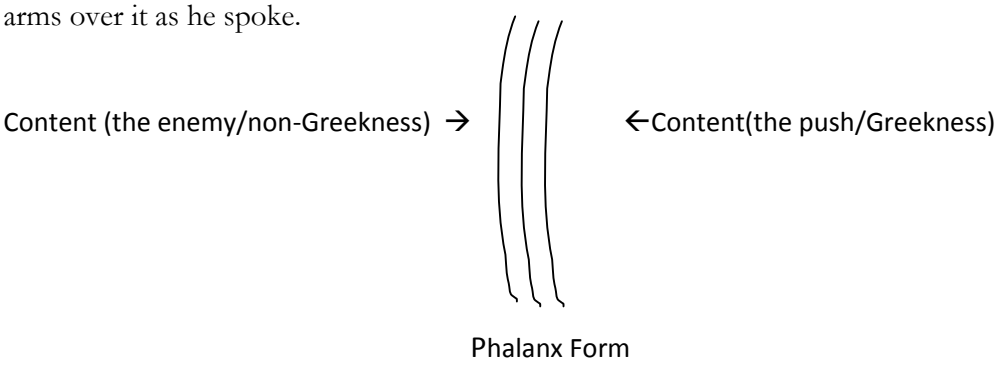

Figure 26 – Form & Content

Think, he went on as he waved, of how incomprehensible such a relationship of form and content must have been to the Persians for example. We might guess that for them war was usually a confused swirl of action, centered on individual fights especially when nobles were involved but where, Hanson suggests, most who were there unwillingly anyway sought to kill but not to be killed, easily convinced to run out of harm's way if things were going badly. There would be no lesson on form and content to be learned in this way; Persian culture's interests, we may guess, were elsewhere.

[76] Keegan, p. 252.

He turned back to his audience. The significance of the second point, that there was general agreement on fighting in phalanxes, is interpreted by Hanson as related to the genesis of democracy, but let me add what I think is an equally crucial point: that this widespread participation meant that the equation of identity and form in warfare that I just sketched *must have permeated the culture*. On at least unconscious levels we can guess that the Greeks would have had firm beliefs, underwritten two out of every three years in fresh blood, that *in general*—not just in war, but in every aspect of life—the alternative to the form of a solid line was… Barry stared hard at his audience for a moment … catastrophe.

4.

Barry had swept out of the room on those words, leaving Ray looking around in confusion but Norman reassured him that it was just a break and that Barry did this dramatic exit in the midpoint of almost every lecture. It's funny, Norman said, to go down to the food court and see him eating an A&W cheeseburger or something after he has just pulled one of his little *Sturm und Drang* exits on a note about the collapse of capitalism or something like that. The editor of the literary journal sidled up behind them and after nodding his helloes to Ray and Norman whispered, the old guy's still got it, doesn't he? That was pretty interesting. They nodded their agreement and then sat mutely reflecting on Barry's impending end as a lecturer. Norman was obviously angry; he was after all losing his supervisor. Yeah, it's bullshit that he's getting kicked out, he said and then sat grumpily with his arms crossed across his chest.

Barry returned after several minutes, and pulled a photocopy out of his bag. He turned to the class, OK. I want you to bracket what I was just talking about for a few moments. I'll come back to it, but remember that key concept of form and content.

What I want to do now is talk about a topic that is probably a little more familiar to you than Greek warfare, namely ancient Greek art. As everybody knows, the period in ancient Greece that Hanson was discussing in military terms was also a time of significant developments in the realm of art. The eighth to fifth centuries BCE, which was the period when Hanson suggests phalanx warfare was its most pure, is known to art historians as the Archaic Period. The beginning of the Classical Period corresponds exactly with Hanson's account, its origin

marked off by the defeat of the Persians in 480 BCE. The third major era in Greek art is the Hellenistic Period, which is usually defined as beginning with the death of Alexander in 323 BCE and lasting until the defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra by Augustus in 31 BCE.[77]

Traditionally, art historians say the art works of these periods evidence a trend toward greater realism. Barry threw up some power point images. From left to right we are moving from Archaic (a stiffly posed image with, to modern eyes, crudely rendered skeletal-muscular forms and a clearly idealized face with characterless, non-specific smiling expression), through Early Classical (the figure's musculature and skeleton are rendered much more exactly and the figure convincingly pivots on one hip while the face is closer to a real human face), High Classical (the face retains touches of the Archaic smile, but is identifiable as a specific individual, even if still idealized) to Hellenistic (a convincingly detailed portrayal of a scowling and hunched-over old man).

He gestured vaguely at one side of the screen, the figure on the left has all the characteristics of Archaic art: squarely frontal in stance, he has abstractly patterned hair and his lips are upturned in what is termed the Archaic smile – usually thought to denote that the subject of the art was alive rather than intending to convey the subject's happiness. As we move forward historically the figures, such as the one shown here, the famous so-called "Kritios Boy," begin to rotate around their spine, what art historians call *contrapposto*, meaning counterbalance, as in different parts of the body start to counterbalance each other: a hip is shifted to balance a leg thrown forward for example.

By the time of the image of Pericles, second from the right, a figure of High Classicism, we have a considerably more distinctive individual, whose smile is evolving into an expression, although one still loaded with visual conventions that denote his rank as a *strategos* or general. In the image at the right end, we have a sculpture of the philosopher Chrysippus, who scowls with no trace left of the archaic smile. He is distinct in his identity, a man unlike any other: visibly old, for example, with his face etched with deep lines and his skin sags. He is an individual at a specific moment in time. It has been assumed therefore that in ancient

[77] Helen Gardner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 12th edn (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005), pp. 104-165.

Greek culture as a whole we move steadily away from abstracted idealizations to representations much closer to what actual living persons looked like.

This evolution of Greek art has been a major preoccupation in Western culture for centuries. One of the great mysteries in classical studies has been why the Greeks were uniquely able to develop in this way, along this stunning path of increasing individuation and visual personality, parallel of course to equally shattering Greek innovations in politics and philosophy.

Barry brandished the photocopied article he held in his hand at his audience. An Israeli art historian, Matti Fischer, has however given us an interesting new way to think about this evolution, by focusing in particular on ancient representations of the face.[78] He begins by noting that our ideas about this Greek evolution toward greater realism, a closer correspondence between representation and actual living human beings, depends on a rather modern insistence on the coherence of the subject. He notes first, that the problem of the correspondence of face and representation is in fact one we grapple with all the time. Although we routinely assume otherwise, if you think about it there is no settled, final face to which representation can correspond. First of all every human face is in a state of constant flux. Secondly we can apprehend our own faces only through some form of reflection, like a mirror or a photograph. Thirdly, and here I'm quoting Fischer directly, "Since we are always in *specific social situations* we are constantly obliged to adapt our faces to them and thus the face seen is always already not the 'original' because it is being determined by the gaze of another human."[79]

"The face seen is always already not the original," Barry repeated, almost abstractedly, as if he had forgotten his audience was listening. He seemed to suddenly remember that he was being watched and he stared pointedly out as he went on, And Fischer footnotes Derrida's notion of the trace, which he defines after Jameson as… and Barry read directly again, "… the impossible, but actual, belief in a past that was never a present."[80]

[78] Fischer, 31-62.
[79] Fischer, 31-62 (p. 32).
[80] Fischer, 31-62 (p. 32n).

Where Fischer wants to take us is to thinking about the face as *always already* a representation, a kind of mask, however much we may think of it as real. Reality in Fischer's view is a *social convention* to deal with the directly inaccessible and constantly aging and otherwise changing faces we all have. Based on that insight he wants us to rethink the notion of ancient correspondences between person and representation, moving away from received ideas that the older Archaic sculptures were stylized and inaccurate masks whereas later Hellenistic work is a much more realistic representation of individuals as they really were.

Fischer notes that our English word for *person* evolved out of Greek and Latin words, *persperon* and *persona*, and both are related etymologically to the words 'face,' 'mask,' and 'role.'

Fischer also reminds us, as is well-known, that Archaic sculpture, with all its stiff frontality and apparently stylized facial forms, was often intended to commemorate the dead. Let's think for a moment about what that might have meant. Through their conventional sameness, Fischer suggests, these sculptures reassuringly *re*-placed the now-dead subject back in his or her tribal group by situating him within that group's visual conventions *and* by indicating his or her sameness as all the other absent dead. This *sculptural* presence, re-uniting the absent man with other losses suffered by the tribe, was indeed like a mask worn by actors, only frozen, a permanent *actual* presence that a live actor can never achieve, symbolically thereby bringing the subject back to life, transmuting absence into presence, epitomized in the Archaic smile indicating the life in the dead person. He concludes that these archaic mask-like sculptures may have had, for their Archaic audience, a more "life-like" character than the later artwork that we moderns tend to see as more "realistic."

Importantly there is however no sense in these Archaic sculptures of a true 'inner' self; in fact the role represented by the sculptural mask may have defined the person rather than the other way around.

Fischer goes on to make some interesting comments about the mask-like elements of later ancient sculpture such as the Periclean head, suggesting that what we see as increasing individuation may have been more of a shifting of *conventions of masking*. Other *strategos* were

represented in almost the exactly same way as Pericles. He argues that the emerging new *iconicity* of the image—here visual distinctions separating one *strategoi* from others in his tribe—was reliant not so much on subjects represented *as is* but rather on subjects *as if* represented; an increasing emphasis, that is, on the object *as if* separate from the subject, a *stepping outside* of the subject and his place in society. I would add that it is perhaps this as-if separation, the *exposing* of the individual in space, that contributes to the almost erotic charm of early Classical works such as the Kritios Boy.

Be that as it may, Fischer continues to urge us to consider this conditional, as-if separation of the subject and object—which of course can be considered a kind of a short-hand or condensation of some major leaps taken by Greek philosophy—as a visual stance that could be and was, Fischer suggests, *conventionalized* just as much as the older Archaic statuary.

At the same time, there is indubitably an increasing indexicality—a direct or point-for-point correspondence between the representation and what we usually think people look like—in later Greek art, especially as we move into the Hellenistic era. Egyptian art was perhaps influential in this regard. Let me remind you that the basic form of the Greek *kouroi* (which means 'youth'), such as we see in Archaic sculpture, was actually imported from a very old Egyptian sculptural tradition long preceding the Greek Archaic versions, different only in that the Egyptians left their figures embedded in the stones they were carved from as opposed to the free-standing Greek versions and that the Egyptian statues were clothed whereas the Greeks rendered their figures nude.

But there was another Egyptian sculptural tradition that may have been influential as well, which was the funerary or mummy mask. These masks were plaster-soaked linen wrappings that were moulded over the face of the deceased, and then plaster casts made. Obviously there is a high degree of indexicality in these masks, giving them, some of which are four or five thousand years old, an astonishing presence and verisimilitude.

Of course, as Fischer has noted, these were still masks; many of them were gilded with gold and precious metals to reinforce the status of the deceased. Nonetheless in these masks the absent individual directly moulds the funerary mask's features, a shaping of the mask from

within versus the *kourai* mask-like forms shaped from *without*. Done much later historically but equally astonishing are the Egyptian wax or encaustic mummy portraits that scholars now believe were painted while the subjects were still alive and perhaps kept in the home then inserted over the face of their mummy after they died.

Fischer discusses how these portraits—which have generated a lot of controversy over whether they are arise out of Egyptian, Greek or Roman traditions—modify the indexicality of the mummy masks by representing the face *as seen at a distance* by the artist. Numerous signifiers such as the abstractly roughed-in hair or the quick sketching necessitated by the technique of painting in wax indicated *the perspective of the artist* as he surveyed his subject: how much time the artist had, how close he was to his subject and so on. Fischer's point is that this indicates perhaps a grafting of the increasing *as-if* distancing of Greek art onto Egyptian funerary traditions. But is it not likely that the influence ran both ways: that the indexicality of Egyptian death masks influenced the Greeks who were struggling to represent themselves? OK, with that question in mind, let me summarize Fischer's argument as we did Hanson's. Greek representation turned on the question of form and content. What, Fischer asks, was the relationship of increasing indexicality of sculptural *form* to *actual living individuals* who were ostensibly the subjects of those works? The answer he suggests and which I am expanding is not straightforward. The *content* of those forms is linked to the iconic or social context in which they were created, demarking the *social* role of the subhject—their 'mask-like' features in short, which is the social pushing *in*—and to traces of actual faces as in the mummy masks, which is a nascent notion of the individual pushing *out*.
Barry drew another diagram on the board, next to the one he had drawn of the phalanx. When I put these two diagrams side by side, he said, I think you can see where I am going with this. I want to suggest that the two—the phalanx and sculptural form—are directly related.

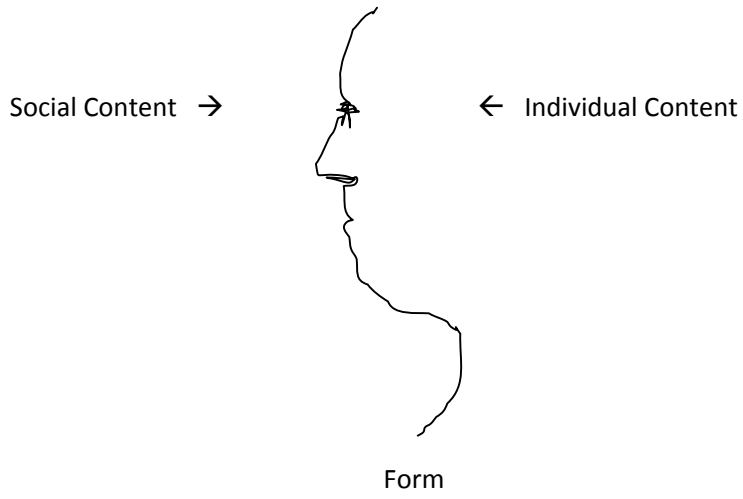

Figure 27 – Form and Content

To begin with, chronologically the different stages or periods of Greek art map perfectly onto the military developments Hanson describes. In the Archaic Period, the era of pure phalanx warfare when those soldiers most brutally ground away at each other, the Greeks produced funerary statuary copied more or less directly from Egyptian traditions. But new ideas—motored at least in part by indexical funerary traditions of the body pushing itself out into layers of plaster-soaked linen—were pushing *out* from *inside* this tradition, just as hoplites were pushing out from their phalanxes in warfare—motored, I am suggesting, by the experience of Greek citizens repeatedly and self-consciously choosing this historically novel form of conflict.

The pivotal moment is the Persian invasion: culturally it marks the transition of Greece from a provincial non-entity to the centre of civilization with a coherent proto-national self-consciousness; in art we see the transition from the Archaic period to sculptures and other art the likes of which *had never be seen before*. Barry banged his fist into his other hand as he made this point. He went on, this art was centered, as Fischer argues, on an as-if conditionality, a distancing, a stepping outside of the object just as, at the *exact same historical moment*, again he thumped his fist, militarily Greek hoplites realized that their phalanx method of battle could overcome apparently overwhelming odds if adjusted to

accommodate the nature of the Greek's *first truly foreign enemy,* with their vast numbers and war chariots and massed archers and so on.

It was this dynamic of *Greek armies stepping outside of themselves*—out of the Archaic mode of parochial city-state interests facing opponents who were from other Greek city-states and who had made similar decisions to face the foreign invader—in combination with *the form of the bristling phalanx wall being murderously pushed out by the back ranks* that enabled what was after all really nothing more than a hasty assemblage of an unpleasantly truculent group of farmers and shepherds to defeat the most powerful empire in the world, thereby dramatically changing the course of human history. Barry paused for a moment to let that sink in.

This reflective military distancing only grew more pronounced as time went on, as the Greeks squabbled among themselves so tragically through the Peloponnesian War, by the end of which the Athenians were huddling behind stout walls sick with plague (which killed Pericles by the way) and refusing to fight in open fields, preferring to battle by sea, and the Spartans were forming an alliance with, of all people, the Persians and so on for a hundred or so what must have been miserable years after the war until the barbarian usurpation of Greek culture by Philip the Macedonian and then his psychopathic son Alexander.

This evolving military distancing, i.e. the constantly developing responses to constantly changing *outside* enemies, was still anchored throughout by the dynamics of the phalanx, which continued to triumph in its Greeks forms. Finally however, the Romans—even more thug-like than the Greeks, a remarkable achievement indeed—used their Etruscan-influenced version of the phalanx[81] to build their own empire over the traces of their Greek predecessors who nevertheless fought nastily until the end when along with Cleopatra and Anthony they were finally shut down and faded from world-historical importance.

Don't forget Hanson's point that I emphasized earlier: most Greek males participated in this incessant bloody fighting. That means that the artists who were producing increasingly stunningly beautiful and distinctively indexically-oriented art probably often had first-hand

[81] Nathan Rosenstein, 'New Approaches to Roman Military History' <http://www.apaclassics.org/education/CAH/RosensteinAPA2009.pdf> [accessed 12 March 2010].

experience with the lessons in the relationship of form and content being fought over in the battlefields of Greece. Is it not possible that these artists as they grappled with adequate means to convey the merits of their dead or the myths of creation and destruction saw *the distinctiveness of human form pushing out from their stones* just as *hoplites pushed out from their phalanxes*, an aesthetic *othismos*, for the first time conceiving of the individual as a *force*? And is their creative form not a *trace* of the fact that perhaps in the bloody brutality of war the genesis took place of *the coherent individual subject*—perhaps the most sacrosanct creation of the west? For what is subjectivity if not a conception of interiority as a *force*, an internal *othismos*? Was the harsh confrontation of hoplites willing to face down and kill or be killed by an opponent like the big bang in astrophysics, this birth of the individual out of a vast undifferentiated archaic tribal past, the person as a legal and moral entity first arising out of fateful decisions by a group of belligerent farmers who voted to face their enemies in decisive battles, a genesis that is witnessed in their art? *Othismos*, the push: a historical force that changed everything; the birthplace of the force of the individual and the genesis of the West?"

Barry paused, his small frame poised almost aggressively as he faced his small audience and glowered at them. There wasn't a sound in the room. Finally Barry dropped his eyes and mumbled, With that thought I leave you. Thank you for listening. This class has been cancelled and you will be given notice of other courses you may take or how to get a refund. Good luck everyone. While everyone watched in apparent shock he threw his books and papers into his bag and again swept out of the room, this time forever.

No one moved for a long time. Finally the two young men in the corner got up. One of them said to the other, That was a cool lecture, to which his partner chirped happy agreement as they too exited. The scary boy in black and the girl left too, both of their expressions blank. The Asian kid incredibly still slept. Ray, Norman, and Ian, the editor, sat as if transfixed. Finally, Norman spat out angrily, The lights are going out all over Europe and we shall not see them lit again in our lifetimes. What? asked Ray. Shit happens, muttered Norman in disgust and he too got up and left.

Ray turned to Ian with quizzically-raised eyebrows. It's a quote from Lloyd George or somebody from the eve of the First World War, said Ian. Oh. said Ray. Barry is Norman's

supervisor, Ian continued, so I guess he's kind of pissed about Barry leaving. Oh, said Ray again. They both shook their heads and looked down at their shoes. They sat silently for a long minute. Fuck, was all Ray could bring himself to say. No kidding, responded Ian. He got up. Barry asked me to gather up his computer and stuff and give it to him tomorrow. I'm going to meet him at the City library at noon. You can come along if you're interested. Ray thanked him, Yes, yes, he would love to have a follow-up conversation, especially if he could have a night to mull over what he had just heard.

5.

Ray suddenly realized he badly had to pee. He left Ian and went into the washroom. As he washed his hands he looked up and saw his face in the mirror. Just as Barry had alluded to he often felt a small shock when he saw his reflection; amazed at the inaccessibility of his own face, how *distant* it seemed from him as the mirror reflected it back to him at the same time that it undeniably *was* him, how strangely his face manifested what he often felt was the weird inner push outwards of his personality. His weird obsessive personality.

He ran his fingers over his face then with one finger traced his outline on the mirror. Could the origins of these feelings, of his representation of himself to himself and to others, really be traceable back to the Greeks? He had been thinking about machines and the urban forms that supported them and how they weighed down on him and sometimes lashed out violently. Everyone else mostly seemed quite happy to acquiesce to their predations. But for him it was almost as if the city was pushing back at him. Every step, every time he drove, every window he looked out was a kind of provocation. He had always thought that his reflections on the city and how the traces of its forms often seemed to him so invidious in fact had a history, a genealogy that perhaps led back to such illustrious forebears as Walter Benjamin or Baudelaire. But was it possible that this sort of counter-history could lead one back to the dawn of western civilization, to those truculent Greeks saying nothing in the end mattered, no traces should be left, except of forms born of pushing up hard against each other and killing?

Six. Impressions of Power, "… the Origins of which Are not in View."

Bibliographic Entry:
Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *Ten Books on Architecture*[82]

> I am composed of the formal and the material; and neither of them will perish into non-existence, as neither of them came into existence out of non-existence. Every part of me then will be reduced by change into some part of the universe, and that again will change into another part of the universe, and so on for ever. And by consequence of such a change I too exist, and those who begot me, and so on for ever in the other direction. For nothing hinders us from saying so, even if the universe is administered according to definite periods of revolution.
>
> Marcus Aurelius[83]

1.

Figure 28 – The Library Building

The day after Barry's lecture Ray went down to meet Ian and Barry at the downtown branch of the municipal library, located just beyond the edge of North False Creek. The library building was often disparagingly referred to as a post-modern version of the Roman Coliseum: it had a circular outer ring, a bit like an unravelling jelly roll, with classically-inspired engaged columns and large window frames referencing stepped arches. Inside the roll was a modernist cube where the library itself was situated. Inside the two main entrances, between the high circular outer wall and the entrance to the library cube, there was a large atrium covered with glass. The atrium had small food outlets and cafes with

[82] Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *Vitruvius, On Architecture*, ed. by Frank Stephen Granger, trans. by Frank Stephen Granger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).
[83] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (New York: Modern Library, 2002) Book Six.

tables and chairs where people could relax with their food or coffees and chat in the open space brightly illuminated by the vaulted glass ceiling even in the middle of winter.

Ian and Barry were already there and deep in conversation when Ray bought himself a cappuccino and brought it over to their table. Ian was hunched over close to Barry, who sat with his head drooping so far down it looked as though he was sleep. Ray thought the two of them made an almost classical scene, like a Rembrandt print perhaps, "Plato and His Student" or something, except of course for the big ugly grey and yellow trainers worn by Barry—who judging by his spindly body with his basketball-sized protruding belly had probably never gotten up to jogging speed unassisted in his entire life. Oh yeah, Safdie did a bunch of variants of this basic design, Ian was saying. He turned to Ray with some apparent relief at the arrival of a relatively normal human companion, as Barry had sat while Ian spoke apparently mesmerized, as he often seemed to be, by his shoes. Hi Ray, he almost shouted out, we were just talking about this building. Do you know Moshe Safdie, the architect who did this building?

Ray smiled and told them—well, told Ian anyway, Barry showing no sign that he was aware of Ray's arrival, still lost in meditation of his running shoes—about when he was a quite young man one of his first lovers had been house-sitting an apartment in Habitat, a building Safdie had constructed as part of Expo 67 in Montreal. Ray remembered one late fall morning in the early 1970s, joyfully lying in bed with his lovely young companion on first waking. She had cozily nestled her head in the crook of his shoulder as they looked contentedly and with some amazement out of the floor to ceiling windows—a feature that not while not entirely novel was not as taken for granted in homes in those days as it is now either—at the nubilous harbour directly across from where they lay, smudged by a steady slight drizzle of rain mixed with the year's first light snow under a darkly lowering sky. That morning a passenger ship was setting sail and it blew its horns and sent streamers flying as a big crowd, which to Ray and his girlfriend looked like a gathering of brightly-coloured ants against the dark sky and docks, gaily waved back. It was a richly memorable experience; he could almost still smell the warm woollen blankets and the cotton sheets and his young girlfriend's skin as he had lain there thinking the world was revealing itself to be a very happy place.

Ian grinned and raised his eyebrows with mock lechery at Ray's recollections. Ray smiled ruefully and shook his head; how his life since then had changed since then, as had his happy perspective. They sat silently for a moment. Ray stretched his arms as if to pull himself out from that bittersweet nostalgia and looked around him. You know, he said, it has often struck me that this library building is similar to Habitat in that it is quite crude from the outside.

Have you seen Habitat? Ray asked. Ian shook his head. Ray continued, it was supposed to be an experiment in affordable building techniques. Safdie stacked up a series of large unadorned shipping-container-like concrete boxes, each one holding different rooms, laid at slight angles to each other. It turned out to be pretty expensive, so the idea was never repeated. And it's pretty ugly from a distance and worse when you get close. I remember it as having these narrow, cold exterior concrete corridors that were particularly unappealing, especially in winter. And this library building is equally ugly on the outside, with this weird Coliseum look and stucco façade and the lack of bases on the columns giving it an almost archaic quality that seems clumsy and almost shoddy when you are up close to it, like some kind of stucco suburban fantasy gone completely mad. So both Habitat and Library Square have this simultaneously cheap and weirdly almost forbidding quality from the outside. But the funny thing is that the experience *inside* both buildings can often be quite beautiful, with lots of glass and surprising spatial features that are very warmly welcoming, like a lot of the spaces inside the library, or this atrium, he finished, looking around.

Ian nodded. Yeah, I agree. And I was just saying, and here Ian nodded at the still almost recumbent figure of Barry who was now so far bent over they couldn't see his face and who could have been passed out from all they could tell, that Safdie has done a few other designs that are pretty close to this, like Salt Lake City, which I visited a few years ago, and it's just like you say; kind of tacky from the outside but with an atrium that is even more stunning than this one. But all these later versions still have the same circular outer shell wrapped around a modernist cube core. What is also interesting is that in the other versions Safdie has dropped the classical allusions and the outer circles seem to me to be referencing something more like rocket launching pads or roller coasters. They definitely suggest speed, things taking off.

That *is* interesting, Barry suddenly sputtered, while continuing to stare fixedly at his shoes as he excitedly stammered out a tirade in almost in one long breath as Ian and Ray watched with surprise. I have long felt, he went on, that this library building could be read as a kind of metaphor for the city's development. If you drop the Coliseum reference, and think of it instead as being more like a Roman *viaduct*—as an allusion to flow in other words, if not to speed as you were suggesting is apparent in these other similar structures of Safdie's Ian—then you have this opposition between the mobile, flowing exterior and the dynamic stasis of the cube interior.

Barry started to gesture more excitedly with his hands as he continued his little speech, like he was an orchestra conductor but his orchestra seemed to consist of his incongruous runners. Someone, he said, once showed me a diagram of the urban freeways that were proposed for the city in the 1960s and one version has the freeway circling the downtown grid just the way in the library building the outer shell circles the cube.

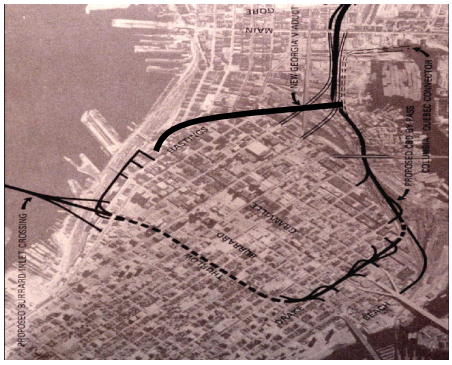

Figure 29 – Proposed Freeway Route

The design of the library was voted on by Local citizens in a competition, do you remember that? Barry went on without waiting for a response. It's often pointed to by architectural critics as an example of why lay people shouldn't get to choose architectural designs, but whether or not that is true, and I think personally that architects are in a bad position from which to dismiss the critical abilities of others, I often wonder if at some level people weren't happy to have this building as a kind of model or memorial of how the city grappled with having a freeway, of what the city could have become, a kind of imaginary past, just as it

resonates with classical allusions. It makes it a very semiotically-rich building, even if all the architectural types hate it.

The performance ended as quickly as it had begun. Barry dropped his hands into his lap and retreated back into consideration of his shoes. There was a long awkward silence as Ray and Ian waited to see if more was coming. Finally Ian tentatively spoke. Uh … that's interesting, he said, looking at Ray when Barry still was unresponsive. If the exterior of the building represents freeways, then perhaps the modernist cube inside represents a more democratic, participatory vision.

Ray reached into his bag and pulled out his now somewhat dog-eared copy of *The Death* and laid it on the table. Yeah, so maybe the cube is like a Jane Jacobs sort of building? Sorry if that seem out of the blue, but I have been thinking about her a lot lately.

Barry snorted loudly at this, and suddenly raised his big eyes and turned them first to Ray and then to Jacobs's book, his head swivelling like a surveillance camera triggered by foreign incoming objects while his mouth curled in contempt. Oh right. Jane *fucking* Jacobs, he spat out.

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Ray couldn't help laughing. He had been trying to reconcile Jacobs's writing with his own confused ideas about city streets and suddenly here was Barry contumeliously dismissing her whole enterprise. He was about to ask Barry what he meant when Barry suddenly cut him off, as if he had dismissed the whole idea of Jane Jacobs as even remotely worth talking about. His head swivelled back toward Ray. Anyway my friend, Barry said loudly to Ray who looked back in surprise, Ian and I got caught up before you arrived. But tell me what you have been up to. Ray mumbled a bit in response about his fading career path and Barry snorted happily, Christ you were useless as a bureaucrat! And anyway those places will fucking destroy you! Thank god you got out! But that's all career horseshit anyway. Tell me what you have been thinking about, or, and here Barry almost sidled up to Ray, maybe writing…?

Well, laughed Ray, what I have been thinking about is pretty mixed up. He paused for a moment, trying to gather his thoughts. I guess lately I have mostly been thinking about this city … I have been thinking about *stuff* in particular, you know, materials: concrete, asphalt, steel, all the material stuff that is everywhere. And I have wondered *why* this stuff is everywhere and what effect it is having. Hmph! exclaimed Barry with a little smile. Taking this as encouragement, Ray told him and Ian a little bit about Janice, and how hard he had found it adjusting to her loss. One of the things I have found hardest, he said, is that Janice's suffering was so under-acknowledged: the hospital where she was first taken after being hit, the police who investigated after, the insurance company, really everyone outside a very small circle of friends and family. But of course that experience was a disaster for Janice. And although I wasn't directly injured, nonetheless Janice's accident has changed me in very profound ways.

And I have been thinking too a lot about how accidents change things in general, like road design, which is after all almost like a record of sorts of accidents. Every crosswalk or sidewalk has all these features that have been designed in significant part to take into account accidents where people were killed or injured and try to prevent that from happening again. So on the one hand you have this experience that was overwhelmingly significant for Janice especially but also for me and a few others and that along with other accidents has this major social impact through evolving built public forms but, on the other hand, at the very centre of this universe related to injuring, at the level of Janice's suffering, there is an attempt to almost make the accident go away: to shift the blame onto her, to minimize the seriousness of her injuries, to deny the value of her loss.

Barry had watched Ray intently as he had spoken, his big eyes magnified by the massive eyeglasses he wore. Yes, yes, not to mention being utterly ignored in all the crap about liveability that is being broadcast over us all the time. He gestured with a little moue toward *The Death* sitting on the table. Exactly, said Ray, that is just what I have been thinking too. Well then no wonder you didn't cut it as an urban planner, laughed Barry. Uh-huh, said Ray, smiling wanly, as he went on, and all that has gotten me thinking about technology, and how technology transforms us in ways that no one really ever seems to sign onto knowingly but that end up affecting everyone profoundly.

Ray stopped for a moment and sloshed the coffee around in his cup. He continued, I have been thinking a lot along these lines about concrete in particular because it is so common. It's one of those materials that we touch all the time and I have wondered what is going on with it when we do: how do we use *it* and how is it changing *us*? But its taken-for-granted-ness makes it hard to pin down.

Do you guys know Wolfgang Schivelbusch, his little book on the railroad? Both Barry and Ian shook their heads. That work really got me launched in my thinking about technology in general and concrete in particular. Ray went on, Schivelbusch lays out the multiple impacts of the railroad: standard time, the telegraph, levelling of the countryside, mass crowds in cities, birth of the consumer, department stores, the annihilation of space, blah, blah, blah. But what is most interesting to me is how he goes from the micro detail of, say, developments in shock absorption to the dramatic growth in public reading and along with it newspapers and cheap book presses; once people were successfully insulated from jarring by the railroad cars as they rode over the steel tracks they became bored and looked for things like reading to occupy their time. Schivelbusch keeps going back and forth like that from the *microphysical* to the *macrosocial*.

I think of that book often because concrete or asphalt is arguably responsible for an even more dramatic transformation of space than the railroad and if what Schivelbusch describes is *paradigmatic*—not just the effect of railroad technology specifically but a model of the transformative effects of modern technology—then surely it follows that these materials are transforming not just geography but human consciousness. If that is so then what is the nature of the change? What happens exactly, not only in highly dramatic interactions with technology such as a car accident but in all the more mundane moments like crossing the street or turning a corner in your car?

Uh-hmmmm, that is *so* interesting. muttered Barry, his eyes focused intently on a spot seemingly many miles away. Yeah, well thanks, Ray answered, again smiling ruefully, but these kinds of little rants don't get me invited to a lot of wildly fun parties, let me tell you. Ian smiled, while Barry continued intently staring into space. Anyway, Ray went on, out of thinking about concrete I have become really interested in impression, in how we leave

traces in materials and materials leave a mark on us. And I have been thinking about materials that are specifically designed for that interaction of impression, materials that are either *shaped by* or are hardened *in anticipation of* impression. I am sure that this set of phenomena is really central somehow, even though it is so taken-for-granted.

Part of what I have been thinking about is how these material relations, in concrete anyway, create a kind of spectacle, in that Debordian sense of the transformation of things into images of themselves. What I mean by that is on a daily, even moment-by-moment basis, whereas once maybe we might have had a sense that what we did could leave a trace of human effort—you know, leave a footprint, chop down a tree, dig up a mine, pile up ore in a harbour, build a city built brick by brick, in each case leaving visible evidence of human work—now almost all building, (which in cities usually means building in concrete) is *abstract* building, an *image* of building, built from a mould, impressed into place, to reflect exigencies that have little to do necessarily with the site or any *apparent* human connection.

Ian watched Ray with obvious fascination and Barry too had deigned to actually look directly at Ray. Both were periodically nodding their heads vigorously in agreement. Encouraged, Ray pressed on. Let me add to that idea of spectacle. In the preface of Schivelbusch's book there is a line about what was novel about the motive force of the railroad is that it is a power the origins of which are out of view. Early train travelers felt themselves being literally hurled through space by an invisible force; they likened it to being a projectile shot out of a cannon. And I think that this notion of *power*—and not just technical power but social power—as *a force the origins of which are out of view* is really important with materials such as concrete. Concrete literally shapes our lives but according to exigencies that are completely abstract, always originating elsewhere and manifesting themselves in ways that defy any apparent human connection. And this is what I've been thinking is perhaps a Debordian spectacle,[84] (and especially as Debord's ideas were updated by Jonathan Crary, who described the essential aspect of the spectacle as not the image—i.e.. the imagistic object—but how spectacle creates us as audience, i.e. as subjects, how it "striates" us, through "tropes of

[84] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).

imprint, impression and recording"[85]) is reinforced every time we step off a sidewalk or get in a car: people seek imagistic resolutions in commodities to try and somehow *humanly reconnect*—through desire or even more savagely through the spectacle of public injury, such as happened to Janice—to a world that every footfall on concrete or sight of a concrete building self-evidently reinforces as being *abstract*, motivated by powers that are out of view, not humanly scaled.

Ray turned to Barry. That's part of why I found your lecture so amazing last night. You seemed to drill down to the origin of everything I have been thinking about: that whole thing about the genesis of subjectivity in warfare and the centrality of the push and the relationship of form and content. You suggested the mask, the formal trace of between exterior and exterior contents, as a kind of trope in military and aesthetics for the Greeks, and I really liked that because I have been playing with the idea of the form of cities as a kind of mask, a masking structure that is in some crucial, fundamental ways reproduced in photographs of the city. I started thinking after listening to your lecture that there is something there that I don't quite see yet about the intimacy of violence in what Schivelbusch characterized as the projectile economy and the centrality of form and identity in material forms of impression. Ray paused for a long moment as his two companions watched him eagerly. Well, he shrugged, that's as far as I have gotten for now. Any thoughts?

Barry whistled softly and sat back, shook his head and said with a small smile, Man! He tossed his head back and looked up at the ceiling. That's quite a head-full you have been carrying around.

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After a long pause during which Barry appeared to continue to study the glass ceiling above them while Ray and Ian looked on quizzically, he finally murmured quietly, I do have some thoughts about what you are saying. Ray and Ian looked at each other. Ian cocked one

[85] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 80-81.

eyebrow, as if to say, now what the fuck? Then Barry abruptly dropped his head and stared intently at Ray who guiltily shifted his eyes back from Ian. But let me first say one final thing about this building, Barry began, because I think it will bring us right back to what you were talking about. If you continue on with the idea that the building is a sort of marker of the city's long conflict between the flow of expressways—a form that encourages freedom, speed, thrill and so on, signified by the somewhat imperialistic viaduct-like outer shell—and the more democratic, participatory, pedestrian (in the many senses of that word), information-rich modernist cube that houses the library, then this atrium, he gestured around him vaguely, is an attempt to resolve those contrary impulses, both of which are powerfully attractive and mutually exclusive. The atrium presents the conflict between the freedom and speed and often unwelcome dominance of the freeway and the more—Barry nodded with mild disdain at the book on the table—well, let us say Jane Jacobsian participation and engagement of the gridded street, a tension that is a foundational myth of this city and, really, North America as a whole, as a kind of built form of *spectacle*, to use your word, Ray, which invites—and this is where Safdie's use of interior space can be quite brilliant—what we might summarize as the conflict between *forms of flow* and *forms of interaction* to be contemplated as an *aesthetic* pleasure, alluding spatially to … what? well, some kind of power perhaps, of sheer visual space as almost a *force*. So we're starting to get closer to what you were talking about Ray regarding Schivelbusch and the impact of technology and all that.

Barry chortled and spread his hands palms out. Now I know I am going a bit overboard in my hyperbole here about this atrium as a spectacle. He looked around bemusedly at the other people—high school teenagers, moms with kids in strollers, the odd bearded intellectual absorbed in some thick library book—sitting at tables sipping their coffees or eating frozen yogurt. In lots of ways, Barry went on, this place is just like a small food court in a shopping mall, except the library is the main attraction instead of Sears or whatever. But nonetheless I would insist that the built space has a pull on our imaginations. He turned to Ian and Ray. Do you remember the first time you saw this space? Yeah, said Ian, I really remember being kind of amazed by it. Right, said Barry, and you can still sometimes see someone coming in here for the first time and when they come through the doors they stop and look up with a kind of wonder. And I would maintain that even though we quickly get

used to it we are still on some level enthralled by this space even though consciously we mostly ignore it. So my question is, what is the nature of that wonder that this space inspires?

Barry turned to Ray. And that leads me back to what you were talking about and all your very interesting observations and questions about what happens when people touch concrete or similar urban materials. The connection I see between this space and what you were commenting on as the *spectacle of concrete* is this. Barry paused for a moment, gathering his thoughts.

The kind of open, domed space we see here in the atrium, Barry continued, has a history obviously. Think of the Houston astrodome or the *Volkshalle* that Albert Speer had planned to build in Berlin after Germany won the Second World War or long before that Brunelleschi's *Il Duomo* in Florence, one of the signature buildings of the Renaissance. In different ways these buildings were attempts not only to dazzle through an almost magical deployment of sheer space but to glorify the gods of their builders: the spectacle of mass consumption in Houston, the savage massed will of the Nazis in Berlin or the emerging miracle of a rationally-planned universe in the Renaissance. And the genealogy of all these domed buildings can be traced back to one of the earliest *concrete* buildings still extant, the Pantheon in Rome, 2600 years later still one of the most dazzling displays of built space in the world.

To think about what the Romans accomplished semiotically in the Pantheon, we can pick up on what I was talking about last night, how the ancient Greeks' emerging sense of individuality, traceable in their sculpture, was importantly linked to hoplite war in which a line was formed between an external enemy on the one hand and Greeks pushing outward on the other. I used that formula, FORM = IDENTITY, which can be carried forward into consideration of the Pantheon. As you mentioned Ray, that identity and the mask—the Egyptian death mask, the military mask (to this day, military jargon refers to a feint as masking, as in masking a retreat), the façade of the phalanx, the statuary of fallen warriors—were closely linked.

Barry took a sip of his coffee. He suddenly and disconcertingly smiled like a shy child, with his eyes averted. But here I am launching into a lecture, he mumbled. Perhaps this is not of such interest? Ian and Ray both exclaimed, No no, keep going, please.

Barry nodded with satisfaction and raised his bugged eyes to Ian and Ray. Thank you. I am just so enthralled by this topic, and it does seem to me to be so close to what you were talking about Ray. Anyway, I don't know how much you both know about the Pantheon. Not much, muttered Ian while Ray nodded agreement. OK, well, as I mentioned what ties it back directly to your interests Ray is that it was built of hydraulic concrete, which as I'm sure you know is the result of a chemical process in which water is displaced from the materials, even when under water, and allows them to become very hard.[86] A crude non-hydraulic concrete is possible to make fairly easily with volcanic ash or other mediums, and the Greeks and Egyptians and other early people had used concrete in that way, as a kind of mortar. But the Romans discovered the formula for real hydraulic concrete no later than the end of the first millennium and started to use it as a construction material much as we do.[87] For example they rebuilt Ostia, the ocean port servicing Rome, largely in concrete in the first century CE and early on they started to build concrete dome structures.

The Pantheon was built by the emperor Hadrian over several years, I think between 118 and 127 CE; I'd have to check the dates, but it was certainly right at the beginning of Hadrian's reign.[88] We know exactly when it was built because even though the core structure is concrete there were also bricks used in it and they were stamped with the dates they were made. Anyway, it was built as a temple but beyond that we don't know for what exactly it was intended. Contemporary writers seemed to have taken its use so for granted that although they mentioned the building frequently they never bothered to describe why it had been built as it was or what went on within it.

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[86] Fikret K. Yegul, 'ROMAN CONCRETE', *Roman Building Technology and Architecture* <http://id-archserve.ucsb.edu/arthistory/152k/concrete.html> [accessed 13 March 2010]; 'Concrete - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concrete> [accessed 13 March 2010].
[87] David Moore, 'The Riddle of Ancient Roman Concrete', *Romanconcrete.com*, 1993 <http://www.romanconcrete.com/docs/spillway/spillway.htm> [accessed 13 March 2010].
[88] Christiane L. Joost-Gauthier, 'The Iconography of Sacred Space: A Suggested Reading of the Meaning of the Roman Pantheon', *Artibus et Historiae*, 19 (1998), p. 21.

There have been numerous speculations as to its function and meaning: that it was a monument to Saturn or to the family of Julius Caesar or to celebrate Pythagorean mathematics and geometry.[89] And, of course being one who can never let sleeping historical dogs lie, I can add to the speculative list. We know that Hadrian had a rocky start as emperor; he was out of Rome when he assumed the imperial mantle and was apparently viewed with some hostility by the Senate and there was talk of possible violence if he returned to the capital city. As a consequence of that and the demands of the empire during the first years of power he was rarely in Rome.[90] So the construction of this stunning building may have had an important symbolic role; its vast interior void could have stood in for the absent emperor, visually transmitting the power of the ruler through the undeniable, almost physical, power of the open space. The building in other words vouchsafed for him through a visual rhetoric of uninterrupted space. I imagine that the Pantheon's impressive space—and it is doubly impressive, right Ray? impressive as causing some kind of cognitive dazzlement and its concrete construction impressed into place?—manifestly affirming to Romans that Hadrian's power was otherworldly and would overwhelm anyone who tried to challenge him.

That ties directly back to what you were saying Ray, about the relationship of concrete and power transmitted over a distance. How did you put it? A power the origins of which are not apparent? That is exactly what I am suggesting was going on with Hadrian and his concrete Pantheon. The mystery of the sheer weight of space in that open void—the tangibly powerful *presence* created by nothing other than pure *absence*—conveyed a real power of the absent emperor, making him physically present. Barry leaned forward conspiratorially, What I am guessing the building said to the Romans, in other words is: "Don't fuck with me!"

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[89] Paul Davies, David Hemsoll and Mark Wilson Jones, 'The Pantheon: Triumph of Rome, or Triumph of Compromise?', *Art History*, 10 (1987), 133-153; Joost-Gauthier; Rodolfo Amedeo Lanciani, *The Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome.* -- (New York: Blom, 1967); Carroll Meeks, 'Pantheon Paradigm', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 19 (1960); Peter Wilkins, 'The Pantheon as Globe-Shaped Conception', *Nexus Network Journal*, 6 (2004) <http://www.nexusjournal.com/conf_reps_v6n1-Wilkins.html> [accessed 29 November 2006]; Fikret K. Yegul, 'Review Essay of William MacDonald, The Pantheon', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 31 (1978), 121-123.

[90] Mary Taliaferro Boatwright, *Hadrian and the City of Rome* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987); Anthony Richard Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*, Roman imperial biographies (London: Routledge, 1997); Stewart Perowne, *Hadrian* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1976).

Barry paused and looked at Ray, Does that make any sense? Ray said quickly, Oh yeah; that's a very interesting take. I don't know anything about Roman architecture, but it makes perfect sense to me that Hadrian would have had political motivations to build such an audacious structure. God! jumped in Ian, if the building is amazing to us in the twenty-first century, imagine how it must have overwhelmed people in the early second century. And if I can add, it kind of ties back in to what you were saying last night. It's almost as if the Pantheon was a giant mask for the living emperor, projecting the power of his physical person over space.

Yes that's right, said Barry, and I want to come back to that point. But first let me suggest that there is another factor that supports my idea of the Pantheon as a built projection of imperial power. That is the influence of Stoicism.[91] I don't believe there is direct evidence that Hadrian was a disciple of Stoicism, but we know he was aware of it. For example he visited the famous Stoic philosopher Epictetus in his school in Nicopolis, Greece. I don't think we should minimize the symbolic importance of such a visit by Hadrian. He was after all the supreme leader of an empire that in many ways has never been paralleled. I read somewhere that in the Roman empire in Hadrian's time one could walk from Britain to the Middle East, across Europe, to Greece and Turkey, down through Palestine and ending up in Libya, reasonably certain the whole time of being free of molestation and without crossing a single border, which was an imperial accomplishment that has never been matched and a situation that we are obviously very far from today. So when the leader of such an empire visits somewhere we can be reasonably certain that there were important reasons of state symbolism behind it. Think of Obama going to Ghana not too long ago for example; it wasn't sightseeing, it was a symbolically-fraught announcement that the United States, the most powerful country in the world, was engaged in a re-evaluation of the roles of African Americans slavery, freedom, individual accomplishment, the power of history and so on. Similarly, I think we can assume, Stoicism held some powerful symbolic associations for Hadrian to have publicly recognized it in this way, just as Obama recognized the symbolic importance of Ghana's old slave ports. Hadrian even took up wearing a beard in the Greek style, the first of the Roman emperors to do so.

[91] Paul J. Alexander, 'Letters and Speeches of the Emperor Hadrian', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 49 (1938), 141-177 (pp. 141-177, esp. 174).

Like a thirteen-year-old boy, Barry held his hands straight out in front of him and puffed up his cheeks, before continuing, I mention all this because Stoic philosophy ties in very neatly with what we are talking about. Marcus Aurelius, who was named by Hadrian to be one of his successors, wrote in his wonderful and obviously Stoically–influenced *Meditations* about how every man, no matter what his individual circumstances, is the same distance from his own death and, he concludes, all the forms of the universe come around like a great circle, precisely in the way the Pantheon is a giant suspended globe.[92]

But on a more material level the connection is even more striking. The idea of impression was central to Stoic philosophy.[93] It centres on a notion that human consciousness is a blank slate upon which sense-impressions are inscribed. The classical Greek philosopher Zeno wrote to the effect that cognitive knowledge is correct to the extent that the phenomenal world has impressed itself upon that knowledge. He likens the soul to a wax tablet, and this seems to have been an idea with considerable currency in classical Greece. [94]

So, I am guessing, it would have made perfect sense in this light for Hadrian would recognize that concrete would be a good medium to transmit his imperial power; the veracity of the Pantheon's message, its ability to impress others, to convince them of the emperor's right to rule, was guaranteed by the impressive character of the concrete medium itself, the mystery of his power literally impressed into the material building.

Barry tuned to Ray. And here is where I want to come back to the point about the Pantheon as a kind of giant mask and the relation of that to what I was saying about Greek sculpture manifesting a relationship between form and identity first elaborated in Greek phalanx warfare. Hadrian knew that his audience would be particularly receptive to the Pantheon as a

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[92] Marcus Aurelius, p. Books 2 & 6.
[93] Gordon H. Clark, 'Plotinus' Theory of Sensation', *Philosophical Review*, 51 (1942), 357 - 382; John M. Cooper, 'Stoic Autonomy', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 20 (2003); Maryanne Cline Horowitz, 'The Stoic Synthesis of the Idea of Natural Law in Man: Four Themes', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35 (1974), 3 - 16; Anna-Maria Iopolo, 'Presentation and Assent: A Physical and Cognitive Problem in Early Stoicism', *The Classical Quarterly*, New, 40 (1990); 'Stoicism', in *Internet Dictionary of Philosophy* <http://www.jep.utm.edu/stoicism.htm> [accessed 2 December 2006].
[94] Drew Griffith, 'A Homeric Metaphor Cluster Describing Teeth, Tongue and Words', *American Journal of Philology*, 116 (1995), 1 - 5 (pp. 1-5); John Onians, *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 7.

signifier of his rule because the Roman nobility (and we should remember that doubtlessly the nobility was the only group Hadrian was interested in convincing; I doubt he gave a flying fuck about ordinary Romans) had a tradition of wax death masks. I don't know if this was something that the Romans inherited from the Egyptians, who as I mentioned last night had their own long tradition of death masks, but in any event Romans would create full waxen masks, known as *imagines*, of the deceased. These were stored in patrician homes and brought out during significant events and perhaps even worn by actors to show the presence of ancestors at moments of tribal importance.[95] There's a famous sculpture that shows a Roman patrician carrying two of wax busts and lots of literary references to them but unfortunately none of the busts have survived so far as I know.

Anyway, it makes sense to me at least that Romans were then primed via this very old Republican tradition to be able to read the semiotic significance of Hadrian representing himself through the Pantheon's stunning void, the impression it made in the concrete self-evidently pointing I would say to the almost god-like, or at least ancestor-like stature of the absent emperor. I would say that a similar semiotic power was at work at a micro level in the use of seals, which had—and in fact still have—a curious legitimizing power, transmitting presence over space, literally legally and morally re-presenting an entity over space, as is still true today such as when a corporate seal is attached to a document.[96]

Barry turned to his small audience. Can you bear with me for one more point? Ray and Ian nodded eagerly. Fuck yeah, said Ian and they all laughed. Ok, good said Barry smiling. The last point I want to make confirms the connection between the mask—which I talked about last night as playing a crucial role in the emergence of the individual in Greek art—and concrete. I'm sure you know this, but the only Roman writing on architecture that survived the empire's fall, and which was tremendously influential in the Middle Ages and early modern periods, was Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Achitecture*.[97] And, wouldn't you know, Barry said, turning pointedly to Ray, one of those books is on concrete, which when Vitruvius was

[95] L. Goldscheider, *Roman Portraits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940); Emerson H. Swift, 'Imagines in Imperial Portraiture', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 27 (1923).
[96] Verity Platt, 'Making an Impression: Replication and the Ontology of the Graeco-Roman Seal Stone', *Art History*, 29 (2006), 233-257.
[97] Vitruvius Pollio.

writing, during the beginning of Augustus's reign, was a relatively new material, the potential of which must have seemed quite astounding to as acute an observer as Vitruvius.

Now most of that chapter is unremarkable, providing a formula for cement and so on, but what is really fascinating is how Vitruvius chose to begin this part of his work, which is with a fairly lengthy story from the final moments of the classical Greek era about an ambitious young architect named Dinocrates. Dinocrates had failed to get the attention of the Macedonian conqueror Alexander through traditional methods of letters of recommendations and contacts at court. Frustrated, the tall, handsome youth took off his clothes, anointed himself with oil, crowned himself with a wreath of poplar, slung a lion's skin over his shoulder and picked up a large club. Unsurprisingly, the young man caused a stir when he appeared thusly attired at Alexander's court and the astonished Alexander asked the young man who he was. Dinocrates blurted out a fantastical scheme to transform Mount Athos into a sculpture, complete with rivers flowing out of giant chalices, which Alexander, no fool, rejected as impractical. However the Macedonian conqueror was sufficiently impressed to include the brash young architect in his entourage, and when Alexander decided to build a city bearing his name in Egypt, Dinocrates was appointed head architect of the project. What is crucial I think is that Vitruvius is quick to demurely contrast himself with the hero of this happy story and to describe himself self-deprecatingly: he talks about how his own face is old and wrinkled but despite that he thinks his scientific accomplishments merit some attention from the emperor.

What I am getting at is that just as Greeks had come up with an aesthetic ideal of human form in their sculptures that balanced an exterior mask of their perfect Greekness with the increasingly urgent force of the individual, so too did Vitruvius sketch in words his own face, in which his unique skill and knowledge—his specific individual contribution—was a force to which the emperor should pay attention. Vitruvius, and others of the same republican patrician class such as Plutarch or the Roman consul Marius who similarly either directly referenced themselves as masks or imagines,[98] thus completed the work of the self that the Greeks had started; the *looking upon* inherent to the Greek's classical naturalism had become

[98] Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 20.

the self looking upon the self, the face instead of the shield or the seal etched with the work of presencing and absencing. Vitruvius's passage gives us a glimpse of a late Republican Roman mask, which is very different in appearance to the Greek examples, taking the form of the care-worn visage of a republican elder; but the *content*, constructing the self, remains central. Vitruvius is subtly challenging the Greek formal ideal in his story of the young good-looking architect by presenting his worn face as testament to his values as an observer of building technique. The same appeal to the honourably time- and care-worn face is also evident in the remarkable tradition of Roman sculpture art historians call *veristic*. These were, we think, highly realistic images of powerful men and women which, unlike representations of their powerful Greek predecessors who represented themselves in idealistic ways, clearly show the wear and tear of the demands of their lives, giving them a *moral* certainty, their ability as individuals to surmount the slings and arrows forming their moral pivot point.

Meanwhile, as Vitruvius struggles to bend his message of this tradition of the self-created identity to suit the new political conditions of empire, he clearly revels in the material basis for architectural work, which he renders in careful detail in his books: the grit of material and the hard labour of construction and military engineering. He takes obvious pleasure in rough honest work, a pleasure that we might guess had at least some of the same connotations of directness and a special connection to republicanism as it still does now. This is especially true, it seems, with concrete, where Vitruvius goes to considerable pains to anchor his observations about this potentially very powerful material in the foundations of class and individual semiotic self-awareness. Thus from almost its first moments of even its

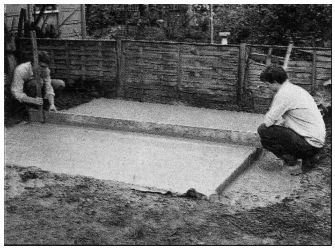

Figure 30 – Laying Concrete

more pedestrian uses, concrete was imbued with signification, reflecting back the tough and powerful self-appraisals of a republican upper class acutely conscious of semiotic power of

impression as exemplified by the physiognomy of ancestor death masks stored in all their homes. Based on that, we can imagine more easily how Hadrian's designers might have happily pushed concrete's semiotic boundaries toward the Pantheonic apotheosis of space.
After these last words of his dissert, the life seemed to go out of Barry, and he slumped back in his chair. For a long time none of them spoke. Ian suddenly looked at his watch. Shit, it's three o'clock, I have to pick my daughter up from school. That was a great discussion you guys. Thanks Barry, I never heard any of that stuff before about the Pantheon. He grabbed up his bag and smiling at them both rushed away.

Barry had barely responded to Ian's departure, only glancing up briefly as he had said his good-byes. Ray was reminded again of a drug addict who is pumped up while high but then sinks back into lethargy as the effects of the drug wear off.

I should go too, mumbled Barry. He glanced up at Ray. If these ideas that I have been discussing last night and today are of interest, I belong to a group that perhaps could shed some more light. Ray nodded enthusiastically. Barry shrugged lethargically. Well, you're welcome to come along the next time I get together with them. They are actually a group of Christian military historians; I hope you won't find that idea too off-putting. The thing is, they have discussed how the kinds of things I have been talking about and in which you seem interested—power and materiality and the emergence of the individual—and considering them in medieval and early modern periods as well, which might bring you closer to your questions about what is going on in North False Creek, and the connections that might exist between urban forms and the violence of spectacle, whether it is the mundane violence of the commodity or the more dramatic violence of the car accident.

Ray and Barry spoke a little more, and decided on a time when Ray could meet Barry's colleagues (They're quite cute in some ways, Barry had stage-whispered to Ray, they publish a little journal, *Onwards Christian Soldiers*; and they tend to have meetings that are more like little quodlibet coffee-klatches than anything really scholarly. But their journal is peer-reviewed by some very good military historians and in the end they get some pretty good work done.)

As Ray had scooped up his copy of *The Death* to put back in his pack, Barry nodded at it and said, I have been doing some work on our friend Jane Jacobs. Oh yeah? said Ray, I'd love to read it if I could. Yes, Barry replied, I was inspired by the Walker Evans show on at the Art Gallery. Have you seen it? Ray shook his head. Oh you must, said Barry. His work is quite incredible. And I think there are some very interesting connections to be made between his photography and Jane Jacobs's writing. When I am finished my paper I'll send you a copy. And with that Ray found himself walking down the street, headed for home.

4.

As he walked, Ray moodily pondered how Janice's loss had reshaped him, more rudely than he had let on to Barry and Ian. It had made him moody and withdrawn. It had cost him his job. His daughter, with whom he had been very close, had drifted away from him, caught on social currents that Ray was certain were dangerous but that he was powerless to counteract, only able to shout increasingly shrill warnings as she drifted further from his influence and into a likely egregious future. Ray was left wandering around lost in dreamy meditation; it seemed to be all he was still fit to do. Ray thought back to how before Janice died she had been shaped too by the accident: her personality changes, the brace she hobbled around in shortly before her final stroke, her frustration with insurers and police – public institutions she had trusted implicitly previously. And Ray thought of the intersection where she had been struck: its concrete linings and asphalt bed, its markings, the arrangement of lighting around it, all shaped by a series of prior accidents and mishaps.

It seemed right to Ray to trace back this reciprocal relationship between the material and the human, each shaping the other, as Barry had done to its classical genesis in Greek warfare and art and then its manifestations in Roman concrete structures such as the Pantheon. The Pantheon was a perfect model. The void at its centre was really more like a boundary, where presence and absence was held in a dynamic balance so charged one could almost hear it hum. But it wasn't just human absence and presence that generated the Pantheon's semiotic power; its coffered concrete surfaces balanced material-human reciprocity too, a mask yes, but more like an interface, a generative field perhaps, electric with messaging capable of running in either direction: the material creating the human or the human creating the material. And it seemed to Ray, as he returned to his autistic padding down the street, that

the material of concrete, in its mouldability, was central to this pregnant in-between state. What Hadrian had brought to a kind of zenith of built form was, Ray thought, played out, if much more crudely, in every structure moulded in precise contours around more quotidian voids: the intersection, the sidewalk, the concrete dwelling.

Seven. Modern Impressions

Bibliographic Entry:

Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome. Italy and the Ancient World*[99]

> Though thou shouldst be going to live three thousand years, and as many times ten thousand years, still remember that no man loses any other life than this which he now lives, nor lives any other than this which he now loses. The longest and shortest are thus brought to the same. For the present is the same to all, though that which perishes is not the same; and so that which is lost appears to be a mere moment. For a man cannot lose either the past or the future: for what a man has not, how can any one take this from him? These two things then thou must bear in mind; the one, *that all things from eternity are of like forms and come round in a circle*, and that it makes no difference whether a man shall see the same things during a hundred years or two hundred, or an infinite time; and the second, that the longest liver and he who will die soonest lose just the same. For the present is the only thing of which a man can be deprived, if it is true that this is the only thing which he has, and that a man cannot lose a thing if he has it not.
>
> Marcus Aurelius[100]

1.

To be fair to her, Ray's daughter Elaine had been left doubly bereft: first by the loss of Janice and then again by Ray's gloomy descent into almost permanent mourning. But whatever the justification for her behaviour, Ray was worried sick about her: she spent more and more time alone, often hunched over her computer keyboard, the black circles under her eyes exaggerated by the pale light emitting from the screen that she faced with a vacant, slack-jawed expression, her jaw propped up by one hand. Ray had tried repeatedly to wean her off this cybernetic-induced trance, bribing, cajoling, threatening, but nothing had worked.

In the months after Janice's death he had sat through countless sessions at her school with teachers and counsellors who were sympathetic at first and had variously beseeched Elaine to get off her self-destructive track, but eventually they turned more threatening, all

[99] Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976).
[100] Marcus Aurelius Book Six, my emphasis.

apparently to no more avail than his increasingly exasperated efforts at home to salvage her from her despondency. At school meetings, vice-principals were now being called in, who turned responsibility back to Ray; do something, they warned in essence, or her fuck-ups will be on your head.

As much as Ray was by now fed up with his daughter's seemingly endless vacant lethargy punctuated by bouts of rage, he still felt almost a sympathy for her at these sessions: the self-confidently unctuous voices of the badly-dressed forty-something martinets who had built lucrative school-board careers around mouthing puerile ideals of personal responsibility and commitment to hard work that they sure as shit weren't going to abandon now to try to reach a girl who was going down in flames, trauma or no trauma. Ray felt himself withdrawing as much as his daughter had in the face of these embarrassing sessions, only able to shake his head or nod limply until vice-principal X or counsellor Y or principal Z had thrown up their hands and said, if things don't turn around pretty dramatically she is going to be out of this school. When they were dismissed after these tirades Elaine would be sitting slumped in her chair, staring with unrestrained hostility into the space above her shoes while sucking madly on a strand of her hair, rising only reluctantly and as if doing Ray a great favour as he stood with the door open waiting for her, the whole little pointless drama watched by yet another secretary over the top of her glasses as she looked up from her computer with thin-lipped disapproval.

One evening when Ray had come home from a dinner meeting earlier than expected, he caught a glimpse of Elaine running surprisedly from the bathroom to her bedroom and he was sure that he saw welts of some kind running down her arms. He had pleaded with her to talk to him and when he had in frustration started rapping loudly on her tightly closed door while shouting at her to answer him goddamn it she had opened it only enough stick out her face contorted with rage and to scream, Leave me the fuck alone! and then she had pushed past him while hurriedly throwing on clothes and running out the door. She hadn't come back until early the following morning. Ray had hardly slept all night, wondering if and when exactly he should call the police. When she returned as the first light of a cold dawn feebly reached into the house, Ray was sitting at the kitchen table helplessly pouring himself

another cup of tea as she marched in past him wordlessly and, without even a glance in his direction, pounded up the stairs and slammed her bedroom door shut.

God, where was Janice, he thought to himself, feeling a swirl of unwelcome emotions: guilty anger that she had managed to miss all these histrionics that in significant part her death had caused; shame for blaming Janice for being dead; shame too for being such an obviously terrible father; and sadness that he had wasted so much time when Janice was alive in petty squabbling. As Ray sat morosely googling "cutting" at the kitchen table, the phone rang. It was Barry. That group I was telling you about is meeting tomorrow night, he announced without saying hello. Are you interested in coming along? Ray took a moment to recognize the voice, then shrugged and said sure, and wrote down directions.

2.

Ray found the house right downtown, in the alley next to the cathedral; he was so distant from Catholicism he had barely ever noticed the church before, let alone this sombre dark brick structure hidden right under the nose of the surrounding office towers. Come around to the side, Barry had said and, after hesitating a little in front as Ray tried in the quickly gathering cold autumn darkness to figure a route into the overgrown brambles that seemed almost impenetrable. Ray noticed a small fence and a cobbled path leading to a short flight of steps leading down to wooden door badly in need of paint.

Ray knocked and was relieved when the door was opened by Barry, who briefly flashed his yellow teeth in welcome and made a little mock bow. Come in my friend, come in, he said, his eyes almost painfully bugging out of his head. He led Ray down a hall flickeringly lit by ancient, loudly humming and mostly ineffective fluorescent lights and through an open French door into a gloomy room that appeared to be a games room. It had a folded games table pushed over to one side next to a covered pool table with cues lined up on a wall and a small smudged blackboard.

In the far corner of the room, past stacked chairs and a seemingly abandoned dirty kitchenette, was an incongruously lively burning fireplace that spread a warm glow over an overstuffed settee and three large easy chairs arranged around a once-luxurious but now very

worn carpet. Two similarly equable and slightly porcine men and a skinny scowling woman, all roughly well into their fifties, bundled up in tweed and woollens, sat staring into the fire. They each struggled politely to stand with small smiles as Barry introduced Ray to them: James and David Grimm (the brothers Grimm, he said winkingly to Ray) and Tristesse. They each held out a hand to shake, both of the men's soft, warm and damp, Tristesse's cool and sinewy. After Ray had settled deep down into one of the soft easy chairs and, to Ray's pleasant surprise, Barry had brought him a scotch, they shared some pleasantries.

There was a very short lull then James turned his large head toward Ray. He had a high-pitched somewhat nervous voice like, Ray thought to himself, someone who had never really gotten over having been bullied in high school for being too smart and too fat. Nodding toward Barry James said, our mutual friend has told us a bit about the research you are doing on concrete, can you tell us more? Ray mumbled that "research" was a bit grand of a word to describe his often stumbling questioning, at which everyone politely smiled but continued to watch him with no less rapt attention, clearly expecting a more complete answer. So he repeated some of the observations he had told Barry and Ian about at their library building discussion. Nodding to Barry he briefly described how there seemed to be classical antecedents to the kind of issues he saw inherent to the concrete structures as a from of representation, mirrored in certain types of photography, and their crucial role in the interaction between people and technologies of the streetscape. He discussed Schivelbusch's notion of the railway and how he was trying to work forward from his descriptions of the myriad ways this novel high-speed form of travel had transformed life to thinking about concrete and photography and how they might similarly have worldmaking effect. He ended with a brief summary of his tentative ideas about the spectacle of concrete as the outcome of the organization of urban life into projectile economies. Cities, he concluded, are perhaps through their concrete structures and the images taken of them, an image of themselves, not just a rendering of *subjects*, as in the way a sidewalk or an overpass renders specific types of movement or a photograph renders specific individuals, but a rendering of *subjectivity* itself, confronting a world that is always already abstract, a spectacle.

David's nasally voice was more blustery than James's and with his slight overbite it gave him almost a British air, although his accent was decidedly west coast. One thing, he said, I find

really interesting about what you are telling us and the little bit that Barry here—Barry gave a small mock bow from his seat—has related is the notion of impression. It seems to me that your comments about concrete are really about *a special case* of the broader phenomenon of technologies of impression, wouldn't you agree? Ray nodded tentatively and David sank slowly back in his chair. Hmmm, he said pensively, his eyes bright. After a pause he continued, We can perhaps use that idea of impressive technology to think a bit about how we got from the relationship of technical structure and human culture that Barry is talking about in Classical times to the sort we have now. He looked around at his colleagues, Any ideas on that?

Tristesse stood up with a thoughtful expression on her gaunt face and walked toward the fire. She held out her hands, rubbing them, and then turned her back to the fire, now holding her hand behind her as she tried to absorb the heat. Well, she began, one place to start might be to think about the tools used to design built structures, about which, Ray, I have written quite a bit. Do you know Joseph Rykwert's work on ancient Roman cities? When Ray shook his head, she went on, He describes how the tools such as those that would have been used by the Pantheon's designers were richly imbued with spiritual meanings, hearkening back to magically resonant foundational Roman practices in which specific spaces – especially intersections of streets – were anointed, originally perhaps with sacrifice.[101]

Rykwert focuses in particular on augurs, she continued. They were both engineers and soothsayers who sought divine signs about the fate of particular spaces. The augurs used tools, such as the *groma* or *gnomon* (used for determining the central orientation of any site to the major roads—here Tristesse turned to Ray as if acknowledging without any hint of disrespect his lack of expertise in this area and said pointedly, the *cardo* and *maximus*—that would be created to intersect at the centre of every Roman town and camp) that were only *secondarily* about creating and transferring measurements. Their more central concern was the relays between the *specific* and the *divine* indicated by various forms of divination, including the reading of organs from sacrificed animals for signs of the gods' propitiation. We can assume then that, to the Romans who used them, other tools such as callipers, dividers, set

[101] Rykwert, pp. 41-65.

squares and rulers also resonated beyond the purely functional qualities apparent to modern sensibilities.

Moreover, Tristesse continued, these tools from their earliest uses were closely linked in practice to etching in various impressionable materials such as wax, vellum or parchment, since this of course was the medium available for writing. Sometimes though, such as in the Temple of Apollo at Didyma near Miletus, plans for buildings were etched right into the structure itself, betraying among the ancients a complex interplay of objectification, representation and transmission: What is being represented in a building scored with its own design, and why? Could it be the act of *scratching into something* in and of itself had important associations, much as Rykwert says the ancients, when they founded a new city, typically ploughed a circle around its site? Were such acts something like those ancient death-masks that indicated complex projections of subjectification and objectification—of identity in short—over time and space through the semiosis of indexicality? Did their founding actions say this: here in this bisected and ploughed site is the core outline of a city?; here we are drawing the traces of the various people to come?; here we are linking those to come to the divine? Was every step ever to be taken at that site thereby thereafter connected directly to the gods?

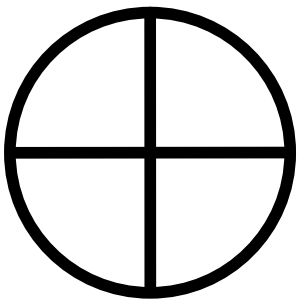

Figure 31 - Ancient Symbol for "City" (after Rykwert)

Tristesse looked at her hands as though she was trying to find evidence that they had warmed up after being held very close to the fire for as long as she had been speaking. Apparently not happy with what her close examination revealed, Tristesse folded her hands under her armpits with her shoulders hunched up as she went on speaking. Pure conjecture

of course, but we do know that these founding procedures were important to the ancients; it was for example a crime punishable by death to jump over the founding circle ploughed around the newly-surveyed *cardo* and *maximus*.

We can assume, she said, scowling slightly, that some of this magical relationship between measuring tool and the divine would have clung to the instruments used by builders in the Dark Ages, even though the capability to make precision scoring tools was lost. As building re-emerged into the textualized era of the renaissance, the importance of using tools to impress representations of space on more portable surfaces reasserted itself and endured even after the introduction of paper that replaced the more impressionable vellum, wax and papyri writing technologies that survived the classical collapse. Scored drawings, sometimes later filled in with ink, in fact continued until the Renaissance and even survived in use until the 1700s, when precision drawing tools became, and only then, for the first time in history, wholly centered on the pen riding *over* the surface of paper.[102]

Yes, yes, jumped in David, leaning over the big arm of his chair. We have this long period where as we all know many of the advances of the classical era were supposed to have been lost. But were they? Or did they merely burrow into a kind of underground where they simmered in ways that are hard for us moderns to fathom because they were, as you say Tristesse, outside of the textualized use they had in the eras of antiquity at one end and the renaissance and modernity at the other? Not disappeared but literally de-con*text*ualized perhaps?

This may have been true of concrete, he went on, turning to Ray. The standard story is that within two hundred years of the completion of the Pantheon, knowledge of hydraulic concrete had slipped away until its rediscovery in the 18th century. But I read a very interesting article by Chandra Mukerji,[103] building on the work of Pamela Smith[104] and others, who argues however that the techniques of hydraulic cement (among other abilities)

[102] Maya Hambly, *Drawing Instruments 1580 - 1980* (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1988), pp. 11, 19.
[103] Chandra Mukerji, 'Tacit Knowledge and Classical Technique in Seventeenth Century France: Hydraulic Cement as a Living Practice Among Masons and Military Engineers', *Technology and Culture*, 47 (2006), 713 - 733.
[104] Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

didn't disappear but simply shifted from the textual realm of Romans such as Vitruvius to that of medieval oral culture. He demonstrates examples of construction from throughout the medieval era that can be shown to have relied on implicit knowledge of the application of hydraulic cement.

David sipped at his drink and looked into the fire. Whether or not the impressive technology of concrete was available to medieval builders and engineers, he went on, and beyond *speculation*—David turned to look archly at Tristesse, who wiggled her eyebrows conspiratorially and smiled back—of the significance of building tools carried forward from their classical uses in impressive drawing, the point is impressive forms remained vibrant through the Dark Ages and the entire Medieval period.

For example, the Roman death masks you mentioned Tristesse continued to be used. There is a wonderful book published by Virginia Wolf[105] that shows photographs of death masks—o long-dead luminaries such as Lorenzo Medici, Napoleon or Theodore Géricault—that that are simply astonishing.

The death masks render major historical figures with a photographic realism. We can only guess as to their impact on those living in pre-photographic eras when realistic portrayals were very rare if they existed at all. Another example is that the ancient seals discussed by Verity Platt[106] if anything assumed greater significance in the medieval era than they had in the classical world. In a brilliant summary of the semiotics of medieval seals, Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak[107] argues that seals were so significant because they were the spindle around which spun concerns over individual authority and its place in sets of serial relations of difference and similarity, concerns about—in a word—identity, a problem that as Barry keeps pointing out, was familiar to the earlier Graeco-Roman world.

[105] Ernst Benkard, *Undying Faces: A Collection of Death Masks* (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, 1929).
[106] Platt, 233-257.
[107] Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, 'Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept', *The American Historical Review*, 105 <www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/105.5/ah001489.html> [accessed 6 December 2006].

The death mask, David went on, was eventually to be brought forward into the modern world in wax figurines such as those made famous by Madame Tussaud and in the form of the mannequin, which is of course an important formal trope of modernity.[108] David stopped to sip his drink. There was, he went on after a dramatically loud sigh of satisfaction, another form of impression in antiquity that signalled specific valuations of the individual that continued into the middle ages: branding of slaves and prisoners. The Romans almost certainty and perhaps the Greeks used punitive branding, a custom imported from surrounding barbarian cultures such as the Persians. Branding survived in medieval Europe as a punishment, and was occasionally used in the new colonies of America, and was a forerunner of the use of fingerprinting.[109]

Barry turned to Ray. Well my friend, he said, what do you think of what our colleagues here are describing? Is it clarifying anything for you? Well, said Ray hesitantly, it's all very interesting, but I also find it a bit confusing. I mean, what does all this have to do with concrete or photography? Tristesse smiled thinly and said, Ah yes indeed; very good question. There was a silence for a moment, and Ray was worried the little group had taken offence.

3.

James's nasally voice cut into the quiet. Let me try and summarize where we are and how we might get to thinking about concrete and photographs, he said. You have opened things up for us Ray by describing how imagery in concrete and photography is, self-evidently enough I suppose, central to the form of cities and their built obsessions with speed. OK, fair enough. But, he added, what I particularly like, and which is why I imagine Barry has brought you to meet with us, is that you are suggesting that the relationship of imagery—and here concrete imagery, concrete space, is especially relevant—to human action is more complicated than the usual functionalist assumptions.

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[108] Michelle E. Bloom, *Waxworks: A Cultural Obsession* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[109] Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001); M. Gustafson, *Inscripta in fronte: Penal Tatooing in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); C.P. Jones, 'Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 77 (1987), 135 - 155.

For a start, the activities—especially those related to high-speed mobility—which concrete really makes possible, or at least possible in their current forms, such as driving (think of how utterly different the urban streetscape would have to be if concrete was for some reason not available), have a reciprocal relation between concrete form and social content. Both shape the other. This is on one level also self-evident, as in injuries, and here James nodded gravely to Ray, obviously having been made aware by Barry of his loss, and, he went on, in the form of streets which slowly but inexorably change to take those injuries into account.

But, and again I am here following Ray's suggestive introduction to the topic, might not this reciprocity occur on deeper, more fundamental levels? Concrete structures, Ray is suggesting I think, render human interaction with their urban environments *abstract*; any physical or sensual connection between people and urban things such as sidewalks or the scale of buildings appears unrelated to the physical activity required to produce it. James here turned to Ray who nodded his concurrence. Yes, Ray said, there is no evidence in a concrete structure of the labour that went into it. Right, said James. And, he went on, still looking at Ray, I have read a claim that the origins of the word abstract derive from a fellow named Abstractus who was dragged through the streets to his death, suggesting that violence, the streetscape and built form as a kind of lesson, as abstract, have a very old history.

But, said James, that is of course an aside. To get back to the main issues here, Barry as we all know has described in very interesting ways what the origins of this abstraction and its power might be; how concrete almost from its very inception was infused with a semiotics of power: Hadrian's Pantheon as a kind of marker of imperial reach, or Vitruvius's infusion of republican ideals into what is really no more than a manual on the use of concrete; in short the projection of power *impressed* into the material, specifically this uniquely mouldable and hard material.

OK, if you accept that, then the question we are grappling with tonight is that while all that may be very interesting, it is rather speculative and so it must be asked how might it add to our understanding of what is transpiring *now*, in the mundanities of modern urban life, in every step on a concrete sidewalk or every time a car crashes into a concrete block alongside a freeway? And what I hear you suggesting Tristesse, as a first step to answering that

question historically, is that the idea of impression as a semiotics of power didn't disappear in the medieval interregnum but rather went rather subterranean socially; it is still present in writing, in death masks, seals and perhaps even in the ongoing use of concrete but likely far from the central powers of society as it had been in Hadrian's time.

But at some historical point, and I would say that point is the mid-15th century, impressive technology reasserted itself with a vengeance in the emergence of and modernity—and its manifestations in the common urban streetscape. But that is getting way ahead of ourselves.

What needs to be thought out first, said James, and he turned to his brother beside him, and David I'm thinking that you might speak to this, is how our central question might be redefined as: what could an impressive lens tell us about how we got to *here*, the impressive materials of modernity, from there, the impressive material of antiquity, and is there a carryover from the latter to the former? Care to speak to that?

David sipped his drink meditatively. Well, he began, I think I can address one possible scenario from the period between then and now, which of course was an era dominated to an important extent by Christianity. He turned to Ray and Barry, as he spoke. As James and Tristesse know, I have been working a lot on developing some ideas put forward by Michel Foucault. Specifically I have been thinking a lot about one essay he wrote toward the end of his life, a lecture he gave in the United States that was transcribed and published in two sections under the title, "Hermeneutics of the Self."[110]

Now what you might find interesting Barry because of some of what you have been ascribing to the impressive semiotics of the Pantheon, is that Foucault in the first section discusses Stoicism, specifically Seneca's essay *De Tranquilliate Anime*, translated as *On Tranquility of Mind*. It was written as a dialogue with a troubled young student of Stoicism who wonders how to reconcile himself to fate. What interests Foucault is not so much that Seneca suggests the student must reconcile himself to the forces that shape him—recall that a fundamental tenet of Stoicism is the concept of the soul as akin to a wax form receiving

[110] Michel Foucault, 'About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self', *Political Theory*, 21 (1993), 198 - 227.

the imprint of its specific circumstances—but the nature of the truth of the self that Seneca is attempting to corral to convince the young man. The key point for Foucault is that to be self-consistent Seneca must avoid conceiving of truth as force of coercion coming from somewhere else. Truth is *internal* to the individual reconciled to the *external* discursive formations in which he lives; the wax plate of the soul is not just impressed upon by the forces of the world but is in the first instance formed by it. It is literally and theoretically senseless for the individual thusly formed to feel that things could have turned out differently, that you can somehow escape your fate, whether that is for good or ill when that fate is what shaped you in the first place.

Barry jumped in, Ray I think this relates to that idea at the library you attributed to that writer Schivelbusch about people on the railway being subject to forces the origins of which are out of view. People were ambivalent about that, right? You said they compared the experience to being shot out of a cannon; exciting and frightening at the same time, right? Especially the latter when the train crashes? The train crash only intensified the ambivalence, replied Ray; Schivelbusch writes about the amazement of observers that many of the men who had died in train crashes had erections. Right, right, said Barry, it brings to mind the Ballard novel, *Crash*;[111] have you read it? Ray shook his head. The narrative centres on a group of people who get sexual pleasure from car crashes; Cronenberg made it into a not very good movie a few years ago.[112]

Anyway, Barry went on, talking loudly to his shoes, if my analysis of the Pantheon is correct, what is that building but an attempt to render in pure form the *experience of the power of transmission, power rendered abstract,* in fact power *as* abstraction?

Part of the challenge that this presented, as Hadrian would likely have been aware, was that there was already in his time—two thousand years before people were to get hard-ons as their machines crushed them to death—a long history of suspicion about exactly the power manifest in forces of transmission. The early Greeks for example were very dismissive of archery in battle on moral grounds: an arrow, they fretted, cannot distinguish between a

[111] J. G Ballard, *Crash* (London: J. Cape, 1973).
[112] David Cronenberg, *Crash* (Alliance Communications Corporation, 1996).

good man and a bad man; unlike a warrior in face-to-face combat, an arrow kills indiscriminately.[113] This same moral stricture was evidently at work in the medieval era when serious if ultimately futile attempts were made by the church to outlaw the crossbow as a means of war-making for reasons similar to those as had motivated the Greeks.[114] Part of the Pantheon's contribution may have been that it experientially *resolved* that ambivalence; standing inside its sheer space feels something like falling, but in complete safety. It's a veritable rejection of deep-seated concerns about giving in to a power the origins of which cannot be seen, viscerally encouraging a thrilling Stoic acceptance of that power in built form (which would of course have dove-tailed nicely with Hadrian's imperial requirements).

But this brings us back to our original question in slightly different terms: how did we get from long-standing and strong suspicions commingled with fascination with forces projected from elsewhere to the situation in modernity where such forces are arguably a central means of social organization? Automobility, electricity, jet engines are just three examples of modern projections of power; these sort of technologies now utterly dominate the physical and social landscape. How did we get to the *modern self*, overwhelmed each second by such impressive forces of unknown or at least unseen origin, from the *Stoic self*, tranquil within its form, a point of view influential enough that Roman emperors could build temples to it?

Well, said James triumphantly, this is precisely the topic of Foucault's second lecture. He leaned forward and took a thoughtful sip of his scotch. In that part of his lecture, he went on after a long pause, Foucault focuses on "Christianity and Confession." Foucault begins by noting that in Christianity the Augustinian "access to the light," i.e. the light of God or the set of propositions constituting the dogma or the authority of the Church, is separate from the discovery of truth within the self. This is opposed to say Buddhism or Gnosticism. Whereas in other religious systems the two are interlinked such that the discovery of the truth in oneself leads to enlightenment of various sorts, in Christianity the two are separate, requiring two different operations. His concern in this piece is the obligation on Christians to manifest the truth about themselves.

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[113] Hanson, pp. 15-16.
[114] Jean W. Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages, 1000-1500* (University of Washington Press, 1994), p. 210.

James put his scotch down on the floor and stood up. As he continued speaking he started to pace, as though he was talking to himself. His small audience nonetheless watched him attentively. Within Christian self-knowledge, James mumbled, forcing everyone to lean forward to hear, the knowledge of the truth of the self, Foucault further bifurcates. On the one hand, there is what the Greek fathers of the Church described as *exomologesis,* which means the self as essentially sinful—dirty, defiled, sullied—and the will of the penitential self to get rid of his own body, to destroy his own flesh to get access to a new spiritual life. Thus penitents wore hair shirts and covered themselves in ashes or whipped themselves raw. The ultimate expression of *exomologesis* is the martyr; self and self-destruction perfectly joined.

On the other hand, Foucault continues, there was *exagoreusis,* the permanent, exhaustive, and sacrificial verbalization of the thoughts which was obligatory for the monks in monastic institutions. The Christian self required confession, which ultimately focused on thoughts. This was not as straightforward as one might think: one might for example use possibly praiseworthy actions, such as fasting, for sinful ends, such as to arouse the envy of other monks. The "truth" or godliness of each moment lies therefore in how one is thinking, and thoughts must be verbalized as part of a movement toward God. Satan resists his dark deeds seeing the light so verbalizations that are difficult and induce blushes or reluctance to speak indicate the devil's resistance. True or total confession renounces the impure self imprisoned by evil and reaches toward the purity of God. It is, Foucault concludes, verbalization as another form of self-sacrifice.

I might mention also that Nietzsche, whom Foucault of course spent much of his life referencing, argued that Christianity was a slave morality[115] that offered up the sacrifice of the self as the most sublime of thrills—a cruel *albeit* effective turn for which Nietzsche held Paul singularly responsible.[116] Anyway, Foucault concludes that these two aspects of Christian thought—*exagoreusis*, the confessional technology of the self, and *exomologesis*, the martyrdom of the self—though very different, are nonetheless parallel in how truth and

[115] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Francis Golffing, Doubleday Anchor Books (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1956).
[116] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley, trans. by Judith Norman, Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

sacrifice are closely linked. But he notes that, after centuries of debate, the *exagoreusis* strain triumphed over the *exomologesis* and is at present everywhere apparent in what Foucault characterizes as the permanent verbalization and discovery of the most imperceptible movements of our selves. He smiled wryly, perhaps Foucault was predicting the Oprah-ization of the world. Be that as it may, Foucault's final thoughts are that one of the great problems of Western culture has been to found the possibility of a hermeneutics of the self not, as it was the case in early Christianity, on sacrifice but on the contrary on a positive emergence of the self. James stopped.

This conclusion is based on a wonderful characterization in my view, he said looking around him, but perhaps it is overly stated. Is it not at least equally likely that the technologies of *exagoreusis* and *exomologesis* of the confessional and martyr continue to run in parallel? He started to pace again. If we modify Foucault's analysis thusly we are left with what I think is a wonderfully rich formulation in light of our analysis of impressive technologies. At the centre of what we are grappling with is the transformation of the stoic ideal of the individual moulded to circumstances, paradigmatically represented by the Pantheon, into the modern individual who founders on what you Ray called the projectile economy, which I would define as a sociotechnical regime of impressive technologies organized around speed.

James turned to David. You have done a lot of work on Jeffrey Schnapp,[117] he said to him, who characterizes speed—the animal, almost sexual pleasure of simply going fast that Ballard and Cronenberg picked up on—as a historically and critically under-examined motor of individuation. Schnapp however, as you and I have repeatedly argued over, leaves the thrill of velocity unexplained, a psychological black box. Foucault's theory of sacrifice at the core of Christian thought could help explain it. For medieval Christians no greater thrill was possible than the abnegation of self through martyrdom, characterized in countless images as comparable to sexual ecstasy. I mean, have you ever walked through the Uffizi Museum in Florence? It is room after room of exquisitely-rendered medieval BDSM! All that scarring of nude flesh while eyes roll to heaven! Really! Talk about funky sex! Ray couldn't help laughing; James was as close to an image of asceticism as he could imagine and it was funny to watch someone like him revelling in the idea of edgy medieval sexual energy.

[117] Jeffrey Schnapp, 'Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)', *Modernism/Modernity*, 6 (1999), 1 - 49.

James's face turned serious again. This thrill, he continued, no doubt underlay the quieter renunciations of the self occurring in the monastery; priests, as we hear about almost daily, are far from immune from sexuality. But the point I am making here is that God, the exterior force regulating the whole system of being for us Christians, may have died for many moderns but the thrilling connection between truth and sacrifice nonetheless remains lively for them. The SUV striking a pedestrian or the explosive device buried in a road, to take two current examples, take moderns to the edge of sacrifice; those who survive these baleful circumstances peer over the edge of the craters they create with something akin to awe. They fear and deplore the consequences of the marauding SUV or the terrorist bomb and yet, judging from the fascination with which many hold such things, it appears that there is some kind of truth in them that moderns can find nowhere else.

4.

Tristesse jumped in, Well, James, your sense of hyperbole is certainly alive and well. James gave a little mock bow and sat down. Fuck you too, he said politely as he sank with a self-satisfied air and his scotch back in his chair. They all chuckled. Fine, said Tristesse, but first of all may I remind you that a few moments ago you mocked *me* for being overly speculative and second, some fucking Christian you are! Everyone laughed again.

But no, no, seriously, Tristesse continued, that notion of sacrifice is very interesting. I would suggest that what you are talking about can be seen in two technological innovations that are often referenced as major signals of the beginning of the end of the medieval era: the invention of the moveable type printing press and the development of mobile cannon that were powerful enough to destroy castle walls (such as Charles VIII's rapid invasion of Italy in 1494 during which he levelled in a few hours fortresses that had previously withstood long sieges) and enemy shipping (such as the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571).[118]

Both printing press and cannon at their centre *obviate the subject*. The cannon self-evidently does this; eliminating subjects is its whole point. The printing press's effacement of the

[118] Keegan, pp. 3213-323, 336-337; Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*, 1st edn (New York: Doubleday, 2001), pp. 233-275.

subject is hinted at in its origins in part as a means of maintaining consistency in printed texts versus the idiosyncrasies of individual scribes[119] and confirmed by the same sort of transmission of the subject as Barry talks about in the Pantheon: where, we might ask in this light, is the subject when we are reading? In our head? In the book? In the author? The subject is all of these places and none of them; absence and presence commingled, and this abstraction is multiplied, abstraction squared we might say, when reading is rendered capable of easy reproduction. Could we say then that these ground-breaking technologies physically manifested the Christian ideal of *exomologesis*, the self not as the Stoic positive ideal of a mould formed in Foucault's discursive formation but as a mould *emptied out* to allow the light of God to enter?

Barry had been sitting quietly in the background through these long perorations, the flickering light of the fire barely reaching him where he seemed as usual lost in studious consideration of his shoes. Then he spoke suddenly, I don't know if your idea Tristesse of Christian sacrifice was at the bottom of the push to develop these technologies. That would be hard to prove. But we can I think with some confidence look at the reciprocity involved in technological development, which is important because it leads us I think, directly to concrete as materially invested in what Ray you have called the projectile economy. You have described the railroad as central to the emerging projectile economy of early 19th century modernity. I took out that book by Schivelbusch you recommended and it inspired me to do a little bit of research on the railroad. I'm sure you know its prehistory, but let me repeat some key moments of it for the others' sake.

The railroad emerged out of mining uses of the wagonway, a tracked road built by the ancients out of stone and in the medieval era out of wood. A reciprocal development occurred between wagon and wagonways: the wooden tracks were covered with iron to extend their lives but increased wear on wheels led to iron wheels, which in turn required fully iron rails to withstand the added load. The long, slow and localised development of the wagonway was dramatically transformed by the rapid introduction of engines—the Newcomen, James Watt's low pressure rotary engine, and Oliver Evans's high-pressure

[119] Eisenstein Elizabeth L, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early-Modern Europe*, New Ed (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980).

engine—in roughly a forty year span at the very end of the 18th century, with far-reaching consequences.[120] The key point to be made here is that the railway didn't just suddenly appear; its creation was a series of reciprocal actions driven by the desire to move things, to blur the distinction between what is over *here* and what is over *there*.

Ray jumped in. One of the things Schivelbusch doesn't mention in his descriptions of the sociotechnical economy of the railroad is that the railroad also gave a boost to the fingerprint, a micro-impressive form that has inherited many of the semiotic characteristics of the seal, transmitting across space semiotic resolutions of concerns about identity. Did you know that fingerprinting originally developed as a means of controlling subject populations in India, especially after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1858? One of the leading advocates of fingerprinting as a colonial tool was William Herschel, whose father John had helped two pioneers in the development of key technologies of modernity, Talbot's innovations in photography and Babbage's difference engine. Anyway, railroads in the late 19th century, concerned about stolen tickets, developed what they called "punch photographs," recording specific characteristics of the ticket holder (before the word "fingerprint" had been coined, the phrase "digital photograph" was sometimes used), and these inspired Herman Hollerith to use punch cards for tabulating the 1890 U.S. census. Hollerith's company would develop into International Business Machines (IBM) in 1924. So one can draw a very interesting trajectory of sorts:
wagonway→railway→photography→fingerprinting →computers.[121]

That's interesting, said Barry. OK, well, now if we skip ahead a little bit to the mid-nineteenth century, Shivelbusch gives a couple of examples of contemporary reporting that likened the speed of trains (then capable of roughly seventy-five miles per hour) to a specific

[120] C. Hamilton Ellis, *Railway History*, Dutton Vista picturebacks, 22 (London: Studio Vista, 1966); A. F Garnett, *Steel Wheels: The Evolution of the Railways and How They Stimulated and Excited Engineers, Architects, Artists, Writers, Musicians and Travellers* (Waldenbury, Chailey, East Sussex [England]: Cannwood, 2005); 'History of Rail Transport' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_rail_transport> [accessed 13 March 2010].
[121] Cole, pp. 64-65, 250.

kind of projectile: the cannonball.[122] It is outside of Shivelbusch's purview that cannonballs themselves were undergoing a similar metamorphosis at roughly the same time.[123]

Barry had by this time stood up and now he was the one pacing, stopping every so often to gesture at one or another of his listeners, accompanied by his usual bug-eyed expressions. As everyone here knows, except perhaps you Ray, the mechanically-powered projectile launcher known as the catapult had a long history (for example the Assyrians from the 10th century BCE routinely carried siege trains with them on campaigns). The Greeks in the Hellenistic era developed a range of highly-sophisticated projectile weapons.

In Europe, starting in the late eleventh century, warfare was transformed by the crossbow, despite that injunction by the Church against its use mentioned earlier. A reciprocal development between crossbow and armour, each getting stronger in response to the other, took place similar to those reciprocal changes that was on to take place soon after on wagonways. Weaponry was to undergo as dramatic a transformation as wagonways underwent with the introduction of engines but much earlier due to a radically new transmissive agent: gun powder, introduced into Europe from China.

Gun design evolved rapidly for about one hundred years after the first use of gun powder, when by the middle of the 15th century it transformed from essentially a noisy and dangerous toy into an effective weapon capable of levelling castles, the power centres on which the whole feudal system rested. But after that cannon and rifle design stabilized for almost the next half millennium.

Barry turned to David. Didn't you research how artillery suddenly transformed after that long static period? Yes, replied David. A key factor was the development at the beginning of the 19th century of milling machines capable of cutting component parts into prescribed shapes. These milling innovations first appeared at the Springfield Massachusetts armoury, the site of one of the first efforts to organize production according to the principle of

[122] Schivelbusch, pp. 53-54.
[123] The following summary is taken from William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force and Society Since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 14, 79-80, 88 and 233-247.

interchangeability of parts.[124] Although these first efforts were of dubious actual efficiency, the principle of machinic interchangeability spread to other theatres of war, especially after many influential British were impressed by Samuel Colt's display of revolvers with interchangeable parts at the Great Exhibition of 1851, very close in time and space to what you tell us Schivelbusch reported as the mid-century experience of train travel being likened to being shot out of a canon. The Crimean War was one of the first where the new forms of artillery demonstrated their effectiveness. This was confirmed by the use of the new manufacturing techniques to equip the Prussian citizen-army (transported to the front on railroads quickly enough to greatly outnumber the enemy) with rifles that so surprised Napoleon III's hard-bitten professionals in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

Right, right, said Barry. Now what I want to emphasize is that the structure of urban form—and here Ray we are finally starting to get close to concrete—both reflected and drove these military developments in a reciprocal process similar to that motoring crossbow and armour innovation or wagon way and then railroad development. Schivelbusch characterizes the various innovations that responded to the pressures—psychic, physical, social, geographic—created by the railroad as the development of a stimulus shield, a crust that hardens in response to the projectile economy, and I want to draw that dialectic out to include technical innovations in warfare.

Before considering the stimulus shield created by evolving weaponry, let me first point out that, as Hirst notes, contrary to the focus of most historical research, during most of the second millennium *sieges of cities* far outnumbered open battles *outside of cities*; in the period between 1500 and 1800 the difference was ten to one.[125] Thus, although there were lots of local variations and myriad other factors at play in actual outcomes, one could with at least some accuracy dramatically simplify the history of military conflict from at least 1000 CE onward by saying that *a*, if not *the*, central story was usually that of testing the strength of fortifications, mostly located either in cities or forming the nucleus of cities to come.

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[124] David A. Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800 - 1932* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); James Massender, ''No Undue Prejudice:' Samuel Colt and the Politics of Uniformity', *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 32 (2002), 17 - 51.
[125] Paul Q. Hirst, *Space and Power: Politics, War and Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity, 2005), p. 198.

OK, so for the first couple of hundred years gunpowder weaponry only intensified reactive castle-building process already long underway. Salses Castle near Rousillon has walls 18 meters thick for example.[126] So along comes Charles VIII whose cannon realigned the relationship of defensive wall and projectile, with dramatic social consequences, but after him projectile technology remained remarkably stable. Charles's cannons could fire a fifteen kilogram ball over three-quarters of a kilometre. New fortress-building techniques such as the bastion trace slowly emerged that re-established fortress cities as centres of power, and so things sat for almost four hundred years. The cannonballs that could be fired in 1850 (the kind Schivelbusch's commentator must of have had in mind when he was trying to find an apt metaphor for the experience of train travel) had merely double the performance of those used by Charles VIII in 1494; thirty kilogram balls could still be hurled at most only 1½ kilometres.

It took new manufacturing techniques such as precision milling of interchangeable parts you described David to engender another transformation of the impression/ transmission dialectic. By 1880 cannons could shoot 100 kilo explosive shells over 6 kilometres, and by 1914 the Germans could fire shells weighing a metric tonne. [127]

The immediate battlefield consequence was that, just like medieval castles faced with improved canon, the 19th century fortress that had slowly evolved out of the bastion trace of the Renaissance became almost instantly pointless, since these giant new shells could crack most structures (many Belgian defenders huddled inside forts in 1914 went insane listening to the systematic advancing explosions caused by German guns) despite innovations in fortress design from the 1880s including sunken armoured cupolas, mechanized ventilation systems, and elevators.

The French in 1914 decided to abandon all their fortresses as a result, even though as it turns out fortresses such as Verdun that used reinforced concrete—which was an innovation in building material that the French had first patented—remained unbroached by the new artillery. The French later realized the error of abandoning reinforced concrete fortresses and

[126] Hirst, p. 187.
[127] Hirst, p. 195.

re-occupied Verdun, which as we all know became a particularly horrific killing site as the Germans focused unsuccessfully on its capture and, not coincidentally, a symbol of the French nation resisting domination.[128]

The suddenly obsolete unreinforced concrete or masonry fortress was superseded by the easily built and replaced trench, as anyone with even a glancing knowledge of the First World War knows, since piled dirt could render even large calibre shells only very locally effective. Hirst describes a sort of pre-history of trenches in warfare, noting that they were often integral to sieges, with complex structures requiring vast amounts of digging in relatively short time. Their value in modern warfare became apparent to perceptive observers of the American Civil War , the Crimean War and the war between Japan and Russia in 1904-5. But only in the First World War did trenches become the organizing principle of combat.[129]

The entrenched battlefields of World War One also both relied upon and had to solve the problem of a massive influx of a hitherto primarily rural population into centralized spaces of battle. This hoovering up of whole populations was of course made possible by railroads; the French for example mobilized nearly 3 million men in August 1914 using over four thousand trains.[130] As a result, while the basic structure of warfare remained as essentially siege-like as most warfare of the preceding millennium, it was transformed by its massive scale; now it was almost like two continent-wide cities—formed in mere weeks, one German and the other Allied forces—besieging each other.

Barry turned to Ray, OK, now we are finally getting to your interest in concrete. Only reinforced concrete was capable of generating structures with enough speed and intrinsic strength to withstand the forces that the projectile economy of the war brought to bear on them, and only trenches could accommodate this huge influx of men also under constant

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[128] Keith Mallory, *Architecture of Aggression; a History of Military Architecture in North West Europe, 1900-1945* (London: Architectural Press, 1973), p. 29 <http://ipac3.vpl.ca/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=link=3100023~!5721216~!3100023~!3100002&profile=pac> [accessed 5 April 2010].
[129] Hirst, pp. 201, 206.
[130] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880 - 1918* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 270.

fire. Both sides as a result had almost randomly distributed suburb-like trenches anchored by reinforced concrete bunkers and fortresses that were like the city centres of the combat zones (the Germans, who embraced the philosophically-novel aspects of the war with more considerably more zest than their opponents, called this orienting of trenches around a reinforced concrete strong point the *feste* principle).

There is, said Barry, stopping suddenly and looking up at the ceiling as if it was of great interest, a striking similarity in aerial photographs taken of First World War trenches and images we see of suburban sprawl. He turned to Ray again. I don't think this is just coincidence, do you? Cities surrounded by suburbs *and* modern battlefields both have to accommodate high speed projectile economies (which are of course the only economies capable of moving large numbers of people and large amounts of things) through unpredictable circumstances that are both created and resolved through massive use of the force that underwrites the whole system. As a result the morphology of both urban regions and battle zones is similar.

Barry by now was in full lecturing flow, walking quickly back and forth, gesturing and making his usual panoply of exaggerated facial expressions. There is another dimension to the stimulus shield of modernity formed in the fires of the First World War that I think it is important to keep in mind, he said, oblivious to the smiles on some of the group, who glanced bemusedly at each other, obviously used to being treated as if they were his students. Barry continued heedlessly, just as Schivelbusch describes new forms of vision enabled by railways—such as what he calls the panoramic view, which is what we typically see from the window of a car or a train where the foreground rushes past while the middle and far grounds roll by seemingly much more slowly—as central to the emerging stimulus shields forming around the railway, so too did warfare prompt widespread and important novel perceptual conditions as well.

In terms of the battlefield, the most central characteristic was *in*visibility; the understandable *subjective* urge of the troops to present no outline to the murderous views of the enemy. This played out at a more systemic or *objective* level as well; the constant churning of the industrialized battlefield made it difficult for military commanders to identify what was

happening. The solution was the battlefront photograph, which could track changes otherwise impossible to register. The battlefront photograph had its origins in photographs taken from balloons in the American Civil War.

There were two major developments in photography that can be traced to the First World War. The first of these is the emergence of the snapshot: the use of photography to capture a fleeting moment in time, reflecting the fragmentary vision which was characteristic of life in the trenches. The posed portrait became obsolete in principle, although of course in fact it remains widely used up to the present day. But the constituent elements of the pose—enough time for the subjects to stand in a pre-arranged setting, conviction that the whole subject could be paraded in its pose before a photographer likewise conceived as taking in the whole of what appeared in front of the lens—all this was often no longer appreciated any longer as the only desirable form of imaging or often even possible. To the millions at war at least, for whom life was so manifestly fleeting, quickly-glanced moments were a more appropriate visual response.

The second perceptual change was that the shape of the battlefront was no longer visible to the human eye. Enormous in scale, constantly churned by shellfire and the passage of millions of men, the progress of the battle could only be perceived telescopically, such as through comparison of photographs of trenches taken over time from the air.

Virilio argues that the battlefield use of photography was the outcome of a process that began with telescopic visual prostheses and Galileo's mathematization of society.[131] Barry knelt down to the floor by where he had been sitting and picked up a notebook, which he quickly thumbed through. Ah, here we go. Virilio cites Merleau-Ponty's description of the worldview rendered obsolete by new technologies of vision. "Everything I see is in principle within my reach, at least within reach of my sight, marked on the map of 'I can'"[132] Although this worldview had been undergoing a long decay, Virilio suggests, "the age-old *act of seeing*," collapsed utterly in World War One, "replaced by a regressive perceptual state, a kind of *syncretism*, resembling a pitiful caricature of the semi-immobility of early infancy, the sensitive

[131] Cited in John Johnston, 27-48 (p. 30).
[132] Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 7.

substratum now existing only as a fuzzy morass from which a few shapes, smells, sounds accidentally leap out … more sharply perceived." Virilio describes the new battlefield experience of the soldier in the trenches as "topographical amnesia: "His faith in perception is reduced to a line of faith, the *ligne de foi*, as the gun barrel's sightline was formerly referred to in French."[133]

A similar perceptual shift accompanied concrete's rise in the shape of the bunker. The focused view out from the protective concrete mass became standardized in the form of urban space.

So, Barry said, to sum up, there are two significant material changes brought about, or at least dramatically intensified, by World War One: the use of reinforced concrete, and in particular the bunker shape, and the use of the photograph as a kind of syncretic record of specific moments. Both photography and concrete had long followed a similar developmental trajectory. Both initially required a cumbersome process to create the conditions necessary for them to take their final impressed shape. Both had medieval antecedents, which took recognizably modern turns in experiments done in Britain and France around the turn of the 19th century. Both had contested patent claims that were bound up with technical issues, personalities, national pride, and uncertainty over the emerging shape of modernity. By the middle of the 19th century, careful scientific analysis permitted industrial production of both technologies but for cultural reasons both remained constrained to specific functions, such as tunnels for concrete or the staged portrait in photography. The Great War transformed their usage, rendering both part of the material vernacular.[134]

To conclude then, the "stimulus shield" described by Freud and as used by Schivelbusch to characterize railway development is a characteristic of the reciprocating growth of the projection of impressive technologies (printing presses, trains, artillery, photography) onto receptive fields (books/reading publics, wagonways/railroads, cities/bunkers/bunker-cities).

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[133] John Johnston, 27-48 (p. 30).
[134] Peter Collins, *Concrete: The Vision of a New Architecture* (McGill-Queens Press, 2004); Mary Warner Marien, *Photography and Its Critics: A Cultural History, 1839 - 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

This was apparent during even the earliest uses of such technologies, as in for example the evolution of the fortress form or the wagonways' development in resistance to the pounding of wheels. The history of railroads, artillery and imaging devices all were characterized by long periods of slow development, punctuated by occasional leaps forward. But when these stimulus-rich impressive technologies interlocked, as they did in the 19th century, their growth and social consequences became exponential, culminating with both positive, we might even say emancipatory, mass *pro*ductiveness *and* negative, crushingly violent *de*structiveness in the First World War.

Impressive technologies thereafter became dominant forms of technology, underwriting much of the trajectory of modernity as it blazed across the twentieth century. The concrete bunker, for example, with its univocal forms of vision, increasingly became the standard building block of cities, within

Figure 32 - Concrete

which people increasingly lived within perceptual realms increasingly motored by and typified by the snapshot. Internet search engines such as Google are in many ways nothing other than the imagistic potential of the printing press and the snapshot multiplied out almost infinitely, but its root impressive impulse is the same, which we confirm every time we press down on our keyboard and expect and accept the machine's response to be meaningful.

Barry stopped and stood frozen for a long moment. He turned and looked hard directly at Ray. Barry had never looked quite so directly at him, without his usual clownish facial trappings. Again Ray was reminded of Rembrandt, this time the probing late self-portraits,

which Ray had always thought were among the most hopeful and devastating images he had eve seen.

Ray shifted self-consciously under the weight of Barry's intent gaze. There was a long silence. Then as quickly as the moment had arisen, Barry suddenly puffed out his cheeks and raised his eyebrows in his more usual semi-buffoonish way before sitting down and as usual sinking into his post-expository lethargy. There was a long silence as everyone sipped their drinks meditatively, wondering whether Barry was going to start up again. Ray finally looked down at his watch and realized it was late. I have to go, he announced quietly. Tristesse and James nodded slightly. Barry absent-mindedly raised a hand in farewell. David said, Well old boy, I hope that was helpful. Ray nodded, but once again he felt like he had too much information to absorb, like his head was going to explode from all the ideas that had been thrown at him. Yes, yes, it was, Ray said, but I'm not sure what to make of it all yet. David smirked. Well, maybe that's because there is nothing to be made of it. Ray smiled ruefully and said his good-byes, made his way down the dim corridor and was back onto the now black streets.

5.

A few days later Ray was reading the newspaper when by chance an article caught his eye. Titled, "Long-Time University Teacher Goes Missing," Ray skimmed it with increasing horror. Barry's car had been found abandoned at the base parking lot of one of the local mountains. Police had been called in, a search had been launched, but no trace of Barry could be found. His apartment sat empty. There was mention in the article of the termination of his teaching contract, with a brief quote from the dean, looking dutifully sombre, who had fired him about Barry's unique contribution to the life of the university

Ray jumped up and phoned Norman. Nothing to report, the disconsolate Norman told him. He just disappeared. Norman sounded close to tears. Can you let me know if you hear anything? asked Ray. Norman mumbled his assent and they hung up. Weeks went by. Finally Norman called to let Ray know that a memorial service was being reluctantly pulled together by Barry's family It was a mournful affair, overhung with despairing wonder by the small coterie of friends and family—all of whom seemed to Ray as unremarkably plain as Barry

was idiosyncratic and weird—over what had finally happened to Barry, of whom no trace had been found. Numerous theories were proposed, all with unhappy outcomes, but none could be confirmed one way or the other.

Ray didn't tell anyone, but he liked to imagine Barry leaving his car to set off by foot, his colourful shoes flashing as Barry hitchhiked his way up north perhaps, or south across the border, hustling up poker games where he would win enough to keep him going for a couple more weeks. He could almost imagine Barry huddled in a homeless shelter in Prince George or Prince Rupert, a copy of Celine or *The Order of Things* with him perhaps, which he would be reading in his bunk with his usual acerbic pen close by, from time to time declaiming the fate of the world to street companions who were, it would perhaps seem to Barry, with very few exceptions as receptive an audience as he was ever likely to get .

Part Three. The Work of Mourning

Eight. "I See a Thing and, Why, There It Is:" Walker Evans's and Henry Luce's Impress of the Real

Bibliographic Entry:

Michael Augspurger, *An Economy of Abundant Beauty: Fortune Magazine and Depression America*[135]

> In all societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as a vast accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation … The spectacle originates in the loss of unity of the world, and the gigantic expansion of the modern spectacle expresses the totality of this loss.
>
> Guy Debord[136]

1.

Ray sat at his kitchen table with his copy of *The Death* in front of him. He had read through it so many times he had practically memorized it. Now he just sat staring at the picture of a very materteral Jane Jacobs on the back cover.

He felt like her image was almost talking to him, nagging him, but in a language he couldn't quite understand. He thought back over the discussions he had had with Barry: the origins of Western identity in the phalanx and the death mask; the Pantheon as a Hadrianic messaging system imbued with the signification of the Roman *imagine* and late Republican ideals of concrete; the death masks in the Middle Ages and into early modernity that seemed to continue to relay complex messages; the emergence of photography in ways similar to modern concrete and at about the same time and how both took on what could be called a mask-like function in the violently emerging projectile economy of the First World War.

He turned back to Jacobs's portrait. He could feel in his stomach how these various threads interwove in the image before him but still seemed unable to articulate the many messages; they were still eluding him. He decided he should get out of the house, that he was just going crazy sitting around his deserted home, his daughter having drifted away into a hash solitude

[135] Michael Augspurger, *An Economy of Abundant Beauty* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).
[136] Debord Theses 1 & 29.

or worse and the ghosts of his dead wife floating ever-presently nearby. He stuffed his copy of *The Death* into his coat pocket and headed out, not quite sure where he was going.

He headed for downtown over the bridge near his home, marvelling at its massive concrete forms, which he had never really appreciated before.

Figure 33 - Concrete

Their stark enormity seemed almost comical. If Jane Jacobs's face was in many respects a messaging system, sending out quiet but persistent signals, then this concrete structure was positively howling. But both the bridge and the face felt as inscrutable as Easter Island statues, like neon lights in a foreign language.

After Ray had crossed the bridge he turned toward downtown. He stopped at what many architectural critics feel is among the city's most important features, a large concrete plaza built between the law courts and the municipal art gallery, designed by Arthur Erickson, probably the most famous architect to come out of Ray's city, renowned most of all for his delight in concrete. Ray had read somewhere that Erickson had used a special mix of concrete in the plaza that turns a shade of rose buff when it gets wet with rain.[137] Ray thought that it was revealing—although, typically enough, of what he wasn't exactly sure—that his city was both so famously liveable and had this oddly-hollow monument to concrete at its very centre, without anyone suggesting that this juxtaposition was odd. Like the bridge, the plaza seemed to be a messaging system; here the signal at its very minimum seemed to be that the liveable face the city presented to the world was concrete. Ray sat on one of the cascading concrete steps of Erickson's concrete plaza and took out his copy of *The Death* and again examined Jacobs's face. He looked up from studying the book cover to the old

[137] 'arthur erickson-provincial law courts/robson square/art gallery', *Arthur Erickson Architect* <http://www.arthurerickson.com/txt_law.html> [accessed 16 March 2010].

courthouse across from him, now the art gallery. Large banners hung on its façade announcing its current show: "The Face of America: Photographs of Walker Evans, 1930 – 1970."

2.

The show was in its final days and Ray felt like his head was spinning uselessly around all his thoughts, so he decided to follow the advice Barry had given back in the library and to go see the show.[138]

He had not at first been unusually impressed but the small yet intensely luminous pictures of American faces and buildings, which started in the Depression, through the war and into the 1950s, increasingly intrigued him. As he slowly moved from image to image they started to seep seemingly deeply inside him, the pale, almost metallic images inexorably etching themselves into what after a while began to feel like the very folds of his brain. These images were hieroglyphics, he realized after a time, a written code of faces and facades; and Evans was endeavouring to provide something like a Rosetta Stone. And these were exactly the forms Ray was grappling with: the face of Jacobs and her ideas about liveability and the facade of the city around him with all its curious ambivalences: of concrete versus liveability; of the lively street versus the death and hardship it participates in; its taken-for-granted inscrutability versus its deep cultural layering.

After about an hour of feeling increasingly mesmerized by Evans's photographs, Ray had took a break and went to the gallery bookstore where he bought a copy of the comprehensive catalogue accompanying the show and referred to it as he slowly circled the gallery for the second time.

Evans apparently originally wanted to be a writer,[139] but started photographing while in Paris for a year. He returned to NYC in 1929, and the first publication of his photographs

[138] The exhibition and the catalogue, though of course not the photographs themselves, described below are fictitious.
[139] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), p. 235.

appeared in 1930, illustrating a book of poetry by Hart Crane. In the early 1930s Evans continued to photograph stark, dramatic scenes of New York, often shot at radically oblique angles. As he traveled around New York state and then later to Boston and Cuba, his distinctive style started to emerge: increasingly formally sparse, often flatly frontal shots of buildings, devoid of apparent life, or people in sublime moments of doing not much at all, either unmindful of the camera watching them or staring back at the viewer with a captivating combination of flintiness and openness.

In 1935 he started to work for the federal government's New Deal agency, The Resettlement Administration, later known as the Farm Security Administration. Working with his friend James Agee, in 1936 Evans photographed Depression-era sharecropper families, a project originally commissioned by *Fortune* magazine's editors but ultimately rejected by them.

Their project was published to minimal acclaim in 1941 as the book, *Now Let Us Praise Famous Men*,[140] but when it was re-released on the 1960s it achieved significant critical and popular success and posthumously has become one of the iconic works of American arts and letters. Evans was hired by *Fortune* magazine in 1945 and he worked there until 1965[141] as he pursued his seminal path as a photographer.

The catalogue went on to discuss how Evans has been widely admired for his realist approach. "Evans at his best convinces us that we are seeing the dry bones of fact, presented without comment, almost without thought."[142] Evans's long-time friend Lincoln Kirstein composed what Ray thought was a lovely eulogistic essay about Evans, describing how in Evans's photographs the "facts sang for themselves." He continued,

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[140] James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988).

[141] Evans had his first solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1938, and started a series of photographs of riders on New York subways that same year, apparently taken with his camera hidden in his coat. He did a remarkable series on pedestrians in Detroit and Chicago after the war, and close-ups of minutiae of the streetscape in the early 1960s. By the 1970s he was working in colour, often capturing commercial signage presented deadpan, without commentary. This later work has not received nearly the popular nor critical attention of his earlier work, but it can be argued that he presciently pre-figured current neo-avant-garde artists such as Jeff Wall and Ken Lum with his determined focus on liminal qualities of the interstitial minutiae of everyday public life. Evans died April 10, 1975.

[142] Walker Evans, *Walker Evans.* (New York, Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn., 1971), p. 18.

> The most characteristic single feature of Evans's work is its purity, or even its Puritanism. It is "straight" photography, not only in its technique but in the rigorous directedness of its way of looking…Every object is regarded head on with the unsparing frankness of a Russian ikon or a Flemish portrait. The facts pile up with the prints. This is neither a baroque nor a decorative, but a purely protestant attitude: meagre, stripped, cold, and, on occasion, humorous. It is also the naked, difficult solitary attitude of a member revolting from his own class, who knows best what in it must be uncovered, cauterized and why. The view is clinical. Evans is a visual doctor, diagnostician rather than specialist. But he is also the family physician, quiet and dispassionate, before whom even very old or very sick people are no longer ashamed to reveal themselves….The pictures of men and portraits of houses have only that 'expression' which the experience of their society and times has imposed on them. The faces, even those tired, vicious or content, are past reflecting accidental emotions. They are isolated and essentialized. The power of Evans' work lies in the fact that he so details the effect of circumstances that the single face, the single house, the single street, strikes with the strength of overwhelming numbers, the terrible cumulative force of thousands of faces, houses and streets.[143]

As poetic and compelling as Ray found this description to be, it pulled him in different directions. To be sure, he found these photographs to be spare, precise, absorbed and highly detailed. But Ray thought that the images were not just crystallized moments in time and space, facts just piling up, *tout court*;. At least part of the almost aching beauty Ray found in Evans's work was an admission of the *limitations* of portraying the real; celebrating the tangible certainly, asserting its dominance, yes, but also mourning its ultimate ephemerality and even illusory nature.

Ray thought that Evans's works at their best were affecting precisely because they carried within them a self-knowledge of a moment perpetually dissolving before the viewer's eyes. A song indeed, thought Ray; as he looked at these now long-gone faces and building facades. He almost could hear faintly a lovely if dolorous melody of a time and place otherwise forever lost to us. But Ray also thought it was as though Evans set out to discover how the present he surveyed would look as the past, to photograph a way of being in the present that acknowledges how this singular moment exists only to be looked back upon. And this self-conscious looking back underlay our wonder at circumstances of

[143] Lincoln Kirstein, "Photographs of America" in Walker Evans, *American Photographs* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938), p. 194.

the past impressing themselves upon palimpsest-like subjects[144] in a harsh form of *frottage*, their faces tracing the compelling, weathering forces at play on these faces, reminiscent of Roman veristic sculpture that Barry had been talking about and examples of which Evans surely saw during his time in Paris.

But Evans's subjects also evidenced a human, all-too-human temporal transcendence, looking back at the viewer with an awful, final self-knowledge. The poignant majesty of those variously hardened faces also drew on a superior intimation of mortality. Ray thought they confronted and taunted him with the knowledge that soon, whatever the emotions conjured up in him by the wounds these buildings and people suffered on their journey to the moment they were photographed, he too would be just as long gone. Evans made apparent how these faces and buildings, step by shuffling step, were hurtling to their destruction just as every viewer was to theirs, beautifully characterized by Agee[145] as "the cruel radiance of what is." [146]For Ray, Evans's subtle but complicated temporal resonance within his realism-laced visual appeals foreclosed on any easy ontological conclusions; past, present and future were in energetic dialogue in Evans's best work, not brought to frozen stasis. The photographs did a kind of presencing and absencing work, bringing the vanished and vanquished past into the present by situating the present in the past and at the same time bringing the triumph of the present to it knees, portending its inevitable demise.

Part of the strategy Evans used in his engagement with past-ness was to emphasize the fleeting moment, which he burnished to the high sheen of an icon, as Kirstein said. As had been discussed with Barry's Christian friends, one of the consequences of the First World War, which had ended just a mere decade before Evans had turned to photography in Paris, was the emergence of the photographic snapshot, reflecting the dissolution of

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[144] Evans.
[145] Jeff L. Rosenheim, ''The Cruel Radiance of What Is': Walker Evans and the South', in *Walker Evans*, ed. by Maria Morris Hambourg, Jeff L. Rosenheim and Douglas Eklund (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 2000).
[146] The title is of course ironic. For a doubly ironic story of Fortune's 75th anniversary edition return to where Evans and Agee photographed and wrote see David Whitford, 'The Most Famous Story We Never Told', *CNN Money.com - Fortune*, 2005 <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2005/09/19/8272885/index.htm> [accessed 17 March 2010].

stable visual space for the war's participants and rapidly evolving camera technology. For the first time the singular passing moment, with all its awkwardness, became imagistically more significant than the carefully structured formal pose. Evans took this snapshot aesthetic to a higher level, creating an image that *advocated* on behalf of the instant it was taken. Despite its quotidian nature each iconic second he captured asserted that no other moment was more important than *this* one: the harried businessman gulping lunch at the downtown sandwich stand, the jumble of furniture in the back of a moving van, workers unloading a truck. These were as significant in the imagistic universe Evans had called into being as any staged, ceremonial photograph.

The recurring imagery of signs—literally pictures of signage—in Evans's work indicated that at a visual level he understood, or at least was consistently intrigued by, this complicated discursive work. Especially in his early work, Evans enjoyed emphasizing both the distance and the relays between his studious practice on the one hand and quotidian picture making as it existed out in the world around him on the other, an emphasis more recent academic shoptalk might call "self-reflexive:" the art school sign next to other hand-lettered marquees for a fish shop, vegetable shop and public stenographer, all unceremoniously tacked on a porch from which, as yet another sign confirms with touching crudity, General Lafayette spoke in 1824; or the storefront window display of massed penny-pictures with the words "studio" stencilled on the glass; or the back alley shed offering both a five-minute photo studio and driving licences (one stop shopping for all your photo needs).

The humorousness of these pictures is that these small workshops in social and photographic bricolage were at the moment Evans photographed them being made obsolete by the cultural trend away from the staged photograph, a trend for which Evans was one of the primary exponents. In the emerging world of the snapshot, the unplanned, unique photographed moment that Evans was a champion for, the formal portrait to which these small town operations alluded was no longer necessary except for the most limited of functions, such as a driver's license or to commemorate a wedding. He was in a way photographing his own destructive wake.

But such in-jokes aside, Ray felt that the signs Evans captured offered up a glimpse of the quotidian gods worshipped by the immutable inhabitants of the semi-foreign past parading across his pictures: Lucky Strikes, ice cream, a 20 cent western sandwich, horses, or the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company; each of these archaic images of low-level commerce required a comparison to or translation from the present forest of signs Ray encountered around him almost every waking second.

It was as if Ray knew how the signs in Evans' photographs—similar to those around him and yet very different—should be read but he could not really carry this reading out; the signs walked an almost painful line between the familiar and the incomprehensible. Evans's images of signs further foregrounded a semiotic disjuncture; parallel sign systems uneasily co-existing within a single image, by amplifying the distances and connections between signs and their contexts. For instance an old building, considered solely as a type of structure, has its own semiotic relationship to the viewer, signifying perhaps industrial obsolescence, or rural poverty, or racial tensions, or other currents. The signs on or beside that same building meanwhile point in other interpretive directions, some similar, but others not so much.

The play visible there in the difference between sign and building, like that between the Evans photograph and the image of a photographic studio within it, pointed to levels of signification that mirrored the larger project of Evans's subtle visual challenges to "pastness." The parallel dyads of signifier and signified were in these self-consciously signed photographs mapped *almost but not quite on top of each other*. It is the subtle but crucial disjuncture between these otherwise usually apparently wholly coterminous levels of signification that Ray thought often gave Evans's work its critical punch.[147] Ray read in the catalogue some of Evans's prose as well, which had considerable power, and even the cadence of his speech reflected his complex signification work. "I see a thing," he said with an almost Hemmingwayesque deadpan solipsism, "and why, there it is."[148] Evans unwaveringly placed his work within a modern realist or naturalist literary tradition: Baudelaire, Whitman, Flaubert, Henry James, Proust, T.S. Eliot, Dos Passos, Hemingway,

[147] This disjuncture becomes increasingly apparent in Evans's later work. See *Walker Evans*, ed. by Maria Morris Hambourg, Jeff L. Rosenheim and Douglas Eklund (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 2000), plates 157-186.
[148] H. Allen, 'The Great Voyeur', *The New York Review of Books*, 67 (2000), p. 10.

William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Hart Crane and James Agee.[149] In numerous comments, Evans militantly upheld the force of the real, derived from this tradition.

> I think I incorporated Flaubert's method almost unconsciously, but anyway I used it in two ways; both his realism, or naturalism, and his objectivity of treatment. The non-appearance of the author. The non-subjectivity. That is literally applicable to the way I want to use a camera and do.[150]

Ray thought it didn't contradict the significance of these admiring comments about the non-appearance of the artist in his own work to note that they were coming from a photographer now identified as one of the great stylists of his medium, a photographer now famous everywhere through precisely his posture of non-appearance. Just as he saw in Evans's photographs, Ray could hear in both the forms and content of his words complicated presencing and absencing work.

In one corner of the gallery a little booth was set up with head phones. Ray put them on and listened to an old Smithsonian interview with Evans.

> WALKER EVANS: There's no book but what's full of photography. James Joyce is. Henry James it (sic). That's a pet subject of mine – how those men are unconscious photographers.
> PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?
> WALKER EVANS: In the way they see.
> P.C: Yes. That's interesting. You mean their imagery?
> WALKER EVANS: Yes. Joyce was one of the first. As you know, in his Ulysses he was one of the first realists, and simple direct kind of men whose language – he was partly a reporter. Photography is reporting, too.
> P.C: It's interesting that you keep saying things like reporting and journalism is not as good; portraiture is a problem, and all this. You know, there are so many problems you wonder –
> WALKER EVANS: There are. I'm interested in reporting, but I also think that reporting at its worst is journalism. But Hemingway was a hell of a good reporter and was always grounded in that and did it to begin with.[151]

[149] Trachtenberg, p. 234.
[150] Jerry L. Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 1st edn (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 70.
[151] Paul Cummings, 'Walker Evans Oral History Interview', *Smithsonian Archives of American Art*, 1971 <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/evans71.htm> [accessed 18 March 2010].

2.

Finally exhausted from hours wandering the exhibition, carefully scrutinizing the long rows of photographs while looking each up in the catalogue and pondering the curators' comments, Ray headed off to the gallery restaurant. Its long rows were packed with people; obviously this was a very popular show.

Ray stood for a long time in the cafeteria-style line-up and ordered some food, then made his way to a table amidst the loud clatter and chatter of the busy room. At first he just looked around him as he ate. He was always fascinated by the type of people who frequented art galleries such as this one: usually hyper-stylish in every detail, their hair, their eyeglasses, their watches. They were undoubtedly what hipster public intellectual Richard Florida referred to as the creative class. Ray was always conflicted by these relentlessly cool people; he admired and even envied them, but he also was, he had to admit, a little afraid of their crisp hairstyles and their sharp black clothes and flawlessly subtle makeup. To Ray these noisily chattering paragons of style were, through the signifiers they assembled around them, proposing a world that struck Ray as something like airless; as pleasant as this café was in many ways, Ray always felt parts of him being sucked out of him as he lingered there, like he had fallen into a vacuum.

Ray caught himself staring blankly into space with these pointless ruminations running unchecked through his brain and so, after getting himself a cup of tea, he turned back to the catalogue. There was a whole section in it that Ray had skipped in the gallery that discussed the significance of Evans's years at *Fortune* magazine, the flagship business journal of right-wing media magnate Henry Luce.

As he read through this section, Ray thought back to the recording of Evans he had listened to earlier. The slippery slopes leading from the heights of carefully realist reportage ideals down into the muck of crass journalist sensationalism that Evans had referenced must have been very much on the mind of a man who worked for Henry Luce—a news media baron after all—for twenty years. But, as the catalogue essay reported, Evans was not a mere passive observer in his more prosaic staff role at *Fortune*, performing as he was told; rather

Evans advocated actively for a specific interpretation of *Fortune*'s proselytizing role in the struggle for the hearts and minds of America.

In the summer of 1948, Evans wrote a lengthy memo[152] arguing for a shift in photographic emphasis, away from "its traditional look [which, Ray read elsewhere in the catalogue, was the Bourke-White mode, which Evans tactfully described as the 'romanticization of American industry'] for the concise, orderly and legible style of his own photographs."[153] Evans used an example of a photograph published in *Fortune* as exemplary of his proposed alternative approach.

> This picture is quiet and true. Since I am writing about photography, let me point out that this picture is a better part of the story at hand—National Biscuit Company—than a drawing or painting would be. There is the profitable and well-run cracker factory in the sweaty part of town, there is a knot of men talking on the pavement about anything but crackers, amidst the irrelevant trucks. This is where Mal-o-Mars are cooked and this is where last week's newspaper meets the gutter too. And the Strand Hotel becomes Famous for Flavour. My point is *Fortune* photographs should take a long look at a subject, get into it, and without shouting, tell a lot about it.[154]

Evans was on one level reasserting the same realist philosophy that he advocated through his own photography and talk. But in his memo Evans didn't stop at a kind of realism-for-realism's-sake argument. Instead, Evans concludes his panegyric memo with a remarkable discussion of taste.

> If you have it [taste], you have to use it rather arrogantly. But your arrogance may be so quiet and assured as to be unnoticeable; then, strange to say, people like it and fall in with you. Almost everybody likes a show of knowing taste—people learn something from it. Is there a greater pleasure?[155]

Eklund pointed out, correctly enough, that, "For Evans, clearing out an uncontaminated space for his elegant lessons in 'knowing taste,' there always lurked in the shadows this

[152] Thompson, p. 181.
[153] Douglas Eklund, ''The Harrassed Man's Haven of Detachment:' Walker Evans and the Fortune Portfolio', in *Walker Evans*, ed. by Marria Morris Hambourg, Jeff L. Rosenheim and Douglas Eklund (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 122.
[154] Eklund, p. 122.
[155] Eklund, p. 123.

other photographic essay—the banal beauty pageants, the gruesome executions of *Life*—as a negative model against which to contend."[156] But this was, Ray thought, drawing out Evans's comment in only one direction. Wasn't Evans's also self-evidently moving along another route entirely, making an equation between his "elegant lessons" in imagery and elite tastes of the sort that would appeal to *Fortune's* postwar capitalist readership? Evans suggests that the kind of elegance he was promoting would resonate among *Fortune*'s readership and moreover would encourage widespread admiration; people would "fall in" with the *Fortune* viewpoint. He was describing a kind of *imagistic politics*.

Advocacy for elite points of view are not necessarily particularly unusual of course, but what Ray found so interesting in this case was firstly, that Evans, *contra* his so otherwise typical sputtering protestations of folksy realism of the "why there it is" sort, was acknowledging *at all* that his photographic viewpoint carried a political weight, and secondly how that weight—getting people to fall in with elite tastes—was quite different from the normally more or less vaguely leftist values usually ascribed to the co-author of *Now Let Us Praise Famous Men*.

It could be protested that Evans may have only been trying to curry favour with his employer, an accusation that could be levelled in one form or another at everyone. Fair enough. But Ray thought what was really interesting was that Evans's argument for elite taste *seems to have been convincing*. He had obviously touched on something that his superiors found compelling: two months after composing this memo Evans was appointed Special Photographic Editor of *Fortune*, presumably to implement his ideas.[157] Whether he unambiguously embraced his own suggestions to his superiors or not, Ray wondered what in Evans's case appealed enough to lead to a promotion as a result? What exactly appealed to the managers of *Fortune* about the idea of the potential leadership provided by a realist aesthetic?

[156] Eklund, p. 123, original emphasis.
[157] Eklund, p. 123.

3.

The article in the catalogue Ray was reading was highly suggestive about this question, placing it the broader context of the social position of *Fortune*'s readership. This readership had, like much of the white middle class, tended to flee North American city centres in the 1940s and after. The article noted that in many accounts the flight of the middle class from North American downtowns was in significant part accelerated by the dark ascendancy of modernist urbanism, the ultimately dead-end aesthetics and politics of massive housing projects and inner-city freeways. In the 1980s and after the middle class started to return to city centres, rebuilding downtowns along new residential lines, signalling for many the eventual triumph of cosmopolitan urban liveability, and nowhere had this been more true than in Ray's hometown.

It was often argued that the middle class that had come back to cities was not the same as the one that left. The new middle class, it was said repeatedly in the media and in the hipper urban design seminars, were "knowledge workers"—young, highly educated, diverse—adept in manipulating the "global economy," just the kind of sleek professionals Ray saw around him at the gallery.[158] But many key characteristics and values—entrepreneurialism, scepticism of received traditions, individualism, self-reliance—of this managerial class were established early, long before the prodigal return to city centres, and had endured and expanded throughout that process.[159] These creative class characteristics did not, the article continued, arise spontaneously. They were consciously advocated for by Henry Luce, in significant part through the pages of *Fortune*.[160] In the present era of Walmartian logics everywhere triumphant, it is easy to forget that the present situation—where a professional managerial class, many of whom were just like those sitting around Ray, is firmly in charge and, again just like his fellow diners, apparently quite smugly self-content about it, almost as if divinely ordained, a kind of middle-class force of nature—was not a foregone outcome. In the 1930s and 40s Henry Luce was at the centre of a struggle to promote capital's interests against

[158] Richard L Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[159] Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Barbara Ehrenreich and John Ehrenreich, 'The Professional-Managerial Class', in *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. by Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979).
[160] On Luce see James L. Baugham, *Henry. R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston: Twayne, 1987).

strong counter currents: anarchism, communism, trade unionism, a variety of compelling and broadly supported alternative systems of political and cultural organization.

The outcome was far from clear. "At a time when much of the world was moving toward putting business under government direction, Luce was adamant that economic progress was inextricably linked to political systems that actively encourage individual initiative and free enterprise."[161] James Miller describes the emerging managerial class as those charged with overseeing "the rise of mass-production technologies, the creation of a national, integrated communication, the centralization and consolidation of capital, the increasing rationalization of production and consumption, and the rise of the vertically-integrated corporation"[162] in this new political-economic terrain. As Michael Augspurger points out, this class had grown in size dramatically in the period before *Fortune* started publishing: the number of accountants in the U.S. between 1910 and 1940 for example had grown from 39,000 to 288,000; engineers from 77,000 to 297,000, professional writers from 4,000 to 14,000 and university professors from 16,000 to 77,000.[163] This new class was inherently mobile, with its self-worth established on the basis of specialized knowledge rather than more traditional affiliations of family, religion, or history.[164]

As Kevin Reilly argues, Luce recognized the emerging professional-managerial class as a potential leader in American society but felt strongly that this class's self-awareness was limited by its own parochial viewpoints, a tendency exacerbated by its inability to understand the critical advocacy role that could be played by the media.[165] *Fortune* was intended to champion this double hypothesis.

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[161] Gerald M. Levin, *The Legacy of Henry Luce* (Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2000), p. 4 <http://www.bollier.org/pdf/values.pdf> [accessed 17 August 2006]; Kevin S. Reilly, 'Dilettantes at the Gate: Fortune Magazine and the Cultural Politics of Business Journalism in the 1930s', *Business and Economic History*, 28 (1999), 213-222.
[162] James S. Miller, 'White Collar Excavations: Fortune Magazine and the Invention of the Industrial Folk', *American Periodicals*, 13 (2003).
[163] Augspurger, p. 14.
[164] Miller, pp. 102-103; Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 26.
[165] Reilly, 213-222; Henry Robinson Luce, *The Ideas of Henry Luce* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 222-223 and Chapter 5.

Fortune described itself at its genesis in 1930 as undertaking a kind of pioneering geography of the terrain to be occupied by the new class, identified with what it characterized as modern industrialism.

> Modern Industrialism is the undiscovered continent of our time. We are sure it exists for its woods are thick around us. But of its geography we are at least as ignorant as were the Teton Sioux of the geography of the Missouri in the year 1804.[166]

The Lucean project was to provide the still-emergent professional-managerial class with the means of self-representation, an aesthetic in short; on the one hand developing more solid *external* aesthetic strategies of self-assertion to assist in this class's political ascendancy and on the other encouraging explorations of the cultural parameters of the *interior* values of this new class such as its recreational pursuits, ethical perspectives and stylistic choices in clothing and home decorating. Luce recruited young cosmopolitan writers and artists of New York City to draw the outlines of an aesthetic for this emergent class. "Many of the magazine's staff emerged out of a bohemian or intellectual modernism. In *Fortune*'s first year [1930], almost every … manager, editor and writer associated with the magazine was under the age of 33. Archibald MacLeish was the veteran writer at 38. Almost all of these individuals had been educated at Yale, Harvard, or Princeton."[167] Ann Douglas describes these writers and artists as the "shock troops of modernity."[168] They were smart, worldly, ambitious and cynical. Luce hired these "shock troops" in the early 1930s to overcome oligarchic resistance to newly professionalized forms of corporate management generally and specifically to assault the owner-directed management represented by old-style executives such as Henry Ford[169] or the DuPont family, an attack these writers and artists happily undertook because it paralleled their own campaign against the ramparts of aesthetic philistinism.

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[166] Miller, p. 84.
[167] Reilly, 213-222 (p. 218).
[168] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), p. 28.
[169] Allen Kaufman, *Managers Vs. Owners: The Struggle for Corporate Control in American Democracy*, Ruffin series in business management (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 125-136.

These young Turks from Manhattan crafted as their primary initial weapon a heroic aesthetic narrative to situate capitalism as the promise of future abundance that conformed to the latest avant-garde modernist aesthetic theories being developed in Europe. "*Fortune*'s mission was to capture the high drama of capitalism … A typical article (appearing in its premiere issue), 'Hogs,' imparted an almost Wagnerian grandeur to the gritty reality of the meat market and was illustrated by Bourke-White's theatrical, dramatically lit photographs of pigs being slaughtered."[170] Daniel Bell commented on the management ontology implicit in this heroic, operatic early phase of Luce's experiment.

> The one place where there was a modernist culture in the United States was *in form*—and this was the machine aesthetic. And, as the old saying goes, this was no accident. The machine aesthetic excluded the self and the person, it was abstract and functional, and fused with industrial design. Photography came into its own not with the periodical *Camera Work*, but with the business scene; the *Fortune* pages provided its showcase. The great functional factories and the huge functional skyscrapers, as well as the curving ribbons of the new concrete motorways, became the emblematic symbols of the new culture.[171]

In the beginning of the Depression the magazine was happy to support New Deal policies because it actively sought a *moral* basis for capitalism,[172] which *Fortune* suggested was still overall best able to provide the abundance necessary to overcome the ravages of depression. But the Depression created a challenge for *Fortune*'s alliance of cosmopolitan New York-based rebels and Luce's imperial managerial class ambitions that had run together under the common flag of modernist symbols and imagery. As the Depression wore on, revealing what were perhaps permanent fissures in the social fabric, the alliance of iconoclastic artists and the emerging business class started to break apart. *Fortune*'s young writers tended to side with the growing crowd of dispossessed through the 1930s and wrote critically on labour struggles and housing shortages. By the mid-1930s Luce on the other hand, along with his business-elite readership, started to turn against FDR and his perceived socialist intentions and in 1936 Luce insisted his writers take a more pro-capitalist line. Many of the magazine's

[170] Eklund, p. 121.
[171] Daniel Bell, 'Modernism Mummified', *American Quarterly*, 39 (1987), p. 125. Original emphasis.
[172] Judith Smith, 'Writing the Intellectual History of Fortune Magazine's Corporate Modernism [review essay of Augspurger, An Economy of Abundant Beauty]', *Reviews in American History*, 33 (2005), 417-423 (p. 419).

intellectual writers and artists, disenchanted by Luce's *diktats*. drifted into the Popular Front or were drawn by the more intellectual *Partisan Review*.

Luce thought the Second World War would provide a renewed national purpose and he promoted a technocratic role for the managerial elite overseeing a vast partnership of corporations and government engaged in postwar modernist projects such as the one promised by Bel Geddes's model city Futurama, shown at the General Motors pavilion at the 1939 world's fair in NYC. But as the Second World War drew to a close Fortune began to refine its aesthetic strategy to hew closer to Luce's anticommunist predilections,173 reconceiving the professional-management class as amoral and socially disconnected, using its leadership and business expertise to generate capitalism's broader social benefits through the unabashed pursuit of its own interests regardless of whether or not this approach conflicted with other segments of society.

However, this new amoral "the best against the rest" stance presented its own challenges for Luce and the professionalizing business class he continued to champion: if that class acted in its own interests, how then was it to get other segments of society, such as labour or non-business intellectuals, to acquiesce in this professional-managerial leadership? Acquiescence was certainly desirable, as the class war that had constantly threatened to erupt throughout the Depression and the Second World War could only impede management were it to continue.[174]

Certainly the old argument could be and was made that a rising tide of abundance created by this class would raise all boats. But a more powerful argument was required; one that would enrol America in the professional-managerial project even when this project manifestly operated against the best interests of others, a "Professional-Managerial Class project of legitimation".[175] The best defence is a good offence: what was needed was an approach that could, like a powerful solvent, dissolve the glue potentially connecting various forms of

[173] Paul Buhle and Susan Smulyan, 'Art of the People', *American Quarterly*, 53 (2001), p. 685; Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999), pp. 255-259.
[174] Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 157.
[175] Ohmann, p. 26.

resistance to capital. Social reaction to capital—strikes, labour migration, failures of individual companies—was of course not completely avoidable but what was needed was widespread identification with capital as the background against which particular forms of social strife could be viewed. Americans in other words needed their *very sense of identity, how they identified themselves as Americans, the nature of their being in the world*, to be understood as capitalist.

This is the subtext roaming very close to the surface in Luce's most famous essay, "The American Century," published in 1941, which concludes,

> We have some things in this country which are infinitely precious and *especially American*—a love of freedom, a feeling for the equality of opportunity, a tradition of self-reliance and independence, and also of co-operation …America as the dynamic center of ever-widening spheres of enterprise [individual enterprise contributing to the capitalist project, versus the failed collectivism of FDR], America as the training center of the skilful servants of mankind ["skilful servants" specified earlier in the essay as "engineers, doctors, movie men, makers of entertainment, developers of airlines, builders of roads, teachers, educators," i.e. the professional-managerial class], America as the Good Samaritan, really believing again that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and America as the powerhouse of ideals of Freedom and Justice —out of these elements surely can be fashioned a vision of the twentieth century to which we can and will devote ourselves in joy and gladness and vigor and enthusiasm.[176]

Fortune's original pre-war muscular avant-garde modernist aesthetic had become too closely associated with socialistic WPA-influenced styles and New Deal politics that had become increasingly hateful to Luce. The dilemma for *Fortune* was to conceive a compelling new "aesthetics of capital" (to use Eklund's felicitous phrase),[177] capable of assisting in formulating an amoral self-identity for the professional-managerial class while also enrolling the rest of American society.

The answer seems to have been realism. When Walker Evans situated himself in a grand realist tradition stretching back to Baudelaire, Flaubert, Proust and Eliot in Europe and from Henry James to Dos Passos, Hemmingway, and Agee in the U.S., he neglected to mention that all of the fiction writers that he listed who were still alive at the time were all indebted to

[176] Henry R. Luce, 'The American Century', *Society*, 31 (1994), p. 11.
[177] Eklund, p. 121.

a greater or lesser extent to Luce. Dos Passos was promoted vigorously by Luce publications.[178] James Agee, Evans's collaborator on *Now Let Us Praise Famous Men*, worked for Luce for fourteen years, thereby in the opinion of some squandering a prodigious talent.[179] Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (Pulitzer Prize winner for 1953) was first published by *Life*, another famous outlet, along with *Time*, in the Luce stable. (In Hemingway's case, the Lucean reach was even more personal: one of Hemingway's lovers, socialite Jane Kendall Mason, was married to the *Time/Life* European bureau chief at the time of her affair with Hemingway, and Mary Walsh, a reporter for Luce in Europe in the 1940s, became Hemingway's last wife.)

Luce could also be censorious of artists he felt were wrong-headed. For example he ordered John Steinbeck excoriated for his perceived socialist sympathies in such Depression novels as *The Grapes of Wrath* (and Luce succeeded in denying Steinbeck a much-wanted commission in the Army Air Corps despite having a personal friendship with Franklin Roosevelt).[180] But whether through support or attack, there is little question that Luce played a significant role in the character of American letters and thinking in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. It is an oblique testament to Henry Luce's power that no less perceptive an observer of the American scene than Edmund Wilson thought in 1944 that Luce, through his manipulation of key artists, was the greatest enemy of literary talent in his time.[181]

It is difficult to ascertain the exact extent of Luce's influence but in the postwar period a consensus emerged on the centrality of *facing up to realities*, just as Luce was aesthetically advocating through his hired artists such as Walker Evans. This realist consensus is evidenced by popular movies through the 1950s and early 60s. Academy Award-winning or nominated films from that period included *On the Waterfront* (1954), *Written on the Wind* (1956); *12 Angry Men*, *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957); *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1958); *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959); and *West Side Story* (1961). All manifested the

[178] James Steel Smith, 'The Novelist of Discomfort: A Reconsideration of John Dos Passos', *College English*, 19 (1958), pp. 331-338.
[179] Barbara Probst Solomon, 'I'd Rather Be Dwight [review essay of Dwight MacDonald, Against the American Grain]', *New York Review of Books*, 1 (1963).
[180] Kevin Starr, 'A Life of Dubious Battle', *New York Times*, 22 January 1984.
[181] Louis Menand, 'Missionary: Edmund Wilson and American Culture', *The New Yorker*, 2005 <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/08/08/050808crat_atlarge?currentPage=all>.

same carefully sketched realism oriented toward situations where harsh pathologies—whether natural and individual, or social and collective, or both at once—over-ruled more autochthonous human responses, usually resulting in tragedy. It was exactly this realism that Walker Evans had in important ways pioneered with his Depression-era photographs of people held up as aesthetic objects because they were caught in the amber of misfortune. The role of the author in these circumstances is itself subtly ironic; revealing the injustices of the situation, certainly, and self-effacing too, as if letting these victimized subjects speak for themselves against all odds, but also subtly self-aggrandizing, as Evans's memo to Luce on elite tastes lets slip, and equally condescending, putting these souls on display in their moments of torment.

A sample of Pulitzer prize winners in the 1950s reveals tastes similar to those promoted by Luce; 1953: Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*; 1955: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams and *A Fable* by William Faullkner; 1956: *The Diary of Anne Frank*; 1957: *Long Day's Journey into Night*; 1958: *A Death in the Family* by James Agee; 1960: *Advise and Consent* by Drury. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is in its basic construction typical of these realist works. It rotates around the self-destructive ambivalence of the central character, Brick, who tries ineffectually to reconcile his relationship to his now-dead (probably by suicide) best friend, while a web of familial hostility and plaintive, hopeless interdependence weaves itself around him. The central question of the play is this: what was Brick's real relationship to his lost friend, homosexual or close friend? Unable to either resolve this question or erase it through copious drinking, Brick and his family slowly dissolve in a fractious war of quotidian brutalities.

Similarly, Anne Frank's well-known diary recounts the attempt of a doomed young Jewish girl to avoid the Nazis. *Advise and Consent* revolves around the distance from the common good created by the lust for power. *Old Man and the Sea* demonstrates Hemingway's spare naturalism.[182] In these celebrated works there is a common tension between the real and the delusional. Each in its distinctive ways deals with people swept up in phantasms—personal, political, ideological—of such power that in many cases utter destruction results. People

[182] David Minter, *A Cultural History of the American Novel: Henry James to William Faulkner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

were portrayed ironically in these works; ruined by social pathologies—greed, ineptitude, fascism, homophobia—that were pathological precisely to the extent that they forced denial of the real. It was the inability to feel the contours of the real as it continually bumped and eventually ground against them that destroyed these characters.

Tragedy was related to lack of insight: salvation in these narratives required characters to contest the overgrowth of the consequences of delusion; beneath all the misapprehension, betrayal and destruction, like a shining but subterranean city, lay reality—the real world out there, fully comprehended by those courageous enough to drop or strike off their blinkers.

The article Ray was reading summarized this conflicted realism in one word: modernism.[183] This self-consciously modern overlaying of the real with the confrontation of delusional overgrowths has roots in American arts and letters reaching back through naturalism and realism at least as far as Whitman. Evans and the other Lucean artists enacted a renewed reading of the ideals articulated by Whitman: "to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belongs to every real thing, and to real things only."[184]

The essay concluded with what Ray thought was a critical point: Evans's memorandum proposed that it is precisely in the dispassionate observation of banal, workaday realities of capital's minute mechanics that "elite tastes" emerges. The realism advocated by Evans thus succinctly embodied a critical distance that fulfilled the Lucean project of the aesthetics of capital: on the one hand the realist aesthetic promoted a certain fearlessness; beholden to no ideology or family ties or social values, it could courageously probe the dark corners of oppression in many personal, cultural and social forms—Nazism, homophobia, trade unionism, communism, southern white racism, oligarchies, whatever—implying an abstract commitment to freedom, a beacon to anyone suffering oppression, while, on the other hand, realism provided an ideal conceptual space in which to insert the professional-managerial class via imagistic rhetoric of the *free or detached individual*—represented in the last instance by

[183] Daniel Joseph Singal, 'Towards a Defiintion of American Modernism', *American Quarterly*, 39 (1987), p. 16.
[184] Rosenheim, p. 55.

the artist fearlessly laying the realist scenario before his audience—maintaining a cool, ironic, contemplative take on the oft- and multiply-deluded world, a disinterested take presented as the last, best hope for freedom.

It was precisely this coolly appraising distance that was a necessary pre-condition of for the professional-managerial class's professionalized self-understanding of its own interests and ultimately those of capital while enrolling other classes with divergent and often opposed interests. The rhetoric of realism equated itself with Americanism: to be truly American meant being realistic by staying free from ideology, and staying free meant being an individual, unbeholden to any man or principle except through freely offered and accepted contracts. But the America that emerged from the Second World War, led by men such as Henry Luce, presented a harsher choice of which the vast majority were unaware they were making: either embrace as *subjects* the cool, detached realism of the professional-managerial class or become the one-way-or-another worn *objects* of that class's gaze, like Evans's Hale County icons, rugged individuals maybe, but hardly free. The cruel radiance of what is.

Ray looked up at his fellow diners with awe. The airless vacuum of self-satisfied style that choked him was something like the warm afterglow of Lucean politics, much like he had long ago felt the fading radiation from the railroad era as he had sat soaking in his girlfriend's tub.

Nine. "Shock Trooper of Modernity:" Jane Jacobs

Bibliographic Entry:
Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*[185]

> Everything is somewhere and in place.
> Aristotle[186]

1.

A couple of weeks later Ray was puttering around the kitchen when he heard the mail being pushed through the mail slot. He absent-mindedly sauntered over to pick it up and was drawn to a large, thick manila envelope that had come with the more usual flyers and bills. A slight chill ran through him reading his name and roughly hand-written address. There was no return name or address but that writing looked familiar. He ripped oven the envelope and stared stunned at the contents. It was about 20 pages of what was clearly type-written writing and on top was note written in the same scrawl as the addressing on the envelope, "Thought you might be interested in this, B.S." B.S. Barry Samuels. Ray's mind raced. Barry had been missing now for months and then this just shows up. He looked at the postmark. It was pretty smudged but it looked like it had been posted just a few days ago. He looked at the typed pages. There was a cover page with a title: "Sweet Jane: Jane Jacobs as Shock Trooper of Modernity." Nothing else. Ray pulled over a kitchen chair and sat down. It was too weird. Was Barry back? He thought of phoning Norman to see if he knew anything. He had actually started to walk around looking a little dazedly for Norman's phone number but then suddenly thought better of it. What if Barry didn't want to be found? There was no clue in this envelope as to where he was. If he alerted Norman would he set in motion a whole set of reactions—from Norman, from Barry's family maybe, even the police—that was the last thing Barry wanted?

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[185] Jane Jacobs.
[186] Cited in Mark Kingwell, *Concrete Reveries: Consciousness and the City* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008) p. 207.

Ray sat back down. He looked again at the envelope, then inside it. He turned the papers over and quickly thumbed through them to see of there was any writing there, any clue as to Barry's whereabouts. But nothing. Fuck it, Ray thought, I'm just going to have to read this paper.

2.

Ray quickly realized Barry had written his paper in the form of an extended letter to him, a format he felt both honoured and slightly embarrassed by. It was a curious combination of intimacy, diatribe and scholarship, with the letters hammered angrily in to the page, full of typos, with some things crossed out and the same thing left alone a few pages or paragraphs later. But like his lectures, as Barry's paper progressed the idiosyncrasies dropped away.

Dear Ray, it began.

You have by now I'm sure seen the Walker Evans exhibit at the Gallery. Pretty fucking good isn't it? And I'm also guessing that like me you went right out and bou**g**ht the catalogue. If you haven't, ~~**t**o~~ or if you have and haven't read the essay in there on Evans and *Fortune* magazine, I suggest you put this down and not pick it up again until you have a chance to do so.

OK, you've read it now, right? So to sum it up, the catalogue essay makes a pretty inteeresting argument, which basically goes like this: Henry Asshole Luce in the 1930s, 40s and 50s was proselytizing via his many media outlets and connections for what he saw as the inherent natural superiority of capitalism ("screw ever**y**body!") against the man y competitive systems that were picking up on capitalism's obvious flaws and that were vigorous at that historical juncture (unlike the **a**ttenuated and

etiolated -- i.e. defeated -- alternatives we currently have to global capital…).

At first Luce allied himself with artists who practiced a kind of ~~ikon~~ iconoclastic heroic modernism and who were happy to combat philistinism whether in the ~~aa~~ avant-garde art gallery or the corporate boardroom. Over time however Luce, **ri**ght-winger that he was, became increasingly dissatisfied with the associations those modernist aesthetics had with leftist New Deal policies and he increasingly turned to a gritty, fine-grained realism such as that photographically espoused by Walker Evans. The essay suggests this realist aesthetic worked well for ~~l~~ Luce because it was on its face patently critical of various forms of domination and thus spoke to broad segments of the population at the same **t** ime as it implicitly promoted an ethos of individualism that conformed well with Lucean values of self-reliance, pro-"Americanism," anti-governmentality and so on.

Of course I find the catalogue's approach really fuckin freaky, as you might guess Ray, because it jives so perfectly with all that **cr**ap I have been doing on materiality and subject formation in classical antiquity. Evans's iconic portraits for example--—with their mask-like qualities, their marking off of multiple class boundaries, the centrality within them of the self looking out at the self looking in and so on-—share with Roman veristic portraiture an aesthetic (gritty, detailed realism), a politics (the self-assertion of a powerful social class) and an ontology (the mask made possible by the nature of being) all at once. I have no proof, but I am convinced

that Evans, who became a photographer during a trip as a young man to Paris in the 1920s, must have seen and been strongly influenced by Roman veristic sculpture, many **ex**amples of which can be seen at the Louvre in Paris. I'll come back to this idea of aethetics, politics and ontology in a little while.

But fro now, ~~k~~let me note that as sympathetic to the essay as I am, the problem with it is that it is almost entirely speculative, at its end at least, where the most interesting issues get raised. It suggests that Luce enrolled various classes, and especially the professional-managerial class, through critical realistic imagery that, as the article documents convincingly, became very popular in films and literature in the 1950. It's an attractive pitch isn't it? I personally wantto jump up and shout "Right fuckin' on! We got fucking suckered by that bastard!"

But how do we know it happened? How do we know people didn't just watch Marlon Brando or look at Walker Evans or other naturalistic artists, some of them being paid by Luce directly but all, if that article is t~~a~~ be believed, contributing to the Lucean realist project, and go that's nice or whatever, and simply continue on with their lives, unchanged in any way, let alone being enrolled in a project of professional-managerial class hegemony? The problem I have been working on is how to demonstrate that this enrolment process was indeed taking place. I puzzled over this for, well basically for fucking **ever**. Now bear with me while I shift gears, but I will get to ma**k**ing the connection soon.

I finally realized there was **another** problem that had been driving me nuts for some time but that was actually closely ~~rba~~related and perhaps through one I could address the other and vice-versa. This other problem was this: how ~~ee~~ exactly to account for Jane Jacobs's popularity in urban planning? That question arose for me because like you for some time I have tried to figure out what exactly is the fuck up with North False Creek, and why is Jacobs always so closely associated with that weird—-and popular too, but definitely weird—-place? I mean, yes, yes, she was very sweet and passionate and smart and yes cities are more attractive and fun to be on when there is lots of shit going on in the streets and its nice to have old buildings mixed up with new ones, blah, blah, blah. But **J**acobs touched on a really deep nerve somehow, powerful enough to not only motivate considerable political energy, stopping freeway developments and so on, but to reach far beyond urban design issues, and the question I ask what exactly is that nerve. And how exactly did she touch it?

Now one thing that always always always gets overlooked in all the tons of shit ~~shit~~ that has been written about Jacobs[187] is that she, just like Walker Evans, worked for *Fortune*, and in fact it was there, in ~~that asshole~~ Luce's flagship business magazine, where she first published the ideas that were to become *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, that iconic darling of grass-roots, touchy-feely, feminist, touchy feel-good urban organizers everywhere. Jacobs of course later became famously

[187] A Web of Science Citation Index search yields 657 citations since 1985 in journals cutting across a host of disciplines.

associated with the fights and eventual triumph of community-based urban planning versus the massive high modernist freeway and housing-project ideas epitomized by Robert Moses.

I have dug up some interesting context here. The pro-capitalist proselytizing by Luce through his other media outlets described in the catalogue article was often directly linked in *Fortune* to cities, which he recognized unsurprisingly enough as nerve-centres of business. Like Luce's relations with modernist aesthetics generally, this urban dimension of subject-matter in *Fortune* manifested a trajectory of early embrace of modernist planning schemes turning to disaffection and eventually almost militant rejection as epitomized by Jacobs's~~s~~ series of articles in the late 1950s.

Luce's turn away from planned modernist super-cities seems to have been encouraged by personal circumstances. AAfter the war Luce and his wife, Clare Booth Luce, a formidable right-wing politician and activist in her own right, lived in the wealthy enclave of Greenwich, Connecticut, which was briefly threatened by redevelopment by the United Nations. An august committee that included Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry **S**. Truman, John D. and Nelson Rockefeller and Allan Dulles had been mandated to select a home site in the U.S. for the nascent U.N. After much consideration, in 1946 they chose Greenwich, the Luce's hometown. Their plans were über-modernist ~~whic~~ with that kind of soaring optimism of the immediate postwar world: a massive "free city" of slab towers designed by LeCorbusier holding a world law school,

a world library, a world m**u**seum and residences in park-like settings stretch ing over 100 square miles.

However, the rich residents of Greenwich unsurprisingly organized to oppose this massive dislocation and also ~~xxxx~~ unsurprisingly they were ultimately successful despite original assurances to the committee by the federal government that any site they chose would be hand e**d** over to them for the U.N.[188]

The crisis over l ocation was resolved when another member of the U.**N.** location search committee, Robert ~~N~~ Moses (soon to become Jane Jacob's arch-nemesis), who at the time was just starting on his trajectory as one of the most influential urban planners in North America and who ultimately would be responsible for massive urban freeway systems and enormous super-block housing projects in NYC and elsewhere, offered an area in central New York City known as Turtle Bay to the United Nations. Like Greenwich there were many thousands of residents and businesses in Turtle Bay and they protested too but they were much less affluent and well-connected than their Connecticut predecessors and their complaints were over-ruled.[189]

There is a curious series of overlaps here: Luce, supportive in principle of an internationalist body of government (Luce doubtlessly assuming that such a world government would fulfill American interests, à la his famous panegyric "The American Century"), spurns the United

[188] 'Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich - "No to UNOville!"', 2004 <http://www.hstg.org/content/view/101/377/> [accessed 20 March 2010].
[189] Michael Powell, 'How the U.N. Came To Be in Manhatten', *The Washington Post*, 26 October 2003 <http://www.un.org/cmp/uncmp/news/2003-10-26_WP.pdf> [accessed 21 January 2007].

Nation's requirements when they counter his own self-interests; in ~~**pre**~~ particular his self-interest is challenged by the modernist urban planning proposed as the appropriate visual form for the new postwar internationalist headquarters of the U.N.; the U.N.'s modernist **v**ision, successfully rebuffed by Luce and his neighbours, l ands instead on a long-*es*tablished New York City neighbourhood and uncaringly displaces thousands; the U.N.'s new home is provided via Robert Moses, who had built his reputation and power base in large part by **ov**ercoming the protestations of wealthy land owners to provide roads and parks (such as the famous Jones Beach) that benefited all classes of New ~~Y~~ Yorkers but from the U.N. experience on **M**oses becomes increasingly the emblematic figure of insensitive urban redevelopment centered on "slum clearance," inner-city freeways and massive slab building projects (of which the U.N. building was an early classic example); eventually this increasingly heartless modernism, abetted by racism and class antagonisms, prompts effective neighbourhood resistance, led most famously by Jane Jacobs who works for Henry Luce and for whom Jacobs publishes the first version of her withering critique of modernist cities, *The Death*.[190]

Ok, that's some background. As I mentioned before, the extreme foreground, i.e. the reaction that was to come to Jacobs's book, is a little harder to understand. *The Death* is so fIrmly wedded into numerous orthodoxies that critical distance is difficult. There are not that many works in the

[190] The "imperial phase" of Moses's career was thus bookended by frustration of his projects by residents of places called Greenwich: Greenwich Connecticut in a relatively early stage, and much later Greenwich Village, New York, Jane Jacobs's home.

planning—-or for that matter any other—-canon which have had the longevity or widespread impact of Jane Jacobs' *The Death*.

Yet what is weird is that in these references Jacobs is almost a cipher, in the sense of standing in the place of something, what a grammarian or literary critic might call a metonym. The sources often mention *The Death* just in passing, where it seems to stand in for a vaguely defined unhappiness both with a host of modern urban problems, such as slums, urban blight or sprawl, and with now-discredited ways of solving these problems, such as many ideas proposed by modernist architects, traffic engineers and large governmental bureaucracies.And Jacobs's **b**ook is taken up in the literature as more than just an oppositional stance to these ~~zz~~ specifically urban planning problems; in some way it represents emancipation itself, a source book of liberation from outdated, oppressive, sclerotic thinking, of which high modernist, freeway-oriented city planning is just one example.

The reader of these references in the literature is expected it seems to understand this range of ideas and political stances for which Jacobs stands. This **l**eads us back to my original question, perhaps slightly rephrased: what is to be made of how Jacobs, and especially *The Death*,[191] has come to stand for this basket of attitudes and actions? Why does it represent that courageous stand of common people against the steamroller of stupid monolithic development?

[191] Jacobs has of course written a number of other books that have not been without influence. None however comes close to *The Death's* widespread impact.

Most people in **pl**anning and social activist circles would respond **t**o this question I think by saying that Jacobs has played such a central role because her book ~~sh~~ encapsulates popular resistance to misguided urban planning at least and at most to domination on substantive, practical and methodological levels.

Substantively, Jacobs validated what many at the time could already see but few could articulate effectively: expert high modernist schemes about city planning didn't work, and in fact were significantly harmful. Cities were choking under freeway regimes but seemed unable to imagine an alternative.

Practically, Jacobs established firm credentials as an effective and committed community organizer and made in *The Death* a number of concrete suggestions about how the grassroots might have a larger voice. Moreover, she embraced lower class inner city culture and ethnic diversity.[192] Jacobs fled the U.S. rather have her sons drafted during the Vietnam War. Grass roots organizing, opposition to high modernist schemes, embracing diversity, unwillingness to participate in the Vietnam war: all these attitudes and acts are apparently evidence of a leftist pedigree.[193]

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[192] However, many critics, most famously Marshall Berman, argued that Jacobs was not so cognisant of racial diversification, perhaps the single most transformative phenomenon taking place in cities at the time The Death was being conceived. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin USA, 1988), pp. 324-325.

[193] Herbert J. Gans alludes to this when he points out Jacobs's origins as a middle class girl (daughter of a doctor) from a working class town (Scranton, PA) who moved into a row house in Greenwich Village that she and her architect husband renovated, distinguishing it from the homes of the then still largely Irish working class around them. And thus "… she wrote glowingly not only about her West Village area, but also the North End of Boston and the 'Back of the Yards' in Chicago, another old Irish neighborhood…."

Methodologically, Jacobs, along with such theoretical heavyweights as John Dewey,[194] Richard Rorty[195] and Jurgen Habermas,[196] contributed significantly to a more democratically-oriented "communicative" or "collaborative" planning paradigm by affirming the social formation of knowledge: that most knowledge has a social foundation; that knowledge may take many, not just expert or rational, forms; that individuals develop through social interaction; that people have diverse social, material, and symbolic interests; and that public policy needs to draw upon that broader range of knowledge and interests. These ideas were the foundation for a shift toward a consultative mode in planning that still predominates.[197]

OK, so she's fucking perfect according to that kind of thinking.[198] But despite appearances in the popular media,

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Gans concludes that the benevolent upper middle class observer set amongst an iconic Irish working class is a recurring motif in both Jacobs's life and work. Herbert J. Gans, 'Jane Jacobs: Toward an Understanding of "Death and Life of Great American Cities"', *City and Community*, 5 (2006), p. 214.

[194] *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970); *Experience and Education: The 60th Anniversary Edition*, 60th edn (West Lafayette, Ind: Kappa Delta Pi, 1998).

[195] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[196] Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

[197] Susan S. Fainstein, 'Justice, Politics and the Creation of Urban Space', in *The Urbanization of Injustice*, ed. by Andre Merrifield and Erik Swyndgedow (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996); 'New Directions in Planning Theory', *Urban Affairs Review*, 35 (2000); Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); J. Innes, 'Planning theory's emerging paradigm: Communicative action and interactive practice', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 14 (1995); McAfee, 15-16.

[198] The following quote, describing the conclusion of a conference, typifies the hagiographic esteem in which many hold Jacobs: "As an additional thanks for 'putting up with all the fuss,' Jacobs was given something she'd always wanted: a trip in a hot air balloon. When she left the stage of the Princess of Wales Theatre after a very long standing ovation, a large image of balloons lit up the theater. It took an hour for the audience to empty into Toronto's theater district; many remained in their seats with tears in their eyes. Jacobs had inspired them all; now, at the close of the conference, it seemed they wanted to think about how they were going to 'hop to' and effect their own small, manageable bits of change." Lisa Rochon, 'The Metropolis Observed: Jane Jacobs: Ideas That Matter', *Metropolis*, 1998 <http://www.metropolismag.com/html/content_0498/ap98idea.htm> [accessed 21 March 2010].

praise for Jacobs has not been entirely unanimous among socially progressive writers. There has been a small but consistent critical stream that has picked up on what might be described politely as right wing yearnings in her work. Besides Berman's concerns about race, just noted, Ed Zotti remarked on these more conservative aspirations in 1986.[199] Francis Morrone commented in 1994, "On the Right [Jacobs] is hailed by anti-**U**topians like Robert Nisbet and Roger Scruton, and by economic libertarians like George Gilder and Stuart M. Butler. She believes strongly in the free market, in entrepreneurial capitalism, in property rights, in limiting state power, and in technological progress … She has also endorsed such ~~RE~~Republican initiatives as enterprise zones and privatization of government services".[200]

This idea was picked up and developed further by Roger Montgomery in 1998, who himself as a young professor had taken Jacobs on a tour of Pruitt-Igoe. He lists characteristics of *The Death*: distrust of government; endorsement of small business; lack concern with corporate power, social stratification or racism; and little analysis of suburban or regional metropolitan issues.[201]

One might add to the list her vituperative denunciation of "pervert parks,"[202] her fondness for "common sense,"[203] and

[199] E. Zotti, 'Eyes on Jane Jacobs', *Planning*, 52 (1986), 24-30 (p. 26).
[200] Francis Morrone, 'Citizen Jane Jacobs', *New Criterion*, 12 (1994), 24-29 (p. 24).
[201] Roger Montgomery, 'Is There Still Life in The Death and Life?', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 64 (1998), 269-274 (p. 273 et passim).
[202] Jane Jacobs, pp. 92, 97, 98 Jacobs never defines what she means by "pervert parks," but one suspects she refers to parks cruised by gay men.
[203] This phrase, with such allusions as "natural" intelligence and shared (i.e. conservative) values, became a potent weapon in the rise of the New Right, as for example in Ontario where the dramatically successful election campaign of the neo-conservative Mike Harris government called itself the "common sense

her **e**nthusiasm for surveillance, and conclude with Montgomery that *The Death* is an early neo-conservative tract.

There are grounds then for seeing *The Death* as both critical (i.e. progressive) and affirmative (i.e. conservative) of capital's interests in urban design and planning. Now it probably would be tons of fun for a reprobate like me to pursue Jacobs's less savoury sides, but this is however in some respects a red herring. *The more important question is subtly but importantly different: how exactly does The Death appeal both to neo-conservatives and progressives?*

The answer I think is just that developed in the catalogue essay about Walker Evans: J acobs sketched appealing realist characters and scenarios to demonstrate her theories and this charming realism enrolled various class interests under umbrellas of individualism and **A**mericanism in professional-managerial approaches to urban planning. IN short, Jacobs provides a really good case study of exactly the phenomenon that the catalogue essay pointed to in its concluding points.

A warning is in order here Ray, even to so ~~a~~skeptical a reader as yourself: Jacobs's imagery is so compelling that as we review it we must keep clearly in mind the catalogue essay's distaff claim that in the 1930s, 40s and 50s competing visions of how cities might be conceptualized, such as sites of struggles of the rights of working people

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revolution." See R. Keil, '"Common-Sense" Neoliberalism: Progressive Conservative Urbanism in Toronto, Canada', *Antipode*, 34 (2002), 578-601.

or oppressed minorities or as crucibles for radical social equality. These possibilities evaporate seemingly almost effortlessly in the Jacobsian universe, an outcome doubtlessly winning Henry Luce's approval.

3.

To understand how Jacobs accomplished this, we have to look at her writing in fine detail, because it is **how** she crafts her vision that she does her heavy lifting. Nowhere in *The Death* are the appeals of her characterization of **s**uccessful urban organization on better display than in the so-called Hudson Street ballet,[204] arguably among the most consequential prose passages published in English in the twentieth century. It purports to present readers with a short description of just "how it was" on that longstanding Greenwich Village street that was, when Jacobs was writing about it, under threats from freeway advocates led by the redoubtable Robert Moses.

And you have to ~~dkf~~admit, she is a fucking amazing writer. Jacobs's wonderfully evocative prose makes us marvel at the charming and mundane Walker Evans-like theatrics of her home street, starting from her "own first entrance into it a little after eight when I put out the ggarbage can, surely a prosaic occupation, but I enjoy my part, my little clang," amidst junior high school students strolling along to school and neighbours enacting their morning rituals of opening stores, setting children on the stoop or walking to work. "Simultaneously, numbers of women in housedresses have emerged and as they crisscross with one another they

[204] Jane Jacobs, pp. 50-54.

pause for quick conversations that sound with either laughter or joint indignation, never, it seems, anything in between." As Jacobs herself hurries off to work, she takes up a little morning ritual, as she has for nearly ten years, with a local business owner ("the short, thick-bodied, white-aproned fruit man who stands outside his doorway a little up the street, his arms folded, his feet planted, looking solid as the earth itself") of looking up and down the street, then nodding to each other, "all is well."

She **b**riefly passes over the ~~nn~~ "heart-of-the-day" ballet, sketching its intricac**ies** from observations made on her days off. After work, the ballet reaches its crescendo: "This is the time of roller skates and stilts and tricycles and games in the lee of the stoop with bottletops and plastic cowboys; this is the time of bundles and packages, zigzagging from the drug store to the fruit stand and back over to the butcher's; this is the time when teen-agers, all dressed up, are pausing to ask if their slips show or their collars look right; this is the time when beautiful girls get out of MG's; this is the time when the fire engines go through; this is the time when anybody you know around Hudson Street will go by."

Night f alls; "the ballet goes on under lights," its rhythms less familiar to Jacobs but not unknown after nights nursing a baby. Sometimes trouble comes at night (Jacobs describes a young woman threatened), but when it does people gather to ward off danger until the police arrive, followed by opinions up and down the street; "Drunk … Crazy … A wild kid from the suburbs." Jacobs adds this

sardonic footnote about the gossipy speculation: "He [the trouble maker] turned out to be a wild kid from the suburbs. Sometimes, on Hudson Street, we are tempted to believe the suburbs must be a difficult place to bring up children."

But more often **pp**people gather happily at night, congregating outside a bar or to cheer on a bagpipe player who appears from nowhere. Or they hurry to help the victim of an accident. The fits and starts of bustle continue until the early morning. She concludes, "I have made the daily ballet of Hudson Street sound more frenetic than it is, because writing telescopes it. In real life, it is not that way. In real life, tto be sure, something is always going on, the ballet is never at a halt, but the general effect is peaceful and the general tenor leisurely. People who know well such animated city streets know well how it is. I am afraid that people who do not will always have it a little wrong—like the old prints of rhinoceroses made from travelers' descriptions of rhinoceroses" (50-54).

This extended passage **d**emonstrates Jacobs's subtle interweaving of several textual strategies around her poignantly-drawn characterizations: these include characterization of "real" urban dwellers; denunciation of planning orthodoxy through the use of scathingly overt irony; and the deployment of different meanings of the phrase "common sense".

The most crucial of these strategies is her deployment of the term common sense, so I'm going to focus next on that. Common sense is a razor Jacobs used to slice through the

dense tangle of planners' and others' received misapprehensions. Many of the early enthusiasms **f**or *The Death* centred on the common sense aspect of its charms, starting with Harrison Salisbury, whose review in the *New York Times* was referenced by the publishers on the on the dust jacket of the paperback version: "It fairly crackles with bright honesty and common sense." Charles E. Shutz also approvingly wrote,

> … Jane Jacobs comes forth with some very uncommon common sense on the plight of the city and what can be done with it. She demonstrates with actual cases the abstract unreality of much of the science of city planning … Moreover, Miss Jacobs goes on to propose alternative **so**lutions to urban problems based upon what she argues is the concrete reality of city life. Miss Jacobs' study is supported by … facts of real life, condensed and imaginatively presented, but immediately relevant and comprehensible to concerned human beings. And the facts themselves ~~f~~find corroboration in the real-life experiences of her audience to the point that one exclaims, "Why didn't that ever occur to me?![205]

Common sense thus sounds simple, but in fact the idea is densely layered in *The Death*. There are four dimensions to her common sense approach: participation; innate good sense shared by all urban dwellers (insofar as they were not impeded by ideologically-blinkered planners); a natural leadership; and the centrality of one sense over all others, namely vision, the ruler of all the other senses held in common.

[205] C.E. Shutz, 'Significance and Action in Social Science', *Ethics*, 73 (1963), p. 234.

The notion of participation, naturally acting in common, and the related concept of accessibility is richly upheld in *The Death*. Many of the specific ideas in *The Death* revolve around ideals of accessibility; a concept, which like her circadian narrative is freighted with American democratic values. Within ~~ww~~what Jacobs argues should be a clearly demarcated public space, thriving cities provide physical and cultural access. Physically people should have a number of choices—-the more the better—-as to where and how they move, hence her emphasis on **sh**ort blocks to provide the optimal number of choices of route. Culturally, the needs and d esires—-for stores, bars, movies, clubs and all the other spaces of fulfilling people's wishes—-of urbanites should be met or exceeded.

Jacobs repeatedly points to the need for public spaces that provide opportunities for casual networking. These networks provide widespread access to the urban fabric. Providing the kind of public access Jacobs is describing is complicated by the nature of cities as vast congregations of strangers.[206] When cities work, they do so because these strangers are encouraged to help each other in ways great and small, from lending someone fifty cents, through protecting children from predators, to providing jobs and housing or organizing to change government policy.

Jacobs also appeals to a sense of natural reaction. When she argues that short blocks work better than long ones, she says that presenting people with a choice of routes will ensure a variety of routes used. And, of course, that

[206] Jane Jacobs, p. 30.

means more streets will be enlivened accordingly. These "of course" assertions work on two levels, stating the obvious but at the **s**ame ~~xx~~time elevating such simple decisions as which route to take to a kind of innate good sense, what a later generation might call an "ecological" consciousness innately at work. People are not just social animals, but travelling social animals, who, if not constrained by misguided planners and developers, will **c**reate a travelling economy, a naturally arising healthy system of checks and balances, growth and decay.

But for Jacobs correct civic organization is not merely reflections of this innate wisdom. It represents a careful winnowing. For example, out of all the ways of moving down streets there are only two important variations: down long blocks or short ones. And of course, she continues, if we think in these terms, based on the natural economy of travel everyone can r ecognize and participate in, the better alternative easily emerges. All it takes is s omeo**n**e to point out what is lived by everyone, versus the ludicrous schemes dreamed up by out-of-touch planners. This is a subtle but crucial shift away from what everyone does or knows to the capabilities of thoughtful scrutiny to understand the significance of what everyone does.

Jacobs peppers *The Death* with insights, a native wisdom, gleaned from everyday experience by what we might call a natural leadership (as opposed to the unnatural leadership of ~~ob~~obtuse, misguided experts such as planners). This group of leaders articulates the public will. "Finally one day a tenant more articulate than the others made this pronouncement" (p. 15); "When my sister,

Betty, a housewife, helps devise a scheme in the Manhattan public school which one of her children attends, whereby parents who know English give homework help to the children of parents who do not, and the scheme works, this knowledge filters into a special-interest neighbourhood of the city as a whole, as a result one evening Betty finds herself away over in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, telling a district group of ten P-TA presidents there how the scheme works, and learning some new things herself" (pp. 118-19); "My friend from the street, Mrs. Kostritsky, is quite right when she reasons that it needs some commerce for its users' convenience" (p. 144). Sometimes this natural leadership is expressed by people working in the community, paid to provide direction at the m icrosoci**al** level: "Frank Harvey, director of the North End Union" (p. 33), or "William Kirk, head worker of Union Settlement" (p. 16).

But usually they are just regular folks. "One ordinary morning last winter, Mr. Jaffe, whose formal business name is Bernie, and his wife, whose formal business name is Ann, supervised the small children crossing at the corner," lent umbrellas and money, took custody of keys and packages, lectured youngsters on smoking, gave directions, listened to tales of domestic difficulty, quieted rowdies, advised a mother on birthday presents and collected papers for regulars. "Ann" and "Bernie" (the honorific asides are a delight) do this regularly just because they "see the need (p. 61)". She continues, in a Twainian vein, "… the Jaffes enjoy an excellent social status … in income … the peers of the general run of customers and in independence they are the superiors. Their advice, as men and women of common

sense and experience, is sought and ~~rr~~respected" (pp. 61-62). Jacobs takes great pains to tell us she relies heavily in her own discussions on this peculiarly American form of savage leadership, a group she refers to as "public experts" (p. 70), "competent and well informed" (p. 59). Her penultimate section of the book, "Governing and planning districts," (pp. 405-27) is an organizational manual designed to harness this natural leadership for what **Ja** cobs sees as more constructive ends than that envisioned by modernist planners.

Jacobs is on the other hand flummoxed by how planners think. Early in *The Death* Jacobs describes a planner friend who instinctively recognized Boston's North End as a fertile urban environment, with low rents and low rates of TB, delinquency and infant mortality rates. Moreover, the planner confesses, "I often go down there myself just to walk around the streets and feel that wonderful, cheerful street life." But, he concludes sadly, "of course we have to rebuild eventually. We've got to get these people off the streets" (10). **J**acobs summarizes her friend's ambivalence toward the North End as follows: "Here was a curious thing. My friend's instincts told him the North End was a good place, and his social statistics confirmed it. But everything he had learned as a physical pplanner about what is good for people and good for city neighborhoods, everything that made him an expert, told him that the North End had to be a bad **pl**ace" (10-11).

Natural leaders on the contrary intuitively understand correctly how streets work, which is a dialectic of working and looking. How streets look relies on how they work and

how they work relies on how they look. "The look of things and the way they work are inextricably bound together, and in no place more so than cities" (p. 14). City streets, the "principle visual scenes in our cities" (p. 378), importantly set the social tone: "If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull" (p. 29).

The most important of common sense appeals in short are to visuality, operationalized through concepts such as "eyes on the street" perhaps the most famous of *The Death*'s considerable charms. What people see is the motor of urban life. Early on, she states, "Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull" (29). This visual orientation is the essence of her argument. Lively streets attract diverse uses, users attracted regularly and thereby interacting establish trust, trusting users protect each other. "There must be" according to what is probably Jacobs's most famous formulation, "eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to ensure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind" (35). Pleasant, stimulating **vi**sual environments create a kind of natural surveillance or policing. "Safety on the streets by surveillance and mutual policing of one another sounds grim, but in real life it is not grim. The ~~x~~safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are

using and enjoying the city streets voluntarily and are least conscious, normally, that they are policing". At the centre of an active, safe, attractive and visually robust street are to be found "enterprises and public places … stores, bars and restaurants" (36).

Jacobs again emphasizes the contrast with planning orthodoxy: "that the sight of people attracts still other people, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible. They operate on the premise that city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet. Nothing could be less true" (37). She goes on to describe the vibrancy of a section of upper Broadway, that eventually peters out into the "obvious order and quiet" of the streets adjoining Columbia University and Barnard College, where benches sit empty because the streetscape is so boring. Again, orthodoxy literally blinds planners. "The pseudoscience of city planning and its companion, the art of city design, have not yet broken with the specious comfort of wishes, familiar superstitions, oversimplifications, and symbols, and have not yet embarked upon the adventure of probing the real world" (13). She elaborates on what this probing involves: "the hard, complex business of assembling, using and testing, bit by bit, true descriptions of reality drawn not from how it ought to be, but from how it is."

The orientation to visuality takes place in *The Death* not only at the level of content, i.e. her descriptions of what is seen and who sees it. It is coupled at the level of form with an imagistic justification. Throughout *The Death*, practical observations and conclusions as to the best

material organization of cities are closely intertwined with a compelling series of images, her characters: the duplicitous planners, the earthy and wise residents and the crackling energy of the vital urban street.

The unacknowledged but unavoidable character at the centre of this imagist rhetoric, is Jacobs herself, her distinctively American (at least to these Canadian ears) authorial voice spinning this enthralling imagistic narrative. Jacobs carefully crafted her own manner of speaking: a voice that takes **s**ome pains to be modest but is also unabashedly direct; welcoming to those who agree, but quick to s corn those who do ~~xx~~not (such as grandiose planners); earthy, with feet firmly planted on the ground (like "the short, thick-bodied, white-aproned fruit man who stands outside his doorway a little up the street" or Jacobs herself, doing such routine dailyactivities as taking out the trash). All these are distinctive American virtues, repeatedly upheld in countless films and books. But part of what makes Jacobs voice also stand out is its curious androgyny. It is openly, proudly, female; it draws—quite radically for the time and topic—on distinctively female experiences (Mrs. Kotritsky, Mrs. Lurie, her sister, the P-TA). But it is a voice that looks the reader squarely in the eye in greeting, as in for example its cut-to-the-chase opening sentence: "This book is an attack on current city planning and rebuilding"(3), the voice of a character who **w**ould hold out, we might imagine, a cool, dry and firm hand to shake in greeting, but who would be equally un hesitating about duking it out should the going should get rough (and here too, even under duress, democratic; equally willing to take on hoods in the projects who "play hell

withanyone they can catch," or bankers "way up in the power structure" too dense to see the folly of their lending policies).

Of course, **a**s insistent as she is about the important role played by looking within city life, Jacobs never **a**dmits to her imagistic orientation at the level of form, least of all concerning her own power of speech. On the contrary, she goes to great pains to emphasize that underpinning all the mannerisms of character is a firm grasp of things as they are, contra the delusions of professional city planners. Her quotidian experts, gathered together under her feisty umbrella of careful comparative observation, manifest her insistence on undertaking the hard work of seeing things as they are and testing them and looking at themagain. This is not imagism, her work insists, this is things as they really are.

But note how authority effortlessly passes up from the fine-grained detail of her characters to the autochthonous experts of the neighbourhood, the shopkeepers or P-TA mothers, and from them to her, Jacobs herself, who is (although she never characterizes herself as such) the trained observer, her presence as determinedly and self-effacingly traced out in the book as Vitruvius traces a class-image of himself while introducing his emperor to the merits of concrete; Jacobs apparently almost effortlessly gathers up a harvest of insights for herself to transmit over professionalized circuits of journals, books and conferences. And her professional take is heavily informed by a realist aesthetic aimed at a largely white, upper-middle class group of professional-managers. In Jacobs's

vision, her imagistic universe (which has proven to be utterly compelling), gays aren't being harassed and beaten, African-Americans or Hispanics aren't being systematically excluded at all levels, women aren't being abused in their homes, working-class Americans are not being impoverished by right-to-work legislation, cars are not hitting and killing or maiming the pedestrians as they make their choices for short blocks over long ones. Instead we are given images of the ~~x~~city effortlessly and artfully working when in the end comprehended by the right kind of professional manager, such as Jacobs herself.

So, dear Ray, when I think of your concerns with the materiality of the liveable street and how bodies impress themselves upon it, there is also this counterweight of Jacobsian understanding about the street that has taken ***aesthetic*** impression and turned into something like a weapon, a kind of neutron bomb of ideas, obliterating alternatives and leaving us with these crystalline realist icons instead.

But my key point is that here we have work that clearly manifests the realist aesthetic promoted so vigorously by Luce, and was in fact first published by Luce in his flagship publication. And it shows ***a specific transformative effect*** of that aesthetic. Jacobs's realist work, although certainly not the only important source of contrarian planning ideas in the 1960s and beyond, had specific consequences such as the stopping of freeway developments of the sort proposed for Vancouver or the Spadina extension proposed in Toronto, among other places.

Activists at these events have repeatedly stated that *The Death* was central to their motivations at the time.

Moreover, *The Death* is also repeatedly cited as an influence in the more **x**recent design of urban centres such as North False Creek. Ideas such as short blocks, a lively streetscape in which retail plays an important role and the importance of surveillance (both unofficial, as was advocated for by Jacobs in her "eyes on the street" concept, and semi-official, the ubiquitous privately-hired security patrols that, to be fair, Jacobs never endorsed) all reflect her influence in current planning efforts.

As a result we have built environments that implicitly reflect deeper Lucean aspirations: distrustful of big government schemes and upholding the primacy of the individual, the city is posited as a natural home to the professional-managerial class ("knowledge workers," the "creative class"), which means nothing other than the city as the natural object of the professional-managerial su**bje**ct, who descends on all problems with power point presentations and flip charts and community consultation. Built form that through the management of the professional-managerial class incorporates Jacobsean/Lucean "realist" influences thus reflects the politics, aesthetics and ontology of impression: politics: the professional manager is placed in authority as if it was natural for her to be there; aesthetics: professional-manager politics is undergirded by images such as those Jacobs provided of the city functioning well, **an image** of the city closely looked at, **an image of imaging**, even if that image has little correspondence to many facets (racism, violence,

homophobia, etc.) of city life; ontology: the self-effacing voice of the professional-manager, the putatively neutral observer of politically-compelling aesthetic images of the city, suggests convincingly through its own self-erasure ("well folks, we planners are just trying to do what works") that it is in the **nature of things, in the nature of being,** that the professional-manager subject lords over the city as object.

The built form of "liveable" cities are in these political/aesthetic/ontological dimensions are to a considerable degree impressed with an image of Jacobs, and through her an image of Luce. Every layer of concrete and the arrangement of every park bench and building façade reflects these ancestor influences just as Walker Evans photographs reflect Roman verism, updated for a postmodern milieu.

And there the paper ended. Ray imagined Barry typing out the final words in a bar in Prince Rupert or some small town in the Prairies while the wind howled outside.

3.

Over the next weeks, Ray found himself returning again and again to *The Death*. Barry's paper had started to unpeel that venerable text like an onion, but Ray felt there were more layers to go. As Shelley Rice had written about Paris, everything in the city around him seemed weirdly both open to view and opaque; everything was visible but nothing was ever just what it seemed. History, for example, was everywhere referenced in North False Creek and nowhere a real presence: markers of history were everywhere—the old train shed, magnificent old wooden beams in a grocery store, the worn bricks of the warehouses—but all of these were carefully wrapped up in little packages marked "history;" none of them

were simply history carried forward, the same old bricks or the same old train doing the same old stuff now as then.

Similarly, the city made a great fuss of being welcoming, but the welcome was superficial, like Walmart greeters, a series of fronts for the literally logo-centric universe, dominated by branding, that was everywhere apparent. And very close below the surface of this superficially-welcoming urban world were the ubiquitous markers of security, the cameras, the police, the private security teams, ready at a moment's notice to forcefully turn welcoming on its ear. And of course, most egregious of all, lurking always just below the surface for Ray, was the menacing world of injury contradicting all the protestations of safety. So Ray turned to Jacobs repeatedly, spending hours picking *The Death* apart line by line, like a mysterious poetry, dazzling him with its complex appeals to simplicity.

He had for instance spent one night just trying to understand its very first words, which appear before the epigraph, before the table of contents, before the title page; before everything follows those first words. Here they are in their entirety:

> **Illustrations**
> The scenes that illustrate this book are all about us. For illustrations, please look closely at real cities. While you are looking, you might as well also listen, linger and think about what you see.

Please look closely at real cities. This injunction was rich, Ray thought, in how it suggested a simultaneously cosily exclusive and unmediated relationship to the real, reminiscent of Walker Evans, a relationship in which we could, if we cared to, share. Also like Evans, Jacobs also was reacting to older, stable representations of the world; where Evans reacted to the formal atmosphere of staged photography, Jacobs was responding to centralized modernist urban planning. Both modernist city planning for Jacobs and posed photography were obsolete in the era of the snapshot image. And this complex philosophy of reality and representation was book-ended by a tone of folksy familiarity with the reader; "all about us" at one end, and at the other, since you have proven that you are one of us by going out to look, why (one imagines Jacobs here sharing Evans's folksy hauteur), "you might as well" listen and—implying a kind of flaneurisme, but one shaved of the melancholy European

metaphysics of Baudelaire or Benjamin, replaced with a practical, no-nonsense Americanism—linger.

Then the last words, the iron injunctive core to the folksy invitation (one can almost hear the exclamation mark she is too polite to insert), think! about what you see. And here we find an ambiguity, since she trusts us (the book is, to repeat, all about us) to think correctly about what we saw, assuming that we have chosen to look closely. But just in case, her 448 pages of argument follow.

And then, typical of the micro-contradictions and labyrinthine turns of the book, contrary to her leadoff injunction, Jacobs did provide illustrations: four hand-drawn diagrams in the chapter where she advocates for short blocks. These drawings illustrated perfectly the points Barry had made. At the level of overt content, they manifested the kind of natural common sense of people, who would if given the opportunity naturally choose short blocks over long, and multiple routes over major thoroughfares, presumably shopping and eating in restaurants and seeing movies as they go, thereby continually refreshing the city. Slightly less openly, the drawings also implicitly prioritized sight as the basic sensual drive of cities, the most common of senses; we *see* the inner logic of short blocks in these diagrams. But there are more buried appeals in the drawings: the common-sense logic of the street does not appear everywhere the same in these diagrams; it makes itself apparent first and foremost to the author, who—it is her book after all— manifestly winnows out insight from the day-to-day activity of people just going around their business. At the same time Jacobs absences herself through the throw-away, hand-drawn quality of the illustrations, which she has gone to great pains at the beginning of the book to tell us don't exist. But they do exist of course, and in a book now-famous for its earthiness, the very throw-away hand-drawn quality that features so centrally in the drawings, in which the author is a non-presence, continually self-erasing herself as she advocates so brilliantly for a Lucean realism. Ray thought too how these drawings pointed to developments in avant-garde art that were happening in New York just around the time Jacobs was formulating *The Death*. Abstract Expressionism was developing along lines similar to the illustrations of *The Death*, likewise promulgating the heroic non- artist, made famous by figures such as Barnett Newman or Jackson Pollack, who were practicing a radical subjectivity that obviated the self, trying to become lightening rods

for pure form. There is a striking formal similarity between the work these artists were doing and Jacobs's little illustrations, in the foundational architecture of the grid and a shared commitment within the grid form to what Clement Greenberg, the arch-modernist critic, called "all-overness," treating all parts of the object—for the purpose of our comparison: the canvas on the one hand and the city on the other—as equal.[207]

And as with Jacobs, these radically self-erasing artists promoting Greenbergian "all-overness" had powerful patrons. As Serge Guibault,[208] Thomas Crow,[209] Bradford Collins[210] and others have demonstrated, the late1940's and early 1950's, when Jacobs was receiving Rockefeller grants to go off and undertake her study of cities that would lead to *The Death*, was when as the Evans catalogue had pointed out New Deal alliances between east coast intelligentsia, artists, the democratic left and communists were unravelling in the face of a new and at least partially Lucean-inspired militantly centrist neoliberalism at the core of which was the professional-managerial class.

Barry had pointed out how this transformation was being played out in literature and film. But visual artists were also playing an important parallel role in this transformation, being supported by a new Cold War alliance of American institutions forming to cement American hegemony and to combat communism. Pollack, Rothko and other abstract expressionists were being used by an emerging American bureaucracy to symbolize a uniquely American individualism, which could help combat not only Soviet expansionism but cultural decadence at home and in Europe.

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[207] "The 'all-over' may answer the feeling that all hierarchical distinctions have been, literally, exhausted and invalidated; that no area or order of experience is intrinsically superior, on any final scale of values, to any other area or order of experience. It may express a monist naturalism for which there are neither first nor last things, and which recognizes as the only ultimate distinction that between the immediate and the un-immediate." Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 157.

[208] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945-1964* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990).

[209] Thomas E Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent, 1955-69* (London: The Everyman Art Library, 1996).

[210] Bradford Collins, 'Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-1951: A Historiographic Study of a Late Bohemian Enterprise', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII (1991), 283-308.

Both Soviet ascendancy abroad and degeneracy at home were perceived as real threats. Some argued that capitalist-democratic rhetoric was in danger of losing its imaginative force, leading to such failures as the collapse of liberal democracy in Czechoslovakia and its fall into the Soviet orbit. The same situation seemed to threaten such major strategic partners as France. Ascendant liberal Americans thus felt an urgency to create an inspirational alternative to communism that would stiffen the resolve of those at home and abroad grappling with communism's allures. Part of their ultimately successful approach was to intimate that the old New Deal orientation to social justice was not only practically unable to resist totalitarianism of the right or the left effectively but, perhaps more important for the war for public opinion, was creatively out of date. Free-wheeling New York, not Paris bogged down in old ideological squabbles, was the new cultural centre, these proponents maintained, a view government agencies such as the United States Information Agency vigorously promoted,[211] and it was the centre because of the muscular modernism of the sort represented by heroic artists of just the sort one imagines Henry Luce approving.

And Ray thought that in the end, like these Abstract-Expressionist artists, Jacobs was not pointing to the past through her Americanist characters but to a kind of uncanny future where models of subjectivity would share the self-erasure she so deftly demonstrated, a determination to get to the heart of subjectivity through denying its existence, creating a vacuum at the centre of being into which the professional-manager class, who alone could interpret the complicated messaging system—the complicated appeals to the impressions of reality—being demonstrated so compellingly in arts and letters, could rush.

4.

There was, Ray thought, a final level of irony in the role Jacobs had played in the developments in North False Creek and elsewhere. Ray had spent many hours staring at the structures that arose everywhere around him in his liveable city and pondering photographs of those structures. And through all that he had come to the conclusion that, stripped of rhetoric, the single most important characteristic of the new city was its material

[211] L. J. Monahan, 'Cultural Cartography: American Designs at the 1964 Venice Biennal', in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal 1945-1964* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), pp. 369 – 416.

underpinning in concrete. It was this realization that had led him to pursue the investigations of the origins of the impressive semiotics of that material with Barry.

But, as everyone knew, the specific way that the deployment of concrete had played out in Ray's city had been through the defeat of the freeway system, a political event in which Jacobs had been a major influence. And now in the freeway's place stood concrete towers, marching almost to the water's edge. What seemed to Ray in other words to have always been portrayed as a revolution—the revolution of grass-roots, organic, human-scaled neighbourhood overcoming an ancien regime of entrenched high-modernist engineers who were thoughtlessly destroying the city—was when viewed through the lens of concrete actually more like a civil war over materiality. Concrete had arrived like a tsunami, a giant wave of concrete building, in the post-First World War era, heralding the era of Bartholomew and the possibility of conceptualizing the city for the first time as a plan. That arrival was the revolution, the material outcome of the logic of the projectile economies first set in motion by the railroad. The revolution in concrete seemed to barely register in people's consciousness. Nevertheless after its arrival the problems of urban form could be reduced to a single question: what shape would that coming concrete wave take? Would it take the shape of freeways or something else?

Jacobs and her complicated messaging were in fact much closer in her realist semiotics to the impressive logic of the engineers than to traditional, piece-by-piece city building methods that had always, with very isolated exceptions such as Haussmann, dominated city building. In fact, it was *The Death*, perhaps more than any other single work, through its successful enrolment of urban citizens to support the developments being proposed by professional-manager planners that heralded the end of city development **not** led by professionals.

Ten. Last Songs

> An entire psychoanalysis of matter can help to cure us of our images or at least help us to limit the hold of our images on us. One may then hope *to be able to render imagination happy*, to give it good conscience in allowing it fully all its means of expression, all material images which emerge in *natural dreams*, in normal dream activity. To render imagination happy, to allow it all its exuberance, means precisely to grant imagination its true function as psychological impulse and force.
>
> Gaston Bachelard[212]

1.

One day Ray was putting some things—clippers to trim the grass, some flowers— together for a cemetery visit. He went there about once a week or so, to visit the plain stone marker that was all he wanted, or could afford anyway, to designate where Janice's ashes were buried.

Elaine had accompanied him occasionally, acting as if she was doing him a big favour by being there; the last time she had gone she stood a few feet away from Janice's grave, her shoulders hunched up and a scowl on her face as her black-rimmed eyes angrily glowered at the trees in the cemetery. Ray had tried to get her to talk about what she was feeling as they drove home in the car, and she just mumbled a semi-bored, semi-hostile something about how all those fucking dead people creeped her out, sending a wave of rage washing through Ray who squeezed the steering wheel with all his might and did his best to stop himself from lunging at her. That's your fucking mother! he wanted to shout, but he managed to keep himself in check, gritting his teeth with almost as much force as he choked the steering wheel.

After that painful experience he went up to the cemetery alone, performing his little devotions—trimming the grass around her stone, throwing out the old flowers, laying the new ones—and then stood for long minutes in mournful contemplation. Sometimes he would start to cry, the wellspring of emotion that lay buried just below the surface not

[212] Cited in Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 250n.

diminishing as the weeks turned into months, and the first anniversary of Janice's death now loomed. "The pain of loss never gets any less," a friend had said to him soon after Janice died, "you just get more used to it."

As Ray trundled around his storage room, pulling out what he needed, he became aware of Elaine standing by the door, her arms crossed semi-belligerently as usual, but a slightly forlorn expression on her downcast face. Ray knew by now that any comment by him would be interpreted as provocation, so he ignored her. Where are you going? she asked finally. To visit your mother, Ray responded evenly, continuing to load up his stiff cotton bag. There was a long silence. Can I come? Elaine asked at last. Ray picked up his bag and looked levelly at his daughter. Sure, he said, shrugging. Oh fuck, he thought to himself, what now?

They had driven in silence to the cemetery. Ray couldn't help but marvel at what had happened to them, how his little girl he loved more than anything, for whom he had been prepared to make any sacrifice, the little girl who had ridden on his shoulders with delight or who used to love jumping on him in bed in the morning, screaming with laughter as Ray rose up in mock anger, the bed monster come to get her, how all that had been transformed into this angry, spiteful girl with the greasy hair and black bags under her eyes, who held Ray and all he did in evident icy contempt.

Ray felt almost consumed by sadness as he manoeuvred the car onto the small dirt road in the cemetery that led to Janice's grave and then pulled onto the patch of grass where he always parked. Ray got out wordlessly and pulled his bag from the trunk. Elaine just sat immobile in the car, staring at her knees. Ray paid her no attention as he did his chores, though he did register the sound of the car door opening. He was kneeling with the clippers when he became aware of Elaine standing beside him. Something made him look up, and he saw tears running down her face. Elaine, he said, standing up. He stood awkwardly for a moment facing her as her wet red face contorted with emotion. Elaine, he said again helplessly. He held out his arms and she semi-collapsed into them, great sobs tearing themselves out of her skinny body as she did. Oh Daddy, she cried. I don't know what to do. He hugged her tightly as tears ran down his own face. Sweetheart, what do you mean? She shook her head, unable to speak. Finally her crying subsided a little and she spoke softly into his arms. I am so fucked up. I miss Mommy so much, and I don't mean to be so rude to

you, but I just get… so confused, and I don't know what to do. Angel, Ray said at last squeezing her in his arms. My sweet angel. Oh Daddy, she said again. It's OK angel, it's OK, he said soothingly as he stroked her sad limp hair.

Elaine had chatted with Ray on the way back, the first civil conversation he could remember having in months, and that evening she hadn't disappeared to her room or gone out but had helped him make some dinner, even giggling sometimes at his little jokes and then—this, Ray thought to himself, was truly astounding—helped him clean up. Ray, forcing himself to talk casually, had suggested after that they read together in the living room and, surprising him yet again, she had said yes as though it was something they did all the time. She had cuddled in his arms on the couch, intently reading her book on vampires until she put the book down and sunk her face into his shoulder and promptly fell asleep, while Ray gently stroked her hair in wonder and gratitude. Maybe they were going to survive this after all.

2.

Figure 34 – False Creek

When Ray got up the next morning Elaine was till asleep on the couch with the blanket thrown over her that Ray had pulled out of the linen closet after he had the evening before at long last stiffened more than he could stand while continuing to gently caress his deeply sleeping daughter's face and hair and he had carefully and painfully (oh the tribulations of age, he thought ruefully to himself) extricated himself.

Feeling happier than he had for months, Ray set out with his dog along the concrete edges of the city. One of the pathways to which he continually returned was the seawall that bordered False Creek, the ocean inlet near where he lived. The seawall that ran along the shore epitomized the contradictory emotions he felt about his city. The seawall was undoubtedly a delight, a remarkable achievement in generous urban design, for many the

heart of its liveability. Few other cities had maintained such a strong public presence on their waterfronts. The seawall's long sinews of cement and stone stretched languorously, almost erotically, along the shore; often as joyful to witness, Ray thought, as a beautiful woman lazily getting out of bed.

At the same time, Ray sometimes thought the seawall, through its carefully made-up beauty, offered a sort of disingenuous social contract: all would be well if only somehow everyone could be made able to live in the condominium towers sprouting alongside it. That sort of strata-council socialism could have been innocent enough, even admirable perhaps.

But Ray thought all the sleek joggers and cyclists—flashing by flaunting their expensively-achieved fitness in carefully arrayed form-fitting spandex and the latest running shoes or on high-tech bikes—usurped every graceful curve of concrete and picturesquely-placed pathway brick with a contrary suggestion: that the almost perfectly satisfying way of life offered by the seawall was natively theirs. To let others enjoy the seawall, these smugly-fit bodies whispered to Ray as they glided past, was a form of *noblesse oblige*. To Ray it was as if every picturesquely-straining muscle was an implicit reproach of the lazy, the fat and the poor. The menacing flipside of the carefully-designed charms of the seawall was the unspoken threat—needing, Ray thought, only some as-yet-hidden trigger to spring to snarling life—that all would be well only if everyone who didn't really belong, those unable to exercise or own a strata property nearby or drive a big car or similarly flex tissues of power, could somehow be eliminated.

Figure 35 – Smugly fit

If indeed such a Third Reich of fitness, SUV driving and condo ownership ever came into being, Ray for all his grumpiness was probably in no imminent danger of being one of those to be hunted down by its tribunals. Still, he took the self-righteous attitude he sensed in

many of his smug fellow sojourners along the seawall as a rebuke to his own mostly unpromising prospects.

As if to amplify these anti-social thoughts, his dog was given to suddenly and unpredictably dropping the ball she proudly carried in her mouth and lunging, snarling angrily, at surprisedly-yelping dogs innocently padding by, their jogging or cycling owners recoiling from these attacks in angry and disdainful horror.

While his pet's behaviour was often pretty embarrassing—as he grabbed for his stupid dog's neck Ray would mumble nervously, heh, heh, sorry 'bout that, to some sweating-but-now-self-righteously-aggrieved handsome young dog-owner stopped mid-jog to snarl at him like he was a child murderer, keep your fucking dog on a leash asshole—in Ray's heart of hearts he didn't really mind. In fact, Ray thought, perhaps he should join in. He could launch his own parallel unprovoked attacks on the self-righteous and über-healthy owners of the dogs that his own inexplicably psychotic animal was busily savaging. In these fantasies Ray pinned his stunned victims to the ground alongside their hapless pets while he barked "Fuck you! Fuck you!" at them and tried to rip out their throats.

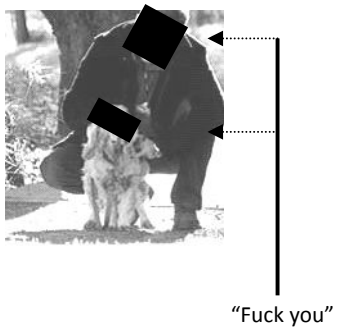

Figure 36 – Fuck You

3.

Once again sinking into his usual funk of sullen resentment, Ray found himself yet again at the intersection just up from the seawall where Janice had been struck. As usual, the concrete and asphalt forms weighed on his heart. As he looked at them, he thought about Jane Jacobs and the irony that it was her notions about liveability as much as anything that had enabled the massive realm of concrete around him to be built. It was Bartholomew's

dream of a concrete-encased city brought to life, after the civil war over the forms that concrete encasement would take. Ray wondered how he could tie together all that he had learned about Jane Jacobs and the ascendancy of planning, which brandished liveability like a weapon in the civil war against the engineers, with all that he felt he now knew about the complex semiotic powers of concrete. How had these elements played out in her little tragedy?

Janice's story had, he thought, almost Homerically epic qualities, which Ray wished he had the writerly ability to transcribe into an epic poem: the brisk clear day and the sparkling sea as a backdrop, the noble, healthy woman striding purposively onto the prepared field while cruel gods blinded the approaching driver—Ray had never been allowed to contact him, but a suitably loutish individual Ray imagined he could assume, a pickup truck driver after all—and in a horrible flash the woman was struck and wounded in ways Homer doubtlessly would have revelled in describing. While Janice lay shocked beyond feeling a chorus of onlookers gathers to comment in hushed tones on her fall from grace until finally angels, messengers of the gods who destroyed her, swooped down to gather her body up in sheets of fabric and spirit her away. Her story concluded with a more Dante-esque descent into the hellishness of suffering amid the circles of an indifferent health care system, and then finally an unredeemed death.

A central part of the mystery to him was how the carnage wrought by the automobile was discounted so completely not only as it was in Janice's case and probably in many others too by the doctors, police, and insurers, but also by the broader public who all seemed to ignore the ample risks of a simple act of crossing the street. How did these acts of violence become so routinized? Few said, "Cars are too dangerous, we must get rid of them;" no candle light parades for the victims of automobile violence, no coloured ribbons sprouting on lapels; no fund-raising runs. It seemed like a kind of short hand for the complicated ways that the contradictory messages of liveability were permitted to go unchallenged.

There are, Ray supposed, assumptions about why accidents are tolerated, such as that the car is such a convenience that people evaluate its usefulness in relation to its risks and are satisfied that they are likely enough to benefit and unlikely enough to suffer to make it

worthwhile; or that the car has been so strongly romanced in the culture that people are blinded to its distaff effects. But these were unproven theories; they seemed to fail utterly to explain why it is that people react with strong feelings if a stranger bumps them in a crowd—think of how fraught it is for a man to even touch a woman for instance—but then we are supposed to believe that just because machines are involved it is no big deal—in effect, judging by the indifference with which Janice was treated by the police or by the hospital doctors or by her insurer—that the same man could leave the same woman bleeding and crippled on the street.

This was especially perplexing, Ray thought, in the neighbourhoods such as North False Creek in which liveability was such an important attribute and to which the lively streetscape with its necessarily attendant constant drumbeat of injury was held up as a central contributor. Perhaps, Ray mused, these questions needed to be turned on their head: *what purpose was served* by the harmful power manifest in every car accident?

It was a curious sensation for Ray to traverse such the nondescript space of the intersection where Janice was struck with Janice's experience reverberating in his mind. As he paced over the walkway across the road or lingered on the concrete sidewalk he felt like there should be a memorial of some sort left there, something like the small bouquets of flowers that can sometimes be seen by the side of a highway or road marking some sad fatality but more permanent, to commemorate the healthy Janice who entered that intersection on that bright winter day and never left it. Of course there was no trace of the accident. But as he painstakingly inspected the intersection it slowly dawned on Ray that while the crossing may have been devoid of markers of Janice's accident in another way it was *nothing but* markers of accidents, its many shapes a *generalized impression* of countless earlier collisions of people and things, from mundane frustrations to the murderous.

Figure 37 – The Intersection

He imagined the features of the intersection speaking solemnly to him: "This ramp is in memory of everyone in a wheelchair who couldn't negotiate the curb." "This set of lights commemorates every pedestrian who died from the failure of cars to stop." "These yellow and white lines mark where injury is *most* likely, where head-on collisions have happened or people have driven off the road."

The forms of the materials gathered in the intersection were like a balloon inflated by an ever-expanding universe of injury, as if the dented mark Janice had left in the truck's hood had been transferred somehow to the materials of the intersection. The presence of these materials was filled with the absence of not only her accident but of countless acts of violence—some less severe, some more so than Janice's experience—that had occurred in this and thousands of similar intersections, a sort of memory of pain in built form.

Like Roland Barthes's famous quip about photographs, every aspect of the intersection was a disaster that had already happened; each square inch of pavement and concrete design carried within it the knowledge yielded by painful experience, both of the past and the future, the sedimentary seeding of accidents slowly yielding a complicit crop of material shapes.

It was not as though nobody knew this however. Ray imagined that the almost impenetrable banality of the intersection must perform a kind of psychic police work, waving along

Figure 38 – The Intersection

anyone who might be inclined to see the intersection for what after all at its most basic it really was: a site built to accommodate injury and destruction.

As Ray dallied in the crosswalk pondering its mute forms he was acutely conscious that he was breaking the rules; "get to the other side of the street as quickly as you can" was the unspoken imperative of the mundane materiality of the streetscape. This rhetoric of

behaviour was very simple and powerful, ostensibly aimed at minimizing accidents. Under the rubric of prevention most people carefully performed the requirements demanded by law that Ray was now studiously ignoring: the simple but precise dance moves of hurrying, stopping, looking both ways, signalling, crossing, turning. Ray imagined Janice performing this dance perfectly, crisply turning her head to check both ways, crossing only between the bright white lines of the crosswalk (no subversive, undisciplined jaywalking for her!), striding forward fully confident that these acts would ward off harm.

Such operations were repeated millions of times across North America with only minor cultural variation. Stop, turn, signal, look this way then that, hurry on; a tightly prescribed enactment of the law through movement.

Figure 39 – The Intersection

But Janice's fate as she had performed those movements had curiously confounded the *idea* of law and its elemental equations of guilt and sanctions. She had done nothing wrong and still she suffered from violence, a transvaluation that is socially condoned, as the number of injuries confirmed.

Max Weber famously once suggested that a monopoly of violence was central to the formation of civil society; perhaps equally important, Ray thought, was *how* societies are violent. What forms of injury are permitted and against whom? Violence sanctioned by a community against its own members can be summed up in a single word: *punishment*, a display of power etched into the body of the penitent. The traffic accident can be seen as a kind of *definitional* punishment—how a society defines itself through a prescribed set of conditions under which one party is, if not exactly encouraged or permitted, at least *enabled* to injure another, to collide violently with them.

But in this socially-sanctioned automotive punishment the suffering meted out is often completely untethered from any guilt or wrongdoing. Janice had certainly been punished one must agree—she, not the person who struck her, had been condemned to death—but if not punished for a crime then for what? Ray thought to himself that he was still restating his earlier question: what was the message of, what was to be learned from, hard machines such as that pickup plunging into soft bodies such as Janice's?

Perhaps, Ray mused, the sanctioned punishment of the intersection made manifest the *limit* of the law, showing the law's ragged outer edge, suggesting a pure caprice of circumstance—in Janice's case the blinding sun, the sharp corner, the relative speeds of approach that all contributed to her disaster. As in her dreams where she imagined a parallel world where her pain was banished, she must have been sometimes at least taunted by the thought that if only circumstances had been slightly different—if she had been hungry five minutes earlier, or if the driver had decided to turn onto Pacific instead of Beach—she would have escaped unharmed. Homeric again, thought Ray: the fickle favours of the cruelly capricious gods …

The law and its enactment through movement and the socially-sanctioned violence it cooperated with was thus transmuted via caprice into its opposite: the accident seemed to impute that it is beyond lawful control, inevitable ("oh well, shit happens") that people would be injured on streets. The socially sanctioned punishment of the street in other words seemed to enforce the form of the street through *failure*. Injury and its accompanying built forms such as the intersection seemed to mark both points of *genesis* and the *outer limits* of human control: a code of behaviours is constantly generated, which every accident—each in its own way capricious—reinforces ("Be more careful or else!") while also demonstrating that no matter what the effort many will be injured and that new people like Janice will emerge from the crosswalks painfully transformed, a birth from which everyone in the province draws hard conclusions thirty thousand times a year about the fundamental capriciousness of being.

Ray thought back to the brace Janice had been forced to wear as her leg seemed to recover from the trauma she had suffered. That brace had always fascinated him because it had seemed to him to signify a new Janice, her alien new identity as crippled, the intersection's sedimentary disasters of built form physically incorporated into her body, impressed into

her, just as doubtlessly her particular drama had been reciprocally inscribed not into the material of the intersection where she was struck but in some bureaucratic data bank where it might eventually serve as a tiny part of justification for some modification in street design—a slightly wider standard for corner turn radii perhaps, or the installation of a traffic light—extending however minutely the reach of the law and of its failures.

The brace seemed to Ray almost like a multi-levelled metonym. It could stand for the *person Janice had briefly become*, the brace's hard moulded plastic conterminous with Janice's damaged body. It could also stand for *where* she had become that person, namely within the moulded concrete and asphalt confines of the intersection. And finally the brace was a kind of taunting beacon, standing for the point beyond which *her true self beckoned* (if only she been able to get rid of the brace, she could have returned to being normal) much as Janice's earlier uninjured life had beckoned to her in night-time dreams, shocking her awake.

Nietzsche had once written that guilt was a perversion of ancient pleasures that nobles had once taken in the suffering of the weak, such as slaves and enemies defeated in war. In modernity, Nietzsche argued, guilt was pervasive, thanks to the slave-morality of Christianity; in principle anyone could suffer punishment. This distribution of guilt structures modern human possibility he suggested, because going unpunished is now equated with being guilt-less, i.e. completely conforming with morality, an end that is an impossible task even for those ascetics who make it their primary preoccupation. This incapacitating guiltlessness or moral purity was, Nietzsche concluded, the siren call of the weak, pulling noble spirits onto the shoals of social impotence; all of late nineteenth century society was therefore to Nietzsche's eyes structured around *vengeance.* Despite its protestations of humility its central dynamic was the revenge of the many weak over the few strong. What Nietzsche didn't talk about is that if he was correct the necessary backdrop of this vengeance-based society was the morality play of everyday life, the minutiae of social organization, of people trying to be their best: sending children to Sunday school, saying "please" and "thank you," alms for the poor, enshrining fairness in contracts and the myriad other behavioural molecules in the vengeful social body Nietzsche flayed so mercilessly.

Something similar updated by the automobile could be read into the punishment Janice had suffered thought Ray. Like nineteenth century morality for Nietzsche, the pervasive mundanity of the intersection masked how it structured the realm of the possible, acting as a kind of built unconscious, distributing everywhere the guilt for the interactions of hard forms and soft bodies. Now however, in place of a moral universe, the intersection offers a *mobile* universe with its own set of impossible aspirations—driven by the exigencies of speed—to which everyone makes little oaths of allegiance every time they stop at an intersection or press down on a gas pedal. Every passage through an intersection is accompanied by a little dialogue about the aspirations of mobility: "I am happy to have made it through this green light;" "I am frustrated to have hit a red light;" "I am very sorry I did not see the pedestrian and hit her;" "I am in pain because the other driver failed to stop and rammed into me…"

Just as nineteenth century bourgeois morality once masked its vengefulness by offering a dream of innocent *natural* perfection perversely reinforced by every human transgression, now the street held out hope that beyond the dance of the intersection and its capricious consequences, if one could somehow impossibly only get it perfect, was a world of freedom and desire, the happy flip side of caprice, a world of fulfillment where all the crosswalks are safe and traffic lights are green and all traffic jams are bypassed, a world where everyone can reach all their dreams; where everything is available, one can see one's friends, buy anything one wants, be invited to the best parties; where collision and breakdown does not occur, only satiety and pleasure. Surely, thought Ray, that dream must underlie our relationship with the street; why else would we get irritated when we hit a red light if we did not have a background dream of a non-irritating possibility: that this light, and by extension every traffic light, would be green somehow, impossibly, just for us, propelling us uninterruptedly through space toward our varied goals, mobility's potential finally realized?

How much, wondered Ray, do we wear that dream of uncontested swift transit like a brace, to ward off its evil twin, caprice? But paradoxically the evil we seek to avoid—pain, paralysis, death—is often created by that very same dream of mobility. Perhaps there was a deeper alchemy at work here, Ray thought: every crosswalk, every concrete curb, every streetlight through its inversion of possibility and pain perhaps thereby inculcates in all who pass

through them or by them that *it is just in the nature of things* that they are able both to threaten capriciousness and to promise us happiness; it is, in other words, apparently just in the nature of things that the world is structured for mobility. What could be simpler, less meritorious of our attention, than that nature; the fact that the concrete and asphalt and steel of every intersection should provide a backdrop for our aspirations and fears? Or perhaps the material acknowledgement in every intersection of the grim reality of the traffic accident is perhaps too bright a sight to bear, like the face of god for the ancients, and we must avert our eyes, telling ourselves it's nothing, very boring really, the gleaming underlying visage only indirectly betrayed by our deeply inculcated belief in trying to be on our best behaviour in the street.

4.

The nature of things in the liveable city. Ray closed his eyes again and listened to the whispered machinic singing all around him, the constant plangent hum draped over the concrete and glass carapaces. The constant whine was a kind of tonal affirmation of the dream of mobility and all that implied: time and space structured to the needs of things on the move and the seemingly boundless freedoms, pleasures and hopes they offered; every atom of concrete and asphalt offering us—in a weird kind of mirroring—an image of ourselves as captivated by being on the move. Ourselves as image: the *spectacle of things*.

The sound of the city was, he thought, a kind of chorus, but with only one line: *sic transit gloria mundi*: shit happens, and it will happen to you. The song of the street revels in the spectacle's savage side: like ancient peoples who cut open up bodies in sacrificial homage to their gods, their deepest values, the modern urban streetscape violently rips opens bodies in liege to the dream of things, binding people in blood to the high-speed movement that is a precondition of the high-intensity exchange of commodities.

Figure 40 –The Intersection1

And while the spectacle of things was then perhaps the cruel underbelly of *all* streets, Ray thought, cruelty was particularly acute in liveable streets such as the ones in North False Creek. Liveability insists not only on a lively streetscape but that the automobile remain an integral element even though injury must result. The liveable city knows that a street without automobiles is both literally and figuratively bloodless. Ray thought about pedestrian malls, such as the major street in his city that was like most such malls a failure. Was this because of their bloodlessness? Remove public injury from the equation of the street and the urban result is dreadfully wan? If so, the same was true in the antiseptic modernist underground malls Ray had always detested in his hometown of Montreal, or in the even more troglodyte version Ray had once visited in Winnipeg. He also thought of the liveable street's other cousin, the shopping mall, where shopping space is treated more like a gated sanctum, a momentary respite, hiding out from difference in general but in particular from the slow but inexorable slaughter outside, which is mostly relegated instead to freeways whose explosions in concrete forbid contemplation.

The liveable street exalts not just the boundless possibility of mobility nor just the savagery of injury; it exalts *that things are the way they are*, that things have been ceded such a transformative role in our lives, that dumb inert stuff could offer us the intoxications of freedom and threatens us with the punishment of imprisonment in injured bodies. Every intersection, every curb, every concrete barricade is, Ray thought, like a little shrine to the allure of the spectacle of things, waving us on as it whispers to us that it will witness half of us in pain. Ray looked around and seeing nobody on the street with him he kneeled down on the concrete sidewalk and ran his hand along its cool rough surface. It was weird to actually touch a surface that is ubiquitous but that utterly defies familiarity. He almost felt as if the cement was laughing at him.

Figure 41 - Concrete

He sat down on the road's edge and looked around him, feeling like the top-hatted man in Daguerre's photograph. This cold material he sat on erased all those who had passed over this ground before him as it would erase all those to come and as indeed it erased him. He was a momentary speck, leaving only this trace in concrete that perhaps generations in the far future would study with wonder and awe.

5.

Ray got up and walked back to the seawall, and again pondered the cyclists and joggers and walkers going past him. Whereas the top-hatted man was innocent of his own potential to be erased by his image, it was as if the denizens of the seawall Ray encountered happily endorsed themselves being overtaken by imagistic erasure, as if in fact they *sought* with all their might to assemble themselves as images, using various trinkets as if they were amulets to ward off their own absence, an absence to which the seawall gives mute testimony. Only some future passers-by will know the fates of those now walking the seawall who, like the top-hatted man in Paris or the factories that once lined False Creek, will be gone by that future moment, a peculiarly modern consciousness of their absence ironically guaranteed by the imagistic outlines of the seawall along which Ray and his fellow travellers now paraded, just as it is the image of the top-hatted man that makes us conscious not just of his passing but of the transience of being as a series of discrete, now-forever-lost, moments; the present as precisely those words: now forever lost.

But the song of the liveable city had deeper notes, Ray thought, those of concrete itself. The concrete surface was like the void in the Pantheon, a generative field, poised by forms (sidewalk, photograph, etc) between subject and object, holding absence (existences that are now past) in the temporal present, literally making them a presence, with real present effects.

The railroad when it arrived in Ray's city in 1886 predicted the modern change of material scale but did not yet fully enact it. It certainly transformed the city—as it had transformed all modernity, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch described—in ways that were previously unimaginable. But the scale of change that the railroad wrought for a long time remained visibly human, directly tied to labour: people worked *at* and not just *in* their surroundings: felling trees or

mining; carrying goods off and on the trains and ships, the piles of lumber and ore reflecting the work of a finite group of people assembled for that specific purpose.

And this one-to-one direct relationship was reflected in the built forms these hard-labouring people put up around them; buildings too went up one by one, brick by brick or stud upon stud.

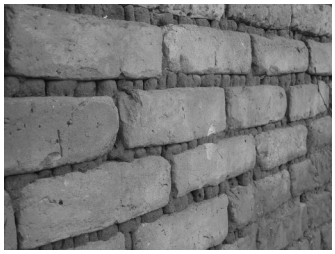

Figure 42 - Brick

But the most recent developments around North False Creek were different: they went up all at once on a scale untied to any direct human experience with a speed and lability made possible by numerous social and technical changes, with concrete first and last among them. Supply and demand still figured importantly of course, but the new community could have been five thousand people or a hundred thousand people; concrete made either as technically feasible as the other.

Figure 44 - Concrete

It was indicative of the whole paradigmatic shift that concrete structures announced that what focused the vast range of possibility within the exigencies of the market into the actual concrete built form the new development took was a confluence of *images* of what the community *as a whole* should be: for almost the first time in the city's history—certainly the

first time at this scale—this significant chunk of the city was actually built (and not just planned for as done by Bartholomew, his own accomplishment itself a breakthrough in its breadth of planning) as a totality, for which was formulated a whole complex of hotly debated visually-rendered ideas in the form of blueprints, plans and drawings.

The new urban centre that emerged out of this process was *itself an image*, an image of a city, an image of itself, rendered more or less completely in concrete (with other materials—besides glass, which was a whole material story in itself—used almost solely as decorative cladding) before people had even moved in. Ray found an apposite quote in his notebook that a few years earlier he had jotted down while reading Guy Debord, the French Marxist theorist who had famously written in *The Society of the Spectacle*: "The abstraction of all specific labour and the general distribution of the entirety of production are perfectly rendered in the spectacle, *whose mode of being concrete* is precisely abstraction."[213] Ray took this insight literally: in the False Creek developments, where abstract imagery had been built in concrete; more: concrete was imagistic abstraction made real.

Ray thought then that what separated the new developments in False Creek from all their predecessors was that there was this spectacular edge—a characteristic that Debord, unlike feverish tourism claims for the city, certainly didn't see as a compliment—to the new city. On a very fundamental level the *specifics* of human activity for the first time *didn't matter* to the concrete forms taken by the new developments. They could have been anything, constrained only by political will.

Of course, Ray thought, a wooden house or a brick building could also contain any number of activities and be in that sense abstract. But, he argued back to himself, activities in those older types of buildings remain visibly bounded by and hence at least subliminally comparable to the human labour required to build them. Each piece of wood or each brick or stone is a measure of the human activity required to place it. A person in a brick or wooden structure is on some subliminal level reminded constantly of

[213] Debord thesis 29.

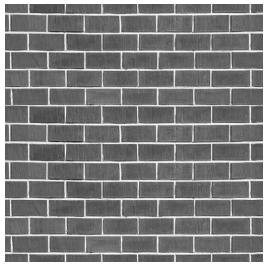

Figure 44 – Brick

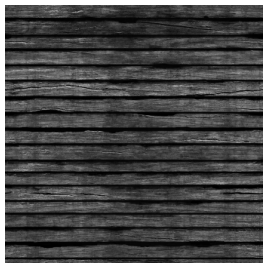

Figure 45 - Wood

how much labour it would take to install each brick or wooden beam and that calculation can be multiplied out for the building as a whole. But concrete is infinitely expandable; a sheer concrete slab rising as much as

Figure 46 - Concrete

thousands of feet in the air *obviates* the labour inherent to its creation.

Figure 47 - Concrete

Thus those who move within or upon concrete structures have a fundamentally *abstract*—divorced from human labour—relationship to those structures. And so, not only could it be imagined that the development in North False Creek might be as transient as its predecessors. As long as the concrete shape of the city remained, those moving within it were mere abstractions on its absolutely unyielding surfaces, as wispy as the smokily billowing clouds that once emitted from the industrial smokestacks.

Ray's response then to the joggers and other co-sojourners along the seawall was thus merely a slightly rabid reaction to peculiar instances of this broader phenomenon: to survive, everyone *had to* construct images of themselves and how they belonged in the world entirely from shards of the imagistic commodity world around them, hence the stores featured on every block of the new liveable developments. Few anymore did work directly related to place and few places took forms directly related to work. Ray remembered neighbours of his telling him that as recently as the 1970s they had participated as volunteers in laying down bricks to construct the seawall near the co-op in which Ray lived on the south shore of False Creek. Such hands-on labour was now *impossible* even to imagine in the industrially-poured concrete-lined developments such as North False Creek.

Figure 48 - Concrete

The connection between place and what people did under the regime of concrete was instead, as Debord said, wholly *abstract*, mediated by images of what the relation should be. People had no other choice but to acquire *images* of what *actually* was their relationship to their surroundings, each likely to be erased as soon as a new image popped up to replace it. This mirrored at the level of form what the photographs of False Creek manifested in their panoramically erasable content. As Debord said, society has become a vast accumulation of images, but for all his situationist urbanism he missed—too French perhaps; the end of his

life suffered in (how European!) a little French villa—how that played out literally; that the triumph of concrete was the triumph of life as image, as cruel spectacle, beneath our very feet.

6.

Ray, back at home, poured himself a drink and sat down at his kitchen table. The book of death masks lay on the table, and he pulled it over and started thumbing through the pictures once again. As he had thought when looking at them earlier, these images still held a powerful fascination, giving a glimpse into the character of figures like Medici or Henry II who otherwise lived on only in officially-sanctioned portraits, where the interventions of the artists were like a carapace around the identities of the subjects. The death masks in contrast seemed curiously intimate, the figures caught in repose, their variously corroded faces bowing out of the earthly fray in which they played such central roles.

We supposedly live in more enlightened, imagistically-sophisticated times, but Ray wondered if the fascination with the mask didn't still endure, still present its magical powers, but on a more subterranean level, or perhaps a level so taken-for-granted that we can't see it. Wasn't Jane Jacobs's appeal—her folksy wisdom encased in a bewitching prose—in the end a mask, both screening and carrying forward among other things the presence of Henry Luce? For that matter, wasn't North False Creek too a mask, screening and carrying forward a volatile and compelling mix of elements Ray had been obsessed with over the last many months and, presumably, many others: Luce's ideas as leavened by Jacobs's prose, the long history of accidents that preceded the present forms of the street and the material history of concrete and its intertwined development with speed and projectiles?

Elaine walked into the kitchen. Aiden and Hope and Nora have invited us to their place for dinner, she announced happily. Wanna go? These were friends that lived on a nearby island, a short drive and ferry ride away. Ray had known Hope since they were children and through a convoluted series of events had stayed good friends. Hope had given birth to Nora a year or two after Janice had Elaine, and Elaine and Nora had become closely bonded. Both single children, they were more like siblings than friends. Ray, still a little unused to Elaine's abrupt descent back into his life, shrugged and said, Sure, why not?

So they bundled the dog and some wine into the car and headed off to the island. A couple of hours later Ray was chatting around the fireplace with Aiden and Hope while Nora and Elaine had run off squealing and laughing to find their own fun.

After dinner, Ray took the dog out for her evening walk. The autumn evenings were starting to get dark quite early now, and the gloom was already settling deeply as Ray and his dog set off down the driveway. Ray looked back at the house where he could see Aiden and Hope cleaning up the dinner dishes through the warmly sparkling windows. He stopped to study the little vignette before him. The softly-lit house set among the darkening trees and the last vestigial light in the sky overhead created a glowing frame for the little scene of chores Aiden and Hope executed before him. At one point Elaine and Nora ran by a window upstairs, their faces contorted by laughter Ray could not hear. Ray felt a curiously warm distance from the cosy domesticity arrayed before him, almost as though he was watching a stage show about people he might like, but performed by strangers.

His dog pulled impatiently on her leash, so Ray turned away from pondering the house and its minor drama of small interactions and set off down the rapidly darkening road. The road from Aiden and Hope's place descended a steep hill, at the bottom of which a trail led to the beach. On an impulse Ray set off along the trail into the dark woods, his dog excitedly pulling, recognizing that they were headed to the water. A few feet down the trail Ray let her off the leash.

A couple of minutes later, after he had gingerly climbed down the steep old concrete stairs at the last part of the trail, he was able to step onto the stony beach. He stood frozen for a few moments taking in the big bay that unfolded before him, the dark wood he had just come out of lowering behind him. The scene was beautiful, breathtaking even, but Ray felt the same curiously dispassionate and not entirely unpleasant alienation he had experienced looking back at Aiden and Hope in their house. Very small waves lapped gently against the stones, making a rhythmic wet kissing sound, and in the farther distance the lights of the city loomed from behind the hulking dark mountains on the other side of the bay. The still air of first twilight seemed poised exactly in a cusp between hot and cold; if Ray moved at all the movement seemed enough to turn it slightly chilly but if he stood still he was perfectly warm. He threw a stick far into the water and his dog splashed happily after it. Ray leaned

down and touched the water. It felt surprisingly warm and strangely compellingly inviting. Ray rubbed his wet hands together and listened to the happily burbling waves. Suddenly, his mind was made up, almost before he even knew he was making a decision. Ray stepped back several paces, then took off his clothes, balancing awkwardly on the stones. He folded his clothes and lay them down, then walked unsteadily over the pebbles on his bare feet back to the water's edge where his dog was watching him in confusion, her head slightly cocked.

Ray ignored her and stuck his toe tentatively into the water. Without his clothes the air tipped slightly into chilliness, causing his skin a slight frisson of goose bumps, and the water felt even warmer to his foot than it had earlier to his hand, so he continued to step in. A few moments later he had awkwardly waded up to his waist and dove in. The water embraced him with wet energy. Ray swam briefly, exulting in his smooth gliding progress. He stopped swimming and paddled water while he looked around. The tinkle of the stays of the deserted sailboats anchored nearby in the bay was quite loud. Back at the beach his dog ran worriedly back and forth at the edge of the shore, trying to understand what Ray was up to.

Ray rotated so he was facing out into the big dark bay. The water glistened in the sparkling reflected light, sensuously caressing him. He felt soothed by it, almost aroused as the warm wet ocean held him, softly flowing around his arms and legs as he paddled only enough to keep his chin barely above the water. Ray felt utterly relaxed and at peace. The distant lights of the city beckoned him. He started to slowly swim away from shore.

Epilogue

Damaged

Memory
Broken bones, ruptured organs, severed arteries
There was too much to remember
So they went digital
Data banks full of it
Blood everywhere

The Law
Edicts had followed orders, hot on their exasperated breaths.
They had issued comments and whispered regulations.
Their bureaucrats had huddled worriedly.
Weighted with crocuses and tears,
"If only," they had almost cried,
"It could stop!"

Dance
They had practiced from their earliest youth,
Until they were hit, publicly, and crushed.
They had wanted to do it right:
Crossing only on the signal,
Watching their step,
Looking both ways,
Besmirched,
Alone.

Form
They had struck each other in precisely prescribed ways.
They had started up their machines and paid their remit.
But in the end it was their obedience that was punished
In simple and mysterious ways,
Each day at dawn.

The Brace
They had nothing else to do but prepare for the worst.
They had moulded a stimulus shield
Around each of them,
A hardened cast.

Impression
It was all distribution of weight really.
How much did one object
Impress upon another?
Footstep upon cement,
Hand on shoulder,
Metal upon flesh.

Simple, really.
Simple physics.

Memory
Finally only the grey sepulchres around them remained.
They had faced injury and death like children, or dogs;
Each collision, completely unexpected,
Had taunted the future with its futility,
When everything had changed.

Our Last Song
As for us, we the still-unharmed legions of the middle class,
Freighted with our mirrored spaces,
Only when we are awakened at 3 a.m.
By the whining drill of our prospects
Do we feel the dull ordure of their debts,
And we weep.

(To Walker Evans)

Eleven. Postscript: The Scholarly Achievements of The Impressive City Cantos

One of the self-evidently central contributions of the *The Impressive City Cantos* is the use of literary form to further scholarly aims. The literary ambitions, if not the accomplishments, of the *ICC* can be situated in a tradition that includes current writers such as Stephen Audeguy[214] or Wayne Johnston[215] and such past giants as Italo Calvino,[216] W.G. Sebald[217] and Walter Benjamin,[218] who provide models of mixing autobiography, intense reflection on the mysteries of the everyday, and learned context. This approach allowed me to foreground dramatically constant and seemingly-essential but difficult-to-relate and socially-ephemeralized experiences such as the car accident experienced by Janice, who is one of the *ICC*'s central narrative tropes. It also enabled me formally to mirror those experiences: the authorial voice of the *ICC* assumes a subjectivity that is *as-if* real to readers, *as-if* the narrative voice really existed, replicating in literary form the labile and power-straddled character of Janice. Not just Janice's legs or her head but her web of social relationships and her very subjectivity are altered by the violence she experiences; in one cruel instant she is transformed from a purposeful and outgoing person confident in her abilities within her community to a frightened and literally alienated object, only able to move awkwardly, painfully confined to her couch and administered by overlapping legal, medical, planning and other bureaucracies. The contingent, as-if subjectivity of her uninjured and injured selves is thereby revealed, and by implication so too is the fragile hold on subjectivity we all share and towards the maintenance of which considerable social energy is invested.

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[214] Stephane Audeguy, *The Theory of Clouds*, trans. by Timothy D. Bent (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 2007).
[215] Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1998).
[216] Italo Calvino, *Difficult Loves ; Smog ; A Plunge into Real Estate* (London: Seeker & Warburg, 1983); *Hermit in Paris: Autobiographical Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003); *Invisible Cities* (London: Vintage, 2002).
[217] W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2001); *The Emigrants*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Harvill Press, 1996); *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. by Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 1998); *Vertigo*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Harvill Press, 1999).
[218] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writing*, ed. by Peter Demetz, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); *The Arcades Project*, ed. by Rolf Tiederman, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1999).

This contingent subjectivity, relayed *inwardly* in the *ICC* between the real (at least in part) accident victim and the mostly but not entirely made-up narrator, also points *outwardly* to the ambivalent social dynamics of automotive injury. On the one hand, contingency seems triumphant in that violent event: Janice is transformed fundamentally and forever; the circumstances of that transformation are more or less universally characterized as an "accident;" her fateful collision contributes its small piece to the glacial but nonetheless perceivable shift of urban infrastructure that otherwise feels immutable. On the other hand, Janice's injury is thoroughly impressed with an iron cage of social conventions: the driver, probably going too fast, enacts social fascination with and accommodation to speed so widespread as to be almost inviolable; Janice steps out onto the street with a sense of security that is as deeply engrained as it is false; a highly inflexible structure of medicine, law and insurance oversees and then tries to make the whole disaster go away.

Despite what might be seen as the post-modern indeterminacy of both the form and content of the *ICC*, there are nonetheless scholarly arguments that are made within its fictionalized narrative. Its overarching scholarly achievement is to develop a history and theory of the role of impression in material forms (especially concrete and photography) in identity formation as the basis for a multi-faceted critique of the notion of liveability in urban planning and design. The critique has two arms that wrap simultaneously around my research site of North False Creek in Ray's city: first, that liveable streets are in fact sites of considerable violence, and second that Jane Jacobs, one of liveability's most important proponents, for all her considerable strengths and probably unwittingly, enacted a political agenda for the hegemony of the professional-managerial class on behalf of an early sponsor of her work, Henry Luce.

Within that overarching framework there are five key sub-arguments:

1) The *ICC* applies to urban forms and their social content two principles of actor-network theory (see the Introduction above for sources): firstly, that many of the boundaries typically drawn between humans and nonhumans are socially-constructed conventions, not the result of the nature of being; and secondly, that the will to act, the agency or power of the subject typically located entirely on the human side of the people/thing divide, is in fact distributed

across networks of interactions between organic and material participants. An initial schematic of networks explored in the ICC might look like this:

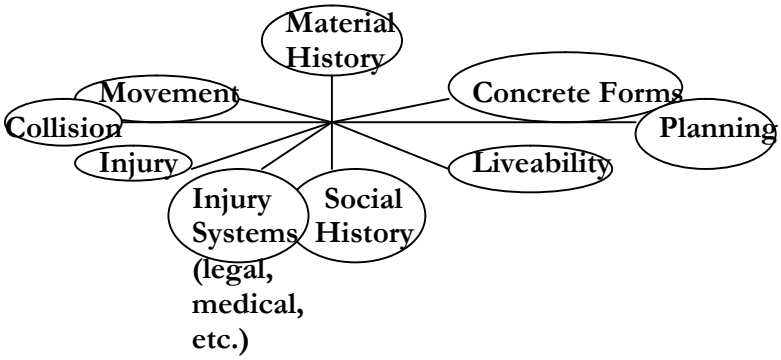

Figure 49 - Networks

In and of itself, this almost Geertzian "thick description" of an accident may not provide any great insight. But the *ICC* launches from that description to address an important question: what motivates the social acceptance of automotive injury? We as a society tend to consider the purposive taking of human life or inflicting injury as deeply repugnant, as evidenced by the fervid attention paid to capital or corporeal punishments or to soldiers killed in war. Yet we sanguinely accept mutilation and death on our streets all the time. We even embrace some of those streets as "liveable," despite knowing a high number of people will die and be injured on them streets, no matter how carefully we design turn radii or walk signals or the regulate the cars that rush down them or how carefully we are made to act. The *ICC* asks why that curious ambivalent attitude to automotive injury might be so, in the first instance in regards to planning and urban design (where the term "liveability" has perhaps the greatest cachet) but ultimately as society as a whole. My response is a theory of impression that is developed throughout the *ICC*.

2) In creating a historical context to my theory of impression, the *ICC* unites previously siloed classical studies scholarship on classical Greek art and ancient military history to develop a theory of impression and identity that offers (as a bit of an aside from our principle focus on urban planning) an explanation to a very old art historical question: what motivated the ancient Greek accomplishments in representation of the human body, representations that

have delighted and fascinated for close to three millennia. The *ICC* suggests the seminal verisimilitudinous idealism of the Greek aesthetic accomplishment was tied closely to military innovation; tied to, that is, a novel Greek structure of delivering force, of homicidally touching other people. The *ICC* carries this insight further forward to hypothesize that the Roman Pantheon should be read as at least in significant part as a sign system within a semiotics of Roman imperial power, projecting Hadrian's force over time and space through an impressive organization of volume—an organization, it is important to note, made possible by concrete—thereby referencing a Roman tradition of mourning through wax masks in which the long-absent ancestor is brought forward, made present, what the Romans called *imagines*, for certain key rituals. The Pantheon, in other words, should be read as a kind of mask, awesomely standing in for the absent emperor.

3) The relays between the projection of force of identity through impression or masking are explored throughout the *ICC*. A pivotal if only suggestively sketched moment in this historical trajectory forward form the classical inheritance of impression is the emergence into mainstream culture of the impressive technologies of concrete and photography. The groundwork for my description of this emergence is a novel application of Foucault's insights into the critical role of sacrifice in Dark Ages theology and the foundation that role laid for the subject—the individual with an identity and agency—who would eventually emerge. Modernity revealed a new level of brutality through and over that subject in the First World War; from this Foucauldian perspective the *ICC* discusses how photography and concrete can be said to have masked—both outlining and concealing—important parameters of subjective possibility within the Great War's savage crucible of sacrifice. (I am indebted to Modris Ekstein[219] for his suggestive analysis of how pre-World War One avant-garde art gave voice to an inchoate and autochthonous but widespread enthusiasm for the coming apocalypse).

4) The First World War rendered violently impressive social arrangements as normal, launching Schivelbusch's projectile economy into full murderous flight, and in the fourth major argument of the *ICC* this insight is carried forward in a radical revision of Vancouver's

[219] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).

history via consideration of North False Creek, the site of Janice's collision. Many traditional histories of Ray's city[220] identify the importance of the Bartholomew Report,[221] the 1929 city planning exercise prepared by a famous American consultant, in the city's emergence as a modern metropolis, but as was discussed in the *ICC*, these accounts overlook how Bartholomew's plan (appearing only 10 years after the First World War) implied a widespread application of concrete. Depression and another war delayed those ambitions, but the intense debates that started in the 1950s over freeways are in the *ICC* reconfigured as a kind of civil war over how the waves of concrete washing over the city, no longer just imagined *á la* Batholomew but actually being realized, should be accommodated. This historical trajectory of concrete—emerging into the material vernacular in World War One, seizing the imagination of the intelligentsia such as Bartholomew after that war, reinforced by use in the Second World War then coming into full flower in the 1950s and 60s when it was widely applied and thereby became embroiled in hot debates over its proper application. These debates concluded ultimately with concrete becoming a kind of material *lingua franca*, a trajectory compared in the *ICC* to that of the kind of naturalistic art, especially relayed via photography, epitomized by Walker Evans.

5) The ICC marries an original art historical analysis of Evans's work (which takes Evans's famous earthy verisimilitude as only a point of entry into a complex mediation on the act of sign-making) to the *ICC*'s overarching project of critiquing liveability. Evans's naturalism, which might seem tangential to urban design in North False Creek, is strongly linked in the *ICC* to Jane Jacobs, who was to have such a crucial voice in the freeway debates in Vancouver as in many other places. The *ICC* connects her materteral image, which was complemented and reinforced by her authorial voice, to Luce's project in the 1940s and 50s to advance the cause of the capitalist professional-managerial class. Jacobs, like Evans and others consciously recruited by Luce, used a naturalistically-based viewpoint that like concrete has now become ubiquitous. In sum, considerations of two strands of impressive technology, concrete and naturalistic art most apparent in photography but also an active aesthetic force in cinema, literature and theatre, open up in the *ICC* into a radical revisioning of Vancouver's history.

[220] Wynn, pp. 69-148 (pp. 123-129).
[221] Bartholomew.

Obviously then the *ICC* covers a great deal of ground. For the academic reader, I suggest that this wide-ranging, narrativized approach should be evaluated through two dimensions of questioning: first, while because of their breadth of ambition each of the arguments is not able to receive definitive treatment, it should be asked if the individual arguments made have enough scholarly merit to encourage further research along the same lines; and secondly, does the overall story told in the *ICC* have sufficient argumentative power to provide new insight and open new lines of inquiry into the cultural resonance of the material arrangements of North False Creek, renowned as it is worldwide for its "liveability?"

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