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The Tapestry of Memory

Kathryn M. Lawson, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Antonio Calcagno, *The University of Western Ontario*

: Dr. Helen Fielding, *The University of Western Ontario*

: Dr. Jan Plug, *The University of Western Ontario*

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Abstract

Rationality points to the complete annihilation and end of a life when the body perishes, and yet when a loved one dies we continue to experience that person in a myriad of ways. The focus of this thesis will be a phenomenological exploration of the earthly afterlife of those we have loved and lost. By positing the subject as always inter-subjective and as temporal in nature, this thesis will investigate how we continue to create and interact with the deceased upon the earth. In the introduction, this work will be placed in the context of the phenomenological tradition; the first chapter will set out a subject consisting of present body, future earth/ world, and past memories; the second chapter will posit the foundation of such a subjectivity upon inter-subjectivity or the in-between the I and the other, in which the present body emerges from the caress, the future world is produced by natality, and past memories are cultivated by language; in the third chapter, cartoons, photography, and fine art are used to explore how an inter-subjectivity so conceived can help us to understand our connection to the deceased and continue to create and live with the dead. This work aims to conceptualize, celebrate, and live our relationships in a temporally liminal and environmentally vitalist way.

Keywords: Bergson, Levinas, Arendt, Irigaray, Heidegger, Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity, philosophy, memory, earth, body, flesh, caress, world, natality, language, death, art

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For Jordan.

This thesis includes a companion short film, which can be viewed at either of the following links:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-k-ZkRy3RMrN0FfV29aVEVETVU/view?usp=sharing>

<https://youtu.be/bKoibONS-0A>

Let us go then, you and I,
 When the evening is spread out against the sky
 Like a patient etherized upon a table;
 Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
 The muttering retreats
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells:
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument
 Of insidious intent
 To lead you to an overwhelming question...
 Oh do not ask "What is it?"
 Let us go and make our visit.

- *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, T.S. Eliot

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The Tapestry of Memory:

Introduction¹



“But I’ll see you in the clouds above, in the tall grass, in the ones I love, you’re going to make me lonesome when you go.”² Presumably lamenting a breakup with a restless but passionate lover, Bob Dylan’s popular ballad directs our attention to the fact that those who we love deeply become infused into our lives in a myriad of ways. When someone is physically

¹ Artwork: Vincent Van Gogh, *Starry Night over the Rhone*, oil on canvas (Paris: Musee D’Orsay, 1888).

² Bob Dylan, “You’re going to make me Lonesome,” in *Blood on the Tracks* (Minneapolis: Columbia, 1975).

absent, we see that person everywhere. She or he colours the fabric of our world with his or her unique personality traits, ideas, and even physical attributes. This phenomenon holds true not just for romantic breakups, but extends towards the ultimate end of a relationship; the death of the other. Mary Elizabeth Frye's 1932 poem makes this vitalist link between the world of the bereaved and the continuation of the deceased person's life:

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
 I am not there; I do not sleep.
 I am a thousand winds that blow.
 I am the diamond glints on snow.
 I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
 I am the gentle autumn rain.
 When you awaken in the morning's hush
 I am the swift uplifting rush
 Of quiet birds in circled flight.
 I am the soft star that shines at night.
 Do not stand at my grave and cry;
 I am not there; I did not die.³

In this poem, we are struck by a blatant refusal to acknowledge death as a complete severance from a particular way of being. The traditional philosophical and scientific notions of death as a definitive end are refuted in favor of a vitalism wherein the deceased continues on in the world after death. It is not clear in Frye's poem if this continuation happens as an idealist vitalism through the mourner alone (because I loved the deceased, I see them in the beauty and sorrow of the entire world) or if the dead person is objectively present in the surrounding earth via a material vitalism (because the energy and matter that animated that particular person is recycled into the earth upon her or his death, this energy continues on in the physical earth). Whether Frye is referring to a subjective continuation in the bereaved or an objective continuation of the deceased, the poem clearly states that death is not the end of life.

³ Mary Elizabeth Frye, *Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep* (London: Souvenir Press, 1996).

In his short story “The Premature Burial,” Edgar Allan Poe claims that “[t]he boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends, and where the other begins?”⁴ As Dylan and Frye have alluded, the lines of absence and presence do not mark a distinct end. Poe draws the conclusion from this that death itself is not entirely distinct and certain. It doesn’t happen suddenly or sharply, but in circling indecipherable gradations. King Lear holds his dead daughter in his arms and exclaims, “I know when one is dead and one lives.”⁵ And yet he cannot grasp where his dear Cordelia is in this stark divide. He stretches out and muddies the liminal space between life and death as he holds her in his arms. Against the finality of death, Poe’s fogginess between living and dead leads us to the two poles of Lear’s reaction to Cordelia’s death: his logical confidence that he knows the difference between the living and the dead and his inability to reify this certainty. In Lear we find the analytic and phenomenal readings of death placed together. There is a biological and analytic confidence to death; a gaping hole; a void where a unique and irreplaceable human life once flourished. But so too is there an inexplicable continuation of the other who has died.

Everything rational points to the complete annihilation and end of a life when the body perishes, but we can trace back religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, many sects of Native American religious practices and shamanic religions to the same essential punchline; human death is not the end. Of course what death looks like is not the same in any of these religions, but it is clear that they are all founded on poignant sensual experience of the other after death. Like Dylan and Frye, these religions assume a moment of realization that someone loved and lost is not absolutely absent.

⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Premature Burial” in *The Raven: Tales and Poems*, ed. S.T. Joshi, 200-215 (New York: Penguin Books, 2013).

⁵ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (Toronto: PocketBooks, 1993), 5, 3: 312.

In the cold light of day, death is final; but at night, we linger with the dead in our dreams;

At night I dream
 She is still at my side. She
 Carries her kit of colored
 Threads. I see her image bent
 Over her bag of silks. She
 Mends and alters my clothes and
 Worries for fear I might look
 Worn and ragged.⁶

Waking, we see the dead out of the corner of our eyes but never straight on. We feel her presence when we least expect it. Like Dylan, Leonard Cohen is focused on a broken heart when he whispers, “I see your hand, I see your hair, your bracelets and your brush. I call to you, I call to you, but I don’t call soft enough.”⁷ Those who are gone are still everywhere, but the form they take on is radically altered and we cannot reach them as we once did. Our soft calls reverberate into screams against vast empty corridors. The former ways of being with someone must be set aside and a new way must be created.

The focus of this thesis will be a phenomenological exploration of the earthly afterlife of those we have loved and lost. There are many phenomenologists who discuss death, most notably, Martin Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger gestures to, but does not engage fully with, the death of another being. Because this short section (subsection 47 of part one), is as truthful and poignant as it is upsetting and distasteful, and because it is foundational in later phenomenological discourse on death, my introduction will be an exploration of this section of *Being and Time*. The subsection on the death of the other is a momentary digression into a phenomenon that cannot give Heidegger the answers he seeks. Heidegger allows us to glimpse

⁶ Mei Yao Ch’en, “A Dream at Night,” in *One Hundred Poems From the Chinese*, trans. Kenneth Rexroth (New York: A New Directions Book, 48).

⁷ Leonard Cohen, “There ain’t no cure for love,” in *I’m Your Man* (Montreal and Los Angeles: Columbia, 1988).

the phenomenal possibility of being with the deceased after they have died and almost simultaneously, he draws an unsurmountable ontological division between the living and the deceased. Perhaps his work here is so compelling because it is imbued with both the cruel loss and the hopeful continuation of the other in the world which that person inhabited. Heidegger gives us neither the satisfaction of a complete annihilation of the other nor an ontological lingering of the other before he whisks his project off in a different direction. Like much of Heidegger's work and like death itself, we are shown possible paths but are given no real answers. For Heidegger, the philosophy is in the journey, not the destination. Furthermore, he chooses not to take any of these paths further but to set aside the death of the other. My thesis follows Heidegger's road not taken towards earthly afterlife and our relationship to the deceased other.

In subsection 47, Heidegger contemplates the possibility of the death of the other as a means to access the totality of our own being through the death of our own *Dasein*. (Heidegger's term *Dasein* refers to a self-reflective and thinking being, namely the human). *Dasein*'s totality or completeness is achieved only in its death: As the being that exists between birth and death, *Dasein* is always reaching beyond itself towards its death. Heidegger notes that a possible way to investigate the totality of my *Dasein*, as it would be achieved upon my death, could be deduced by exploring the death of another *Dasein*. But he concludes that the other's death is not adequate in the investigation of my own death because the *ontological difference* (in which no two *Daseins* are alike) is predicated on the distinction of death; "[t]he dying of others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there

alongside...”⁸ Heidegger continues, “we are asking about the ontological meaning of the dying of the person who dies, as a possibility-of-being which belongs to *his* being. We are not asking about the way in which the deceased has Dasein-with or is still-a-Dasein with those who are left behind.”⁹ Each person’s death belongs solely to that person and this leads Heidegger to rule out an exploration of our own death through the death of another. Because our own death marks the end of our experience of the world as we know it (aka, through our sensual body and the limitations and advantages of our human mind), the other’s death cannot offer us such an end for Heidegger. We continue to live and sense as before and thus we experience this death “alongside” as a mere spectator whose entire way of being remains relatively unchanged. Heidegger is interested in the completion of the wholeness of Dasein, the likes of which cannot be unearthed through our understanding of another’s death because each death is specific and belongs only to the Dasein who dies.

While Heidegger’s project is interested in a phenomenology that begins with our birth, ends with our death, and forever looks towards the undiscovered country that rounds our little lives, *my* interest remains with that which Heidegger dismisses: the dead’s “Dasein-with ... those who are left behind.”¹⁰ This is the first of two ways in which my investigation veers from that of Heidegger: the route and overall goal of our projects is different. His asks the question of Dasein’s Being between its birth and its death. Mine asks the question of the human’s being after death but still phenomenologically present on the earth. The second: the death of the other is not that of a “stranger”¹¹ as Heidegger suggests, but in certain cases, of someone who co-constitutes

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Staumbaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

our very being. This person still retains the radical individuality that Heidegger's ontological difference offers to each Dasein, but rather than making that a reason to avoid confusing our own death with the death of others, we can see such a death as a vast and irreconcilable loss for our own Dasein. *The death of the particular radical other is the death of our way of being in the world and can be a radical shift in the way we question being. Thus, the other's death is a shift in the very ground of our own Dasein.* This stark difference from *Being and Time* makes apparent that my project is not that of Heidegger, but rather takes his work seriously as a possible path towards the earthly afterlife of human beings. With this established, I will now turn to two contemporary commentaries on death in order to establish my second and more serious divergence from Heidegger regarding the significance of the other's death upon my own being.

In his phenomenological exploration of death, Robert Pogue Harrison aims to reconceive Heidegger's notion of death in *Being and Time* as something which "pertains to others before it pertains to me. We hand our deaths over to one another, not because we are inauthentic but because we are mortal... because our bonds and obligations draw their life from primordial guilt..."¹² On earth, upon our deaths, our afterlife is handed over to the community. We have certain responsibilities to the dead. Reflecting upon the death of his brother, Thoreau articulates this phenomenon: "On the death of a friend, we should consider that the fates through confidence have devolved on us the task of a double living, that we have henceforth to fulfill the promise of our friend's life also, in our own, to the world."¹³ With the other's death, our own life changes. The link between the I and the other after death necessitates that the irrational and the real co-exist. In Branka Arsic's treatment of Thoreau, she claims that he believed in the liminal link

¹² Ibid., 157.

¹³ Henry David Thoreau, *Journal* February 28, 1840. Quoted in Branka Arsic, *Bird Relics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016), x.

between literature and life: “far from being something surreal, which could at best function as a metaphor of something real, the fictional or even the irrational is part and parcel of the real.”¹⁴ This speaks to the importance of narrative in its capacity not just to teach us morals and societal norms, but to intermingle with and create worlds. Arsic continues by posing the question, “What have we done to alter the real into what is coherent, explicable, and knowable, expelling the wondrous into an elsewhere that is only imagined?”¹⁵ This liminal nature of the real and the irrational is necessary for our understanding of the subject after death, as it allows for a greater movement between these boundaries of death and life. The process of the other’s death shows itself as a process of transubstantiation, in which our spiritual inclinations merge with the surrounding environment and the other shows herself in the natural world.

We take on the dreams and goals of the deceased in ways we could never have imagined while they were alive. Their projects become our own. Their passions become our own. This is not mere sentimentality or nostalgia, but a radical shifting of our own being in order to adapt to and encompass the loss of a person who constituted our own personhood. Harrison’s articulation of community and responsibility in the death of the other and Arsic’s link between the irrational and the real, point us in the right direction as we return to Heidegger.

Let us turn back to my second divergence from Heidegger, which hinges on an important paradox in subsection 47 where Heidegger claims that in mourning the dead, “the deceased *himself* is no longer factually ‘there’”:¹⁶ While Heidegger posits that the deceased “has abandoned our ‘world’ and left it behind,” he also claims that “*in terms of that world* those who

¹⁴ Branka Arsic, *Bird Relics* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016), 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 230.

remain can still *be with him*.¹⁷ In death, Dasein is dismantled in that the *da* (*there*) is removed. The deceased is no longer *there*. Yet somehow those who mourn can be here in this world with the deceased. This textual paradox implies that in death, Dasein loses its *da* (*there*) but retains something of its *sein* (*being*). In an average everyday sense, the human being is no longer present, but there is still something remaining that others can be with.

Now we can arrive back at Heidegger's *ontological difference*. Heidegger suggests that a substitution of the other's death for my own "demonstrably fails altogether to recognize Dasein's kind of being."¹⁸ He argues that this is because it falls prey to forgetting the ontological difference, which is what distinguishes Dasein: as Dasein, I am irreplaceable and unique while in all other aspects of my life I am always replaceable. As a woman, a student, or a friend, I can always be replaced by another woman, student, or friend. These labels belong to the ontic (average everyday) world and make each person a series of generic classifications and nothing more. But the unique part of me that can never be replaced is my Dasein. The ontological difference is the recognition of the unspeakable quality that makes me radically unique from all others. Heidegger argues that by attempting to understand our own death by the death of the other, we forget the radically unique nature of Dasein. He claims that my own death cannot be substituted or ontologically understood through the death "of a stranger [*Fremden*]."¹⁹ But this is where Heidegger falls into his own trap: how did the other become a stranger? Moments ago we mourned the other's death and even experienced being with the other after her or his death. And now that other has become *Fremden* or a mere stranger? It seems that while Heidegger is keen to uphold the radical uniqueness of his own Dasein through his own death, the death of the other is

¹⁷ Ibid., 238.

¹⁸ Ibid., 238.

¹⁹ Ibid., 239.

interchangeable with the death of any other. The death of someone loved and mourned is equivalent to the death of a perfect stranger. In his mission to uphold his own ontological difference, he denies it to others, or at least leaves them to worry about it themselves. The death of an other is the death of an other is the death of an other. All I have to define my Dasein in its totality is the death of myself.

Heidegger's decision to deny radical uniqueness to others makes sense if Dasein is considered as that being who questions its own being and whose own being is somehow bound by a Kantian subjectivity. For all of Heidegger's protestation that Dasein is not a subject, the way it interacts with others links it rather definitively with the intersubjectivity of Kant's subject as set out in the third paralogism of the *Critique of Pure Reason* wherein the *unity of apperception* (or the "I") exists as a *subject* for itself but can never be more than an *object* to the other. The *double-I* of Kant is I-as-soul in its interior temporality and I-as-body from the other's exterior spatiality. This means simply that I can only see myself from the inside (as a subject), but the other sees me from the outside and through their gaze I recognize that I am also an object. Kant deems this gaze of the subject upon itself as occurring in time and the gaze of the other upon my subject as occurring in space. The I has no access to itself as a body without the objectifying assertion of the other and conversely, the I never has access to the other as a subject. In discussing the death of the other, it is evident that the Heideggerian subject remains in this Kantian solipsistic subjectivity. The objectification of the other can be traced back further to Cartesian proto-subjectivity in the *Meditations*. Looking out his window, Descartes cannot tell for certain if other men are mere automatons. If I cannot be certain that others are not robots, I certainly have little hope of any real intersubjectivity.

This fleeting foray into the history of the modern subject is simply meant to find the roots of my own divergence from Heidegger, which is grounded in the Heideggerian autonomy and alienation of Dasein. When we build the foundation of the human in impenetrable isolation, it is not a surprise that we end up in a society of individuals who feel profoundly alone even (or especially) in the company of others. Heidegger has done much to overcome these solipsistic hurdles: Dasein does not begin alone in contemplation, but in a world, with others, and specific tasks and projects that make sense of the world and its people. Heidegger necessitates the philosopher leave the fireside and exist in the world amongst others. But ultimately, by denying a meaningful difference in the deaths of others, Heidegger shows us that he did not go far enough for our purposes in this thesis. This Heideggerian rendition of an insurmountable subject/ object distinction between self and other is an undeniable truth of the modern world. But it is a constructed truth and completely counter to the phenomenon that this paper will be reaching for: intersubjective memories and earthly afterlife. It now appears that while we see traces of possible post-mortem intersubjectivity in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, these traces do not possess a root system that will bear the fruit we seek. Using Heidegger's skillful distinction between the ontic everyday and the ontologically unique aspects of death, as well as the path he sets out (but does not follow) towards a phenomenal being with the dead, we will attempt to locate a ground from which we can make sense of an earthly afterlife.

The points of divergence that I have gestured to in Heidegger's account of the death of the other have caused us to rethink two important foundational elements: first, the deceased's interrelation with my own Dasein and second, the radical uniqueness of the other. These two elements will be explored in this thesis through a vital reimagining of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Using Heidegger's model of Dasein as simultaneously existing in all three temporal modes of past, present, and future, this paper will set out a subject that moves fluidly in these three temporal directions. This subject will prove to be constituted by the present physical body, the future oriented connection to the earth, and past memories. This notion of subjectivity will be set out in the first chapter with guidance from Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas, Luce Irigaray, and Hannah Arendt. In the second chapter, we will return to the death of the other and posit that this notion of the subject is founded on intersubjectivity. The future-oriented connection to the earth is given to us as a recognizable world by the natality with the other, the physical body is made present by the caress between the I and the other, and the memories of the past are illuminated by the language I share with the other. The subject as constituted by intersubjectivity will allow for us to investigate how the other lives on upon the earth after death. In the conclusion, we will explore how an intersubjectivity so conceived manifests in phenomenological lived experience. Through an exploration of art, I show that we witness the dead as very much alive in our day to day lives.

Chapter One: Subjectivity

“He allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.”

- *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

In this first portion of our exploration into the earthly afterlife of humans, we will aim to explicate a subjectivity that consists of body, earth, and memory. Beginning with that which is physically smallest: the human body. We will then move outwards explaining the connection between the radically individual human body and the entirety of the earth and by extension, the world. Finally, on a metaphysical level, interweaving a tapestry between individual human bodies and the surrounding earth, memory completes subjectivity. In this way, the subject will prove to be temporal in nature, as I will argue that each of these three facets of humans is the physical and metaphysical reification of the three temporal modes of present, future and past. This subject moves dynamically in all three temporal modes: through the body into the present, through the earth into the future, and through memory into the past. The final portion of this chapter demonstrates the subject as inherently temporal, and posits how this temporal subject fits into the history of philosophy, and how a subject can move in all three temporal directions.

The Body: Present

“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.”

- Bukkyo Derdo Kyokai, *The Teaching of Buddha*

The first aspect of subjectivity is the human body, the likes of which offers a physical enclosure for the subject. I set out the body as physical object and as lived phenomenological image; unpack how it is a reification of the temporal mode of the present; and how it is linked to the earth and memory. The body as physical object marks the boundaries of who we are individually and houses that which we see as more than merely physical (namely, the *soul* or the *mind*, depending on one's theoretical inclinations). It distinguishes us from the surrounding earth and acts as the gathering point of our memories. Husserl establishes the constitution of space from "the zero-point of orientation, which is one's own body. My body is the absolute here of orientation."²⁰

The body is also the sensual vehicle through which we experience. It includes what phenomenologists have distinguished as *the flesh*. Phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty,²¹ and Jean-Luc Marion²² distinguish the physical body as object from the sensual flesh as subject. This flesh aspect of the body allows us to feel the afternoon sunlight on our hands, to taste the warm pang of fresh coffee, to hear Glen Gould's *Goldberg Variations*, to smell freshly cut grass. But more than merely passive, the flesh acts: the cheek can move against the hand warmed from the sun, the lips wrap around the rim of the coffee mug, the voice hums and grunts along with the piano's chords. This paper will recognize the body as *both* the body and the flesh, the subject and the object.

²⁰ Explained in: Cristian Ciocan, "The Question of the Living Body in Heidegger's Analytic of Dasein," *Research in Phenomenology* 38 (2008): 80.

²¹ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis, 130-156 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

²² See Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Vincent Berraud and Robyn Horner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 88-90.

From birth to death, we are subjects because we have physical bodies. The body is the source and receptacle of our laughter, love, tears, hatred and memories. And although this is a project that is looking precisely at what happens after the body no longer holds the subject, it is pivotal to note that it is only through a physical body that subjectivity is possible and it is only through the bodies of others that our subjectivity continues on in an earthly afterlife. Subjectivity requires a physical body.

The concrete reality of our body is recognized by Levinas, who states, “I exist as a body, that is, as raised up, an organ that will be able to grasp and consequently place itself, in this world on which I depend, before ends technically realizable.”²³ Through the body, we are acted upon, we receive. But more importantly for Levinas’ ethics, through the body we can act; we can give. It is not a free and separate soul or mind that pushes us to act, but rather the entire ecosystem of the body. The stomach’s churning is already happening before our mind realizes that something is dangerous or uncomfortable; the head is already aching when we realize that we are doing too much; the heart literally aches when we lose love; a close friend tells us something about ourselves that never occurred to our mind, but we already knew in every fiber of our body. There is no definitive split between our body and mind because they are parts of one whole. My senses and my mind interact and create together. In this way, they make up the object that is my body.

The all-too-human feeble body is that which makes life precious. The distinct and devastatingly breakable human body offers our autonomous subjectivity a limited time on the earth. Levinas claims that “[t]he body naked and indigent is the very reverting, irreducible to a thought, of representation into life, of the subjectivity that represents into life which is sustained

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 117.

by these representations and lives of them; its indigence- its needs- to affirm “exteriority” as non-constituted, prior to all affirmation.”²⁴ This delicate compilation of flesh and bones creates, casts, and houses representations: It projects a world from itself in the Kantian sense. It is only through these fallible organs that we have memories, that we have subjectivity. The body, as we will posit it in this work, is first and foremost, the material flesh and bones. But of course, it is also our own phenomenological perception of this flesh and bones. It is an image in a world of images that we perceive as human subjects. The body is not just an object, but also a lived phenomenological experience.

When a part of the body is severed or lost due to an illness or an accident, it is no longer a part of our subjectivity because it can no longer act as a vehicle of our experience. If detached, the finger no longer feels the sun, just as a severed ear is no longer the subject’s means of hearing music. A lost limb is no longer an extension of our subjectivity. Conversely, in cases of phantom limbs, the subject can feel the presence of the missing body part, although they do not feel that body part as it physically exists in the world. For example, the soldier does not feel the limb as detached, burnt and decomposing on the battlefield, but rather feels the perception or image of the limb as it was when attached to the body. The amputee without legs feels unbearable pain in the toes. This experience of phantom limbs reported amongst amputees is an example of the liminality between the body as physical object and the body as image. We will distinguish this difference between physical body and image.

When a person dies, the entirety of the physical body no longer houses her subjectivity. Mourners look upon the deceased body of a loved one and note that their beloved is no longer present. The failed heart, the cancerous lung, or the ruptured spleen make the body inhospitable

²⁴ Ibid., 127.

for subjectivity and so these dimensions that are the only reified encounters we can experience of the subject are gone. But it behooves us to mention that the rites of the dead and the ritual around the body of the deceased is incredibly important for a sense of closure to family and friends.

Harrison notes that it is crucial for the living to bury the dead: “The missing body meant that the deceased person was fated to remain, in effect, *undead*- a condition, once again, that speaks above all of the open-ended, unreconciled psychic state of the grievers.”²⁵ This observation that putting the deceased body to rest is a necessary element of the mourning process further exhibits the confusion and overlapping of the body as physical object and as lived image. The mourners recognize that the deceased no longer inhabits the physical frame, but as an amputee feels pains in the location of a severed limb, the mourner feels the object of the dead body as a container of the deceased person’s spirit.

The body as image reaches beyond the physical object of the body and into the phenomenological realm. Placed in the wide world around us and surrounded by innumerable images of both objects and other subjects, Bergson claims that it is my body, among all other images, that is special; “*I call matter the aggregate of images, and perception of matter these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body.*”²⁶ For Bergson, the *aggregate of images* is the matter that surrounds us. It is the material world. My own body is numbered amongst these images, but it holds a privileged position. As the one image that allows us to perceive all other images, the body is the image par excellence. “My body is then, in the aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement, with perhaps, this difference only, that my body appears to choose, within

²⁵ Robert Pogue Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 144.

²⁶ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 22.

certain limits, the manner in which it shall restore what it receives.”²⁷ This notion fits into the idiom: *we see what we want to see*. We take in the world through our own distinct sensual reception and furthermore, filter what the senses show us through our own memories or preconceived notions of what we think is happening. It is commonly noted that five people will give as many different accounts of a particular event and this is because we see the world through our own personal lens. We should note that while the will (or mind or soul) is a facet of this lens, is not necessarily the free choice of the person’s mind. The body that has experienced violence and cruelty will see through a lens very different than the body that has only been shown kindness and affection. The body that has lived next to nature will see the world very differently than the body that has only known concrete and artificial grass. The body that lives in solitude will perceive the world’s images differently than that which lives in a community. The body that kisses, that communicates, that takes in art, that stubs its toe, and a thousand other tiny and giant conscious and unconscious actions and memories determine the choices that my body makes. The body as an image, as *the* image, is a lived phenomenological force through which the will chooses images and creates a way of being in the world. Thus while the body is an object, our experience of the body (as body and flesh) is always also as a privileged image, as the phenomenological entity.

When we think of the body physically and phenomenologically in time, it bears the marks of our past²⁸ (scraped knees and smile lines around the eyes), and prepares for our future (tensing before a fall), but more than anything else, the body demands of us to be in the present.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

²⁸ For example, Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is always existing in the past and uses the example of phantom limbs to explain the body as a past image and not present. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge Classics, 2005), 88-115.

Bergson refers to “the body as an ever advancing boundary between the future and the past.”²⁹ As the point between past and future, the Bergsonian body as a conductor in the flux of time always finds itself in the center of the ever moving present.³⁰ It is one step ahead of the actions just performed, the thoughts just considered, and one step behind those actions and thoughts about to happen. It exists in the pure present or the duration, monitoring the actions that the body itself will take and the actions that will be inflicted upon the body by outside forces. The body is the key to the present moment. When the mind wanders away dreaming of the future or reflecting upon the past, it is the sensual body that draws me back: I stub a toe, I smell cookies, I hear the doorbell. I am drawn into the present by the senses. The ancient Eastern art of meditation is often as simple (and difficult) as following the breath: *pause; inhale; pause; exhale... repeat*. In this way, meditation utilizes the body’s proclivity to bring the human into the present moment.

The body is intrinsically connected to the earth. We walk, build, and dwell upon the earth. Referred to as a mother, the earth provides humans with a home, but furthermore, has created the conditions for the possibility of human life, and has brought forth the human race. The earth offers us sustenance. In his later essays, Heidegger explains that the earth “is that which comes forth and shelters.”³¹ For humans to be able “to set something free into its own essence”, and also, “to initiate their own essential being- their being capable of death as death,” which Heidegger sees as the highest potential of Dasein, the human requires the sheltering

²⁹ Bergson, *Memory*, 78.

³⁰ For Bergson, temporality is the structure of *durée* or a pure duration. Jones explains *durée* as: “A synthesis of all the fragments of lived time into an experience of wholeness so rich and intense as to be an antidote to forms of alienation and reification in a contemporary social world.” See: Donna Jones, “The Eleatic Bergson,” *Diacritics* 37, no.1 (2007), 27.

³¹ Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Basic Writing*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Frank Capuzzi, 139-213 (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 171.

ground of the earth.³² The earth is the essential ground (both physically and phenomenologically) of the human body.

For Bergson, “my body constitutes at every moment... a section of the universal becoming.”³³ While the body is a privileged image, a system unto itself, it is also a part of a larger whole: the universe. This can be argued in a strictly material way when we consider the creation of our solar system by the collision of stony iron that gradually built up planets, including the earth, from which eventually plants, animals, and humans emerged. In incredibly simple terms, we are made up of the same matter as the earth’s core, which in turn is made up of the same matter as the solar system, which comes from the same matter that exploded in a big bang, creating the universe as a whole. There is not an atom in our bodies that was not forged in the surface of the sun. Materially, we are intricately connected to the universe, and particularly to the earth, which has provided us with the means of natality.

On a phenomenological level, our body is not separate from the images of the material world, but is one of them; “Itself an image, the body cannot store up images, since it forms a part of the images, and this is why it is a chimerical enterprise to seek to localize past or even present perceptions in the brain: they are not in it; it is the brain that is in them.”³⁴ As an image among the many images of the material world, the body as conductor is itself an image created through memories. Bergson describes it as a *place of passage*, a copula, as such. It is a link between the past memories and the future-oriented perceptions of and actions upon the earth. Fluid and dynamic, we must not mistake the body as controlling the system or above the images of the earth.

³² Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Frank Capuzzi, 343-365 (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 352.

³³ Bergson, *Memory*, 151.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

In relation to memory, the body is the container of our memories, and it is contained within our memories. It is not the controller of the represented universe, but rather, it is controlled by the universe that it represents. The body as interlocutor and as copula works with its will, mind, or spirit to call upon memories. These memories live in the recesses of our body. The smell of a flower is an external stimulus, but it mixes with my own body and calls forth a memory. My will sifts through intensities and places, until the memory arrives from the past into my present body. If the flowery smell evokes a high school sweetheart, perhaps the memory sits lightly in the chest, if it evokes a funeral, perhaps it sits heavy and low in the bowels. The memories of the past mix with the body.

The human body as a physical object and phenomenologically privileged image acts as a vehicle for our own subjectivity in the present moment. It is grounded upon the earth and reaches out towards the earth's matter in a future-oriented drive and it is fueled by the memories that cause it to reach back into the past. It stands between the past memory and the future earthly matter, as it opens the human experience in the present moment.

The Earth: Future

If we surrendered
to earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.

Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.

So like children, we begin again...

to fall,
patiently to trust our heaviness.
Even a bird has to do that
before he can fly.

— Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*

In this next portion of subjectivity, we will turn to the importance of the earth in the assemblage of the subject. We will examine how and why we currently exist in a state of alienation from the earth and distinguish between the cyclical *earth* and the unique *world*; link the earth to the human body and to memory; and finally, draw connections between the earth and our forward moving drive into the future.

But is it possible to conceive the nervous system as living apart from the organism which nourishes it, from the atmosphere in which the organism breathes, from the earth which that atmosphere envelopes, from the sun round which the earth revolves? More generally, does not the fiction of an isolated material object imply a kind of absurdity, since this object borrows its physical properties from the relations which it maintains with all others, and owes each of its determinations, and consequently, its very existence, to the place which it occupies in the universe as a whole? ³⁵

In the above quotation, Bergson argues that the human body cannot be considered as an autonomous individuated entity, but rather as part of the larger eco-system that is our earth. While this link between human and earth is fairly simple, it can nonetheless be difficult for us to cognize because of two reasons: first, we have come to accept a traditional Cartesian subjectivity and thus have a difficult time feeling connected or having knowledge of anything outside of ourselves and; second, because we often feel a sense of alienation. It is not easy to recognize a subjectivity consisting of the earth when we feel alone in the world. Arendt describes this modern alienation as stemming from a “two fold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self.”³⁶ She sees humanity in the Cold War era *race to space* as eagerly

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6.

attempting to flee the only environment hospitable to humans, to transcend that which *is* human, that which has created, sheltered and nourished human beings. We are so eager to move forward and dominate outer space, that we are not taking care of or even recognizing, let alone nurturing, that which we fundamentally *are*: the earth.

Arendt distinguishes a difference between the physical *earth* and the human made *world*: the earth is the physical domain upon which humans live and which subjects humans to a continually recurring cycle; the world on the other hand, is the human artifice, which creates a lasting stability for humans to live on after death. It is in the world and not the earth that the second flight from the self occurs. The human begins to dissolve into the private sphere, turning away from public discourse and instead turning to the private realm of the social, which is often aired in public but is filled with banal private content. In this two-fold way, humans see themselves as singular Cartesian subjects who flee the earth inwardly (into the self) and outwardly (into outer space), ultimately creating a profound sense of alienation from that which creates, molds, and nurtures human existence. Thus, while humans are physically of the earth as Bergson and Arendt suggest, Arendt claims that they are also in the midst of a modern discourse that promotes fleeing the earth. In this work, I will posit that the world is a product of the human condition, and the earth is that which creates the human condition or our subjectivity.

In his essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger sets out the earth and the world as bound in a continual productive strife.³⁷ They are “essentially different from

³⁷ Additionally, in his lecture given in 1951 and subsequent essay entitled, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Martin Heidegger explains the human being as a member of something he calls the fourfold. There are four elements normally considered separate that Heidegger posits as one; namely earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. These four things equi-primordially constitute one another in a way that unites them as a four-fold, which amounts to one whole rather than four separate entities. I would argue that the fourfold is ontologically determined in the very fabric of existence for Heidegger, but our upholding the fourfold and properly recognizing our

one another and yet are never separated.”³⁸ Similar to Arendt,³⁹ the earth is the sheltering and concealing force that is “essentially undisclosed”⁴⁰, cyclical, and dynamic, whereas the world is the setting out of history and unique human creativity. Heidegger claims that earth and world “raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures.”⁴¹ We can understand this relation to the earth as similar to Heidegger’s relationship to *Being*. The call of Being, which Dasein hears in silence and which allows Dasein to exist authentically⁴² in the text *Being and Time*, here becomes the “silent call of the earth.”⁴³ It is an openness to the earth that allows the human to create a world. In a listening and silence that allows the earth to be heard but unreified, humans can create a world. Thus the dance between the earth and the world is the dance between Being and beings. It is the continual strife that marks the two as distinct but inseparable. So when we speak of the earth in this thesis, the world is a natural implication. As humans, we create worlds, we perceive, and make narratives and histories to understand. Thus, I will specify when I refer to the world rather than the earth, but both are always implied.

place within it requires conscious building and thinking. The earth is creation, abundance and the manifestation of plants and animals. Mortals participate in the fold of the earth in that they save the earth by dwelling in and safeguarding it. See: Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 352.

³⁸ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 174.

³⁹ As a student of Heidegger, Arendt inherited from him this love and respect for the earth. As an example, see: Arendt, “Prologue,” in *Human Condition*, 1-6.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 172.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The authentic existence of Dasein revolves around a human who recognizes her own mortality and the fact that she was thrown into existence in a world amongst other humans without being consulted. It is her ability to listen to the call of being that makes it possible for the subject to authentically live with the knowledge of the life-culminating act of dying. See II.ii ss. 56 “The Character of Conscience as a Call” and ss.57 “Conscience as the call of Care” in Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 262-269.

⁴³ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 160.

We are of the earth, but the earth is also of us. Harrison furthers this argument with the question: “Because the earth has reabsorbed the dead into its elements for so many millions upon millions of years, who can any longer tell the difference between receptacle and contents?”⁴⁴ It is not commonly noted in Western narratives, as it is in traditional aboriginal ones, but when we walk upon the earth, we walk upon our ancestors. Those we loved, those we hated, those known and unknown who have come before us are literally the ground on which we stand. The earth is our history and we in turn will become the earth for generations to come.

The line between the physical and the metaphysical connection between the body and the earth necessarily begins to blur. The physical body returns to the earth; the earth shelters the living physical body; the body as image endows the earth with a world; the earthly world gives the body as image history and collective memory. Physically, we need the earth to survive. Metaphysically, the earth upholds and stores our historical past and makes available to us the possibility of our future. We are herein reminded of Arsic’s suggestion that the real and the irrational or metaphorical can indeed be the same thing, or that our day to day lives and not just literature, can be imbued with magical realism.⁴⁵ The meaning structures and symbols are built upon the physical realities and the materiality of these realities is in turn reinforced by the symbols. Harrison further argues that it is through the connection to the earth that subjectivity has the possibility to continue after life:

It is only because their bodies have a place to go that their souls or images or words may attain an afterlife of sorts among the living. We should be infinitely grateful, therefore, for the hiding and receiving power of this terraqueous globe, which Michel Serres, reflecting on the image of Jules Verne’s dog, rightly calls “a tabernacle, a receptacle for all decompositions.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Harrison, *Dominion*, 1.

⁴⁵ Arsic, 3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The body is housed in the earth after death and as such, the earth becomes the reminder of the deceased. This is why, as mentioned in the introduction, artists and poets can find the deceased everywhere in the surrounding earth. The deceased subject literally and figuratively becomes the tall grass and the autumn rain.

Arendt links this vitalist philosophy of natural life to the Nietzschean *eternal return*⁴⁷ in a continual recycling of matter, renewal and decay, as an earth in which everything, quite literally, materially continues to happen over and over again. But Arendt notes that the exception to this Nietzschean assertion of eternal return is the individual human life. While the matter of the earth is forever recycled and recurring, a specific human is only once. Through her world-making capabilities, the human has the ability to stand out from the flow of eternal recurrence and create something genuinely new. This is evident in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* when the shepherd bites off the head of a snake that has crept down his throat: "he bit with a good bite! He spat far away the snake's head - and sprang up. No longer a shepherd, no longer a man, a transformed being surrounded by light, *laughing!* Never yet on earth had any man laughed as he had laughed."⁴⁸ Nietzsche alerts his reader that the Shepard's tale is an allegory, a riddle that must be solved: "Solve for me this riddle that I saw, interpret to me the vision of the most solitary man."⁴⁹

Arendt's analysis of the eternal return is a possible answer to this riddle. The snake or the ouroboros is the embodiment of the eternal return and by grabbing onto the shepherd, it demands he take part in the material natural recurrence of all life. Fearful and unable to free himself, the shepherd is prepared to move from life to death, attached to the snake that eats its own tail. But instead, the shepherd, upon Zarathustra's urging, defies the eternal return and steps out into the

⁴⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 97.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Classics, 1961), 180.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

action of human kind in a laughter that is genuinely new. So while nature or the earth continues on forever in an eternal return, the human being in the world has the possibility of stepping out of this return for the short span between birth and death and creating something genuinely new through action, speech and thought.

The paradox of being a human is that we are necessarily eternal recurrence but also radically unique and unrepeatable. We are a part of the earth's cycle but also have moments where we stand out apart from that cycle in the world. As the material of the earth, forever recycling back into itself, humans are bound to recur eternally. But despite this, they are simultaneously radically unique, and never to recur. This paradox reveals a profound *ontological difference* between subject as individuated worldly flesh and subject as cyclical earthly body. But rather than taking these two aspects of subjectivity as mutually exclusive, they must be understood as a very real and necessary part of the human condition. We are both the cycle of the earth and the distinct individual person.

In its connection to the earth, subjectivity continues on after the death of the human body. The earth makes the dissolution process of the subject gradual and impossible to complete. Born onto the earth amongst others, when the human body perishes, the subject changes dramatically. No longer bound by a human bodily form and no longer capable of the autonomy of voice, movement, and action, which we associate with traditional Western subjectivity, the subject transitions into the earth by fire, by water, by decomposition. The body becomes earth. The unique and individual aspects of the subject continue on in those who knew that person well. If someone has been famous in life, perhaps they carry on a long time, such as with Ulysses, or Janis Joplin, but regardless, eventually the last person who directly knew the subject will die and the particulars of that person will either fade completely or become the stuff of legend and reflect

very little of their personal identity. However, this is still not the end of the subject because they have affected numerous people in a myriad of ways, the influences of which have affected how these people act upon the earth. For example, the deceased subject affects her best friend upon the earth. The best friend, in turn, is fueled by her friend's love or humor as she interacts with her nephew. Her nephew in turn receives that humor and love and passes it along to his students when he grows up and becomes a teacher. The humor and love of the deceased continues on. This can go on for decades or even centuries, until eventually an end occurs, where the subject completely dissolves into pure materiality. Harrison explains this notion of end through architectural ruins: "Ruins in an advanced state of ruination represent, or better they literally embody, the dissolution of meaning into matter."⁵⁰ All metaphysical ideals and meaning structures will eventually decay, they will become mere matter from which new meaning emerges.

Perhaps the most poetic example of the body's physical continuation upon the earth comes not from the human animal and not from our great literature, but from the biological example of *Whale Fall*. When a cetacea dies over oceanic areas with maximal depth, it falls into the permanently black abyssal zone amongst the elusive deep sea giant squid and the giant tube worm. Due to the cold temperatures, high pressure, and scarcity of scavengers in this abyss, the whale body becomes a complex localized ecosystem that supplies sustenance to deep-sea organisms for decades. It lives on. It grows and gives until eventually, the whale body itself becomes devoid of all life giving capacity and exists as mere ruins.

As the source of our stimuli, the earth informs our senses of particular memories. Bergson explains, "I smell a rose and immediately confused recollections of childhood come

⁵⁰ Harrison, *Dominion*, 3.

back to my memory. In truth, these recollections have not been called up by the perfume of the rose: I breathe them in with the very scent; it means all that to me.”⁵¹ In this passage, we explicitly come to the connection between individual human body, material earth, and memory. It is not that the aroma of the rose is an external object that triggers in the subject a memory of childhood, but rather, the rose *is* the memory. A good friend and brother-in-law of Bergson, Proust famously uses this combination of earth, subject, and memory in *Swann’s Way* when a grown Marcel is transported back to his childhood home as he drinks a cup of tea infused with a madeleine cookie:

And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann’s park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.⁵²

I have quoted Proust at length here because not only is it a beautifully written reflection, but it furthermore links the discourse of memory, earth and body as a dynamic process that moves in all directions. The taste of the tea affects the body, the memory affects the

⁵¹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: Dover Publications, 2001), 162.

⁵² Marcel Proust, “Way by Swann’s” in *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Lydia Davis (London: Allen Lane, 2002).

taste of the tea, the body affects the structure of the memory, the memory affects the body, the taste of the tea affects the memory, the body affects the tea. There is a swirling dynamic at play in this passage where a memory emerges from the continual interplay of all three.

The earth holds our past memories and unfolds for us in the present by interacting with our sensual body. But more than this, the earth offers our future. As that which is me but is also beyond my personal individual body, the paradoxical connection to the earth constitutes that yearning towards a future beyond myself that is never fully graspable in my varying states of alienation. The material bodies or objects of the earth are that which offer a ground for the world. In the world, I am driven toward my future projects and affairs. The surrounding material objects ignite in me a Heideggerian desire to continually plan for the future.⁵³ The forest may be a future residence, the material for building a home, or the inspiration for a painting. In a myriad of ways, the surrounding earth drives the subject forward into futuration. The goals and ambitions of the subject, in short, his or her future oriented drive is informed by the world. It is in the world that we find the subject's futural mode or drive toward the future.

As noted above, the world is special because it is unique. It steps outside of the cycle of earth precisely because the human is radically unique and has a limited time upon the earth. The earth, as a stable recurring entity, unknowable and unreifiable is itself *the* marker of human time. Against the earth, the world of history is possible because of the earth's relative unchanging nature. As the gestalt image that is now a beautiful young lady, now a haggard old woman, the earth offers us the notion of time immemorial

⁵³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 321- 324 (II.IV, ss. 68a).

against which springs forth the possibility of a distinct world. This interplay of earth and world drives the human towards the future. The constant presence of the cyclical earth and the human body's return to that cycle acts as a baseline for our lives. It is the deep resonating sound of the Hindu and Buddhist "auhm," the universal sound of all existence that calls and demands we pay heed. We hear this resonating sound in the overture to Wagner's opera "Das Rheingold," the first of his ring cycle. Harrison notes that this elemental chord signifies the Rhine river "prior to the advent of gods and humans."⁵⁴ From this drone, we recognize our own inherent link to the cyclical earth's temporality, but also our possibility of human temporality: the potential to stand out between our birth and our imminent death as something wholly unique. The earth's drone and the gestalt image of the world that springs forth (and often dominates our day to day experience) drives us to act, to create, to distinguish ourselves in some way before our death. The strife of the earth and world is the force that implores the human subject to move toward the future, which will culminate in his or her own death. The earth/ world is the future.

The earth does not merely support the subject, but *is* the subject both physically and metaphysically. The earth constitutes the physical make-up of the subject and it also holds the subject's memories quite apart from the individual human body. The body *is* star dust and the rose *is* memory: I am the earth/ world, but so too is the earth/ world me. Driving me toward the future, the earth/world constitutes my motivation towards the projects and goals that shape my very being. The earth is future, the earth is the subject. With this in mind, we can now move into an exploration of memory as it works alongside

⁵⁴ Robert Harrison, "A Monologue on lightness and heaviness," in *Entitled Opinions*, (Stanford: KZSU, June 20th, 2014), 29:30- 29:40. <http://french-italian.stanford.edu/opinions/>

the body and the earth to constitute what we will here take as the assemblage of subjectivity.

Memory: Past

As the final aspect of the subject, memory links into body and earth and connects the physical to the metaphysical. Because we have already set out the links between memory and body, as well as memory and earth, we will unpack memory and briefly touch upon how all three aspects link together and then reflect upon memory as a movement into the past. This movement into the past via memory will lead us to question traditional Western notions of temporality and ultimately to ask why the subject set out is made of these three aspects and how such a subject is temporally liminal.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson argues that “memory... is just the intersection of mind and matter.”⁵⁵ Let us consider *mind* to be the individual human body and *matter* to be the totality of the earth upon which we dwell. Memory illuminates the crossroads of these two, drawing now upon earth, now upon body, weaving a narrative by which we live our lives. Embodied in a corporeal form, the ever-changing human subject moves along the plane of the earth and is constituted, guided and structured by an ever flowing cone of memories that draws from recent, prominent experiences, but also reaches farther up into the more remote memories such as Marcel’s madeleine or Bergson’s rose.

This undulating, breathing, pranic cone of memory constitutes the human subject. Bergson notes that it is not the memory of mere repetition or habit, the muscle memory, but rather another type of memory, the memory that imagines:

⁵⁵ Bergson, *Memory*, 13.

To call up the past in the form of an image, we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless, we must have the will to dream. Man alone is capable of such an effort, but even in him the past to which he returns is fugitive, ever on the point of escaping him, as though his backward turning memory were thwarted by the other, more natural memory, of which the forward movement bears him to action and to life.⁵⁶

It is not the action oriented memory of forward flowing habit and repetition that distinguishes the human as a unique subject, but rather the backward glancing memory of imagination. Bergson's notion of memory draws parallels to Arendt's notion of thinking:

thinking always deals with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense perception. An object of thought is always a re-presentation, that is, something or somebody that is actually absent and present only to the mind which, by virtue of imagination, can make it present in the form of an image.⁵⁷

Bergsonian memory is akin to Arendtian thought in that they are a backward flow of time. Both are a movement away from the forward thrusting into the future, which instead turns back on itself. They are forms of reflection, and indeed, for Arendt, this act of reflection marks the pinnacle of the human condition. Recall that Arendt charged Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi responsible for transporting thousands of Jews to their deaths during the Second World War, not as inherently wicked, but as thoughtless. His inability to think is what Arendt deemed "the banality of evil."⁵⁸

I bring Arendt's voice to the conversation because she helps to justify the need to move in alternative temporal directions. With Bergson alone, it is easy to see the subject's movement into the past as sentimental or even maudlin, rather than as a

⁵⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Social Research* 38, no.3 (1971): 423.

⁵⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 1964).

productive and necessary aspect of human subjectivity. Arendt claims that the human need to think leaves nothing tangible behind⁵⁹ and deals with things absent or invisible and seems to us to be “out of order.”⁶⁰ But it is the disordered unworldly act of thinking that “may prevent catastrophes... in the rare moments when the chips are down.”⁶¹ Our ability to move temporally backwards marks our saving grace for Arendt. It is all we have as a shield against the unthinking, violent forward flow of human time. Nor is memory always a pleasurable and nostalgic vehicle. Following his world worn but not broken protagonist Sisyphus, Camus argues that memory can be a heavy burden:

I fancy Sisyphus returning towards his rock, and the sorrows in the beginning. When the images of earth cling too tightly to memory, when the call of happiness becomes too insistent, it happens that melancholy rises in man’s heart; this is the rock’s victory, this is the rock itself.⁶²

Memory holds a danger of nostalgia, of becoming lost in what might have been. It can be the very rock that asks us to eternally climb and push if we allow it to take over. This is why we cannot move solely towards the past.

As I have shown through the three facets of human subjectivity, this notion of a dynamic temporality is key to the subjectivity I have set forth. This subject is constituted by and moves in each temporal direction. The body *is* the subject and opens in the present. The earth/ world *is* the subject and drives into the future. Memory *is* the subject and draws back into the past. Each are distinct aspects and temporal modes of our subjectivity, and yet they all contain one another. Although all modes are always active, only one of the three is the primary mode of a subject at a given time. For example, as I

⁵⁹ Arendt, “Thinking”, 421.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 425.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁶² Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, (New York: Penguin, 2005), 117-118.

stir wine into my risotto, I am taken up in a future-oriented project of sustaining and entertaining myself and my friends. But so too do I sip the cooking wine and find myself sensually stimulated in the present. Stirring the rice, my mind leaves this present and I am drawn back towards memories of sipping wine and cooking risotto with friends and lovers from the past. In this case, my action is future oriented, but it is supported and shared by the present and the past. Because this point of “time” has emerged as the under current and force of the subjectivity in this thesis, let us further probe this “out of order” dynamic flow of temporality as it constitutes the human subject.

The Subject as Temporality

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.
 Through the unknown, remembered gate
 When the last of earth left to discover
 Is that which was the beginning;
 At the source of the longest river
 The voice of the hidden waterfall
 And the children in the apple-tree
 Not known, because not looked for
 But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
 Between two waves of the sea.
 Quick now, here, now, always—
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing not less than everything)

- T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding” in *Four Quartets*

In order to understand Arendt’s “out of order” thought and what Bergson is attempting to do with memory, let us consider the flow of time from past to future:



Traditionally, in Western philosophical thought we consider time to move in a linear direction from past towards future.



This lends itself to a teleological view of time, with a clear beginning and a clear end. It is the worldly human temporality that stands out against the earth's cycles. As Shakespeare expresses in *As You Like It*, within the span of a life each human "plays many parts, /His acts being seven ages."⁶³ For the human, time moves with certainty from infancy to school days, to love, to war, to justice, to old age and finally ends in a "second childishness and mere oblivion; Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."⁶⁴ Each human has the possibility (though not the guarantee) of living out these seven stages and no person is granted the freedom to reverse this flow or experience these acts in any order but that which is set out by the constant forward flow of linear temporality. Of course, this is an undeniable truth: no person can turn back time and no human can defy death. However, this is not the whole truth nor the end of the story and Bergson complicates this flow of time.

Our memories simultaneously draw together the past and the future, opening up the present moment, the now. Bergson explains that past and future must be drawn upon simultaneously and in equality:

It may be said that we have no grasp of the future without an equal and corresponding outlook over the past, that the onrush of our activity makes a void

⁶³ William Shakespeare, *As You like It*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1997) Act 2, scene 7, lines 1040-1041.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Act 2, scene 7, lines 1063-1064.

behind it into which memories flow, and that memory is the reverberation, in the sphere of consciousness, of the indetermination of our will.⁶⁵

For Bergson, time is dynamic, circling and drawing from both past and future to open up a space of being in the present. Neither past, present, nor future is favored, but each is considered equal and simultaneously opening. The three modes of time open up as one, they act as one. Furthermore, time can flow equally in all three directions. Now time flows forward, now back, now it opens in the present. For Bergson, the temporality on which the subject is founded is based upon all three acts of time and flows in all three directions.

In the philosophical tradition, time has been an important way of understanding the human condition, particularly in modern continental thought. Since Kant's assertion in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that time is the key to our inner world and the internal apparatus through which we access the outer world, time has been a key concept in understanding our human experience.⁶⁶ In this section of subjectivity, we will examine how the subject must be understood as moving in all three temporal directions and how Bergson ultimately fails in achieving such a movement. We will set out Heidegger's temporal movement as an inversion of the Bergsonian model and argue that neither past nor future must take predominance in the flow of human temporality.

The construct of human time is tightly linked to our conception of the human condition. Why does philosophy see the subject as inherently temporal? Robert Harrison explains that if "to be human means to translate our mortality into history, as I believe it does, then one could say that the ethos or dwelling place of humanity remains mortal

⁶⁵ Bergson, *Memory*, 65.

⁶⁶ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 88. Quoted in Harrison, *Dominion*, 2.

time, which we transmute into historical durations that are themselves radically finite. We are through and through temporal in character, that is, finite, in our mode of being.”⁶⁷ In the Heideggerian sense, the human condition is a process of establishing our own temporality as distinct from the earth. This temporality does not simply characterize, but constitutes the human. The human subject is a distinct form of temporality, which through body as present opening, earth as future flowing, and memory as past reflecting, creates the world in which we live.

As mentioned above, Bergson aims to posit a subject who moves freely in all three temporal directions. Cassirer explains that for Bergson, “in the intuition of time, the three stages, past, present, and future, are given to us as an immediate unity in which no stage is differently evaluated from the others. No phase is singled out as the genuine, true, original stage- for all three are equally given in the simple meaning of time.”⁶⁸ But Cassirer questions Bergson as to whether this claim is actually substantiated in Bergson’s temporal structure. Cassirer argues that despite Bergson’s attempts at a unitary temporality, he ends up favoring the past, which ultimately destroys the multi-dimensional system of time that Bergson establishes:

If we take time not as a substantial but rather as a functional unity, as a function of representation comprising a threefold sense of direction, none of its factors may be detached from the whole without causing it to disintegrate as a whole. But it is precisely such a detachment of one factor that gives Bergson’s metaphysics its characteristic imprint. Fundamentally he recognizes only the past as originally temporal, whereas the consciousness of the future does not belong to pure temporal intuition.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Harrison, *Dominion*, 2.

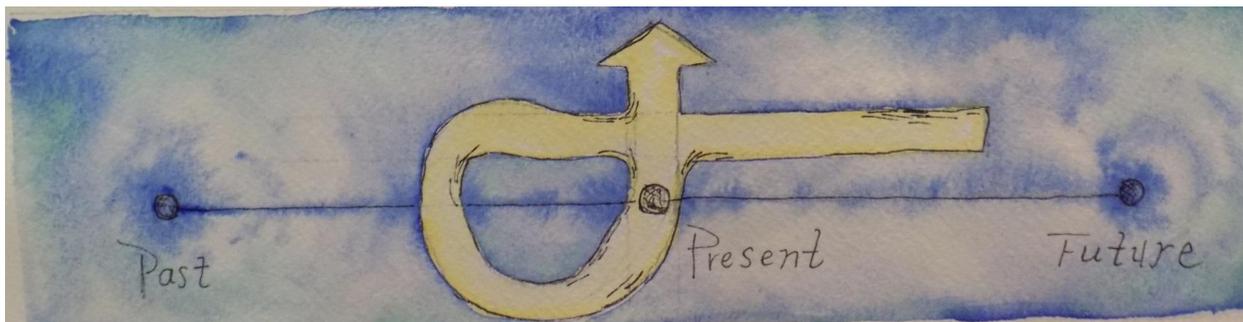
⁶⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, vol 3, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 186.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

This accusation is incredibly prescient to the analysis of Bergson that this thesis means to put forward. Cassirer charges that the structure of Bergson's temporality demands that it be functionally equal and capable of moving in all three directions. But Bergson's emphasis on the past (via memory) as the only one of the three temporal structures (past, present, and future) to construct the human subject means that ultimately, the metaphysical structure of Bergson's temporality is compromised. Again, Cassirer explains;

Despite all of Bergson's emphasis here on the "momentum of life," on the "*élan vital*," a distinctive romantic-quietist feature enters into his theory. The looking back into the past is philosophically transfigured: it is it alone that leads us into the ultimate ground of the I and into the depths of speculative cognition. Any such idealization is denied the direction toward the future: it has only a "pragmatic" and no theoretical value. Is the future, however, always given to us only as the aim of an immediate and, in the most restricted sense, practical *effective action*, or must not a purely spiritual "looking forward" [*Vorblick*], an ideal element and motive, underlie the effective action itself if it is to raise up to true force and freedom?⁷⁰

Thus, while Bergson attempts to set out a metaphysics of time that moves in all three directions, he ultimately privileges the past and so his temporality can move only backward, toward the past:



We can see this prioritization of the past via memory again and again in Bergson. As such, memory reaches into the past as *imaginative* memory and *habitual* memory reaches

⁷⁰ Ibid., 187.

back into the past in order to find the images to create a world and project into the future. We can consider this as an adaptation of the Cartesian affirmation of existence: *Memoro ergo sum*. I remember therefore I am. The subject is ontologically constituted by the past: “Memory, inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration, and thus by a twofold operation compels us, de facto, to perceive matter in ourselves, whereas we, de jure, perceive matter within matter.”⁷¹ For Bergson, it is our memory of the past that links our mind (individual body) to matter (the surrounding earth/ world) and acts as the tie that binds. Memory is the force behind a Hegelian recognition of meaning in matter, in and through matter as meaning.

Not only does the past constitute us as subjects for Bergson, it is also responsible for the illumination of existence. The past epistemologically constitutes us in the present moment by offering us knowledge and meaning; “it is from the present that the appeal to which memory responds comes, and it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory borrows the warmth which gives it life.”⁷² The body, in the present moment, is activated, as it were, by an appeal to the past. We can imagine a body slightly slumped, a mind on pause when a waft of cinnamon and apples drifts through the nostrils of the stagnant subject and suddenly the subject is activated, illuminated, reaching into the past, recollecting the childhood reward of hot apple cider after shoveling the snow from the front drive. Through the memories brought on by senses, the subject moves from mere matter to mind. In memory the subject *lives* and accesses the present moment. The emphasis on memory and the past as it ontologically founds the subject and

⁷¹ Bergson, *Memory*, 73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 153.

epistemologically gives the subject meaning leads to a recognition that Cassirer's criticism is correct. For all of his attempts at a multi-directional equi-primordial temporality, Bergson privileges the past and the subject is solely founded upon an inversion of the traditional flow of time. Time flows forever into what *was*, or as Fitzgerald suggests at the conclusion of *The Great Gatsby*, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."⁷³

Thirty years later, Heidegger cultivated this idea of an equi-primordial temporality in his text, *Being and Time*. Similar to Bergson, Heidegger sets out all three acts of time together, but unlike Bergson, Heidegger unabashedly favors the future. For Heidegger, time moves only forward. So while he sees the three ecstasies of time occurring at once, the direction, like Shakespeare's acts of life moves only toward becoming "sans everything": toward the own most possibility of my own death. In *Being and Time*, the future and the knowledge of one's own death constitutes the subject: "Thus death reveals itself as one's *ownmost, nonrelational, and insuperable [unüberholbar] possibility*."⁷⁴

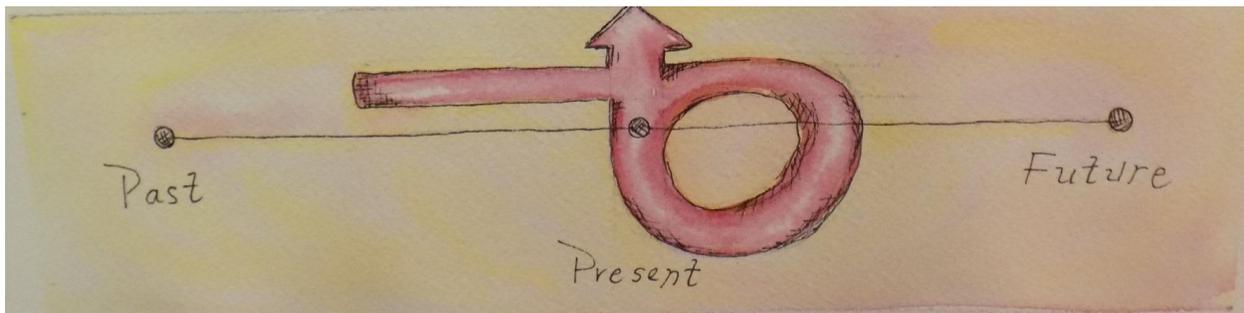
Heidegger admits that we often ignore the fact of our own death in our day to day lives, but he holds that even when we are being deceitful with ourselves about the reality of our own death, we are still very much aware that death can come for us at any time: "this evasive covering over of death is not capable of being authentically 'certain' of death, and yet it *is*."⁷⁵ Even when death is far from our minds, when we are young and feel invincible, our knowledge that we can die guides our every action. Indeed, the more

⁷³ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, (Planetebook, 2012), 193;
<http://www.planetebook.com/ebooks/The-Great-Gatsby.pdf>

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 241.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 245.

boldly we push aside the possibility of our death, the more it haunts us. Like Ebenezer Scrooge, when we dismiss this ownmost possibility, we tuck into bed at night and are haunted by the sight of our own grave stone. All that is certain in our life is that the grains in our hour glass are not infinite. This being-toward-death suggests a favoring of the future for Heidegger: “Here “future” does not mean a now that has *not yet* become “actual” and that somehow *will be* for the first time, but the coming in which Dasein comes toward itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being.”⁷⁶ The subject (or rather, *Dasein*) is future oriented, but this future orientation takes part at the same time in past and present. Continually driven forward by her ownmost possibility of death, Dasein thrusts forward from past into the future and is drawn back into the present by the call of Being, or the silent call of the earth:



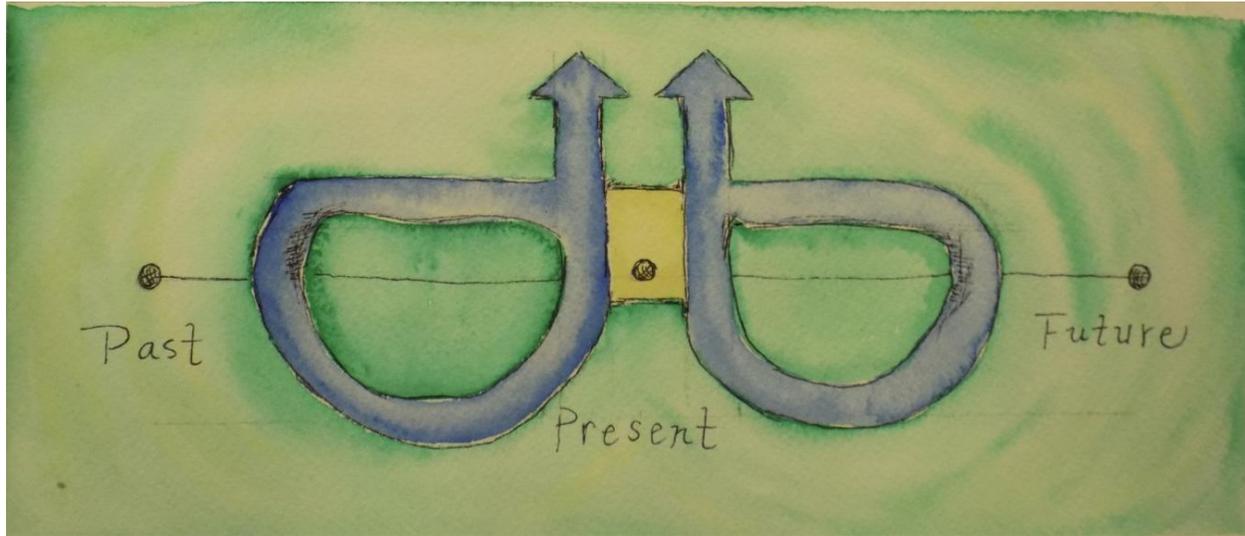
Heidegger, then, offers us the same structure of temporality as Bergson, but moves in the opposite direction. The three moments of time happen simultaneously, but the flow of time is only future oriented.

As I have established, the movement of the subject in all three temporal directions is what marks our human experience and makes us unique in a world of cyclical flow. The flow forward into the future marks our creations and projects upon the earth and in the world, the flow into the present marks a duration and Zen-like recognition of our

⁷⁶ Ibid., 311.

place and connection in our body, and the flow into the past allows for reflection and thought in the imaginative memory. If we hope to come to a true Bergsonian temporal structure in which the subject can and does phenomenologically move in all three temporal directions, we cannot use the constitution of the subject as memory (as does Bergson: in order to move in any temporal direction, the subject must first and originally move back toward past memories) nor as death (as does Heidegger: the subject only moves forward in a project-oriented drive that recognizes the possibility of its own death). This thesis differs from both Bergson and Heidegger because no particular temporal mode of the human takes predominance. Each moment holds all three temporal modes and the subject moves phenomenologically in the modes of past, present, and future. The subject, made of memory, earth, and body exists in the three equi-primordial temporal moments. The subject's time flows back into the past, into memory, which it draws forward, projecting those memories into the earthly future and experiencing those memories from the senses of the present. The subject's time flows forward, called by the aspects outside of it that constitute its own being, namely, worldly matters, built upon earthly matter, which it draws back into memories and opens up in the corporeal present moment through the sensual body. And finally, the subject's time flows and opens in the present moment, unfolding a duration that simultaneously gathers memory and earth/world into its finite and all-too-human body. In each given moment, this subject not only experiences all three modes of temporality in equality, but has the ability to move in all three directions of time. Thus, we find ourselves with a unique and liminal temporal

subject:



All three aspects of time make up the subject and realize a lucid and dynamic temporal structure. So when Bergson claims that the body is “an ever advancing boundary between the future and the past,”⁷⁷ the picture of three flowing dynamic and interweaving aspects of our subjectivity and modes of temporality begins to form as a brightly colored, shimmering quilt flapping on a clothes line: singular in its particular body, its material shape, but with patches made up of small bits and pieces of the surrounding earth and world, and bound together by memories. The subjectivity we have unearthed is a tapestry of memory.

⁷⁷ Bergson, *Memory*, 78.

Chapter Two: Intersubjectivity

We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.

- “Little Gidding,” *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot

In the last chapter, we set out the subject as comprised of a body anchoring us into the present, an earth as the condition of the future, and memory as the hearkening of the past. From this we have a shifting, dynamic and liminal subjectivity that exists in all three moments of temporality. But let us turn our attention once again to the death of the other, as this phenomenon is the reason for undergoing our exploration and we have seemingly strayed. As we noted in the introduction, the other continues on after her or his death. We find the other in the earth, in the natural environment, which is a part of that person’s subjectivity. We feel his presence in the summer sun across our face, in the flock of geese flying south across grey autumn skies, in the bright flashing lights and noise downtown, in the wine bar he loved to frequent and the coffee shop she was want to write in for hours at a time. Upon the death of the other, we find the other not only in the earth, but also in ourselves. The mixture of a certain bottle of chardonnay with my own deep inhale conjures the memory of the other. The other is imprinted not solely in the common property that is the scent of chardonnay: another person will not experience this same bewitching vision. But the memory of the other is not solely in my personal body or mind either, as it was not by my own volition, but by the scent of the wine that the other was called into presence. Imprinted upon me and upon the chardonnay, it is the mixture or the interplay of my senses and the wine that conjures the other. Upon the death of the other, we find them in all aspects of our subjectivity: in body, earth, and in memory. The death of the other reaches deep into our being and ruptures a foundational tenet of our very world. The ground upon which we

stand shifts and we change. Not superficially, but in the deepest way imaginable. It is a cavernous change best described by Tony Kushner in his play *Angels in America*:

God splits the skin with a jagged thumbnail from throat to belly and then plunges a huge filthy hand in, he grabs hold of your bloody tubes and they slip to evade his grasp but he squeezes hard, he insists, he pulls and pulls till all your innards are yanked out and the pain! We can't even talk about that. And then he stuffs them back, dirty, tangled and torn. It's up to you to do the stitching. And then up you get. And walk around. Just mangled guts pretending. That's how people change.⁷⁸

The experience of the other's death causes us to realize that there is something incredibly unique in our relationship to others. There is something originary about what happens between the I and the other. We do not invite the other to join in our world, but rather, our world is created *between* the self and the other. In the death of the other we realize the extent to which our world has been colored and created not by our self but by the *in-between* that hinges on the input of the other. *In the death of the other we realize the chink in the armor of our own subjectivity as autonomous.*⁷⁹ Our bodies do not exist in rich sensual fullness until the other's hand caresses us and opens us up into the present moment. Our future does not roll out the earth before us until the life of the other gives us something to plan for, to protect, and with whom we literally create a world. In our shared language with the other, we create memories that allow us to move into the past. We are not fashioned and built as a subject by ourselves, but always and originally through an interplay between the self and the other. When this foundation of the liminal in-between is radically altered through death, we must face the fundamental nature of the relationship between the I and

⁷⁸ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part Two: Perestroika* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994).

⁷⁹ Death is only one path through which we can recognize our ground as being outside of ourselves. Another path to this recognition is in the caress, which I unpack later in this chapter (pages 62-71). Undoubtedly, there are a myriad of other routes to this discovery, but these are the only two I deal with in this text.

the other, and therein we begin to understand the nature of our ground and the meaning of the other's death.

Without the physical presence of the other, this in-between dramatically shifts but perseveres. Before the other's death, even while I felt connected to that person, I could continue to perceive my existence in autonomy and their existence as separate. But after death, this changes. Without the other's physical body as a point of connection, one half of this in-between that has crafted my very existence is no longer present. But because the in-between belonged to each of us and each in our own separate way, the other persists. The change is marked. But it is not total. The in-between myself and the other continues in a new way. Suddenly, I recognize just how much the in-between has created. It has molded my body, my earth, my memories. In short, the in-between has created my subjectivity. In fact, I perhaps cannot speak of a subject only but also of an intersubjectivity.

The subject, as described in the previous chapter, was analyzed from the first-person singular perspective: how one lives one's own subjectivity. In this second chapter, I extend the discussion of subjectivity by arguing that intersubjectivity is significantly constitutive for subjectivity by considering the notions of *natality* as it creates earth and world, the *caress* as it creates the body, and *language* as it creates memory. I will begin with how we experience the other as that person or those people for whom we plan for the future and experience the possibility of natality. We will then move to the notion of the caress of the other and how it opens us up to our body in the present moment. Finally, language will be explored as a two-way vehicle that has always already structured our experiences and which both shepherds us back to our past memories and also ferries us away from these memories. In this way, we will set out the notion of subjectivity as a fantasy of autonomy founded on the in-between of intersubjectivity.

We will see how memory relies upon language, the body relies upon the caress, and the earth/world relies upon the natality between the I and the other. This situation of a temporally bound intersubjectivity will allow us in our final chapter to arrive at the main investigation of this work: the continuation upon the earth of the other after death.

The Rise of the In-Between of Intersubjectivity and Natality as Future

In the first chapter, we established the human being as future-oriented through the drive towards the earth, understood in terms of both the physical earth itself and the metaphysical world that opens from the subject's projection upon the earth. We also noted Heidegger's future orientation based upon the person's ownmost possibility of not being or the futural being-toward-death. In this second chapter, I argue that future orientation is conditioned by the possibility of natality *between* the self and the other. In order to explain this *in-between*, I will set out the nature of my relationship to the other in Levinas and Irigaray and link this to an Arendtian notion of natality. I will then unpack how the other is a fundamental aspect in the establishment of the world. Finally, I will explain the nature of our relation to the other and the future, not through a fear of one's own death (as in Heidegger), nor through a fear of the other's death (as in Levinas), but as a possibility of natality between the I and the other.

In his ethical essay *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas deems the *face to face* encounter an "ultimate situation,"⁸⁰ in which the other presents him or herself across an infinite transcendence where I must question myself and give an account of myself in the face of the other. Essentially, the face of the other demands attention, it is a recognition that "[m]y freedom does not have the

⁸⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 81.

last word. I am not alone.”⁸¹ Counter to Sartre’s radical *absolute freedom*, wherein each person is utterly free to make whichever choice they want, and even the glass ceiling of Beauvoir’s *situated freedom*, wherein one recognizes the limitations set upon the freedom of one body versus another (for example, the limits set upon a black body as opposed to a white body in contemporary North American civilian/ law enforcement relations), Levinas claims that my own freedom is always secondary to the freedom of the other and I recognize this through the face to face encounter. However, Levinas does not extend the category of absolute Other to all relationships. In opposition, he also maintains a *domesticated other*, who is the feminine partner to the I and does not offer a radical difference. The home and the family is a place of escape and comfort, not of demand and radical alterity.

Luce Irigaray offers a critique of Levinas’ theory⁸² that allows for a continuation of the terrifying demand of the radical other, but also permits for an alterity and transcendence through what Levinas sees as the domesticated other. This means that for Irigaray, the other I know and love can also offer transcendence and mystery through a mutual love and equal level of respect. I know the other well enough to recognize just how unknowable she truly is and love her enough to permit her the secrets and mystery that allow her to be human. When we do not allow this to those we love, we level that loved one down to our own perception. We discredit his alterity, autonomy, and his ability to surprise us. In the most extreme way, we see this in Othello. Blinded by the jealousy planted in him by Iago, Othello literally snuffs out the life of his beloved Desdemona because he cannot know for certain if she is faithful to their marriage. He denies her a personal interiority, therein denying her the human condition. When he realizes that this denial

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁸² Luce Irigaray, “The Fecundity of the Caress,” in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, 185-217 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

cannot bring him what he seeks, that he can never know for certain the longings of her heart and the actions of her past, he takes her life.⁸³ Similarly, in *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione is turned into a statue by her husband's misguided jealousy. It is only upon the return of her daughter, and more importantly, the return of her human dignity, that she returns to life as her friend Paulina entreats, "'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;/ Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,/ I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come away,/ Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him/ Dear life redeems you."⁸⁴ In a form of death that sustains her body, Hermione is reduced to a statue, to that which is less than human but holds the human form. This denial of alterity and interiority to the domesticated other is a common misstep of Western patriarchal thought, which Irigaray skillfully avoids by adapting the relationship to the domesticated other as driven not by a demand, as is the case in Levinas' radical alterity, but by a consensual love that allows for the other to meet the I in-between and create a shared threshold. Rather than the asymmetry of Levinas' alterity in which the subject must give continually to the radical other on the one hand, or receive the domesticated other in her totality on the other hand, Irigaray's other finds an in-between.⁸⁵ We can consider this as a move similar to Jean-Luc Marion's erotic reduction, in which I ask "Does anyone out there love me?" and can only find an answer in the affirmative by

⁸³ William Shakespeare, *The tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004).

⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, *A Winter's Tale*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1998), Act 5, scene 3, lines 3410- 3415.

⁸⁵ It should be noted that this is still an asymmetrical relationship for Irigaray, but one in which difference is allowed to occur and need not be suppressed into the same. Difference occurs for both parties and in this way, there is a sense of equity in the relationship, if not a totalizing equality. Stoller and Nielson explain: "While Levinas... proceed [s] from a general asymmetry irrespective of gender, Irigaray claims an asymmetry derived from sexual difference." This asymmetry based on embodied, gendered differences is, for Irigaray "an ontological category" that "cannot be transformed into symmetry." See: Silvia Stoller and Camilla R. Nielsen "Asymmetrical Genders: Phenomenological Reflections on Sexual Difference" in *Hypatia* 20, no. 2 (2005), 20.

making the decision to love first. Only by loving the other first can I discover that they also love me and experience a relief from the superfluous vanity of my own existence by way of a love that allows the I to be and also renders it incredibly different from before it loved.⁸⁶ The love of the other is a leap, in which both the I and the other are revealed. It is not an escapism nor a mere comfort but requires a boldness and an immense personal risk.

Irigaray's adaptation or addition to Levinas' alterity allows for us to avoid the demanding stifling of alterity in those we know and instead to open up to the possibility of transcendence through love. In this way, we can begin to conceive of our relationship to the other as a future-oriented drive that is more than a being towards the death-of-the-other, more than a demand or guilt towards the other; rather, it is a natality.⁸⁷ The future-oriented drive of alterity springs from a possibility to create something between myself and the other. Between the I and the other, Levinas posits a demand, which Irigaray modifies into love. The demand creates us as individuals and forces us to be who we are in the eyes of the other. Love, on the other hand, is a consensual act. It is an in-between through which both I and other contribute. It is neither *she* nor *I*, but the mixture of both. It is a phenomenology of *us*. The experience of the other in Irigaray is a communal birth of the us: "They are reborn, each for the other, in the assumption and absolution of a definitive conception. Each one welcomes the birth of the other... they love each other as the bodies they are. Not irremediably diminished by having been born in different times

⁸⁶ See Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 22 and 72. For Marion, it is in loving God that I recognize the love of God, which has always been present.

⁸⁷ It should be noted that fecundity is the goal of Levinas' domesticated other. However, this fecundity is vastly different from a mutually conceived natality, in that Levinas' I uses the domesticated other as a means to the end of fecundity, aka, the wife is a necessary erotic escapism that leads to the true alterity of the son. For more on Levinasian fecundity, see footnote 116 on page 65-66.

and places nor by having lived prior to their mutual union and generation.”⁸⁸ From this consensual interplay springs the possibility of creation. Thus, from love, we find the possibility of natality.

Hannah Arendt asserts that the highest achievement of humans happens as a form of birth or creation between people. Arendt claims that: “With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance.”⁸⁹ Similar to Irigaray’s notion that lovers experience a second birth into radically new people, Arendt sees our speech and action as acts of birth and insertion into the community of humanity. And while each person begins each action alone, it can only be brought to completion by a group and it can only occur between people, not alone:

Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively “objective,” concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arises their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the world’s most literal significance, something which inter-est, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together.⁹⁰

Every interest that humans have, even when it seems to be separate, is actually a connection to the community. Our interests are shared among others and form a web of possible manifestations of natality or creation between ourselves and others.

Arendt claims that as humans our words and deeds create a “web of human relationships”⁹¹ that is more intangible, but no less real, than the “world of things we visibly have

⁸⁸ Irigaray, 190.

⁸⁹ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 177.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

in common.”⁹² Thus, for Arendt, we are only capable of action, speech, and the second birth of inserting ourselves into the realm of human affairs through a community, through sharing an in-between with others.⁹³ In our speech, we posit or birth who we are and in our action, we create a new beginning. This marks the shift between the cyclical *earth*, which we enter upon our first physical birth and the *world* of politics and community, which we enter upon our second birth. The movement from earth to world marks the highest potential of the *vita activa* and the essence of the human condition: to live among others upon the earth and step beyond the cycle of nature in order to birth something new (an idea or a way of being) in the in-between collaboration with other humans. Arendt notes that this web of human relations complicates our actions and makes fulfilling an action almost impossible. The process of creation between the self and the other will always move beyond our own conceptions, because it is precisely by opening up and sharing with this alterity that radical new possibilities are born. Thus, the other as an unknowable and unpredictable alterity that drives us towards natality contains the possibility of both a Levinasian terror and Irigaray’s love. We cannot ever know for certain that we will receive love in return, and even if we do, we cannot know for certain that this love will yield the possibilities that we hope. As Richard Kearney suggests, the other may not be the transcendent alterity described by Levinas, but rather, may be a psychopathic murderer.⁹⁴ This not knowing is a necessary part of the fear and the risk of natality as an in-between.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The in-between weaves what Arendt calls the “web of human relationships,” which is intangible but palpable nonetheless. Curthoys explains that for Arendt, “the common world we share is manifested in the spaces between us and the media which connects us.” The in-between is what opens up a world, allows people to act and to form the web of human community through the weaving of narratives. See: Arendt, *Human Condition*, 183 and Ned Curthoys, “Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Narrative,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 32, no.3 (2002): 349.

⁹⁴ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

With the notion of alterity in Levinas and Irigaray set out and related to Arendt's natality, let us now turn to how the other is pivotal in opening up the world for the subject, followed by an explication of how this natality amounts to the future for the subject. It is through the other that a nuanced, multi-faceted world opens up for the I. This world is a complicated experience, which continually informs us that we can never have the whole truth or have the last word on anything. Following Kant, Bergson's notion of experience divides the subjective internal experience in time and the objective external experience in space without acknowledging the meeting place of the two in intersubjectivity. This chapter aims to muddy this distinction, but let us first clarify how Bergson draws this divide. He notes that when I smell a rose it is not the same as when someone else smells a rose:

To others it will smell differently. -- It is always the same scent, you will say, but associated with different ideas.-- I am quite willing that you should express yourself in this way; but do not forget that you have first removed the personal element from the different impressions which the rose makes on each one of us; you have retained only the objective aspect, the part of the scent of the rose which is public property and thereby belongs to space.⁹⁵

We are made up of a diverse compilation of memories that is unique to the individual self. These memories are, of course, influenced and colored by the other, but they are then stored by the individual alone. We cannot access the other's interiority nor they ours. The communal is the spatial external earth and the private is the temporal internal world. Thus for Bergson, the other is involved only in the external.

Paradoxically, I argue that the other is responsible for crafting both our internal and external experiences. I am in a world that has been created not by myself alone, not by the other, but rather, *between* myself and the other. All that has been created, the entirety of human natality, is a product not of myself but of my relation to the other. In many ways, the world has

⁹⁵ Bergson, *Time*, 162.

no author because each act of creation is a birth between people. Rather than Bergson's division, let us consider Arendt's web of human connectivity, which works in both the private and the public, the temporal and the spatial. Arendt's model sets out the paradox of the self wherein the other crafts, yet cannot access, my inner world; the other shares my external world and yet cannot experience that world in the same tones and intensities of my own experience. The in-between that we dare to take part in is made public for Arendt, because it creates "somebodies" who act and speak in a community. The acts and speech, the reification of these creative encounters between people, is made public in her philosophy and creates the ability for us to interact as a productive community. She allows for an inner world, but also encourages an outer world, both of which are created by the in-between. The rose's smell is specific to my own memories, but these memories have been crafted by and with the other.

The impenetrable nature of alterity is a part of what drives us toward the other despite our fear and our unwillingness to experience discomfort. Levinas explains how the other cannot be grasped:

The absolutely other is the Other... Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger [l'Etranger], the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [le chez moi]. But stranger also means the free one. Over him I have no power. He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension, even if I have him at my disposal. He is not wholly in my site.⁹⁶

There is a sense of freedom in the other because she or he exists beyond the I's totalizing understanding of the world. The other is always impenetrable. In an Arendtian framework, this impenetrability manifests in our actions. The ability to create that which is radically new is a mysterious force in the human condition: "The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to

⁹⁶ Levinas, *Totality*, 39.

perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.”⁹⁷ Each individual person is capable of creating something utterly new and in this way, each person harbors an unknowable force. We cannot know how the other will shatter, form, or change our world, but we do know that every aspect of that world has been shaped between our self and the other. We are inexplicably drawn to the raw potential for action and natality that the other contains. While Levinas and Arendt both offer a world that is, at least in part, formed with the other, Bergson does not and this divergence of my project from Bergson should be noted.

Bergson is cautious in approaching anything like a relation to the other and alterity because he sees the other as capable of shifting the I from an authentic self to a “second self.”⁹⁸ The second self does what one is supposed to do, listens to the populist ideals, and ignores Polonius’ famous advice, “this above all else, to thine own self be true and it shall follow as the day the night, thou canst not be false to any man.”⁹⁹ In recognizing the truth of the other, I lose my own truth. For Bergson, the other is not the

⁹⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 179.

⁹⁸ Balsille explains that there are “two selves in each person, the real fundamental Self which is free, and the superficial-self, which is under the law of necessity.” See: D. Balsillie, “Prof. Bergson on Time and Free Will,” *Mind: New Series* 20, no. 79 (1911), 357. This duality does not manifest as a fractured personality, but rather a personality with layers. As two sides of one coin, the two selves experience the world in very different ways, but always from within the same unified source. Bergson explains: “It is the same self which perceives distinct states at first, and which, by afterwards concentrating its attention, will see these states melt into one another like the crystals of a snow-flake when touched for some time with the finger.” As the superficial-self, one experiences things as distinct and separate. However, if one is able to tap into the deeper-self, it becomes clear that our experiences are gradations that bleed one into the next and blur the distinct lines of the superficial-self. See: Henri Bergson, *Time*, 138.

⁹⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), Act 1, Scene 3, lines 564-566.

creator of the world but rather causes the self to slip into an inauthentic relationship with the world:

When our most trustworthy friends agree in advising us to take some important step, the sentiments which they utter with so much insistence lodge on the surface of our ego and there get solidified in the same way as the ideas of which we spoke just now. Little by little they will form a thick crust which will cover up our own sentiments; we shall believe that we are acting freely, and it is only by looking back to the past, later on, that we shall see how much we were mistaken.¹⁰⁰

The sentiments of the other cloud over our own sentiments in Bergson's reading.

Heidegger speaks of this phenomenon in *Being and Time* and argues that Dasein lives inauthentically and becomes *Das Man* (or the they-self, the mass society) when it is subsumed by the inauthentic idle chatter of others. It is only in a silence or a dialogue between self and Being that authenticity can be achieved. Thus, in this case, both Heidegger and Bergson see the self as autonomous, whereas Arendt and Levinas see the self as reliant upon the other. While I will not disagree with the possibility of being subsumed by the second self in some of our subsequent worldly encounters with the other, the originary creation of the authentic self springs from a primary and formative relation between my self and the other. In the creative in-between the I and the other, each individual facet of the I is forged and the world as we know it is created. This relation to the other that brings out the second self is an event that happens in a world already created between the I and the other.

In Levinas, the other has always already created this world for us in this more primordial way: "The Other, the signifier, manifests himself in speaking of the world and

¹⁰⁰ Bergson, *Time*, 169.

not of himself; he manifests himself by proposing the world, by thematizing it.”¹⁰¹ One individual on their own can create a world of make-believe, but upon entering into a community, there must be a common understanding that will constitute what the community identifies as the world. “The presence of the Other dispels the anarchic sorcery of the facts: the world becomes an object.”¹⁰² The other allows the world to reify into a fixed and shared experience. The I and the other agree upon the facts of the world or face dire consequences. On an individual level, those who cannot agree on the facts of the world may be institutionalized, on a national level, violence breaks out between groups that cannot agree on the facts and parameters of the world, and on an international level, a disagreement of this type can lead to war.

The I does not create the world on its own, but rather, it is created between people in a discourse. The objectivity of the world is “posited in a discourse, in a conversation which proposes the world. The proposition held between two points which do not constitute a system, a cosmos, a totality.”¹⁰³ For Levinas, the world comes to us not from ourselves but from the other: “To receive the given is already to receive it as taught – as an expression of the other...”¹⁰⁴ Everything that is given to the I is the product of an in-between the I and the other. The other stands before us as a beacon of natality. They beckon us to open, to love, to fear, but always to create.

Having utilized Bergson, Levinas, and Irigaray to set out this ground work of our relationship between self and other as a well-spring of natality, let us finally link the natality between the I and alterity to the future oriented aspect of our subjectivity. In the

¹⁰¹ Levinas, *Totality*, 96.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

first chapter, we set out how the connection to the surrounding earth drives the subject toward the future. Recall that *earth* is the ontic physical material and *world* is that which humans phenomenologically make of the earth.

This future orientation toward the world is founded in-between the I and the other: that which drives every project forward is our relation to the other and potential for a natality between the I and the other. The human potential for natality arises from the in-between. Without the other, there is no freeing the self from the totalizing world of the I: “it is not I who resists the system as Kierkegaard thought; it is the other.”¹⁰⁵ Only through the influence of the other can I see the possibility to shatter the world and create something wholly new. Thus, we have the originary relation between the I and the other, wherein natality creates the world and we have the secondary relation to the other that allows our reified expectation to be smashed as something radically new is created.

Contra Heidegger, Levinas argues that ontology, or the study of being, is not originary, but rather ethics, or our relation to others, comes before all else. We are not isolated lone subjects, thrown into being on our own, but rather, we are called into being by the other. It is not until the other calls to us that we see ourselves as separate. It is the possibility of the other’s death towards which I strive, or rather, it is for the other that I live. The other literally constitutes me as a subject, calls me into being. The other molds me and demands me to be a continually giving host to her needs and in this state of continually giving I also become hostage to her every desire. Thus Levinas considers our futural orientation not towards my own death, but towards the death of the other[s]. I am constantly preparing for the possibility of the other’s death. I go about my day to day life

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 40.

serenely dreaming that the other will always be there to laugh with, to tell ideas, to argue with and live with, when suddenly I am paralyzed with the undeniable possibility that the other can die. I recognize that he or she will one day die. Selfishly, I can only wish that it shall be me who dies first and not the other. While we cannot say for certain the experience of the dead after the body perishes, we know the shattered pain of the living who mourn those lost. Even those beyond our years, our parents or grandparents, whose deaths are timely and in the natural progression of Shakespeare's seven stages of life,¹⁰⁶ leave us broken. The death of the other is the concern that drives my life.

This is not a suggestion that Levinas' humans are purely altruistic while Heidegger's subject is purely self-absorbed.¹⁰⁷ Rather than pure altruism, this Levinasian

¹⁰⁶ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 2, scene 7, lines 1040-1064.

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger's focus is incredibly solipsistic, perhaps with even a touch of megalomania in the assertion that one's own death is necessarily the pinnacle of his project, but most importantly, it lacks the understanding that there are arguably more radical shifts to experience than one's own death. Plant notes; "On Heidegger's account then, focusing on the deaths of others will inevitably distract us from the really important philosophical issues. Indeed, he has no doubt that by concentrating on the significance death has for Dasein itself, he is revealing the fundamental, universal features of death - those features which would have to ground any respectable anthropology, biology, psychology, theodicy, or theology of death." Contra Heidegger, Plant continues: "philosophers have tended to focus on the significance death has (or ought/ought not to have) for the one who dies. Thus, while the relevance one's own death has for others (and the significance others' deaths have for us) is often mentioned, it is rarely attributed any great importance to the purported real philosophical issues. This is a striking omission, not least because the deaths of others - and the anticipated effects our own death will have on those we leave behind - are normally of great importance outside the confines of academic philosophy." Solomon argues that this dismissal of the death of the other as ontologically inferior is a "morbid solipsism, a denial of the obvious in favour of an obscure and mock-heroic philosophical theory." See: Bob Plant, "The Banality of Death" in *Philosophy* 84, no. 330 (2009), 581 and 571. And see: Robert Solomon, "Death fetishism, morbid solipsism," in *Death and Philosophy*, eds. J. Malpas and R.C. Solomon (London: Routledge, 1998), 152. Of course, this lack of inter-subjectivity also hinges on the lack of embodiment that Heidegger bestows upon Dasein. Levinas rightly notes that "*Dasein* in Heidegger is never hungry." See: Levinas, *Totality*, 134. For other notable critiques of the lack of embodiment in Heidegger see: Didier Franck, "Being and the Living" in *Who Comes after the Subject?*, eds. Cadava, P. Connor,

futural projection that looks not to my own death, but to the death of the other is also self-serving. The other is the necessary alterity with which I create the world. The other's input meets my own and constitutes my subjectivity. The other is the only possibility I have of fashioning myself. Arendt tells us that "nobody is the author or producer of his own life story."¹⁰⁸ With the death of the other, a piece of that story is forever lost. With the other's death, my own narrative, my own subjectivity is radically and irreconcilably altered. I mourn for the other in his or her self but so too do I mourn for myself in the other. Thus, our subject is drawn into the future, towards the possibility of the death of the other, or in a positive sense, toward the life of the other.

The I and the other move toward the future through a joint natality, a drive to create that is more than simply our inspiration for the future, but *is* our future. And this future is *us*. In our creation and natality that springs from between the I and the other, we become *somebodies*, *a who* in the Arendtian sense. This process of becoming a somebody is not an act that takes place in the present for the I and the other alone, but rather, reaches beyond to something radically new, creating a world for the community, for the larger web of humanity and the generations to come. If we begin from a societal focus on autonomy, striving for this type of glory can seem self serving, but when we consider a communal way of being, it is only through such a creative striving that we are given new possibilities for the *what* and the *who* of a human. The natality between the self and the

and J. Nancy (London: Routledge, 1991), 144. Also, David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 52.

Heidegger's response to this criticism is documented by Askay, who notes: "while our bodily being is essential to our being-in-the-world, it is our being-in-the-world (our openness to that which addresses us in the clearing, our dwelling as ecstatic being, our understanding of being, etc.) which is primordial from an ontological perspective." See Richard Askay, "Heidegger, the body, and the French Philosophers" *Continental Philosophy Review* 32 (1999), 33.

¹⁰⁸ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 184.

other also encompasses the temporal moments of past and present, but these two modes are secondary to the future. While creation is always looking forward toward that which is creating, it is also leaning upon the bodily actions between myself and the other with whom I am creating in the present moment. Furthermore, future-oriented natality also leans upon the memories of the past, communicated by language between the I and the other, upon which we can ground our shared world and our creative plans for the future. Thus, future orientation upon the earth towards the world and its projects is founded upon the possibility of natality between the I and the other. My drive towards the future is always a drive of natality with the other.

The Caress: Present

In the previous chapter, we argued that the individual human body brings us into the present moment. It holds back the curtains of the past and the future and through the body, we can enter into this moment, this breath, this now, this sensation. We can see this in yoga and meditation exercises where the practitioner comes into the present through focusing on the body's steady breathing. But what gives us our body? How does the human receive the body? In a material primordial way, we receive the body from our mother, who has created it with our father. There are already necessarily at least two others in the process of creating our physical form. Once the other has given us our body in an ontic, physical way, they re-give it to us over and over through what Levinas calls the *caress*. In the present section, we will set out the definition of the caress for Levinas, and how Irigaray adapts this notion in order to maintain alterity. I will argue that the caress gives us our own body, as flesh, in a recognition that it is not solely our own

autonomous possession, but rather a shared experience between myself and the other. Finally, I will conclude by situating the caress as the opening of the present moment.

Vastly different from merely touching, in Levinas, the caress opens up our body in the present moment. Consider incidentally touching elbows or arms with someone on a city bus. We feel that touch as we feel the bus seat beneath. It is undeniably present, but it is almost inanimate. Compare this to holding a loved one's hand before they go into surgery, or kissing the face of your newborn child.¹⁰⁹ As humans, we are able to caress, to open ourselves up to that which we caress, be it animal, plant, or another human. But it is only the other human that can truly reciprocate. In this pairing, "the I springs forth without returning, finds itself the self of an other."¹¹⁰ Levinas refers to the corporeal caress as the product of the erotic relationship.¹¹¹ Let us consider this notion of the erotic as all forms of loving touch and not simply romantic love. In the caress, "the body quits the status of an existent"¹¹² and infinity is opened up to the Levinasian subject.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Prabhu explains the importance of the caress in Levinas: "One of the remarkable ways in which Levinas 'explains' or opens up our thinking of this unknowable entity is by describing in the form of a phenomenology, the encounter of otherness beyond the other's self, in the tenderness of the caress actualized in erotic love." See: Anjali Prabhu, "Eros in Infinity and Totality: A Reading of Levinas and Fanon" *Levinas Studies* 7 (2012), 132.

¹¹⁰ Levinas, *Totality*, 271.

¹¹¹ Prabhu explicates eros through the notion of Levinas' erotic love; "erotic love provides an important theoretical move for actualizing, philosophically, a transcending of totality toward infinity." It is in eros that the subject can move from the totality of day to day life toward transcendent infinity. See: Prabhu, 128.

¹¹² Levinas, *Totality*, 258.

¹¹³ This infinity represents the possibility of God for Levinas, but also the domain of the other. In his reading the two are not mutually exclusive, but just the opposite: the other is the only avenue through which I can access the possibility of infinity, the possibility of the divine. Prabhu explains that "[f]or Levinas, infinity can be God, but it is by definition radically and absolutely other, such that it cannot be known, named by any specific term, nor totalized by thought." Infinity is the counterpoint to totality, which defies the integration back into the economy of the same. We live in totality and are beckoned by the other toward infinity. See: Prabhu, 129. Or, as Min states, for Levinas, "The only model of transcendence in the world is

While Levinas offers a jumping off point, the notion of the subject pursued in this paper is more about a *love* between the self and the other, as suggested by Irigaray in her ethics, than about the *demand* that Levinas posits in his ethics. In her critical analysis of Levinas, Irigaray extends the Levinasian view of the face: “Lovers’ faces live not only in the face but in the whole body.”¹¹⁴ The Levinasian notion of the face is the site of alterity, transcendence, and self-reflection through the eyes of the other. By shifting this site from the face to the entire body, Irigaray opens up the possibility of transcendence through the hands, the fingers, the lips. In defense of Irigaray’s inclusion of the body as a site of ethical imperative, let me recall a personal experience from years ago: Sitting down at a subway stop before dawn early in the winter morning, I am arrested by the calloused, work worn hands of the man on the bench beside me. The care he has taken to clean under each finger nail, the smell of the pungent lemon soap still hangs in the air. I never saw his face, but his hands acted as Levinas’ face. I could see how hard he worked, how he had shaved and cleaned in the black cold of a New York winter’s morning. I still think about him years later. I still feel that I somehow know him, that there is something indescribable that I owe to him. Through his hands I experienced Levinas’ concept of the face. Levinas already sets us up for this possibility of an alterity beyond the face through his notion of the caress between lovers:

The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it *were not yet*. It searches, it forages. It is not an intentionality of its closure but of its search: a movement unto the invisible. In a certain sense it *expresses* love, but suffers from an inability to tell it.¹¹⁵

that of the Other.” See Anselm Min, “Naming the Unnameable God: Levinas, Derrida and Marion,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 60, no. 1 (2006), 101.

¹¹⁴ Irigaray, 193.

¹¹⁵ Levinas, *Totality*, 257- 258.

From this passage, we can see Irigaray's jump from the face to the entire body when it concerns lovers. It is only through the body that the mind or spirit can be accessed. In the body we catch a glimpse of the radical alterity of other human beings. In our body, we interact with the bodies of others. The body is our vehicle to the possibility of intersubjectivity. Through the face, the body, the caress we can reach others, we can interact with others in a deeply profound and transcendent way.

With Levinas and Irigaray's notions of the caress set out, let us turn to how Levinas posits the caress as an escapism that loses alterity, while Irigaray maintains alterity in the caress. For Levinas, the caress leads the subject to vacate his or her own body, and in so doing to fly from the world. There is an unworldly power to the caress that is incredibly human and interior but also a danger to the political realm and the community of human beings. It is with this in mind that Levinas distinguishes the caress as a mere escapism or a navel gazing transcendence and not the true alterity of the absolute other's ethical imperative. He explains and overcomes this problematic aspect of the caress through a traditional patriarchal family structure: The masculine I escapes from day to day life into the transcendence of the feminine alterity. The domain of the feminine is the home, the space of dwelling. The feminine other constructs and upholds this dwelling, which in turn is ruled by the masculine I. From the space of dwelling, the feminine is folded back into the male I in a merger that pulls Levinas' relation of the male to the female into a variation of the Hegelian synthesis. There is no real difference here because it is an alterity that can be subsumed and controlled. Thus, the realm of the home as feminine domain is posited by Levinas as one of mere escapism from the external world and not true alterity.¹¹⁶ In

¹¹⁶ Furthermore, it should be noted that the reason the feminine caress is redeemed is that it is a means to the end of procreation. The feminine caress, in its domestic alterity brings about

this way, Levinas overcomes the problem of the caress, namely its anti-political and thus potentially anti-ethical nature. But something is lost in not allowing the caress to take part in the ethical landscape.¹¹⁷

In a response to Levinas, Irigaray claims that rather than the caress drawing us out of the world, it has the potential to create a threshold between the I and the other.¹¹⁸ In this way, the lovers create a threshold of flesh, in which they share a space of infinity grounded in the totality

the birth of the son who is both I and radical other. See: Levinas, *Totality*, 278. Engaging with this question of fecundity in Levinas, Oliver points to the gap between feminine other and son: “we might wonder why the relationship with a lover does not provide the same kind of uniqueness as the father-son relationship. Strangely enough, it seems that for Levinas the feminine other is neither radically other nor the same, and both conditions are required for the uniqueness identified with the father-son relationship. It is as much the son’s sameness as the son’s difference that engenders the uncanny otherness experienced by the father in this relationship. While the feminine other may be unique and chosen by her lover, she is neither other nor the same because she is not fully human. For Levinas, the fecund relationship with a woman has its goal in the child, more particularly, a son. The paternal relationship is higher than the lover’s relationship because it is social.” See Kelly Oliver, “Fatherhood and the Promise of Ethics”, *Diacritics* 27, no. 1 (1997), 50-51.

¹¹⁷ By violently subsuming feminine alterity into the masculine and thus creating a feminine person devoid of all subjectivity and difference, Levinas gives himself the grounds to maintain what Hanson refers to as “an almost stubborn insistence that the relationship with feminine alterity is simply not paradigmatic and does not have the same ethical force as the relationship with the “Other,” generally designated with a capital O.” Hanson suggests that it is possible instead to view the relationship to the feminine as a “first among equals”. It is not more or less important, but sets a template for all other relationships. See: Jeffrey Hanson, “Woman as first among Equals: A Subversive Reading of Domesticity in Totality and Infinity,” *Levinas Studies* 9 (2014): 80 and 88.

¹¹⁸ Walsh tells us that for Irigaray, “sexual difference, rather than sexual equality, provides the conceptual key to understanding, and perhaps even overcoming the patriarchal oppression of women.” For Irigaray, the difference of women cannot be made to fit the male subject’s mold but must be allowed to exist in difference. Thus, hers is not an equality based critique of the very idea of radical alterity or difference between the genders, but rather a critique of *how* Levinas implements this difference. Walsh explains the nuances of this gender problem as it is constructed in *Totality and Infinity*; “Levinas’s masculine lover achieves his onto-theological transcendence through the invention of a patriarchal genealogy that manages to efface the maternal and the feminine and construct the material and the divine as identical to the one and only masculine self.” See: Lisa Walsh, “Between Maternity and Paternity: Figuring Ethical Subjectivity,” *Difference: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12, no.1 (2001): 80 and 85.

of their bodies. Here, one can dwell with the other in a shared space of difference: “A qualitative threshold makes it possible for love to endure. For the lovers to be faithful? When they do not obey, the threshold wears out. The house of flesh which lets them remember each other, call to each other- even at a distance- is destroyed.”¹¹⁹ The love born of the erotic encounter creates a sacred dwelling shared by the lovers. Unreified but accessible within the totality, this dwelling is a moveable feast nourished by faith in one another.

Rather than a counterpoint or a danger to ethics, the caress becomes the harbinger of a lasting ethics and alterity in Irigaray's reading. The caress brings about the founding relationship to alterity from which all others are built. In the originary caress of the parent, or any subsequent caress, we connect profoundly to the other as Other. They are not the I and yet they open up the body of the I. The other's caress unites me to the other, “dissolving the in-between” and simultaneously makes me recognize the limits of such a merger. Like Aristophanes in *The Symposium*, I long to find the other's body and mend it to my own, becoming whole. But the other's body is, as Helena finds in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, “mine own and not mine own.”¹²⁰ The other's body defies my grasp in this paradox of being both alienated and at home. Thus, the caress opens the possibilities but also shows us the limits of a connection to the Other.

In this reading, there remains a sense of alterity in the caress and the undoing of the self.

Irigaray explains the role of the caress between lovers:

Without paralysis or violence, the lovers would beckon to each other, at first from far away. A salutation that means the crossing of a threshold. Pointing out the space of a love

¹¹⁹ Irigaray, 214-215.

¹²⁰ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, eds. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Park, 2004), Act 4, scene 1, lines 1750-1751: “And I have found Demetrius like a jewel, / Mine own, and not mine own.”

that has not yet been made profane. The entrance into the dwelling or the temple, where each would invite the other, and themselves, to come in, also into the divine.¹²¹

Irigaray calls upon the human creation of a dwelling or a temple and skillfully places this metaphor into the erotic relation between lovers. For Irigaray, the temple of transcendence is a Levinasian connection to another human being. But unlike Levinas, Irigaray's other need not force a shameful and shocking experience upon the I in order to glimpse a trace of the divine. Levinas requires this abject fear and repulsion towards the Other in order to truly have the experience of the trace of God. The Other must be so radically beyond my world that I realize the divine unfathomability surrounding my encounter with the Other. But Irigaray suggests that the experience of the Other need not always be of this ilk. The caress can be more than an escapism, it can be the possibility of ethics through a love that begins in the caress. "This gesture, which is always and still preliminary to and in all nuptials, which weds without consum(mat)ing, which perfects while abiding by the outlines of the other, this gesture may be called: the touch of the caress."¹²² This ethical alterity is founded on the caress of an other and experienced as an awakening of the body in its presence and vast possibilities.

Having set out the notion of caress in both Levinas and Irigaray and investigated how these two thinkers respectively forbid and allow alterity in the caress, let us turn to the Levinasian notion that the body quits its status as existent under the caress of the Other. This is an aspect of the caress that will allow us to follow Irigaray by ultimately positing the caress as the in-between myself and the other. In turn, this will open up the caress to a becoming in the present moment that exists in the realm of in-between. Contra Levinas, this paper argues that the

¹²¹ Irigaray, 207.

¹²² Ibid., 186.

body is *given* in the caress and not taken away. Irigaray counter's the disappearance of the body in the Levinasian caress:

as he caresses me, he bids me neither to disappear nor to forget but rather to remember the place where, for me, the most intimate life is held in reserve. Searching for what has not yet come into being for himself, he invites me to become what I have not yet become. To realize a birth that is still in the future. Plunging me back into the maternal womb and beyond that conception, awakening me to another birth—as a loving woman.¹²³

In this way, we understand the caress as an opening up of pure potentiality between the I and the other. It is a rebirth. It is not that the body disappears per say, but rather that it becomes open to *becoming*. No longer merely a set, static entity, the body realizes its potential and raw possibility in the caress. Thus, the caress draws our physical form into recognition of its own connection to the surrounding bodies of the earth. Deleuze explains this phenomenon via Spinoza: “I only ever know the mixtures of bodies and I only know myself by way of the action of other bodies on me and by way of mixtures.”¹²⁴ The caress of the other gives us our body alongside the recognition that our body has never been what we had thought. It radically alters our experience of the body as it becomes simultaneously my own and the other's and no one's.

In short, the experience of the caress, is *la petite mort*, a small taste of what it is for the other to die. It is a mind boggling recognition that the body is not its own ground. Passionate lovers can literally lose themselves (their *I* as ground) in the caress, which leads to a madness or a forceful desire to regain their own ground by any means necessary, such as we see in the love of Verlaine and Rimbaud. Verlaine can only take back his own ground by freeing himself of Rimbaud. In this case, by literally shooting him. But this loss of ground, while frightening, need not lead to violence or a sense of groundless unworldliness. Rather, it can educate us regarding

¹²³ Ibid., 187.

¹²⁴ Gilles Deleuze, “Spinoza 24/01/1978,” in *Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze* (Tous droits réservés. v.1.0, 2016): <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/14>

the reality of our relationship between the self and the other as foundation of the self. As we come to terms with our reliance on the other and the *world creation* that the other performs with us, we gain a deeper recognition of our need for community, politics, and ethics. We can use this world changing revelation to recognize our subjectivity as less autonomous than we initially assumed and to launch ourselves into a new notion of the subject. The caress brings about a shocking shift of ground, but it need not be only destructive. It can also be a vital and creative leap into a new conception of our very being. The caress does in a sense draw us out of our body, but only to show us that we have been incorrect to assume that our body is our own. Instead, we find our body as given to us by the caress in-between the I and the other.

The caress is the in-between that is our experience not merely of the body or the displacement of the body as sole ground. Rather, the caress is the present moment. It is through the caress that the body opens up in the now. The caress of the other implores, and the I stands before the choice to open up into the present or to deny the love and remain aloof. The caress opens the body, asks the subject to feel the vital flow in-between itself and the other. It opens up what Irigaray terms a threshold of flesh. This qualitative threshold, this house of flesh, is a recognition of the full potential of the physical body at the very limits of its physical frame. It is the space in which I am fully embodied and through this embodiment share the force of pure presence: “The one for the other, messengers of a future that is still to be built and contemplated. The one for the other, already known and still unknown. The one for the other, mediators of a secret, a force, and an order that also touches on the divine.”¹²⁵ The world slows down, the senses become hyper perceptive, the breath flows in and out, the caress unfolds the present as neither my own nor the other’s but in an exchange that does not merely *give* presence but *is*

¹²⁵ Irigaray, 166.

presence. Additionally, the caress contains a whisper of future-oriented natality, of sheer possibility in its utter presence: it generates a pathway to the future. In the caress of the other, my body opens up to the very limits of its possibility and recognizes the potential to create: to make that which is radically new. The caress also contains my past-oriented memories and the language (both verbal and sensual) that I have shared with others. It gathers these memories and words around the present moment as a foundation and a lens of perception in the present caress. Gathering the forces of the past and the future, the caress is an opening in the present. It gives us our own body in a new way. It makes possible. It cracks open the present and stands firmly in the flesh before the world as an intersubjective dynamic between myself and the other.

Language: The Past

“I was gathering images my whole life, storing them away, and forgetting them. Somehow I had to send myself back, with words as catalysts, to open the memories out and see what they had to offer.”

- Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine*

Memory is the path to the past and language forges this path. Our memories are incredibly personal and create a rich and layered subject. Through the other, language is shared, taught, explored and pushed to its limits. In a shared language, the other offers me the tools to form memories, to clarify and sharpen them with more and more exact words. Bergson tells us that “a word has an individuality for us only from the moment that we have been taught to abstract it.”¹²⁶ Only by interacting with an other, learning not just the word itself, but how to move and create with the word, can I begin to form my own words and craft my own memories. Furthermore, the words and moments shared between myself and the other color my memories

¹²⁶ Bergson, *Memory*, 118.

with a distinct tone specific to that particular person. In this section on our relationship to the past, I will argue that language acts as an originary creative force but paradoxically, it also drives us away from the originary experience of the other by demanding a reified definition of all objects and people. Language necessarily implies a *what* and not the ontological difference of a *who*. It necessarily rejects the un-nameable because its very essence is to name. Thus language creates and leaves no traces of its origin. I will set out how language draws us away from our originary experience of our lives in Bergson and, paradoxically, how it also offers us a path back to that experience (in Heidegger), and how, if we follow Levinas, language in its paradoxical complexities, acts as an interconnection, or an in-between the I and the other. Finally, I will unpack how language is oriented to the past and memory.

Let us begin with Bergson, whose philosophy is exemplary in explaining how language can be a force that draws us away from the experience of the other and shared memories. Bergson's stance on language seems paradoxical to what this thesis will eventually argue: that language creates an in-between the I and the other, which drives our orientation to the past. But Bergson offers us an inroad to the paradox of language: it is both that which drives us away from the other and that which connects us to the other. Unlike the so-called linguistic turn of philosophers shortly after his time, Bergson is extremely critical of language.¹²⁷ A student of

¹²⁷ This neglect of language in Bergson has been a source of much scholarly critique. Mullarkey notes: "if Bergson is a neglected philosopher today, it is because language plays a minor role in his conception of the world." Language and its importance in creating both the external worlds in which we live and structuring our most internal existence has been the hallmark of post-Bergsonian philosophy of the 20th and 21st century. See: John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 152. Another critique from Zahavi claims, "Bergson might be faulted for operating with too narrow an understanding of both conceptualization and language." Zahavi continues that Bergson seems to miss out on linguistic nuance; "Language can have a multiplicity of forms, possess a force and mobility that enables it to articulate the subjective without necessarily violating it in the process..." See Dan

Bergson, T.S. Eliot sets out the debilitated inability of language to articulate the human condition in his cynical modern love poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”. Prufrock observes, “it is impossible to say just what I mean.”¹²⁸ Prufrock is stunted in his ability to connect to others through language, and he feels the violence inherent in the language of others:

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?¹²⁹

Eliot notes that this poem is a direct product of reading Bergson’s work.¹³⁰ Indeed, for Bergson, “every language, whether elaborated or crude, leaves many more things to be understood than it is able to express.”¹³¹ Bergson offers us a view of language that alienates and draws us away from both internal and external connections to our own self and to the other. Language reifies and in so doing, kills the liminal, dynamic experience that it expresses.¹³²

In unpacking Bergson’s use of language, it can be helpful to consider Arendt’s distinction between earth and world. For Arendt, world is a celebrated shift from humans as laboring servants bound to the whims of the earth into *homo faber* who creates the world and masters the earth. This is a shift from being cogs in a cyclical natural system to standing out as individual

Zahavi, “Life, Thinking, and Phenomenology in the Early Bergson,” in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael R. Kelly (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 126.

¹²⁸ T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” in *Collected poems, 1909-1962* (London, Faber & Faber, 1963).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ For more on Eliot’s Bergsonian influence, see: Donald J. Childs, *From Philosophy to Poetry: T.S. Eliot's study of knowledge and experience* (New York, Palgrave, 2001), 68.

¹³¹ Bergson, *Memory*, 125.

¹³² See Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 83: “Bergson describes the superficial layer of consciousness as a kind of crust of language and symbols that covers over living feelings. At moments of strong passion, our energies break through the crust.”

human beings. But for Bergson, this shift, which is the shift into language, entails being violently pulled out of the *durée*, or the sense of openness in pure duration. Bergson notes the severe boundaries that language enforces, and while these boundaries can be helpful in some cases, they can be extremely detrimental in others: “In short, the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element on the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness.”¹³³ It is our most intensely experienced moments that the word defies. Be they private moments, such as pausing under a cherry blossom tree in the springtime to drink in the tree or public moments, such as protesting for and speaking about a cause in which you believe, there are no words for these intensities and to slap a word upon them is to deny the unique experience and make it a reified commercialized common event.

Simply put, “language is not meant to convey all the delicate shades of inner states.”¹³⁴ The objectifying act of language separates and makes common all things until they move from the *durée* into separate reified boxes: “A moment ago each of them was borrowing an indefinable colour from its surroundings: now we have it colourless, and ready to accept a name.”¹³⁵ For Bergson, the true self is made of a series of shimmering and overlapping intensities and memories, dynamically circling and bleeding into one another. This notion of the self is not cohesive with language, but rather it is destroyed, muffled, or at the very least repressed by words.

[A]s we dig below the surface and get down to the real self, do its states of consciousness cease to stand in juxtaposition and begin to permeate and melt into one another, and each to be tinged with the colouring of all the others. Thus each of us has his own way of loving and hating; and this love or this hatred reflects his

¹³³ Bergson, *Time*, 132.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

whole personality. Language, however, denotes these states by the same words in every case: so that it has been able to fix only the objective and impersonal aspect of love, hate, and the thousand emotions which stir the soul.¹³⁶

The delicate nature of our self is annihilated by language and when we attempt to articulate our inner lives we are struck dumb. As Prufrock observes in the face of the utter impossibility of language, “I should have been a pair of ragged claws, scuttling across the floors of silent seas.”¹³⁷

This picture of language painted by Bergson is admittedly quite grim and thus far, language does not seem to be an adequate vehicle through which to access memory or our link to the past. But let us note that Bergson’s (as well as Proust and Eliot’s) method of expressing these inadequacies of language is language itself.¹³⁸ This points to the subtext of language: it also has the ability to lead us back to that which is closer to me than I am to myself.¹³⁹ Language assists in the flight from community into self and it also sets out the way back again. Or, as Harrison notes, “[e]very reader or listener who reactivates the semantic content of the literary work performs an act of prosopoeia, that is, a reverbalization of the text through a transfer of his or her voice to its otherwise dead letter.”¹⁴⁰ Even though there is necessarily always something dead in the linguistic (particularly literature), it also always carries the possibility to come alive again through a diligent reader. We can see that for Proust and Eliot, this happened through reading the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 164.

¹³⁷ Eliot, *Prufrock*.

¹³⁸ As Balsille points out, “The author himself laments the inadequacy of language to express reality from the point of view he claims to have reached, and warns his readers of the necessity of making a vigorous effort of introspection if they would verify for themselves the contents of his system.” While the verification of the system requires effort, the experience of *durée* itself is in opposition to intellectual effort. See: Balsillie, 357.

¹³⁹ This notion of that which is closer to me than myself is Augustine’s explanation of our relationship to God. See: Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 43.

¹⁴⁰ Harrison, *Dominion*, 153.

words and works of Bergson. And when we ourselves read these three thinkers, the dead letter may lift off of the page for us as well.

Bergson reflects on the role of the novelist as an anti-linguistic movement: “We estimate the power of a novelist by the power with which he lifts out of the common domain, to which language has brought them down, feelings and ideas to which he strives to restore, by adding detail to detail, their original and living individuality.”¹⁴¹ Bergson’s view of language as masking over the self is similar to Heidegger’s notion of *idle chatter* in *Being and Time*, where the subject (or *Dasein*) is made to act and experience life as a member of a homogenous mass culture and not as a unique individual.¹⁴² Heidegger counters this notion of idle chatter with the notion of openness to Being. In this openness, the dialogue between subject and Being involves a silence that is listening, hearkening, and finally perhaps speaking.¹⁴³ These spoken words are poetic and precise, they communicate something deeper and closer to the Bergsonian self. These words are capable of creation between the subject and Being.

In his later text, “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger writes: “Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech.”¹⁴⁴ Here we see Heidegger shift from the Bergsonian notion of language that coincides with his inauthentic and self-denying idle chatter into the paradoxical subtext of Bergson’s words, wherein the dead letter comes alive and language opens up an in-between two subjects in which

¹⁴¹ Bergson, *Time*, 164.

¹⁴² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 161.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 262-269.

¹⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 217.

memories can be created and accessed. Because this aspect of language in Bergson remains unspoken and only implied in a meta-reading of his work, we will continue along this path with Heidegger. In the above quotation, Heidegger is saying that poets (those who think and those who create with words) create worlds; they care for and maintain the worlds they have created.¹⁴⁵ The job of the poet is this silence and openness through which she experiences a higher power or a source of inspiration beyond herself.¹⁴⁶ Epistemologically, this is undoubtedly a religious turn, but Heidegger does all that he can not to make it about a God or a religion, but rather about the possibility of a creative ontological moment that happens through the human but is also beyond the human's control. He refers to this ontologically creative force beyond man as "Being". Thus, for Heidegger, language is "the house of the truth of Being"¹⁴⁷ and can only be accessed when we step into a nameless silence or an unworldliness that allows for a recognition of language as a home or a world for humanity.¹⁴⁸

Later in the essay Heidegger states, "As the destiny that sends truth, Being remains concealed. But the world's destiny is heralded in poetry, without yet becoming manifest as the

¹⁴⁵ In defense of this Heideggerian union of world and language and against the Bergsonian (although without specific reference to Bergson) notion of the poverty of language, Hatab argues that "language and world are coextensive. 'World' is a context of meaning, and meaningful experience is co-extensive with language. Mystical union with God or nature remains a world, a context of meaning, albeit a radically altered meaning. Joy, love, power, beauty, etc., remain essential aspects of such experiences and are so expressed." See: Hatab, 54.

¹⁴⁶ Marion refers to this space between saying and silence as a discourse of praise, which Min explains, "conjoins the rigor of a precise language and the assurance that it maintains and travels through distance." This is an important step because it notes that it is not an either/ or situation of two polar choices. Rather, there is the possibility of both. See: Min, 108.

¹⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 223.

¹⁴⁸ Kirsch refers to Heideggerian poetry as "a contemporary version of the medieval via negative: only what cannot be said is worth saying." See: Adam Kirsch "The taste of Silence" in *Poetry* 191, no.4 (2008), 346.

history of Being.”¹⁴⁹ The origins of all history, of the narratives woven by the web of human relationships¹⁵⁰ begins in poetry. Before there is a possibility of the world, the poet carves out a space with a word and they fill the space with objects by naming them; the artists arrive and diversify the objects; the historians arrive and document the movement of these objects; the philosophers arrive and speculate upon the nature of these objects.¹⁵¹ But it is the poet capable of thinking who creates this world, who gives this world objects and who is capable of protecting or guarding this world. Thus, in a refined and thoughtful way, we can overcome the reified limitations of language through an open, poetic language.¹⁵² By allowing silences and openness, we can access the self on a deeper, less superficial level. But while this Heideggerian notion of

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 242.

¹⁵⁰ This notion is taken up by Hannah Arendt in her own philosophical explorations. Kristeva explains the action of narrative in community as what “links the destinies of life, narrative, and politics; narrative conditions the duration and the immortality of the work of art; but it also accompanies, as historical narrative, the life of the polis, making it a political life, in the best sense of the word.” The narrative and the community are symbiotic. Indeed, Arendt notes a “special relationship between action and being together” in that one can only act in the presence of others who can then narrate that act or permit it to be lost. Also considering Arendt’s engagement with narrative and history, Halpern notes; “By preserving action in memory... drama supplies a spur to greatness that makes the formidable risks of public engagement worthwhile.” See: Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative*, trans. Frank Collins, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 8 and Richard Halpern, “Theatre and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Ranciere,” *Critical Inquiry* 37.3 (2011), 553.

¹⁵¹ Heidegger uses “poetic” not just as a way to describe poetry, but as a creative and even mystical form of verbalization. Hatab describes: “Since mystical expression is usually verbal. We can call mystical language poetry. The reference to poetry is not meant to introduce formal characteristics such as rhyme, meter, etc., but rather the aesthetic atmosphere of poetic language: the creative process which involves the transcendence of ego-consciousness, and the bringing-forth of form from formlessness.” See: Hatab, 63.

For Heidegger, the poetic is more than something to examine philosophically, in fact, it is a philosophy in and of itself. Kirsch states that Heidegger “looked to poetry as a model of what thinking should be.” See Kirsch, 340.

¹⁵² Kirsch argues that “Heidegger regards poetry as the truest form of language, and most language as merely defective poetry.” See Kirsch, 341.

language from “Letter on Humanism” offers a more creative and positive interpretation, it still does not give us the in-between that we seek from language.

While Heidegger and Bergson have very different takes on language (the former as a positive engagement with Being through poetic words and the latter as a negative and violent reification of delicate interior intensities), both thinkers tackle the linguistic as a solitary pursuit, which is strange if we consider that language is a source of communication *between* people. For Bergson, language is a covering over of the true or authentic self and for Heidegger, an authentic linguistic encounter is not the idle chatter that happens amongst humans, but rather a dialogue between the I and Being. Neither thinker involves the other in any sort of meaningful way in their linguistic exploration. While I will maintain the linguistic paradox of opening and closing off ways of being or authentic subjectivity, which exists between these two thinkers, the lack of alterity in language is where I diverge from Heidegger and Bergson and move into Levinas’ notion of language. Levinas’ assertion that “the call” back to the originary or authentic self is not a call from Being, as Heidegger asserts, but rather the call of the Other, is our point of departure in unpacking language as an intersubjective mode of the past:

Language, far from presupposing universality and generality, first makes them possible. Language presupposes interlocutors, a plurality... language is spoken when community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted. It takes place in this transcendence... Discourse is thus the experience of something absolutely foreign, a pure “knowledge” or “experience”, a traumatism of astonishment.¹⁵³

Before it is my own, language is given to me by the other. The other offers language. They teach and I learn; I become adept and language is shared; it becomes an in-between: the *interesse par excellence*. “Speech is thus the origin of all signification—of tools and all human

¹⁵³ Levinas, *Totality*, 74.

works—for through it the referential system from which every signification arises receives the very principle of its functioning, its key. Language is not one modality of symbolism; every symbolism refers already to language.”¹⁵⁴ Not merely talking, but a language that also includes silence and listening is a method to open up to radical natality between subjects and to intensely re-live our memories, experiencing the other anew. The silence and hearkening of true Heideggerian poetic language is not always a pleasant encounter: indeed, Levinas refers to it as a traumatism. He sees the silence of language as that which is traumatic and frightening: “Thus silence is not a simple absence of speech; speech lies in the depths of silence like a laughter perfidiously held back. It is the inverse of language: the interlocutor has given a sign, but has declined even interpretation; this is the silence that terrifies.”¹⁵⁵ But as I argued in regard to Levinas’ understanding of the face of the other, this encounter can be wrapped in anxiety and terror, but so too can it be a birthing place of radical creativity. Indeed, it can be both at the same time.

Let us return to the paradox of language, which draws us away from or connects us to an authentic relationship to our own being. If we place the other in the position of Heideggerian Being, it becomes evident how language can be an interconnection between the I and the other, therein creating a vast web of memories and intensities woven upon words and poems, looks and actions between people. But on the other hand, the Bergsonian negative linguistic notion is less intuitively related to the other. To assist with this, let us consider Marion’s notion of distancing in our relationship to God. Min describes Marion’s *distance* as follows:

Distance does not mean spatial distance or spatial absence, nor does it belong to the world of objects at all. It is not a concept or a signifier. It is the absolute anterior and exterior horizon for the transcendental relation between God and the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 98.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 91.

world of objects, a meta-language that describes God's intimate alterity and constitutive asymmetry with which God is related to the world.¹⁵⁶

For Marion, distance necessitates one to “think the doubly unthinkable according to excess (supremacy over being in general) and according to lack (withdrawal as insistence, without being).”¹⁵⁷ Marion claims that language is received as a gift but lives in a “linguistic model of the dispossession of meaning.”¹⁵⁸ Namely, the subject does not recognize that language was given (in the case of Marion, by God, in our case, by the other). It is through the distancing of language that the subject is born: “Anterior distance demands to be received because it more fundamentally gives us to receive ourselves in it.”¹⁵⁹ It is only by drawing back into alienation that the I can recognize the saving grace of the other. In this way, language acts as a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*: We are shaken out of our everyday ennui or malaise and in alienation, we see the other across the abyss of language. Thus, language is an in-between myself and the other in two ways: first, by connecting us to an other and crafting a web or tapestry of memories, and second, by alienating us from the other:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.¹⁶⁰

Some drown. Some stop fighting and are resigned to a bitter alienated and melancholic day, or year, or life. But I argue that it is the human condition to carry on. Kushner's character Prior Walter explains this irrational but real human tendency:

But still. Still. Bless me anyway. I want more life. I can't help myself. I do. I've lived through such terrible times, and there are people who live through much, much worse,

¹⁵⁶ Min, 107.

¹⁵⁷ Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Fordham University Press, 2001), 140.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶⁰ Eliot, *Prufrock*.

but... You see them living anyway. When they're more spirit than body, more sores than skin, when they're burned and in agony, when flies lay eggs in the corners of the eyes of their children, they live. Death usually has to take life away. I don't know if that's just the animal. I don't know if it's not braver to die. But I recognize the habit. The addiction to being alive. So we live past hope. If I can find hope anywhere, that's it, that's the best I can do. It's so much not enough. It's so inadequate, but... Bless me anyway. I want more life.¹⁶¹

We do not drown. We find at the depths of despair our saving grace. As Hölderlin says, "yet where danger lies,/ Grows that which saves."¹⁶² We see the distance between our self and the other. The other draws closer through distance. Language manifests an in-between the I and the other through both real connection and irrational distance.¹⁶³ For Marion, this distance draws us into the future. It is a series of deferrals towards a God that can never be fully attained. But for this project, the distance and the connection of language draws us back into the past between the I and the other. Language forges and later re-awakens in us our memories.

Let us turn, in conclusion, to language's link to memory and the past. In the first chapter, we set out the Proustian concept of memory as a rich mixture of the self and the world that draws us back into the past. We will now return to this memory and argue that it is reliant upon the other. The smell of summer rain evokes in me a flash, a sensation deep inside. I sift, I search. I think it will be lost in the same way a sneeze about to explode suddenly subsides. I am silent. I listen. The colors of the other begin to seep in, to color my very being. But they exist at first in the un-reified un-objectified existence before linguistic domination. I wait. I breathe in the smell.

¹⁶¹ Kushner, *Angels in America*.

¹⁶² Friedrich Hölderlin, "Patmos," in *Hymns and Fragments*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

¹⁶³ This paradox of language that allows the irrational and the real to co-exist, is explored in Arsic's treatment of Thoreau, whom she claims believed that "far from being something surreal, which could at best function as a metaphor of something real, the fictional or even the irrational is part and parcel of the real." This liminal nature of the real and the irrational is necessary for our understanding of the subject after death, as it allows for a greater movement between these boundaries of death and life.

See: Arsic, 3.

My cousin's broad mouthed grin as we teeter-totter back and forth on a large piece of driftwood propped up on a rock. The rain splashing against our skin. We laugh so hard our sides ache. I am ten. We'll be in trouble. We mustn't stay. The waves rush in and out, the sand is rocky and pricks the feet of whoever falls off. The sun is shining through the rain. I sit in my office writing, but my entire body and mind (my flesh) moves towards the past. I can smell my cousin's skin; I can see the painted rocks of the summer against her cottage door; I can feel the rocky clay sand beneath my feet. It seems a solitary exercise, but it is not. As Proust's Marcel continually turns back for his Mother, I turn back in this case for my cousin. Not as she is today but as she was as an eleven-year-old child.¹⁶⁴ I am drawn back into something that is not solely my own. Nor does it belong to my cousin: indeed, she does not have access to this memory as it exists for me. Rather, this memory is a creation between us. It is her and it is also me. The memory links me to the other.

Language creates this link in two ways. First, in the connection to the other, language initially weaves this memory between myself and the other. The other is always already insinuated in my language and thus there is an other in every one of my memories. Furthermore, if we note the above example of recalling a childhood afternoon on the beach, the more particular my language becomes in describing this event, the more specific my memory becomes. Linguistic specificity allows me to deepen my memories. Additionally, if the other and I have shared experiences of literature, theatre, or art, the language of these mediums further

¹⁶⁴ Kristeva argues that Marcel's elated experience of light through the cathedral window in Venice is a link not between Marcel and God, nor between Marcel and a specific object, but rather, between Marcel and his mother: "The window is identified with 'a love which stopped only where there was no longer any corporeal matter to sustain it, on the surface of her impassioned gaze' ... It says to me the thing that touches me more than anything else in the world: 'I remember your mother so well.'" Marcel's revelation is the ability to feel and remember his mother. We move back for many reasons: for nostalgia, for vanity, for escape, but encompassing all of these and most importantly, we go back for the other. See: Kristeva, 113.

colours and effects the memories I share with the other. For example, my friend and I shared a love of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. This is not a surprising or rare love to share, but nevertheless, this means that each time I am reminded of *Gatsby*, I am also coloured by memories of my friend. I arrive at a lavish party and I am "borne back ceaselessly into the past"¹⁶⁵, not simply by a love of a piece of literature (which, in itself, marks a link between myself and the other as author) but as a love of my friend with whom I endlessly discussed this book. I am like *Gatsby* himself who incredulously cries: "Can't repeat the past?... Why of course you can!"¹⁶⁶ My ways of being are woven by the shared language between self and other and they act as always already built and building. The other and I have always already created a language and we can continue to grow and expand that language and its shared narratives. I read *King Lear* and I have a new way of casting my memories of my Grandfather's own pride and fear in old age. I discuss a production of *Lear* with my brother and his interpretation begins to colour my broader conception of humanity. He colours my world and my memories. The richer my language and my comprehension of myths and narratives, the richer my memories and my inter-connection with others. The more I share this love of language with others, the more they, in turn, colour my comprehension of literature, language, and ultimately my memories and interpretations of the world.

Secondly, language opens us up to the other and to memory when we fail to make a connection to the other linguistically, when we are alienated by the Bergsonian limitations of language. When language pins me to the wall, leaves me to drown, shows me the complete limitation and distance in my relation to the other, this is where I can recognize the other's closeness. In this distance and alienation brought on by the poverty of language, I find the other.

¹⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, 193.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

From this vantage point, the other is like me: distant, almost impenetrable, in pain, and in grief. In the heart of my alienation, I find closeness and connection to the other who also comprehends my condition. But more than this, the other has crafted this condition at my side. We find ourselves in a condition we have created with one another in our shared language and our shared culture.

Kristeva argues that Marcel's moments of transcendence into the past hinge on his link to the most important person in his life, his mother. For Kristeva, Marcel's experience of light in the cathedral square is the very character of time embodied.¹⁶⁷ In that moment, he *is* backward moving time. He is the past as created between himself and his mother. And for the moment that I step into the lavish party, I become the past as it was created between myself and my friend. To be sure, in a sense, I am experiencing both connection and alienation in this moment of past movement. I step in and I am amazed by the party, I feel connected to my friends who have put on such an event and pleased to be sharing it with them. I am also struck with sorrow and alienation as my thoughts of this event mingle with the memories of my friend and how much he would have loved this night, these stars, that outfit, this cocktail. But be it in a "positive" or "negative" sense, it is language that connects me to the other as we move back in our language towards the past.

While language is responsible for the totalizing structure of the world and contains within it a certain violent demand that crushes and conforms the unreified, it also has a thoughtful creation and allows humans to encounter one another in and through a construction of

¹⁶⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, trans. Stephen Bann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

memories.¹⁶⁸ In this way, language gives us the gift of memories, in which we intensely experience the other in the tapestry of memory and thus move backwards to the past. But in a lesser way, language also contains the future and the present. Language creates our world and our possibilities, acting as the base of intersubjective exchange upon which we reach into the future. Furthermore, language allows for a certain specificity in the present moment's caress, in which we can become increasingly specific and eloquent in our construction of new thoughts and ideas with the other. Language draws us continually back toward the past, but it also holds within it the modes of future and present.

Language allows us to conceptualize in a way that we can return again and again to our experiences with the other. The latter is not a mere mental exercise divorced from reality. Rather, it is the movement into the past with every fiber of our being. Containing elements of future and present, language and memory become the most precious upon the death of the other. When the other dies, I can no longer feel his caress, which opens up my body in the present moment and I cannot create a future-oriented natality upon the earth with the other. But I can continue to be with the other through the language and narrative of memory.¹⁶⁹ And while my memories sweep backwards into the past, they are replayed in the present and guide my future. Through my memories, the beloved continues after death. If the person who dies or leaves us is important

¹⁶⁸ In discussing Thoreau, Arsic claims that he gestures towards “a nondualistic ontology in which the difference between words and things, ideas and bodies, is not considered insurmountable. Instead, all those different phenomena will be understood to relate to one another on the same ontological plane, affecting one another in the same being.” This nondualistic ontology is precisely what I am arguing in this explication of language. See Arsic, 7.

¹⁶⁹ And indeed, as Arendt shows us in her own narratives on various figures, such as Rahel Varnhagen, Bertold Brecht, Walter Benjamin and many others, the continuation of the other via narrative is the very foundation of political agency and the human condition. Curthoys explains: “evokes the possibility of fragmentary narrations and genealogies which bring into focus discontinuous and complex forms of sensibility and the crucial, yet often neglected, role of cultural histories in the formation of political agency.” See: Curthoys, 368.

enough, it can feel as though we are only ever moving backwards, as Gatsby moves back towards the Daisy who loved him and Marcel moves back towards his Mother. And while it is possible to become a Miss Havisham of sorts and remain always in the past, most people find, as in Ecclesiastes 3, that “there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven”¹⁷⁰ and will one day shift from past movement alone into a present or even future oriented temporal direction. Indeed, there are times when we will continue to be fueled by memories and past but also move into a creative natality that reaches forward into the future. This will be the focus of the final portion of this project: an examination of how the other lives on creatively with the I after the death of the other. I will explore this possibility through a series of art works.

To summarize our exploration of the subject thus far: an “I” constructed of body, earth and memory has been posited as a product of a relationship with the other. From the caress of the other, the present moment of the subject opens up via the physical body. From the natality that links the human being to the other, springs the earth and the world, which thrust the subject forward toward future possibility. From the thoughtful language between the self and the other, flows the draw back into the memories of the past. The subject reveals itself as a temporal being, moving in all three directions of time. The source of this being is not itself nor the other, but the in-between self and other that creates all possibility of humanity.

This project is a framework for a possible human subjectivity that explains the phenomenological experience of the death of the other. The subject has been set out this way because it makes possible the phenomenological experience of the other’s death, but also because it is a way of being that rings true to (1) my own experience of the world phenomenologically and (2) the subject as I would like it to be considered both ethically and

¹⁷⁰ *The Holy Bible*, Ecclesiastes, 3:1.

politically. The notion of an autonomous individual subject has propagated political thought and indeed, much of Western thought in all fields. This notion of the subject has fueled environmental degradation, crimes against humanity, an uncompromising neoliberal capitalism, and finally, having estranged ourselves from all people, environment, and experience beyond this autonomous self, we experience a profound sense of personal alienation. Thus, while this project springs from a personal and almost metaphysical experience of loss, its implications are incredibly prescient to greater political and ethical questions of the physical realm. As Levinas observes, the consequence of the other existing *apriori* to the I is the originary importance of the ethical.

But of course, this project is rooted in our connection to the dead. Arsic describes Thoreau's experience: "death does not have the power to interrupt life but instead functions as the force of its transformation, enabling us to experience finitude while ushering us into what remains animated."¹⁷¹ The transformation of the subject in death demands an acknowledgment that we are not simply our autonomous individuated bodies and that the world and the natural earth operate in *both* real and irrational ways. The space for wonder becomes increasingly necessary upon the death of the other and perhaps acts as the only balm to the pain of this transubstantiation. The wonder is no less real than the pain, but of course the former is posited in the realm of the irrational and the latter lives in the realm of the real. These distinctions are steadfast in our society, but as this thesis has attempted to argue, also arbitrary and fictional. Our world holds within it the cohabitation of the sacred and the profane for those willing to accept the possibilities of intersubjectivity and the dead set out in this work.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Arsic, 19- 20.

¹⁷² In his book *Anatheism*, Richard Kearney examines the possibility of God after God, or rather, how Western society can reclaim the sacred after the death of God. It is an argument as to

The final portion of this work steps back from traditional philosophical writing and will look at three different works of art: the first is the cartoon work of Tristan Douglas, which deals with his link to the other after death; the second is the photography of Jordan Marklund, the best friend of Tristan, who passed away this past year; and finally, the third is my own painting paired with one of Jordan's photographs. These serve a two-fold purpose. First, all three contain a mixture of the sacred in the profane and ask the viewer to deal with the transcendental from a seat in the real. Secondly, they create a dialogue with the dead, which offers three concrete examples of how the in-between continues after death and showcases death as a transformation of life but not as a total end. When Hamlet promises to remember his father, he sets himself into a temporality that is always flowing back into the past, acting as a catalyst to his infamous inability to act:

Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by heaven!¹⁷³

But this need not be the only direction our remembrance moves. Indeed, before we know it, our remembrance begins to open into our present and chug steadily forward towards the future, creating and changing, mixing and evolving. The other continues on after death in an irrational but fully real way when we invite them into the dynamic flowing temporality of our lives.

how we can continue to see the sacred in all its wonder and possibility within the painful reality of the profane world. In many ways, this project's foundation is built upon this anatheistic spirit: how can we experience the wonder and the pain of death. "anatheism- the return of the sacred after the disappearance of God..." See: Kearney, 102.

¹⁷³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 5, lines 840-842.

Chapter 3: Using art to Explore the Relationship to the other after Death and in Life

“It is required that You do awake your faith.” - *Winter's Tale*, William Shakespeare

Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself.

- *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf

As a conclusion to this work, I will turn to reified artistic examples of how the dead live on in the modes of subjectivity and intersubjectivity proposed in this thesis. This transubstantiation of the dead into the living, or rather, this recognition of the vital blending of body, earth, and memory, asks the viewer to recognize the life that continually gives itself from that which we have assumed to be dead. Furthermore, this is the portion of the thesis that asks the viewer for active participation. While the reader had the possibility of being an armchair philosopher for the first two chapters (though of course, this would not be my recommendation for reading this or any philosophy), the last chapter only reveals itself to the thinker who is willing to join in this vitalist endeavour. Let this final portion of the text, then, be a personal exploration of the notions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the face of life and death and see whether these notions hold true for your own experience of the art works presented, and by extension, your own experiences of art and humanity. Allow this to be the initial grounds on which you can judge the intersubjective experience that I have set out in this text. If it does not work for you, if it falls short of your own experience, I entreat you to ask why and to share with me how your own experience differs. If you cannot live and breathe the philosophy of this text,

then by all means, place it aside. But it is my hope that through this art, you will begin to experience the state of the subject as body, earth and memory, and begin to feel your own links to the art as links to other human beings in the intersubjectivity set out. Each artwork will be paired with a commentary to curate the experience of the art, but ultimately, the experience belongs to the individual viewer.

In the art of Tristan Douglas, we observe his own methods of vitalism in blending the living with the dead in cartoon form. Tristan entreats the viewer to recognize the blurred lines of life and death and how we live with the dead. The in-between, the creative impulse between the artist and the dead is unmistakable. Each piece asks the viewer to acknowledge the flashes of merriment in the bare skull. In a brief commentary on his work and its relationship to the deceased, Tristan claims:

The only purpose behind my art is to make me laugh. My best friend's passing didn't change what I drew initially, but as the first anniversary drew closer I found myself thinking more about death; more specifically, what we look like a year after. All the negative energy I would feel about what had happened got channeled into these drawings, but death is never the theme. It's just kind of in the background, like it is for everyone.

Tristan's art remains light: he maintains the infinite jest of life alongside the fact of death. Banal moments of everyday life mingle with skeletal figures in humorous and existential ways. Just as a good production of Samuel Beckett can get more laughs than Noel Coward, one cannot help but chuckle at Tristan's unnerving and humorous juxtapositions. Much has been made of the power behind laughter and its ability to shatter our logical comprehension of the world¹⁷⁴ and

¹⁷⁴ Notably, see Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, 251-277 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980); and Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: SUNY Press, 1988).

Tristan's art uses that power to break down our fears of death and our avoidance of seeing death in the shadows of our day to day lives.



Photograph by Jordan Marklund of Tristan Douglas and their shadows

My hope is that the viewer will allow the laughter, the chuckle, the cartoon, to assist in shaking him or her from the serious academic mindset with which we read philosophy and instead open up to the possibility of a play between life and death and in this way, enter into the intersubjective experience of the art, rather than simply observing how the artist himself is affected by an intersubjectivity between living artist and deceased friend.

The Artwork of Tristan Douglas



“and dread”



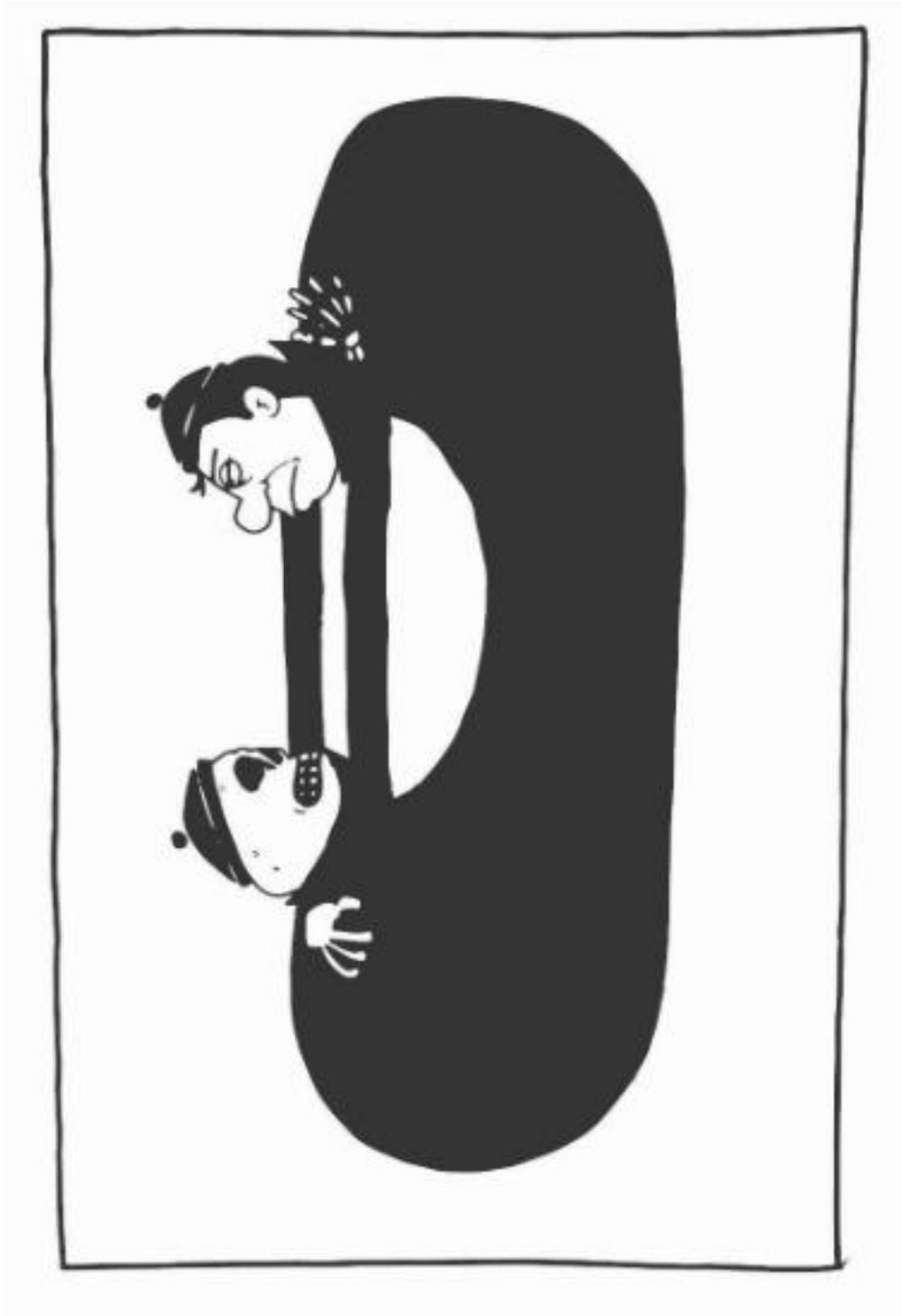
“Only 5 cents”



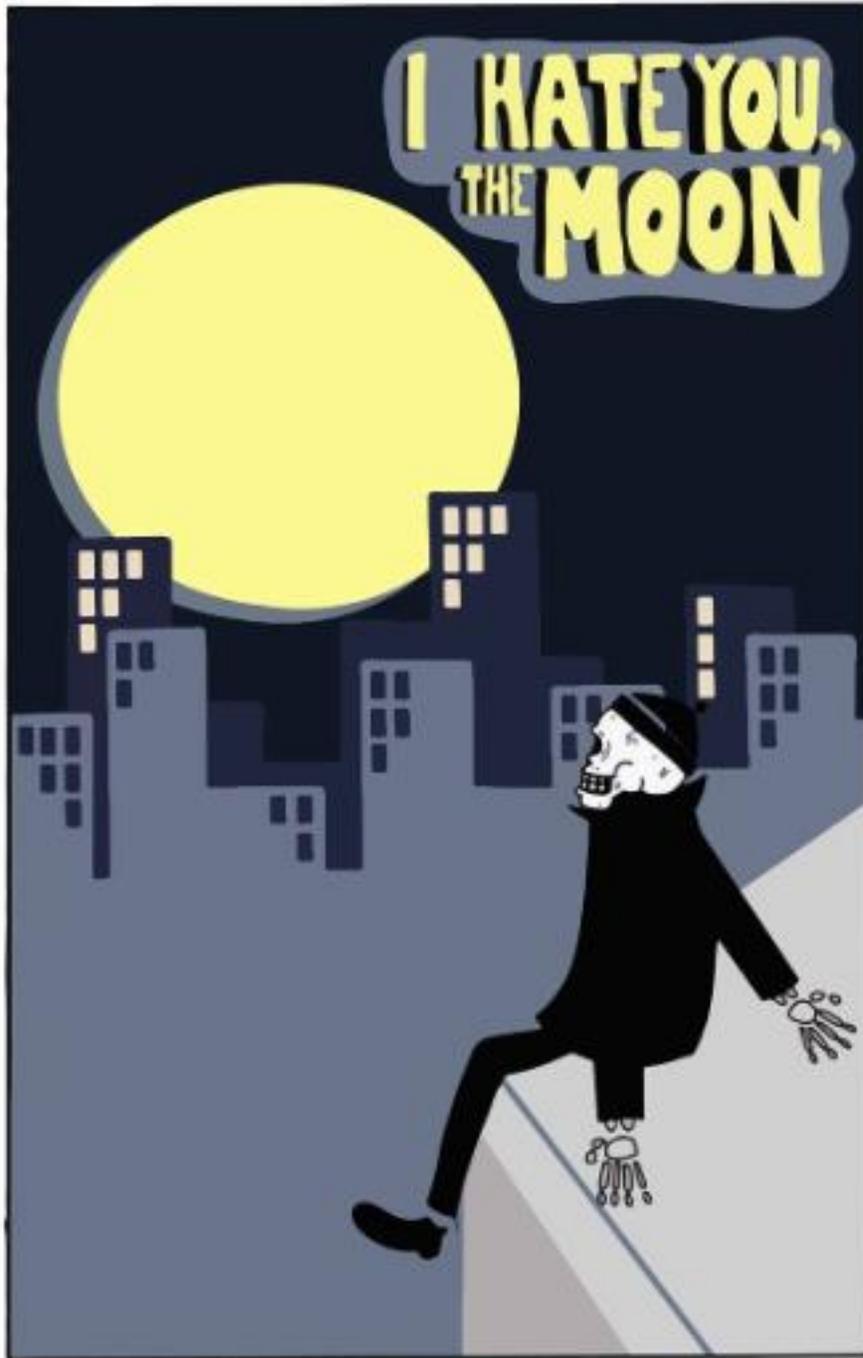
“still dead”



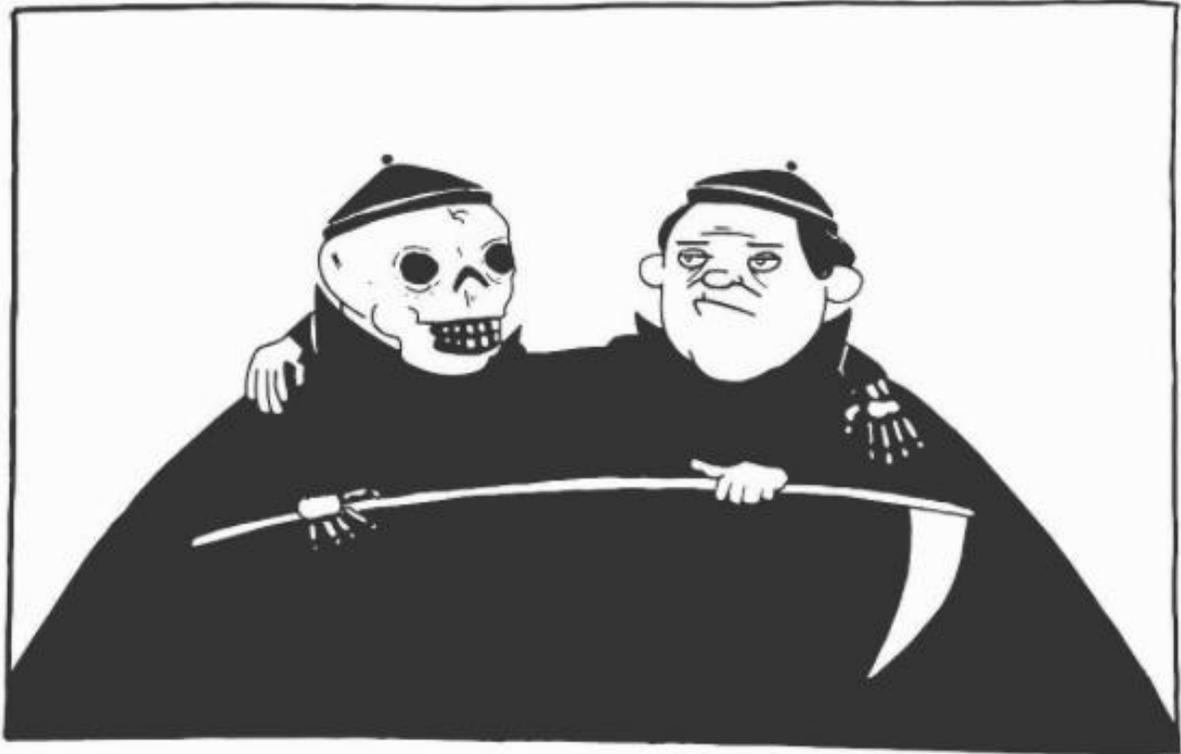
“trade”



“peas in a pod”



"I hate you, the moon"



“buddies”



“where is the party?”

Next, the photography of Jordan Marklund is set alongside my own commentary. A dear friend of mine who died quite unexpectedly, Jordan is the friend who inspired Tristan's existential cartoons. Jordan's photography speaks of reflection, time, possible worlds, shadows, and memory from a vibrant place. Collaborating with the deceased is a strange proposition and in many ways a dangerous one. I run the risk of making claims that Jordan himself would find a stretch, incorrect, or perhaps too nostalgic. Without the living, breathing person, my own speculation is not forced to stand and be judged by the artist and will not hear the words so feared by Prufrock: *that is not what I meant at all. That is not it at all*. Instead, my voice becomes his voice. Like Thoreau argues in regard to his deceased brother, I live a double life in this project, following my own dreams and goals while also taking on those of Jordan. My hope is that my goals do not consume or warp Jordan's, though I suppose that it is nearly impossible not to spin his work in a web that makes the most sense of my project. It is also impossible to tell where my work was influenced by him and where I have made his work blend with my own. Do his photos really see the world in the way I have described? Or am I merely projecting my own desires? Or after hours of conversations and bottles of wine, have our two worlds merged in ways that his photography and my words, his photography and my art, say the same thing? This latter suggestion is my inclination, but again, I cannot ever know this for certain.

I have tried in this commentary to share Jordan's world view and not my own. But of course, the two worlds overlap in a myriad of ways. This is also why I have separated my painting from his photography collection. His photographs are just his own, while the mixture of his photograph and my art that makes up the third part of this final chapter, as well as the short film that opens this thesis, take on that which is more about my loss than his life. In this collection of photographs, Jordan comes alive. His work reveals *who* he is and the worlds he

experienced: the viewer is invited to see the world from Jordan's point of view. In every book we read by a deceased author, or every piece of art we stand in front of in vast galleries of masterpieces by scores of departed artists, we see the worlds of the creators. When we are open to the work, when we step beyond our intellectual or logical understanding, we also experience these worlds and commune with the dead. We create with the deceased, we open up worlds under the tutelage of those who are gone. Harrison asks, "Who are these loquacious masks in the theatre of literature- Antikleia, Achilles, Odysseus, but also Aeneas, Farinata, Lear, Quixote, Bovary- and where do they speak from? Where and above all how? They are all untenably dead, yet they are alive to the degree that, through the poem, they can be seen and heard by us."¹⁷⁵ As an academic, I spend my time with the dead: connecting, reading, devouring, creating with those who are long since gone. Art connoisseurs do the same, as do history buffs, and bookworms. We create with the dead all of the time.

Hannah Arendt believed that it is our responsibility to tell the stories of exemplary human beings and she did so time and again in works such as *Men in Dark Times* or *Rahel Varnhagen*. It was Arendt's belief that only after death could a person's life be measured and their story be told. Was Jordan exemplary? Does his life warrant a narrative? Knowing him, I can certainly say he was not perfect, and loving him, I can certainly say that I may not be the best person to judge him objectively. With this in mind, I will say that he was one of the few people I have met who inspired me to see the world differently, to challenge myself and rethink the parameters of the worlds in which I live. The way he looked at the world was rare and wonderful and shaped the way I saw my own agency and existence. That is what I have tried to continue in this

¹⁷⁵ Harrison, *Dominion*, 149.

photography collection: the creation of worlds between Jordan and myself. Beyond this, and most importantly, I hope that it invites the viewer into these worlds, this natality, this creation.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ The following has been independently published as a collection of Jordan's photography. If you are interested in seeing this collection in book form please contact Kathryn Lawson at kathryn.m.lawson@gmail.com

A Moveable Feast:

Shadows, reflections and possible worlds in the photography of Jordan Marklund



There is something incredibly intimate about the photography in this collection. Jordan invites his viewers to see the world through his eyes: A world that is often dirty and broken, yet infused with transcendence. His work focuses on everyday objects and imbues them with magical realism. The photographs in this collection offer a glimpse at worlds within worlds. One reality is layered upon another through shadows, reflections, and openings between contrasting spaces. Jordan's photographs point to a defiance of traditional understanding of time and space, asking the viewer to see the possibility of the sacred, illogical, transcendent beauty housed within the profane, logical immanence of our everyday lives. On one level, time and space move according to plan: there is rust, graffiti, garbage, and a linear flow of time towards the future. On another level, time flows ceaselessly into the past, offering a nostalgic and surrealist view of the world. This double temporal flow into future and past, arrests the viewer in the present moment. We could call his style of work an optimistic misanthropy or perhaps a pessimistic wonder. In *An Ideal Husband*, Oscar Wilde states, "It takes great courage to see the world in all its tainted glory, and still to love it." This is the gift of Jordan's photography: a recognition of the world's cruel decadence with a stubborn insistence to love it anyway.



Shadows

The three main motifs of this collection linger in a liminal world. Reified in the fixed photograph, they serve as metonymies for that which cannot be spoken or reified. Jordan's work with shadows offers the presence of a person without that person's physical body. At times unnerving, the shadow asks us to imagine that individual in a way that we cannot when they are fully given. We must meet the photograph half way, engage, and create the absent presence. We sense the person more in an atmospheric mood than in a bodily form. Silhouetted against a brick wall or broken pavement, the shadow allows the person to merge with the surrounding world. As Edgar Allan Poe's famous Ushers literally merge with the house in which they live, the shadow is as much an individual person, as it is a quality of the environment. The shadow has been a recurring theme throughout mythology, religion, and even psychoanalysis. In Jewish lore, Lilith, the first wife of Adam, is made at the same time as her husband and the two lived in equality.¹⁷⁷ As society became increasingly patriarchal, Lilith fell into shadow, as the male rose to the pinnacle of subjectivity.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Lilith was recognized as early as 700CE with the Alphabet of Ben-Sira: "When God created the first man Adam alone, God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." [So] God created a woman for him, from the earth like him, and called her Lilith. They [Adam and Lilith] promptly began to argue with each other: She said, "I will not lie below," and he said, "I will not lie below, but above, since you are fit for being below and I for being above." She said to him, "The two of us are equal, since we are both from the earth." And they would not listen to each other. Since Lilith saw [how it was], she uttered God's ineffable name and flew away into the air. Adam stood in prayer before his Maker and said, "Master of the Universe, the woman you gave me fled from me!" See: Jewish Women's Archive, "Alphabet of Ben Sira 78: Lilith," (Viewed on July 15, 2017) <<https://jwa.org/media/alphabet-of-ben-sira-78-lilith>>.

¹⁷⁸ In the 13th-century writings of Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen, Lilith left Adam after she refused to become subservient to him. She then partners with the Archangel Samael and refuses to return to Eden. See: Rabbi Isaac ha-Kohen, "The Treatise on the Left Emanation," in *The Early Kabbalah*, ed. Joseph Dans, trans. Ronald C. Kiener, 244-264 (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

By creating Eve from his own rib, Adam created an anti-subject that made his own subjectivity possible. The distinction, later taken up by Lacan, between light and dark, male and female, good and bad, black and white was born with Eve. As a woman equal to men, Lilith became an impossibility, a shadow, representing everything that was woman and not subservient.¹⁷⁹ Defying the logic of the world in which we live, Lilith suggests the impossible, the unrecognizable, and the incomprehensible. In many ways Lilith is the shadow of womankind, she is the possibility of the impossible.

In German folklore, the doppelgänger is the shadow or the dark mirror of our self. Without their own shadow, the doppelgänger is an evil shadow of a person who prophesizes doom. Edgar Allan Poe refers to this phenomenon in his sonnet, "Silence":

There are some qualities—some incorporate things,
That have a double life, which thus is made
A type of that twin entity which springs
From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.
There is a two-fold Silence—sea and shore—
Body and soul.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ The term *Lilith* first occurs in a list of animals in *Isaiah 34:14* and is translated as "night creatures", (The Complete Jewish Bible) "night monster" (American Standard Version of the Holy Bible), "night hag" (Revised Standard Version Bible), or "screech owl" (King James Bible, 21st Century version).

¹⁸⁰ Edgar Allan Poe, "Silence," in *The Complete Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Signet Classics, 1996), 87.



In his fable, "The Shadow", Hans Christian Anderson writes of a shadow who, freed from the fetters of its master, grows powerful and substantial as the master becomes an increasingly weak shade.¹⁸¹ The motif of the shadow is adapted by psychiatrist C.G. Jung, who posits the "shadow" as our unconscious desires. For Jung, the shadow is the compilation of all the things we do not allow into our persona. For the most part, this more primal aspect of our being lies at our feet, unnoticed, but in cases of extreme fatigue, stress, or intoxication, the shadow takes over. An archetypal aspect of the human psyche, the shadow is not simply an evil force, but contains powerful drives of creation, desire, and a connection to our sense of spirituality.¹⁸² To experience our own shadow, or that of the other, is to experience a primal creative or perhaps destructive force. In all of these representations of the shadow, a common theme is its defiance of our logical awareness. It demands us to see beyond our own boundaries and experience the world in a different, perhaps more uncomfortable, and certainly more mysterious way.

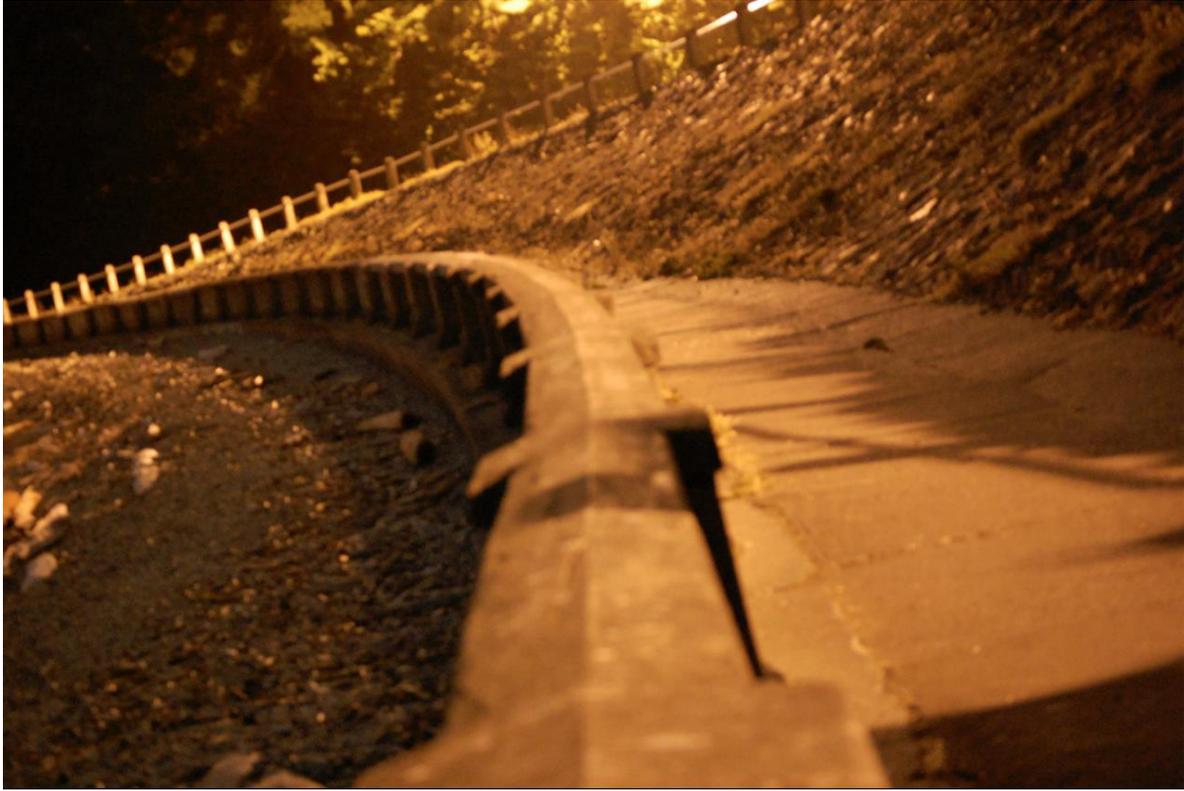
¹⁸¹ Hans Christian Andersen, "The Shadow" in *Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories*, trans. M.R. James (London: Faber and Faber, 1953).

¹⁸² See Carl G Jung, *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 9 Part II: Aion Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, ed. and trans. Gerhard Adler and R.F.C Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 423. "If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc."









Reflections

The second major theme of this collection is reflection. Many of Jordan's photographs use glass, water, mirrors, or buildings to reflect objects not present in the photo. In these works, Jordan often contrasts a banal or even stark everyday world with a beautiful, stunning, almost unworldly reflection. The viewer is asked to look closely at the everyday and discover an ulterior reality. Reflections overflow the object with a visual excess rather than the void our imaginations must fill when we encounter shadows, these reflections also defy our logical comprehension of the world and as such, ask us to see the emergence of other possible worlds within our neat and tidy logical existence. Since as early as 50BC, the tale of Narcissus¹⁸³ has told of a beautiful young man who spurns his admirers. Walking through the forest, young Narcissus catches a glimpse of himself in a pool of water and becomes captivated by his own reflection. Unable to recognize the reflection as a mere image without substance, he withers away before his own likeness, unable to turn away from the beauty. In psychology, this tale has come to exclusively moralize the danger of excessive self-love and self-involvement. But it also sets out the allure of reflections, of images that are not what our logical mind believes. The beauty of Van Gogh¹⁸⁴ and Monet¹⁸⁵ revolves around an ability to create a world of reflections. In their art, we see the world reflected back as if through swirling water.

¹⁸³ The earliest version of the story is ascribed to the poet Parthenius of Nicaea in 50 BC: David Keys, "Ancient manuscript sheds new light on an enduring myth," *BBC History Magazine* 5, no. 5 (2004), 9. Several versions of the myth have survived from ancient sources. The classic version is: Ovid, "Echo and Narcissus" in *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.D. Melville, 51-73 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

¹⁸⁴ For example, Vincent Van Gogh, *Starry Night Over the Rhône*, oil on canvas (Paris: Musée D'Orsay, 1888). Beyond his work that deals directly with reflections, Van Gogh also paints the logical everyday world as if it were a reflection.

¹⁸⁵ For example, his series of the Houses of Parliament in London or his water lilies. See: Claude Monet, *Le Parlement de Londres, soleil couchant*, oil on canvas (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1903).

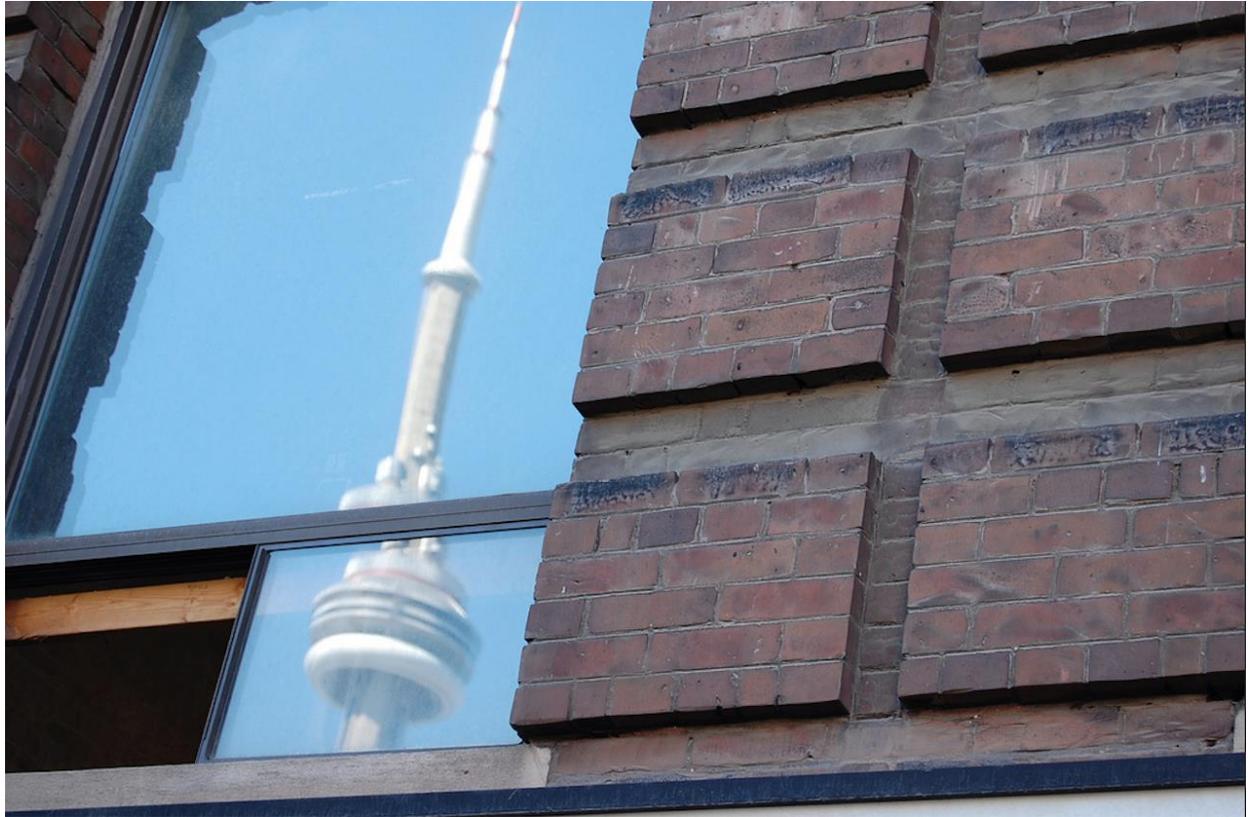
Indeed, when Alice enters the land of Jabberwockys, walruses, and carpenters, it is by stepping through a mirror into another reality. It is not a difficult leap to believe that a mirror may contain an alternate world, or that crystal balls and magic mirrors can see into the future. In Kabbalistic Judaism, it is traditional to cover the mirrors in a house of mourning because the deceased leave behind a void that attracts evil demons, who can only be seen in the mirrors.¹⁸⁶ But of course, there is also the vanity that mirrors imply, which is considered uncouth in a time of mourning. The Romans believed that a broken mirror meant bad luck, as the mirror contained the soul of the person who looked in it and to break this meant to shatter one's soul and remain soulless for the seven years it took for the body to rejuvenate itself.¹⁸⁷ The idea that reflections hold our soul suggests that the reflection is not the objective, physical thing-in-itself, but rather the essence of the thing. It is as close as we can get to experiencing the interior nature of a thing. Dangerous aesthetic objects that one could almost hold in the palm of the hand, the reflection is an embodiment of wonder. These photographs ask the viewer to look deeper and experience the wonder glimmering from within our daily existence.

¹⁸⁶ See: Hillel Hankin, *After One-hundred-and-Twenty: Reflecting on Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁸⁷ Edwin Radford and Mona Augusta Radford, *The Encyclopedia of Superstitions*, ed. Christina Hole (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1961), 232.







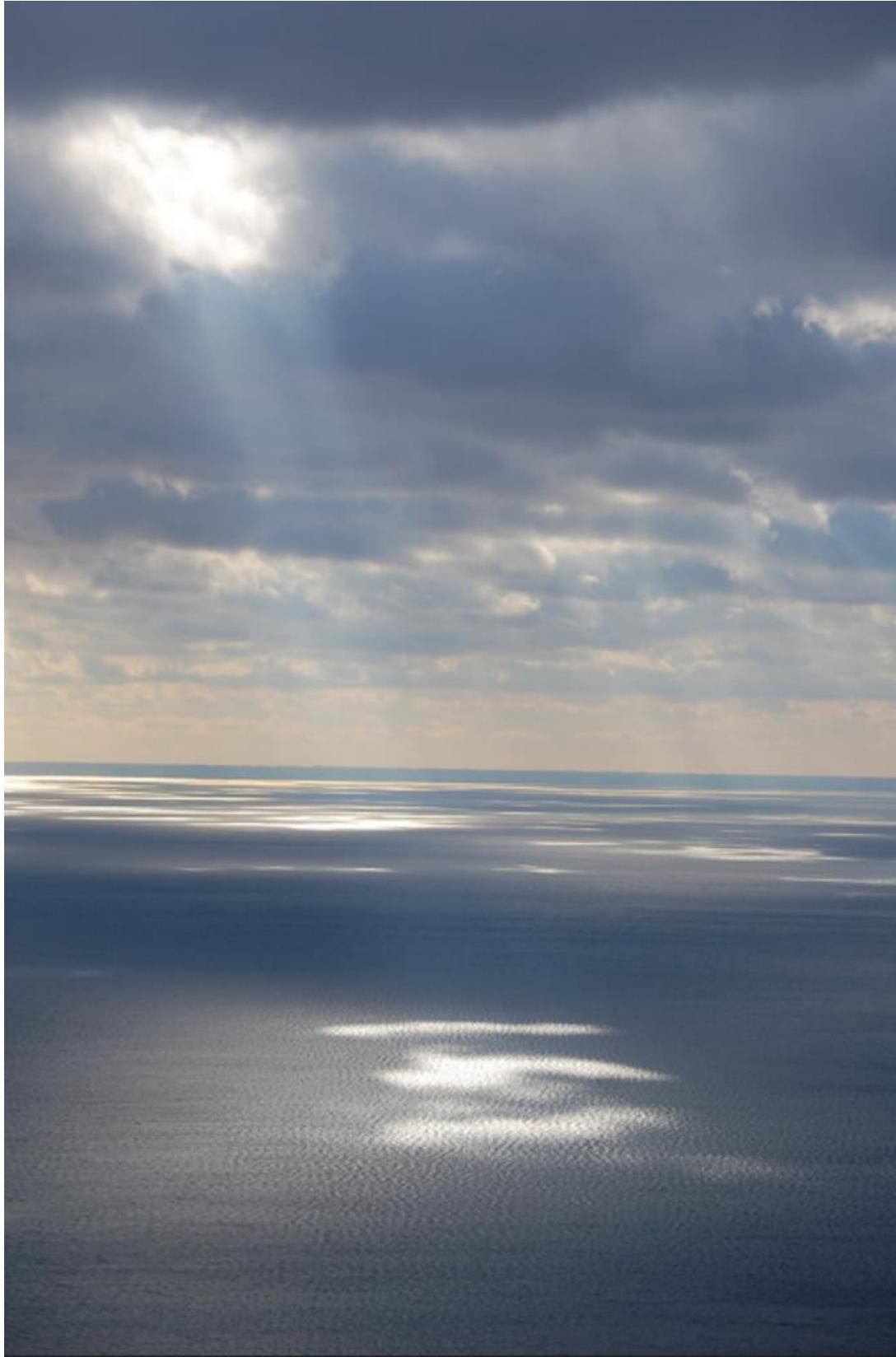


Possible Worlds

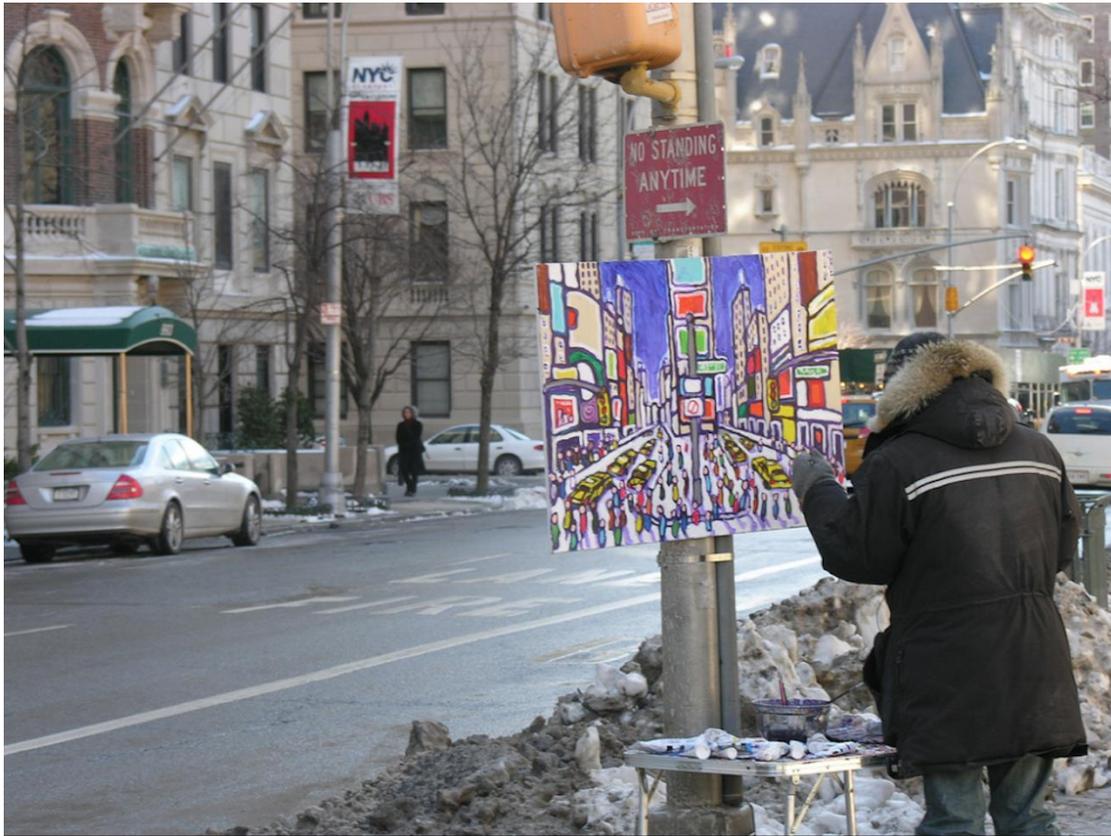
The final motif that this collection highlights is that of other possible worlds, the likes of which are contained in shadows and reflections, as well as Jordan's shots of contrasting mediums and horizons. A blue sky opening over a grey cityscape, or bright light bursting down in patches across a steely lake, offer an interplay of light and dark, of two or more possible worlds in one photograph. Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger has the famous thought experiment known as Schrödinger's cat, in which a cat in a box is simultaneously considered both alive and dead.¹⁸⁸ When the box is opened, the cat is observed as either one or the other but not both. Jordan's possible worlds account for the moment when the cat is simultaneously both. These worlds are not simply the physical earth, but rather human interpretations and projections onto the world. Each of these photos allows us to entertain the possibilities of the world as reality and the world as magical. For example, consider the "world of the shaman" as opposed to the "world of the lumberjack": In one world a tree is a living, breathing entity that bestows wisdom upon those who can speak its language and in the other world the tree is an object to be cut and chopped in exchange for monetary compensation. What makes Jordan's possible worlds so fascinating is that he gives us both the world of the shaman and the world of the lumberjack, as it were: the sacred is nestled within the profane, wonder glimmers within the banality of our everyday existence.

¹⁸⁸ Erwin Schrödinger, "The Present situation in Quantum Mechanics" trans. John D Trimmer, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical society* 124, (1980): 323-338.

















The main motifs of this collection point to beauty and wonder as a moveable feast. In his reflections on his life as a young ex-pat in Paris, Ernest Hemingway contends: "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast." In the midst of a lost generation, a post-war age that had lost all sense of meaning, Hemingway takes the notion of Easter as a moveable feast and places his new foundation, meaning, and *raison d'être*, as an urban center bustling with art, food, and creative comradery. In particular, the love he shares with his first wife, Hadley during his Parisian years becomes something he carries with him, a possibility. Just as Easter carries the promise of resurrection, of spring, and of new beginnings, Paris becomes a source of possibility and hope in Hemingway's book. Similarly, Jordan's photography carries wonder into places of pain and beauty into moments of sorrow. Wonder becomes a moveable feast inserted into the realism that his camera uncovers. While time marches on ceaselessly, Jordan's works open a gateway to time's continual backward glance and remind us that time moves not just in one direction, but is continually drawn into past, present, and future. As we pause before his work, we begin by being drawn into the future, the landscape of our world and our possible place in it, we are arrested by the mirrors, the reflection, the shadows, and find ourselves in the present moment, acknowledging the link between these possible worlds, and finally, these motifs capture us and "we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."¹⁸⁹

It is my hope that the viewer allows these works to open organically, to linger in each temporal direction and to exist as both raw profane life and transcendent beauty.

¹⁸⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Planet-ebook, 2012).
<http://www.planetebook.com/ebooks/The-Great-Gatsby.pdf>



Photographs by Jordan Marklund with commentary by Kathryn Lawson

Brave New Worlds and the life of the Dead



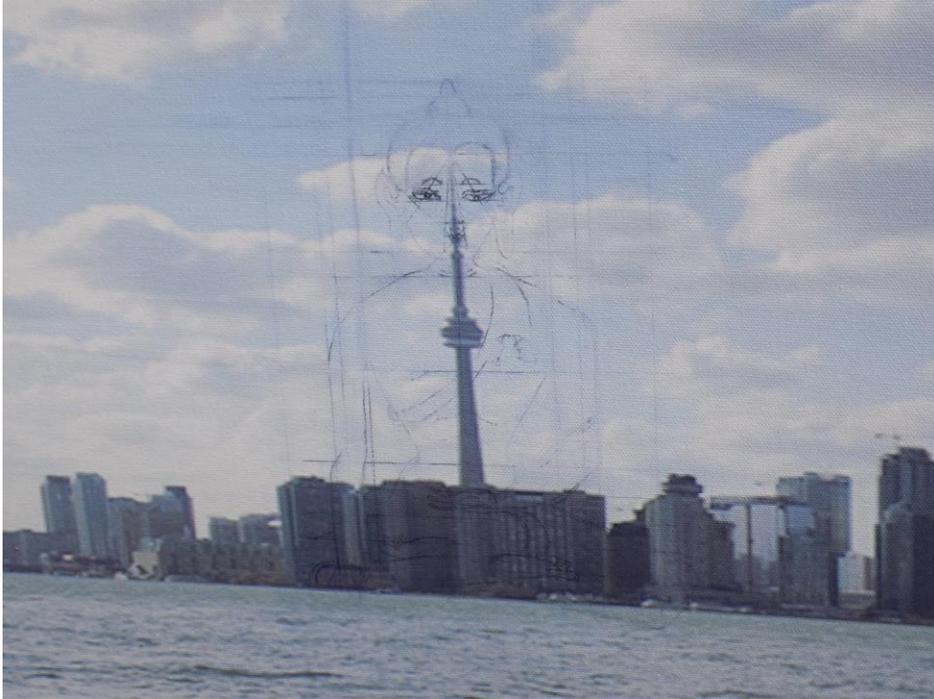
“Brave New World: Views of Toronto”

Finally, I will end with a piece of art that is a mixture of Jordan’s photography and my own painting/ multi medium work. In many ways, this moves beyond the natality between Jordan and myself because in adding to a piece that he meant to be a standalone, I am moving into uncertain territory and at the very least creating with but beyond Jordan. This piece is meant to reflect the impression of Jordan that remains with me after his death. On the canvas is printed one of his photographs of the city that he made his home. His love of Toronto and its neighborhoods, restaurants, sports teams, angry pedestrians, architecture, street food, terrible transit, and art, are all a major part of who he was and thus, for those who knew him, he remains very much alive in the city. This photograph sees Toronto through Jordan’s eyes and that is precisely how I see Toronto as well: a world that he has had an indispensable role in creating. In the foreground, I have painted in Jordan in his signature button up shirt and tie combination.



Detail from "Brave New World: Views of Toronto"

Rather than painting in his face, I have used a blur reminiscent of Francis Bacon's faces. I have always loved the grotesque movement and liminality of Bacon's works and spent hours examining them with Jordan at a recent exhibit in Toronto. In 2015, I saw the ballet "L'Anatomie de la sensation," based on the artwork of Bacon. This ballet brought out the beauty of this grotesque world in a way that I had not previously conceived. This liminal grotesque beauty seems to me to be the experience of the I in relation to the deceased other. The inability to be fully reified speaks to the condition of death: still present in the world but without clear lines and structure. We are beckoned toward the shadows and glimpses, but the person who we seek is not there in the same way.



Detail from "Brave New World: Views of Toronto"

So what is there? What remains? There are many ways to describe how Jordan carries on beyond his physical body: in the earth, his favourite city, his clothing, and the worlds that he has created with others, in the memories of those who knew him and the language that speaks these memories, sharpens, deepens, and expands his presence in the precision of each word. In Buddhist philosophy, everything is Buddha-nature and it is the work of the practitioner to see the whole as a play of consciousness. In Buddhist prayers¹⁹⁰, the practitioner envisions the Buddha in incredible detail and envisions her or himself becoming the Buddha. In the prayer's conclusion, the Buddha dissolves into pure energy, or the sound of the "om". The Buddha and the practitioner alike are everywhere and nowhere. Here, one can also consider Nicholas of Cusa's assertion that God is an infinite circle whose center is everywhere and whose

¹⁹⁰ For example, Ngawang Losang Tenpa Gyaltsan, *Medicine Buddha Sadhana*, ed. Ven. Thubten Gyatso, trans. Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, (Oregon: FPMT Inc., 2013).

circumference is nowhere.¹⁹¹ The Buddha here is meant to show a presence and an all pervasiveness in absence. No longer in his physical body, Jordan remains pervasive and alive in the city he loves.

These three works of art are incredibly different and as you look through them, I encourage you to continually turn back to notions of the subject and intersubjectivity set out in this text.¹⁹² Perhaps this can be the beginning of a conscious communion with the dead ...



Photograph by Jordan Marklund

¹⁹¹ See Nicholas of Cusa, “On Learned Ignorance”, in *Nicholas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), esp. 102, 116- 124

¹⁹² Furthermore, this text culminates in the movement from intersubjectivity to intrasubjectivity, which inevitably takes place after the other’s death, and which can be observed in this final example of art that is a being-with, but also a being-beyond the other after his death.

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Curriculum Vitae

Name: Kathryn Lawson

Post-Secondary Education and Degrees: *Queen's University*, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 2017-2021 PhD
Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, 2015-2017 MA
Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, 2012-2015 BA
American Musical Dramatic Academy, New York, 2003-2004 cert

Honours and Awards: Queen's R.S. McLaughlin Fellowship 2017/09- 2018/08
Hutchins Prize, Gonzaga University 2017/03
Canadian Graduate Scholarship 2016/09-2017/08
Director's entrance Scholarship 2015/09-2016/05
Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2015/09- 2016/05
John and Mary Snyder Scholarship 2014/09- 2015/05
The Great Philosopher's Award 2013-09-2014-05
John and Mary Snyder Scholarship 2013/09-2014/09
King's Continuing Scholarship 2012/09-2014/05
King's University College Entrance Scholarship 2011/09

Related Work Experience: Teaching Assistant, Western University 2016
Substitute Professor, Western University, 2016
Research Assistant, Western University 2013-2017

Conference Papers: "Hegel, Heidegger, Irigaray and the Temple," at *Heidegger and Ethics* Conference, Centre for Advanced Research of European Philosophy, London, Ontario, 10/2017
"Reimagining God Among the Sodden Cigarette Ends: finding God with Levinas and James Baldwin" at *Toxicity Conference*, Western University, London, Ontario, 3/ 2017

“The Image of One Hand Clapping: Anatheism and Buddhist Art”
at *Art, Nature and the Sacred Conference*, Gonzaga University,
Spokane Washington, 1/2017

“The Sunset of Dissolution: Nietzsche and Kundera making sense
of the eternal return” at Simon Critchley’s *Nihilism Summer
School*, University of Tilburg, Netherlands, 8/ 2015

Publications:

Lawson, Kathryn. Editor and Introduction. *Breaching Horizons*.
Rowman and Littlefield Press: London, 2017.

Lawson, Kathryn. “One Hand Clapping.” In *The Art of Anatheism*.
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