The Toronto New Wave, Post-Anarchist Cinema Theory, and the Progressive Apocalypse

by

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Abstract

A group of Canadian films emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that has come to be known as the "Toronto New Wave" (TNW). Most scholarship regarding this "wave" considers the films usually identified with it not as an ideologically or aesthetically cohesive ensemble, but as a disparate mélange engendered by the merely coincidental socio-political, economic, and government policy circumstances that developed at the beginning of the 1980s. Critics who engage more robustly with the cinematic content of these films often make reference to a new global sensibility of the filmmakers and almost universally discuss the theme of urban social alienation that permeates the film narratives. However, the motif of urban social alienation is always understood by these critics as merely a theme in these films. These critics overlook or openly reject the possibility of what anarchist cultural studies refers to as philosophical praxis, an active effort to intervene in cultural meaning-making and to change dominant ideologies. Moreover, the urban alienation theme upon which so many of the TNW narratives trade seems to map very specifically onto more progressive understandings of the term "apocalypse" in the project of philosophical praxis. In the following dissertation, I will argue against the commonly held view that the films of the TNW do not share any significant aesthetic or political unity. In doing so, I will make a case for the marriage of theories of apocalypse with both anarchist cultural philosophy and perception-based psychoanalytical theory as a means to understand a selection of films from within the TNW that I argue are particularly "anarchist-apocalyptic" in their cultural and political work.

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Dedication

It is with pride and humility that I hereby dedicate any value or significance that might come of the content of this research to my life-partner Marianne Christopher, and to the seven children in our family (Rory, Megan, Blair, Camille, Aiden, Lukas- Milo, and Lilian), to my parents, Douglas and Anita Long, to my mother Catherine Patry, to my brother Matthew and his partner Angie, to my sister Barbara, and to so many others too numerous to list, without whose support, patience, perseverance, encouragement, and dedication, this work would not have been realized.

Introduction

Most scholarship regarding the group of Canadian films that emerged primarily in the 1980s and 1990s that has come to be known as the "Toronto New Wave" (TNW) considers the films usually identified with it not as an ideologically or aesthetically cohesive ensemble, but as a disparate mélange engendered by the merely coincidental socio-political, economic, and government policy circumstances that developed at the beginning of the 1980s.[1] For example, notable Canadian film scholars Peter Morris, Piers Handling, and Ted Magder vaguely define TNW as merely "a catchphrase for a spirited generation of English-Canadian filmmakers," "[r]ather than an expression of a particular group aesthetic" (33). Critics who engage more robustly with the cinematic content of these films often make reference to a new global sensibility of the filmmakers and almost universally discuss the theme of urban social alienation that permeates the film narratives. However, the motif of urban social alienation is always understood by these critics as merely a theme in these films. These critics overlook or openly reject the possibility of what anarchist cultural studies refers to as philosophical praxis, an active effort to intervene in cultural meaning-making and to change dominant ideologies. Thus, in the following dissertation, rather than approaching these films from the perspective of genre, as either "Canadian" or "apocalypse," this analysis seeks to understand the political work these films attempt to accomplish in the perceptual space between the filmic texts and both their auteurs and potential viewers.[2] I will argue against the commonly held view that the films of the TNW do not share any significant aesthetic or political unity, and in doing so, I will make a case for the marriage of theories of apocalypse with anarchist cultural studies (terms for

[1] I must particularly acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Lincoln Shlensky in the difficult task of phrasing this first sentence of the dissertation.

[2] Genre studies, it is true, as outlined in Amanda Klein's *American Film Cycles* (2011), for example, serve particularly synchronic historical purposes that align with contemporaneous industry imperatives. However, she explains that "while film genres are primarily defined by the repetition of key images (their semantics) and themes (their syntax), film cycles are primarily defined by *how they are used* (their pragmatics)" (4, my emphasis). More importantly, genre studies have been criticized for reducing the polyvalence of texts to merely defining their taxonomical boundaries. In this regard, "apocalypse" films are particularly problematic. For example, Lianne McLarty suggests that apocalypse films might be reasonably understood as a subcategory of horror cinema, and certainly horror is fundamentally apocalyptic in many ways, but what of films such as *Independence Day* (1996) and *Armageddon* (1998), which duly qualify as apocalypse films, but which are closer kin to action-spectacle than to horror in any strong sense? The boundary limitations of genre are simply too porous to be usefully applicable to films such as those of the TNW. And as Annette Kuhn states in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (1996), "more interesting, and probably more important, than what a film genre *is* is the question of what, in cultural terms, it *does* – its 'cultural instrumentality'" (1).

which I will provide definitions below) as a means to understand a selection of films from within the TNW that I argue are particularly "anarchist-apocalyptic" in their cultural and political work.

The first chapter of the dissertation will serve as a literature review of texts and commentaries concerned with the Toronto New Wave and with its influences and inspirations. Canadian cinema more broadly has primarily been considered in scholarship as a form of cultural capital, and for its merit in the service of legitimizing a somewhat dubious nationalist-cultural identity (Leach *Film* 5-6). In his influential book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; trans. 1984), French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that, under the conditions of capitalism "[t]here is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic" (Bourdieu 1809) in which the appreciation or production of cultural goods in the category of ostensibly 'high art' endows the subject with a "cultural capital" that works to legitimize class distinctions. "Consumption is, in this case, a stage in the process of communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. ... A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (1810). In the case of Canadian cinema, culturally inflected with a colonial footprint of perceived moral superiority (especially as against the U.S.), this cultural capital manifests as the ability to produce, appreciate, and otherwise 'properly' consume films that are considered more intelligent, more politically progressive, and more artistically sophisticated than Hollywood cinema, a cumulative set of characteristics that have taken on the generic title of "avant-garde" or "art house." "'Canadianness' becomes a sign of quality, or, at least, oddity with the potential to be quality" (Mathijs 67). The production of such cinema in Canada may not afford the filmmaker much in the way of financial returns, but it has proven to be instrumental in securing long-term professional legitimacy, and especially in securing government funding and cultural accolades. Much of the cultural capital of Canadian cinema has been garnered in the service of shoring up a distinct form of nationalism.

Nationalism, in this context, refers to the longstanding colonial footprint of Canadian "nation-building" significantly initiated by John A. MacDonald in the latest years of the nineteenth century (Gasher at al 73, 153). This analytical lens is evident in the commercial press as much as elsewhere, and even "cultural hero Cronenberg" (as Ernest Mathijs calls him) has not escaped such analyses (223). For example, in their review of *eXistenZ* (1999), most

European publications "dutifully mentioned the fatwa and video games, … devoting ample attention to how Cronenberg explained their significance" (Mathijs 216). However, "[i]n the Canadian press, references to the fatwa and to video games were avoided in favour of references to 'Canadian' issues (with examples including … the presence of other Canadian films in [the] Berlin" film festival (Mathijs 216). In scholarship, the "nationalist" analytical lens at least takes on something of a critical edge. In *One Hundred Years of Canadian Cinema* (2004), George Melnyk claims that "Canadian studies finds the nation state to be a useful framework for understanding the project of national cultural autonomy in which an imagined community fosters its own creative interpretation in order to create a sense of a bordered self" (6). And in *Film in Canada* (2006), Jim Leach indicates that his "main focus will be on how the films represent Canada visually and on the stories they tell about the nation" (7). While these scholars disavow participating in a neo-colonial "nationalism," they are unabashed about deploying it as an analytical filter apparently still relevant to a mass audience.

Leach concedes, however, that "this is not to suggest that the national context exhausts the interest of these films" (7). The limitations of such an approach are perhaps best implied by the peculiar characteristics of Canadian mass media summarized in Gasher, Skinner, and Lorimer's *Mass Communication in Canada* (2016). They refer to "the vastness of the country and the small size of Canada's population, … [a] third significant characteristic, derived in part from the size of the country, … Canada's regionalism … [and a] final, never-to-be-forgotten characteristic of Canada's communications environment, … its proximity to the United States" (74-5). These characteristics imply the impossibility of satisfactorily identifying universal cultural characteristics that can be reduced to the signifier "Canadian." In fact, the highly regional, even local urban inflection of the TNW films in some ways precludes a nationalist reading of them. TNW mainstay Atom "Egoyan claims that his films are 'very much the result of the city I made them in. …'" (Leach *Film* 61). These films, in fact, participate in a much more tenuous deconstruction of nation, in many cases, by ignoring it as an ontological category altogether. Thus, the "cultural ... and political contexts" of Canadian film that Leach mentions remain available for further analysis, and on the films' "own terms," rather than in the context of "value judgments" based on the putative commercial superiority of Hollywood cinema (6-7).

While I have considered the neo-Marxist analytical tools common to traditional Cultural Studies appropriate when applied to Hollywood cinema, I have long been dissatisfied with these analytical frameworks when they are applied to Canadian films. Canadian films are not so

readily defined as mere commodity, either as a material product or as narrative vehicles of ideology, nor as primarily produced for the purpose of profit. Something is missing in this reduction of production inputs to the logic and ideology of capitalism. Nevertheless, loosely trading on the Marxist conception of alienation, critics who have considered the TNW more specifically almost universally discuss the theme of urban alienation that permeates the films. Virtually every article that comprises Geoff Pevere's *Toronto on Film* (2009) collection makes reference to urban alienation as the defining characteristic of the TNW films (Handling "Foreward" xiv, Gravestock 151, Pevere 25). And both Cameron Bailey and Brenda Longfellow take this urban alienation as a given, as I explain in more detail in Chapter 1. However, these analyses still tend towards a neo-Marxist industry-economic approach to understanding the parameters of the TNW. I rather contend that there might be something more to these otherwise insular stories of urban isolation that reflects even broader material circumstances than those of national industry economic policy changes.

Thus, also in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I further discuss the relevant context of nuclear fear in which the filmmakers I explore came of age. For some of the TNW filmmakers, contemporary nuclear anxieties translated into a fear of catastrophic social collapse, a phenomenon that had come to be referred to colloquially as "apocalypse." Don McKellar offers perhaps the most obvious revelation in this context when he admits in a 2008 interview regarding his work on the film *Blindness* (2011), so long after his *Last Night* (1998), that his "paranoia about the apocalypse hadn't been resolved yet" ("TIFF"). In this context, McKellar is using the term "apocalypse" in a contemporary colloquial sense to refer to the wholesale annihilation of all life on earth (as in *Last Night*) or at least to the violent subversion of post-industrial urban bourgeois culture (as in *Blindness*). However, the urban alienation upon which so many of the TNW narratives trade seems to map very specifically onto the idea of apocalypse in general.

The term "apocalypse," first appearing in the biblical Book of Revelation (although its conceptualization has even further antecedents), derives from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which refers to an unveiling or revelation, presumably of God's plan to destroy the world to make way for a New Jerusalem.[3] The Book of Revelation, the last chapter of the New Testament

[3] "The traditional narrative that has come to be known as apocalypse was fully formed only with the advent of Christianity. It has narrative antecedents in the Old Testament, and the individual components of the apocalyptic

of the Christian Bible, tells the story of an end times that lasts better than a thousand years as revealed to John of Patmos by an angel sent by Jesus Christ. John sees seven churches, six of which are judged for the ways in which they have strayed from their capitulation to God, followed by his glimpse into Heaven where Jesus sits upon his throne and opens seven sealed scrolls recounting the word of God. The opening of each scroll ushers in stages of a strangely mythical account of how God unleashes the four riders of the apocalypse and allows Satan (in the form of a "dragon") to corrupt the unworthy and destroy the earth in a series of increasingly violent catastrophes. Ultimately, God, via Jesus (described as an unusually powerful and unforgiving "Lamb" that slays the dragon), leads the oddly specific number of "the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth" into the heavenly utopia of a "New Jerusalem." The narrative at least implies that this revelation to John might work as a harbinger to the seven churches to reform before the hour of Judgment.

However, beyond its deeply mystical and religious implications, scholars such as Maria Manuel Lisboa, Kirsten Thompson, Elizabeth Rosen, and David Ketterer, amongst myriad others have variously observed the usefulness of the term "apocalypse" as a secular critical lens. Lisboa reports that James Berger "discerns a common thread of radical critique of the existing political and social order linking apocalyptic visions as chronologically disparate as the Book of Revelation [and] the work of Michel Foucault" (56). Lisboa further observes that "[s]cience …, science fiction …, and millenarian evangelical Christianity … have all envisaged apocalypse, whether satirically or with a proselytizing agenda, as a critique of existing societies, and usually, as a cleansing process" (66). However, according to Ketterer, "[u]nlike the mystic, who attempts to break through material reality, the apocalyptic arrives at his revelation through an understanding of the true significance of events in the historical world" (12). The point here is that apocalyptic thinking looks for signs in reality. These are not "true" so much as they are interpretive, but there is at least some attention to the world as it is, where by contrast the "mystic" chooses to ignore all worldly signs as mere superstructure.[4]

story can be traced even further back to the ancient civilizations of the Vedic Indians, Egyptians, Persians, Mesopotamians, and Greeks" (Rosen xiii).

[4] Credit again to Dr. Lincoln Shlensky for this wording.

This "apocalypse" in apostasy has come to signify at least five clear political concepts: 1.) the unmasking of an ideology of domination judged to be corrupt and undesirable; 2.) the destructive sweeping away of an entire social system that supports such ideology; 3.) creativity towards an impossible-to-imagine utopian "New Jerusalem" (Lisboa 63, 132) that will emerge to replace such a system; 4.) an ongoing and continuous process ("progressive" if you will) of permanent evolution in the apocalyptic transition; and 5.) "the basic notion that humanity is approaching a zero-point of radical transmutation" (Žižek *End Times* 336). At least the first two of these are part of the definition of what Douglas Kellner refers to as "social apocalypse," specifically reflected in a largely reactionary "cycle of Hollywood films from the early 2000s through 2008 [which] ground their fears and anxieties over the Bush-Cheney administration" (14). Kellner argues that these films "offer specific critique of how their policies could lead to catastrophe" (14). However, as compelling as Kellner's arguments are, it is difficult to see the films he discusses as anything but Hollywood commodity trading on embedded social anxieties rather than as revelatory tales of apocalypse. As Maria Lisboa explains, in many narratives of this sort "the term 'post-apocalypse' turns out to be both a misnomer and conceptual error. What follows apocalypse ought to be either nothing or something epistemologically different but in fact almost always turns out to be merely a not-very-revised version of prior realities" (67). The films which Kellner discusses are harbingers of recuperation more than revelation.

The films of the TNW are, by contrast, much more revelatory, as well as wholly secular. And such a secular understanding of apocalypse resonates specifically with the type of anarchist philosophy that was prevalent in Toronto intellectual circles in the early 1980s. Thus, in the second chapter, I offer a review of anarchist philosophy which reveals how a latent notion of "apocalypse" is deeply embedded in many veins of anarchist philosophical discourse, a discourse often considered to have begun with the publication of William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* in 1793. Godwin openly rejected "the state," deeming it "despotism: a government, as Mr. Locke justly observes, altogether 'vile and miserable,' and 'more to be deprecated then anarchy itself'" (15). Godwin's early writings duly influenced later theorists at the turn of the nineteenth century who would recuperate the term "anarchy" from Godwin's colloquial usage of it. Just as Marxism maintains a triumvirate of founding fathers (Marx, Engels, and Lukacs), anarchism also maintains its own revered provenance in a triumvirate of theorists (whose political and theoretical historical significance bears a marked and uncanny resemblance to the triumvirate of Marxist founding fathers), Pierre-Joseph

Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pyotr Kropotkin. So closely related were their socio-political concerns that Marx and Engels found themselves in some of the same socialist caucuses as Proudhon and Bakunin until theoretical differences set them at political odds. Bakunin criticized Marxism on a number of counts, but specifically took issue with the idea of a violent revolution, which he deemed unnecessary, and the vanguardism of Marxist-Leninism. Vanguardism is the notion that an intellectual or paramilitary elite within the proletariat must take the reins of political revolution in order for it to foment the necessary cohesion and momentum to succeed.[5] Bakunin rejected the Marxist-Leninist proposition for the use of the State as a mechanism for the practical realization of socialism, arguing instead for the emergence of a set of affinity-based interactive production communes (Woodcock *Anarchism* 158). Bakunin argued that any use of the State would only result in the vanguard becoming a new post-revolutionary power structure governing the working classes (Woodcock *Anarchism* 158).

More contemporary "anarchists have not restricted their analysis to the effects of the state. Their critique deals with the entire system of domination, including not only its statist and bureaucratic aspects, but also such factors as economic exploitation, racial oppression, sexual repression, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, and technological domination" (Clark 100). In Todd May's *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (1994), he cites David Wieck's summary definition of "anarchism" (which can only be provisional to such a multi-valent discourse) that is useful here as it is both succinct and inclusive. "Basic to anarchism is the … view that the abolition of dominion and tyranny depends on their negation, in thought and when possible action, in every form and at every step, from now on, progressively, by every individual and group, in movements of liberation as well as elsewhere, no matter the state of consciousness of entire social classes" (Wieck qtd. in May 49). The "action" to which Wieck refers has taken the name of "praxis" in anarchist discourse, referring to such "direct actions" as outright property destruction in the spirit of rejecting the ownership of wealth or the means of production, or to the more philosophical "praxis" of theorizing, educating, writing, and even filmmaking. To this definition, May adds that "[t]he affinity that many feminists have shown for anarchist thinking is no accident: the operations of patriarchy are more, and other, than just economic ones. They constitute a realm of oppression that requires distinct address"

[5] Both Antliff ("Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism" 63) and Richard Day (59) cite Lenin's role in the Bolshevik revolution as the exemplar of vanguardism.

(50). May concludes that "anarchist struggle is conceived not in terms of substituting new and better hierarchies for old ones, but in terms of getting rid of hierarchic thinking and action altogether" (51) in the ongoing process of constructing a somewhat utopian social structure that might be considered akin to the apocalyptic notion of a "New Jerusalem."

However, much anarchist philosophy has either overlooked or openly rejected the apocalyptic intimations of Bakunin's famous aphorism that a destructive clean sweep may be both necessary and creative in the process of progressing towards an emancipatory and sustainable social system.[6] While anarchism is fundamentally concerned with a rejection of authority in all its guises, especially such patriarchally-inflected forms of it manifest in capitalist economic and social relations and in state socialism, it has grappled with discursive contradictions within many of its multi-valent philosophical strands and has variously been reduced to defending itself against reactionary accusations of ostensible violence, unproductive nihilism, and naive utopianism. And just as much as anarchism has unduly come to be understood as a generic synonym for unmitigated and rampant social violence, apocalypse has come to be used as a synonym for wholesale annihilation. Such a trend may have begun with Godwin himself. Although he posited the central anarchist tenet of anti-statism, he described anarchy in terms little better than the contemporary cliché of it, in which it is celebrated and practised only by what Richard Porton laments as the stereotype of the bomb-throwing 'beardy-weirdy' (11). Indeed, Godwin states that "Anarchy is a short-lived mischief [in which people] yield to all their furious passions" (291). While Godwin concedes that the "nature of anarchy has never been sufficiently understood," he proceeds to argue that "[i]t is undoubtedly a horrible calamity, but it is less horrible than despotism" (291). In a somewhat apocalyptic language, Godwin concludes that "though [anarchy] be a dreadful remedy, it is a sure one" (291). Godwin's apparent fear of the violence of anarchism notwithstanding, Bakunin's aphorism has been echoed by numerous anarchist philosophers through time, particularly George Woodcock and Paul Goodman, and is in many ways implied in the works of such post-structuralists as Foucault and Deleuze. With the turn of many contemporary anarchist philosophers to the *post*-structuralists and the theoretical contributions of *post*modernism to develop a more nuanced understanding of the workings of authority and power in the modern and highly complex societies of global capitalism, Matthew Adams and Nathan Jun refer to this

[6] See, in particular, the different approaches to this aphorism in George Woodcock's *The Rejection of Politics and Other Essays* (100-1) and Richard Porton's *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* (7).

group of philosophers as the "post*anarchists*" (247). Even these, however, have not embraced the critically useful notion of apocalypse.

Richard Porton's *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* (1999), particularly significant here as it is one of only three book-length texts in existence that employs an anarchist theoretical analysis of cinema specifically, is paradigmatic of this rejection.[7] Just as Godwin used "anarchy" colloquially rather than in any specifically theoretically informed manner, Porton uses "apocalypse" in its colloquial sense of a wholesale annihilation event to be duly shunned rather than in its more theoretically-informed sense as a useful critical concept. He argues, for example, that "Bakunin is often caricatured as an apostle of violence, and the sentiment from his pre-anarchist essay *The Revolution in Germany* (1842) — 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion' — is too often cited as an anarchist tenet, rather than as a prolegomenon to a more constructive vision of decentralized federalism" (7). Porton also summarily dismisses the debate surrounding the praxis of property destruction that is a central concern in many anarchist texts, including the neo-TNW film *Monkey Warfare* (starring Don McKellar and Tracy Wright), Matthew Wilson's *Rules without Rulers*, Chris Robé's *Breaking the Spell*, and even Porton's own text when he explores Claude Faraldo's *Bof* (1971) and Alain Tanner's *Charles, Dead or Alive* (1969). With an equally dismissive reference to "the brief, but spectacularly ill-fated, alliance of Bakunin and Sergei Nechaev in 1869-70," Porton claims that "Nechaev combined the conspiratorial vigor of Russian Jacobinism and nihilism with a single-minded, *even apocalyptic*, devotion to his cause" (13, my emphasis). Using the same representational strategy of vilification against which he defends anarchism, Porton concludes that "[t]he Nechaevan determination, moreover, to root out and if necessary exterminate real or imagined enemies smacks more of proto-Stalinism than of genuine anarchism" (13). Considering Porton's skill as an analyst and historian, his characterization of Nechaev is surely accurate. However, in his race to recuperate the "genuine" meaning of anarchism, he does not extend that same consideration to the otherwise critically useful idea of apocalypse.

In contemporary anarchist philosophy, much of the rejection of the notion of apocalypse may stem from its more colloquial usage. Rather than recognizing the revelatory aspects of the term, it is often used as a synonym for the nigh insuperable inevitabilities of late-industrial global capitalism. Uri Gordon, for example, states that,

[7] The other two are Stuart Christie's *Arena One: Anarchist Film and Video* (2009) and Chris Robé's *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas* (2017)

> [t]he writing has been on the wall for decades. Only large helpings of ignorance, arrogance, and denial could conspire to portray an entirely rational prognosis as the irrational rantings of a doom-crying fringe. … [A]s reality begins to slap us repeatedly in the face, pattern recognition is finally and rapidly sinking in. There is no averting our eyes any longer: industrial civilization is coming down (249).

This recognition is similar to that outlined by Slavoj Žižek in his *Living in the End Times*. Žižek explains that the "underlying premise of [his] book is a simple one: the capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point" (x). His allegorical "'four riders of the apocalypse' are comprised by the ecological crises, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions" (x). However, Gordon also sees this apocalyptic inevitability as perhaps the opportunity for anarchist-inflected philosophy and social practices to come to the fore. The tension, between the undesirable apocalypse brought on by capitalist destruction and the emancipatory apocalypse of revelation, and between the predominantly white patriarchal privilege enjoyed by the TNW filmmakers and the anti-patriarchal sentiment they often proffer, are the coordinates within which the social tensions of urban alienation are maintained in their films and through which a new understanding of the films can emerge.

Thus, it is both timely and useful, especially in the service of analyzing the films of the TNW, to recuperate the critically valuable notion of "apocalypse" into an anarchist discourse that has overlooked, even rejected, its value. I use the term "anarchist-apocalyptic" to describe the praxis of filmmaking in the production of representations that include apocalyptic themes, and a concomitant effort to effect revelation and ideological conversion towards the embrace of an anarchist sweeping away of undesirable social relations and the construction of a non-hierarchical social order. In conjunction with the identifiably apocalyptic and anarchist-inflected themes that imbue so many of the films, some of the TNW filmmakers even openly identify as anarchistic thinkers in their socio-political leanings (based on their own idiosyncratic definitions of anarchism, of course). However, I make no claim that either these films or their directors are "anarchist" *per se*. The construction, production, distribution, and thematic content of these films cannot necessarily be explicitly associated with such grassroots anarchist alternative/experimental media filmmaking practices as those listed by editor Stuart Christie in his *Arena One: Anarchist Film and Video* (2009) or Chris Robé in his *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas* (2017) which

together cover such wide-ranging practices as the Latin-American "Third Cinema" of Solanas and Getino or the "guerilla" media practitioners of Paper Tiger Television in New York. However, Porton explains that his more inclusive analysis insists that

> the definition of anarchist cinema is broadened to include discussion of films not made or produced by anarchists; well-intentioned films made by devoted anarchists are sometimes of less interest than non-anarchist works which, perhaps unwittingly, brilliantly encapsulate the anarchist amalgamation of antinomian individualism and collective direct action (2).

Many of the apocalyptic films of the TNW duly fit into Porton's more capacious taxonomy. Not only do they betray a range of identifiably anarchistic and apocalyptic themes, they even implicate the viewer in a process of ideological conversion.

This is why the term "apocalypse" is more critically useful here than such terms as "horror" (often considered a larger category in which apocalypse cinema is a subgenre, but which none of the TNW films could reasonably be called), "holocaust," "catastrophe," "disaster," "tragedy," or even "Armageddon," all of which have duly received their own attention as genres of cinema. Unlike these other terms, and in common with much anarchist philosophy, "apocalypse" not only implies a (*possibly* catastrophic) clean sweep, but it is also deeply concerned with revelation, renewal and re-building, themes that permeate the anarchist-apocalyptic films of the TNW. In a language resonant with anarchist philosophical sentiment, in *The Apocalypse on Film* (2016), Angela Krewani explains that "apocalyptic thinking emerges as a result of institutional and societal failures to embody individual fears and a deeper distrust in society's institutions. As such, this approach to the apocalypse offers a well-known argumentative structure, which can provide the basis of political and cultural criticism" of art-forms including cinema (180). Krewani concludes that "the apocalypse provides the political discourse, on the one hand, and on the other, it offers a rich visual and semantic pool of meanings to be experimentally connected with topical political criticism" (188). In addition, Allan Antliff observes that "[r]adical critics also have a role to play by writing ... from an anarchist perspective" ("Anarchy in Art" 78-9). The remainder of this dissertation takes up Antliff's call in concert with Krewani's related call to "explore ... how apocalyptic thinking and topics can be integrated [especially, I think, with anarchist philosophy] in experimental 'art house' films" such as those produced by the filmmakers of the Toronto New Wave (180).

Building on select contributions to anarchist media theory, anarchist philosophy more generally, and post-anarchist philosophy specifically, I use these insights to develop an

analytical methodology that I argue is more broadly consonant with an analysis of Canadian film and with the films of the TNW in particular. On a meta-cinematic level, in which the films of the TNW are viewed as an ostensible "avant-garde" artistic product rather than for their ideological underpinnings, Bourdieuian analyses of cultural capital are altogether appropriate. Nathan Jun (of the so-called post-anarchists) explains that even an anarchist analytical program might recognize that "[t]hrough the use of niche marketing and other such mechanisms, the postmodern culture industry has not only overcome the 'threat' of the avant-garde but transforms that threat into one more commodity to be bought and sold" ("Toward" 154). Jun also points out that "Deleuze would agree with Horkheimer and Adorno that the contemporary film in the street[8] [a modality that was at the very foundation of early TNW movements such as 'LIFT (Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto)] serves a dual role as capture mechanism *and* as commodity. It not only functions as an object within capitalist exchange but is an ideological machine" (Jun "Toward" 155). But Jun makes clear that this ideological machine need not necessarily be recuperative to a neoliberal status quo which, according to Richard Day, "includes the ongoing globalization of capital, as well as the intensification of the societies of control" (6). According to Jun, the "refusal to relegate cinema to either a commodity form or a mere vehicle of propaganda is itself an act of refusal replete with political potential" ("Toward" 157-8). In his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Mark Seem presents something of a similar perspective.

> If one wants to do an analysis of the flows of money and capital that circulate in society, nothing is more useful than Marx and the Marxist theory of money. But if one wishes to analyze the flows of desire, the fears and the anxieties, the loves and the despairs that traverse the social field as intensive notes from the underground (i.e., libidinal economy), one must look elsewhere (xviii).

Just as the post-anarchists have looked significantly to Foucault and Deleuze for philosophical insights, I think that an avant-garde (in its generic sense) analysis of TNW cinema might look to anarchist philosophy for Seem's elusive "elsewhere." Borne of F*NV*-modelled auteurism and heavily government-funded, the films of the TNW require a theoretical tool that is mutually critical of patriarchal authority as it is manifest in everything from government-socialist

[8] In *Cronenberg on Cronenberg*, he describes a literal version of this experience in Toronto in the 1960s. "I remember summer nights you'd stroll through various sections of town that were hippified and you'd find people screening films on sheets strung up on store fronts, and people sitting on the sidewalk watching. It was very exciting. Your film could be one of those, and you were part of it" (Cronenberg *C on C* 15). Interestingly, *Last Night, Picture Claire, Monkey Warfare,* and *L.A.Zombie* all seem concerned with different forms of urban flaneurism.

political power and capitalist ideology to more interpersonal social relations embedded within what Gilles Deleuze refers to as a rhizomatic social fabric. The purpose here is to apply the analytical potential of post-anarchist philosophy with attention to the subtler details of the films of the TNW as a layer of understanding that complements the Bourdieuian analyses to which they have been subjected and to foster a media literacy that participates in the "development of strategies with which to analyze and discuss media messages" such as those in the films of the TNW (Silverblatt ctd. In Baran & Davis 295).

Therefore, I look to anarchist philosophy's relatively neglected tenets for new critical perspectives. In order to develop a methodology that explores the possibilities of ideological revelation that cinematic practices might afford, I marry the more socio-political and perception-based contributions of contemporary psychoanalytic cinema theory with post-anarchist theory to construct a model for the analysis of the Canadian apocalypse cinema of the TNW. Anarchist theory is more broadly concerned with governmental power and coercive authority in all its guises, well beyond the economic determinism implied by Marxism, and it simply maintains a critique of a wider range of sites of authority. Leach explains that "people's personal interests often place them in a critical relation to certain aspects" of "the nation-state" and the "political and legal systems" which support it (*Film* 8). Much anarchist philosophy is fundamentally concerned with criticisms of such a nation-state. It is under this premise that I think anarchism, the more capacious theoretical critique, steps in as a useful complement. An anarchist analytical model can be used to determine the progressive nature of the philosophy that underpins and informs the apocalyptic TNW narratives. Furthermore, it demands a reading of these films as conceptual experiments that simultaneously engage in a critique of capitalism (often as the cause of apocalypse) and a critique of state socialism (often as a faux-solution that simply replaces one form of patriarchal power with another). As Phillip Schmerheim argues in *Skepticism Films* (2016), "[f]ilms as thought experiments might be able to arbitrate between rifling theories, 'playing the role of an experiment in scientific theory by allowing us to have a field in which to judge which of the two theories is more successful in helping us understand the film'" (52). As such, in an analysis that recognizes the films of the TNW as "thought experiments" (which they surely are), it is possible to "arbitrate" between Bourdieuian and anarchist analyses, "to judge which of the two theories is more successful in helping us understand the film[s]." With these considerations in mind, in the subsequent three

chapters of the dissertation, I apply the analytical methodology developed in Chapter 2 to a close reading of three phases of cinema that might be identified as part of the TNW.

Chapter 3 specifically explores the earlier films of David Cronenberg and the palpable influence they had on subsequent members of the TNW. In the films of the TNW, anxieties (which notably manifest as representations of urban social alienation, perhaps, as Brenda Longfellow argues, surrounding the effects of globalization in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the new millennium), resolve into various forms of anarchist-apocalypticism. This dual proclivity can be traced as much to the pervasive nuclear anxiety present at the time these filmmakers were coming of age as to the sublime influence of David Cronenberg. Interestingly, Cronenberg acts as a sort of grandfather figure to the filmmakers of the TNW while remaining a liminal member of it himself. Such early films as *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977) betray an almost prurient desire for the destruction of bourgeois social harmony and the annihilation of patriarchal social relations in the context of apocalypse. Nevertheless, Cronenberg states that "[i]f you're a Red Brigade terrorist I suppose it would be very cathartic to say … and to believe it—that you must tear down all the old order and live in eternal chaos—but I never really believed that and still don't" (qtd. in Mathijs 21). But what if tearing down the old order did *not* require living in the stereotype of anarchism as eternal chaos, but rather in eternal revelation and emancipation? Cronenberg goes on to intimate hope in this direction. "On the other hand there is something stifling about a certain kind of monolithic order and established social structure" (qtd. in Mathijs 21). As I will demonstrate, even Cronenberg's earliest experimental films such as *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) make use of post-apocalyptic settings to explore what might be identified as specifically anarchist social considerations. Thus, in his opus survey of Cronenberg's works, Ernest Mathijs, astutely I think, argues that in *Stereo* (1969) "there remained a prevailing sense that the communication or a sophisticated use of signs, or transmission procedures, would trigger true understanding, and bring out the best in people. Dedication would lead to love, and all would be well. The experiment in *Stereo* failed but hope remained" (20). This "hope" that "a sophisticated use of signs, or transmission procedures, would trigger true understanding, and bring out the best in people" may be the fundamental characteristic of anarchist-inflected philosophy towards the experimental production of a non-hierarchical social reality. I follow these analyses with a consideration of such films as *Scanners* (1981) and *Videodrome* (1983), both of which also maintain an anarchist-apocalyptic desire to annihilate patriarchal heroes and which actually overlap with

the era of the TNW proper. Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a study of *eXistenZ* (1999), a film which frames the cycle of the TNW proper at the other end.

In the fourth chapter, taking Cronenberg's manifest influence and participation with the TNW as a point of departure, I apply the methodology of analysis developed in the second chapter to a close reading of select films of the TNW proper, many of which orbit the influence of Don McKellar. Not only did Cronenberg appear in McKellar's *Last Night* (1998), for example, but McKellar subsequently performed in Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999). These films build on the themes introduced by Cronenberg with an even more explicitly anarchist-oriented attempt at praxis in the form of cinematic efforts towards revelation and ideological conversion. Beginning with the early works of Peter Mettler I proceed with analyses of the works of John Greyson, Patricia Rozema, Jeremy Podeswa, Bruce McDonald, Don McKellar, and of McKellar's various participation with all of them. I then conclude the chapter with an extended analysis of Natali's *Cube* (1997) and McKellar's *Last Night* (1998), before briefly revisiting Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999). The close of the millennium coincided with significant changes in government policy regarding the funding of cinema production in Canada, the maturation of the TNW directors, and a new era of international co-production that, taken together, according to Canadian cinema theorists Charles Tepperman, Brenda Longfellow, and Cameron Bailey, also brought the era of the TNW to a close.

In the fifth and final full chapter, however, I continue to apply the methodology of analysis developed in the second chapter to explore what became of the anarchist-apocalyptic cinematic impulses of these filmmakers in the new millennium under significantly different social and industry-level production circumstances. In addition to the auteurs explored in previous chapters, this chapter introduces the contributions of TNW neophytes Sara Polley and Bruce LaBruce, and the ways in which they all rode the rising zombie-apocalypse cinema zeitgeist in producing highly subversive film contributions that maintained the progressive anarchist-apocalyptic concerns explored in the previous chapter, albeit in protean forms. While these concerns, for McKellar, Polley, and McDonald, tend towards a less subversive and often diluted commercial form, the works of particularly Peter Mettler and Bruce LaBruce remain almost entirely exempt from the powerful drive towards commercialism, while also remaining duly "anarchist-apocalyptic" in their own ways.

Overall, in the project of this dissertation, the films that I select from within the TNW are significant on two counts. First, the selection of films represents some of the most

celebrated productions of some of the most central auteurs of the TNW. Second, they all feature narratives that might be considered mutually apocalyptic and anarchistic in their philosophical themes, visual representations, and the intentions of their cinematic engagement with the viewer. Movies such as McKellar's *Last Night* (1998); David Cronenberg's *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977); Peter Mettler's *The Top of His Head* (1989); Jeremy Podeswa's *Eclipse* (1994); Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* (1991), *Elimination Dance* (1998), and *Pontypool* (2008); Vincenzo Natali's *Cube* (1997) and *Nothing* (2003); and especially Bruce LaBruce's *L.A. Zombie* (2010), amongst various other TNW films, all stage a particularly anarchist-inflected set of apocalyptic themes. It is my intention that the recognition of this proclivity will provide an opportunity to analytically revisit these films, to add a layer of understanding to their analysis to complement the dominant theoretical lenses through which Canadian film scholars have understood them, and to explore the wider contexts of their cultural significance. Perhaps, as many of the films of the TNW seem to suggest, the "end times" can be emancipatory in the ways implied by anarchist philosophy. Indeed, perhaps the *embrace* of the more progressive aspects of apocalypse can save us from an annihilating inevitability. In the end, I hope to have demonstrated how the contributions of anarchist philosophy significantly advance an understanding of the apocalyptic tendencies within the TNW films explored, their radical socio-political ideological project, and the cultural work that they do on the stages of politics, production economy, social practice, and ideological identity, what Annette Kuhn refers to as "cultural instrumentality" (1), and which I identify in these films as "anarchist-apocalyptic."

Chapter 1 – What is the Toronto New Wave?
Analyses, Influences, and Anarchist-Apocalyptic Intimations

Any sound inquiry into the art-historical or socio-political import of the films of the Toronto New Wave might reasonably begin with the origin of the term. According to accomplished Canadian film scholar Brenda Longfellow,

> It is unclear when the term Toronto New Wave first appeared in print, but it is clear the moniker had been used informally in critical circles since the early 1990s. A short overview published in the summer edition of *Take One* in 1996 by Marc Glassman and Wyndham Wise uses the term to refer to a list of filmmakers who "came to cinematic maturity during the early 1980s" ("Surfing" 130).

The term seems subsequently to have been coined by Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Executive Manager Cameron Bailey in his now canonical 2000 article "Standing in the Kitchen All Night: A Secret History of the Toronto New Wave," in which he outlines what he considers to be its membership and the avant-garde nature of its films. Using the oddly satisfying metaphor of a kitchen party[9] to demonstrate the collaborative community of the group, Bailey summarily states that "Atom Egoyan, Bruce McDonald, Peter Mettler and Don McKellar would take the prime spot" in the kitchen, and that "David Cronenberg would show up early, and leave early, too. Even though it was his kitchen" ("Standing" 7). Bailey also makes room for Ron Mann, Patricia Rozema, Clement Virgo, Jeremy Podeswa, John Greyson, and Bruce LaBruce, although he locates them at the kitchen's periphery ("Standing" 7). In his analysis of Peter Mettler's work, Jerry White similarly states that "The filmmakers who comprise the Toronto New Wave — Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Bruce McDonald, Don McKellar, John Greyson and Peter Mettler – … represent the first generation of Canadian filmmakers to emerge without direct support from — or the influence of — the NFB [National Film Board]" (1). And, as mentioned in the introduction, Peter Morris (et al) vaguely defines the TNW as merely "a catchphrase for a spirited generation of English-Canadian filmmakers," "[r]ather than an expression of a particular group aesthetic" (33). While Morris nods in the direction of a definition by negation, none of these offers a particularly satisfying answer to the question of what the Toronto New Wave is.

[9] This metaphor seems to have some vague Canadian cultural resonance. Of particular note is Alberta filmmaker Gary Burns's *Kitchen Party* (1997) whose title and narrative content works in the same way Bailey's article does, as an allegory for social relations and, like the TNW, is similarly riddled with identifiably anarchist social concerns. Patricia Gruben states that in the film "authority figures are exposed as ineffectual goats" (Gruben 303).

In his answer to the question of what the TNW is, group member and Film Professor at the University of Calgary, John Greyson, was hesitant to imbue the term with much critical capital, insisting its parameters are just too unstable for the category to be tenable. "I question the stability of almost any category, but maybe in particular the idea of a Toronto New Wave. ... [T]hat whole [T]oronto [N]ew [W]ave category was always so wildly unstable" ("Re: UVic Ph.D."). Indeed, its very origins are contentious. While Canadian film scholar Aaron Taylor argues that "The period between 1983 and 1988 were pivotal years for the group: most of the filmmakers produced their first major features" (204), Cameron Bailey insists that the TNW definitively began with Atom Egoyan's *Next of Kin* in 1984 ("Standing" 11). Brenda Longfellow more ambiguously states that

> If 1964 could be retroactively seized upon as the putative origin of a new wave in 1980, then the *annus mirabilis* which reignited hopes at the end of the decade was 1987, the year *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* made the most spectacular debut in the history of Canadian cinema, garnering the *Prix de la Jeunesse* at the Cannes Film Festival and coming home to open the Toronto Festival of Festivals ("Surfing" 111).[10]

These cumulatively ambiguous origins result in an equally contentious elaboration of TNW membership. Greyson, for example, subdivides himself from the group as part of what he referred to as "the Toronto indie queer" movement that one would assume would also have included Rozema, Podeswa, and LaBruce. Cameron Bailey similarly claims that Greyson's "*Urinal* and *Zero Patience* stand so far outside the rest of the new wave that they fit mostly by virtue of chronology" ("Standing" 10). Otherwise, Bailey's and White's membership rosters cited above are largely affirmed by Brenda Longfellow, even though she makes no mention of Cronenberg and largely reduces the significant figures of the TNW to only Egoyan and Rozema ("Surfing").

However, these membership contentions are far from definitive. None of Bailey, White, or Longfellow includes Vincenzo Natali, although he certainly fits into the group based on Peter Morris's definition that includes any member of the "spirited generation of English-Canadian filmmakers" working in Toronto and taking funding from the new CFC (even though Natali largely operated independently of this group) (33). Thus, Morris (et al) offers yet a somewhat different population. He more broadly includes Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Bruce

[10] Longfellow seizes on the year 1964 since it is the date of production of Don Owen's now Canadian-canonical *Nobody Waved Goodbye* which "explored the ennui of two suburban teenagers. This was also the year that Gilles Groulx's equally celebrated *Le Chat dans le Sac* was released.

McDonald, Peter Mettler, Jeremy Podeswa, Clement Virgo, Don McKellar, John Greyson, Bruce LaBruce, Darryl Wasyk, Stephen Williams, David Wellington, John Fawcett, *and* Vincenzo Natali, while also excluding Cronenberg (33-4). According to Morris, "[m]ost were graduates of film departments at the University of Toronto, Sheridan College or Ryerson Polytechnic University. They generally gravitated to LIFT (Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto), the funky film co-op founded by a group including Bruce McDonald and Peter Mettler" (33). All of these memberships, based on a propensity to define the TNW in terms of its auteurism, completely miss another collaborative coterie of neophytes and actors that seemed to orbit McKellar and Cronenberg, including Sandra Oh, Callum Keith Rennie, Sarah Polley, and McKellar's life-partner and long-time collaborator, Tracy Wright. In "Don McKellar: Artistic Polymath," Paul Salmon identifies Bruce McDonald as McKellar's "most important collaborator" and argues for a significant relationship between McKellar and Egoyan (364, 369). However, such a perspective overlooks McKellar's even more significant collaboration with Tracy Wright on both a professional and personal level (they have appeared in some 10 films or shorts together, earlier worked in theatre together, and were life-partners up to the time of Wright's death in 2010), probably because her status as a 'mere' actor rather than a director otherwise excludes her from the auteur cohort.

Bailey and Longfellow also disagree over the extent of the subversive politics at work in TNW practices and narratives. Bailey states that "This new generation" represented "a radical move" that embodied Bruce McDonald's somewhat self-aggrandizing claim that his break with conventional Canadian cinema practices was a form of "Outlaw" cinema ("Standing" 7), while Longfellow counters that

> Maintaining their commitment to art cinema certainly distinguish the new wave directors from the tide of commercial activity that surrounded them, although their status as marginals or outlaws has to be considered either highly relative or deeply nostalgic, given how many of these directors depended on television directing to augment their incomes, and the rising budget and international co-production deals most enjoyed at the end of the nineties ("Surfing" 121).[11]

[11] It seems here, however, that Longfellow might be missing some of the irony embedded in McDonald's claim. McDonald evidently lifted the phrase from comic-idealist filmmaker Brownie McFadden, a character in Colin Brunton's 1993 short "The Mysterious Moon Men of Canada" on which McDonald worked as editor. In it, McFadden ridiculously imagines himself as some sort of rogue outlaw filmmaker for the otherwise relatively un-radical move of attempting to make a movie about anonymous and unsung Canadian astronauts rather than the Terry-Fox-proxy blind cyclist character to which he was assigned. Ironically, the film did have some impact in establishing McDonald's career as, perhaps, the type of moony-eyed 'outlaw' filmmaker depicted within it.

Bailey agrees to the extent that McDonald's claims were "Not exactly" accurate ("Standing" 7). "Sooner or later, they all worked for television. Or Alliance. Or both" (7). Alas, the category of TNW is, indeed, unstable, but not, I think, untenable.

It is possible to credibly postulate the TNW as a coherent movement. The films that comprise it enjoy a degree of aesthetic unity informed by their circumstances of production and distribution (historical, political, and material), as well as by their mutual philosophical and thematic concerns. In the interviews conducted for this project, every director with whom I spoke including Greyson, LaBruce, McKellar, and Natali all knew, at least intuitively, to what I was referring, whether they included themselves in it or not. As Bailey states, "between say, 1984 and 1995, something new *did* develop in Toronto ... Maybe what we had *was* a 'Toronto new wave'" ("Standing" 7, my emphases). In addition, the contributions of Morris (et al) and Longfellow aforementioned at least take the TNW as a given, as do other such scholars as Paul Salmon and Aaron Taylor in George Melnyk's *Great Canadian Film Directors* (2007) compilation. Don McKellar further concedes that the category of the TNW is "as real as those sort[s] of categories ever are, those little sort of niches in film" (Personal interview). So, taking its existence as an underlying hypothesis of this work, what remains is to define the TNW, explore its unities and disparities, and satisfactorily locate it in the cultural narrative of Canadian film history.

Periodization by Industry Markers

More salient to the current discussion than its ontology is where the Toronto New Wave fits into an industry-level historical narrative. While Canada maintains a long history of production-side government subsidies, it also maintains an almost embarrassing history of failures to address the more significant problem of the distribution and exhibition of Canadian films in an arena of American-owned theatres and the less expensive American media productions available to exhibition outlets (due to the economies of scale afforded by the large and well-established American production industry) (Gasher et al 76). However, in the 1980s, in the dying throes of the long-standing dominance of Pierre Trudeau's Liberal Party, the Canadian government established the first significant program to foster festival exhibition as a complement to the latest Ontario provincial production incentives and professional initiatives. According to Peter Morris (et al),

> Three major events of the 1980s proved to be instrumental to the growth of this new breed of English-Canadian filmmakers: the founding in 1984 of the Perspective Canada programme, the world's largest international platform for Canadian cinema, by the Toronto Festival of Festivals (now the Toronto International Film Festival); the creation of the [Ontario Film Development Corporation] OFDC in 1986; and the founding in 1988 of the Canadian Film Centre (CFC) by Norman Jewison, which began to produce an impressive body of work by the mid-1990s (33-4).

Aaron Taylor reiterates that the TNW came into existence "thanks to invaluable new sources of income from the Ontario Film Development Corporation, Telefilm as a feature film fund, generous provincial tax credits, and a grant from the Ontario Arts Council" (204). Cameron Bailey had already described the TNW in similarly economic terms, although he romanticizes these material conditions with a sort of collaborative camaraderie that is an astute understanding of the TNW qua 'wave.' "[T]hese films were made with the help of friends, with newly available government money and with what looks like a complete lack of faith in the existing industry" ("Standing" 7). Bailey concludes with an historicist taxonomy of what he deems the significant moments in the emergence of the TNW. By foregrounding such seminal moments as the opening of the Canadian Film Centre by Norman Jewison in 1988, and with such rhetorical statements as the one in which he claims that in "1995… Mike Harris comes to town. The Tories slash funding to the OFDC and the Ontario Arts Council… The party's over," Bailey preconceives the type of materialist historic account offered by Peter Morris (11). This latter statement also indicates an effort to identify the TNW in terms of its finitude rather than its previously discussed origins.

Overall both Brenda Longfellow and Charles Tepperman give better (or at least more contemporary) accounts of the slow-burn of the industry and economic changes that resulted in the birth and decline of the TNW, or what has more broadly been recognized as an initial move from social realism to auteur cinema, and then from auteur- to producer-driven cinema in Canada. In "Surfing the Toronto New Wave: Policy, Paradigm Shifts and Post-Nationalism," Longfellow states that her intention is "to investigate the evolution of the Toronto New Wave in relation to four key areas" ("Surfing" 112)

> 1. The role of the international festival apparatus in bestowing cultural capital and in generating a niche market for art cinema in this period.
> 2. The evolving policy environment at both the federal and provincial level, continually articulated in relation to two competing models of film production, one cultural, the other industrial
> 3. The social, political and economic impact of globalization in this period, an impact

> most symbolically marked for the historical signing of Canada's first free trade agreement under the Mulroney government in 1989 and NAFTA in 1994
> 4. The shaping of the aesthetic form and new narrative contents of the Toronto New Wave by international flows of cultural and economic influence (112).

In her analysis, Longfellow affirms her belief that the TNW era, characterized by an "openness" in narrative form that superseded the form of social realism in Canadian cinema that had preceded the TNW, ended in 1995 (121). "That openness ... had definitely closed down by 1995 as the election of the conservatives in Ontario and the economic realignments in a globalizing industry conspired to reinstate a purely industrial model of support" (121). From that point of departure, Charles Tepperman discusses the Canadian "Script to Screen" policy that subsequently emerged. He identifies "the Script to Screen era [as occurring from] 2000 to 2011" ("From"). According to Tepperman, "this period shifted its emphasis in funding from the role of director to producer" ("From"). Referencing Piers Handling's "periodization of Canadian cinema," Tepperman lists "1984-2000: '15 semi-golden years… regeneration… the Toronto New Wave' and a ... nation-wide production of distinctive filmmaking," which was followed by "2000-?: '2000 may be as important to our film history as 1978. That was the year Sheila Copps set Canadian cinema a target of occupying 5% of our domestic market'" ("From"). Tepperman's contribution, however concise and objective, echoes Longfellow's preference for somewhat economically-determined historical analyses. Longfellow's title for example, "Surfing the Toronto New Wave: Policy, Paradigm Shifts and Post-Nationalism," makes no explicit reference to any sort of aesthetic or thematic unity that the works of the TNW might share.

The Nationalist-Cultural Footprint

Before any attempt at exploring thematic unity can unfold, however, it is necessary to understand the cinematic and socio-political contexts in which it emerges, and to define the scope and parameters of this ostensible New Wave, as well as the appropriate theoretical tools for its analysis. Historically, Canadian cinema has been a bit of an odd duck. It has never been the purely capitalist commodity that conventional Hollywood cinema is, although Canadian cinema is the only otherwise sovereign national industry to be included as part of the domestic box office of another country, the United States. Many Hollywood films are produced with more of a profit motive than any sort of particular artistic intention. Such Hollywood films are best

understood through a neo-Marxist lens as commodity[12] and their narrative impetus is primarily determined by the sale of the film as entertainment and by the return of profits. As Žižek might argue, they are constructed around and within an ideological framework of consumer capitalism. A Marxist tradition of cinema analysis is certainly consistent with cinema as pure entertainment commodity (and its concomitant ideology) but not as much with Canadian cinema. John Greyson, in a fleeting allusion to the French *Nouvelle Vague* (F*NV*), feels strongly that the Canadian film "industry is [more] like the European film industry: it's state financed, not commercially financed; by definition film is considered an art medium not an entertainment medium" (Greyson qtd. in Gittings "Activism" 131). Demonstrative, for example, is the insistence by Cronenberg that even his earlier genre films were artistically motivated, a contention that was met with some astonishment by American contemporaries John Landis and John Carpenter (Mathijs 94-5).

The TNW auteurs whom I interviewed unanimously had no delusions about the non-commodity nature of the films they were making. Don McKellar, for example, reports that his parents had tried to steer him away from filmmaking because it simply wasn't financially tenable in Canada. When I asked him why, then, he made films, he was clear that "Certainly it wasn't for money. I didn't think that was possible" (Personal interview). Bruce LaBruce similarly states, "I don't make the kind of movies that tend to make money, and fame doesn't interest me so much" (LaBruce). Therefore, the impetus for making these films must be more than mere capitalist profit. For the most part, these films were the pet projects of auteur directors that garnered limited release, predominantly if not exclusively in festivals, and that realized only a slow dissemination over a long period of time. The TNW films also betray an intentionally philosophical character, what Jim Leach, following Jeffrey Sconce, refers to as "smart films" (*Film* 139). In fact, all of the TNW films openly trade on the stereotype of Canadian films that claims they require a greater intellectual investment on the part of the viewer, or "eudaimonic motivations," as opposed to the "hedonistic motivations" implied by pure entertainment commodity (Baran & Davis 214). Indeed, the "uses and gratifications" (Baran & Davis 212) agency ascribed to the viewer by this perspective resonates with the tenets of both cultural studies and anarchist philosophy alike.

[12] Credit must be extended to my supervisors for assisting me with the proper wording of this sentiment.

This strangely interstitial position for Canadian film in general has substantially resulted in analyses of it as a form of Bourdieuian cultural capital. The dominant and most widely practiced scholarly method of understanding Canadian cinema has put this cultural capital in the service of a somewhat dubious nationalist project of securing and defining a sovereign cinematic production. Many of these tend to reduce Canadian cinema to an enterprise that participated in the construction of a post-colonial cultural identity as an ostensibly subversive counter-product frequently contrasted against a questionably distinct American cinema. The footprint of these studies is perhaps best exemplified in Seth Feldman's critical compilation *Take Two Tribute to Film in Canada* (1984) which is replete with nationalist critical perspectives. (Other canonical examples include Robert Fothergill's "Being Canadian Means Always Having to Say You're Sorry: the Dream-Life of a Younger Brother" [1974], Martin Knelman's *This is Where We Came In* [1977], and Christine Ramsay's more recent "Canadian Narrative Cinema from the Margins" [2002]). Post-colonial perspectives on Canadian cinema have tended towards focused criticisms that narrowly look at the lingering colonial footprint, especially in the context of the marginalization of First Nations identities.[13] These contributions astutely consider the Canadian film industry in its capacity as an extension of an official nationalist project best allegorized by the institution of the NFB. According to Mike Gasher (et al), in *Mass Communication in Canada* (2016), the "establishment of the National Film Board of Canada under the direction of John Grierson in 1939 entrenched the state as a producer of films for nation-building purposes" (226). This nationalist project participates in Canadian colonialism as it manifests in such films as the NFB's *Drylanders* (1963), a "canon" film that effaces First Nations identities and romantically valorizes the nostalgic settler-hero (Gittings *Canadian* 263). Admittedly, this sweeping survey is significantly reductive and otherwise minimizes the substantial contributions made to the critical discourse surrounding Canadian film under any of these theoretical banners. More recent criticism from such authors as Jim Leach, Christopher Gittings, and George Melnyk have taken a more eclectic post-modern approach. For example, although George Melnyk's text *One Hundred Years of Canadian Cinema* (2004) is better than a decade old, he delineates a confluence of critical approaches under the rubric of cultural studies and in the context of Canadian cinema that create a cogent framework of historical, political, and theoretical concerns (4). Nevertheless, Melnyk still tends towards

[13] For example, as in Sunnie Rothenburger's "'Welcome to Civilization': Colonialism, the Gothic, and Canada's Self-Protective Irony in the *Ginger Snaps* Werewolf Trilogy." (2010).

nationalist analyses aimed at establishing the characteristics that set Canadian cinema (as a whole) apart from its American counterpart.

The Bourdieuian Limitation

In the earliest years of the TNW era, distribution of Canadian cinematic product remained moribund under American distribution hegemony, largely maintained by the MPAA, and the only hope for recognition was on the international festival circuit.[14] As one might expect, then, another analytical trend applied to Canadian cinema more clearly follows a Bourdieuian understanding of cultural capital as it specifically relates to the pursuit of film festival accolades. In "Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the Economization of Culture," for example, Marijke de Valck reiterates a recognition of the schism between Canadian cinema and purely capitalist criticisms: "The incompatibilities between cinema's business and cultural identity are even more pronounced when it comes to art cinema, independent cinema, world cinema, and so-called quality films. Here, the question of what a film is worth is not (primarily) determined at the box office, but firstly related to its artistic qualities and its socio-political relevance" (74). De Valck invokes Bourdieu's theorization of non-monetary forms of capital as the cultural economy in which Canadian cinema operates, populated by "artists, who claim to be 'disinterested' in economic profit, in fact pursue other types of reward (most notably symbolic capital) … in order to advance their position in the autonomous part of the cultural field of production" (76). Similarly, in "Why Whistler Will Never Be Sundance, and What This Tells Us About the Field of Cultural Production," Diane Burgess takes up this Bourdieuian mantle to

[14] The number of International Festival Awards and Nominations these films have accrued run into the hundreds. Some that are significant here include the following:
Peter Mettler's *Scissere* (1982): Norman MacLaren Award – Best Canadian Student Film.
Bruce McDonald's *Roadkill* (1989): TIFF – Best Canadian Feature Film. (Don McKellar was nominated for two separate 1990 Genie Awards for his performance and screenplay.)
Bruce McDonald's *Highway 61* (1991): San Sebastien International Film Festival – Best Director, Brussels International Festival of Fantasy Film – Best Director.
John Greyson's *The Making of Monsters* (1991): Berlin International Film Festival – Teddy Award, Chicago International Film Festival – Gold Plaque, TIFF – Best Canadian Short Film.
Vincenzo Natali's *Cube* (1997): TIFF – Best Canadian First Feature, Brussels International Festival of Fantasy Film – Silver Raven.
Bruce McDonald's *Elimination Dance* (1998): Cinequest San Jose Film Festival - Best Short Narrative Film, Santa Monica Film Festival - Moxie! Award, Torino Film Festival - CinemAvvenire Award.
Don McKellar's *Last Night* (1998): Canadian Comedy Awards – Film Directing, Cannes Film Festival – *Prix de Jeunesse*, Genie Awards – Claude Jutra Award, Toronto Film Critics Association – Best Canadian Film, TIFF – Best Canadian First Feature.

discuss the unlikely prospect of the Whistler Festival ever achieving the same cultural capital as Sundance. Burgess states that "As Marijke de Valck notes in her contribution to this issue, scholars frequently utilize the concept of symbolic capital 'to explain how film festivals function as sites of cultural legitimization'" and that "[a]s Bourdieu explains in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, the field of production must be understood 'as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated'" (94). Observing the same schism between the product of Canadian cinema and its analysis as Hollywood-like cultural commodity articulated by de Valck, but in different terms, Burgess states that "In the Canadian context, crossover to mainstream audience success would require a transnational shift, given the balance of power (in terms of ownership, economics, and taste) in the North American distribution of cultural products" (93). With regard to the TNW, given the significant list of festival accolades that many of the films have garnered, it is safe to say that the TNW auteurs were certainly operating within such a Bourdieuian-inflected economy of cultural capital.

However, Bourdieuian analyses that focus on festival accolades as cultural capital also reveal certain shortcomings in respect to their application to the films of the TNW. Bruce LaBruce is emphatic on his position in this regard. "I hate the new model of everyone making films now tailored to certain festivals and desperately trying to win awards" (LaBruce). While the TNW auteurs were definitely operating on the Bourdieuian level of cultural capital, apparently it was not by affecting a disinterested ideology of art for art's sake, or solely in the pursuit of cultural capital in the form of festival accolades.[15] Rather, it seems that part of their motivation was the intentional expression of political philosophy. More broadly, the Bourdieuian understandings of de Valck and Burgess seem to have stalled at the structural level. That is to say that these analyses tend to exclusively examine the structures of cultural capital within which these films are circulating. As valuable as the Bourdieuian understanding of Canadian cinema as a cultural product is, what these examples have in common is a tendency

[15] Bourdieu argues that "disinterestedness" is a culturally constructed façade worn by an elite and pedantic class who have been educated to understand works of art from a certain intellectual distance rather than on the level of direct emotional involvement (Bourdieu 1812). He concludes that the ostensibly profane participation by the lower-classes with commerce-grade art creates an artificial category of art appreciation that legitimates social hierarchies (Bourdieu 1814).

to move away from cinematic narrative content towards increasingly industry-level analyses which eclipse the examination of individual cinematic entries.

In terms of reception, Bourdieu states that the "opposition between 'love at first sight' and acquired cultural capital necessarily implies a class bias, so only select members of the moviegoing audiences have the resources to obtain this cultural capital" (1810). Bourdieu assumes that the acquisition of cultural capital is the only social function of moviegoers in understanding an 'art' film that is otherwise not strictly a financial commodity. What if the opposite were true? What if some movie-goers were only interested in a film's radical ideology rather than the cultural capital of recognizing it as such? As Vincent Leitch (et al) points out, "The major objection to Bourdieu's work – as to much materialist work — is that he is 'reductionist,' oversimplifying a complex phenomenon by taking part of the picture as a whole. Few would deny that issues of social prestige and status influence judgements of artworks, but we might argue that a variety of desires and motives enter into our responses to art" ("Bourdieu" 1807). Leitch's critique indirectly brings to the fore the first of many examples of how anarchist theory might work as a corrective to such models of analysis; as Jesse Cohn claims, anarchist cultural scholars, "resist theoretical models for which capitalism absorbs the entire field of social relationships" ("What" 414). Cohn, citing David Graeber, "warns [against] Bourdieu's bid to 'extend economic calculation to *all* the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction'" (414) that has the effect of reducing the entire artistic and social field to a capitalist logic in the same vein as public choice theory. In this context, Ernest Mathijs' contention in his introductory comments to his extensive survey of Cronenberg's work is useful in understanding the dichotomy of Canadian cinema as both an economic cultural artefact and an artistic vehicle of cultural ideology. "It is impossible to write about film and not discuss culture. No film exists in isolation. Apart from its evident place in culture as an artefact, as a product with economic, social and political implications as part of an industry, craft or policy, each film also has content, structure and style that relates to the world we live in" (Mathijs 1). Thus, as Ruy Blanes et al so succinctly point out in their work on "Micro-Utopias: Anthropological Perspectives on Art, Relationality, and Creativity," "to claim that art is politics is not much more than stating the obvious. What is more interesting is to inquire in what terms this is so" (16). The question that remains is what the (ideological) content of this Bourdieuian cultural capital is.

Urban Alienation and Globalization

Within this vague socio-politically defined Toronto new 'wave' is a micro-assemblage of cinema that marries anarchist philosophical tenets with notions of apocalypse, which I refer to herein as "anarchist-apocalyptic" (see Introduction). These films variously map local concerns for the alienated urban subject onto a more global concern regarding socio-cultural apocalypse, which in this case refers to the dissolution of social relations and cultural progress on a catastrophic scale. In what both Bailey and Longfellow describe as a rejection of the nationalist-oriented narratives of Canadian cinema that preceded them, the TNW filmmakers were significantly concerned with a more localized urban alienation. While John Greyson denied the tenability of the TNW as a stable category, he went on to indicate, "What I do agree with ... Cameron Bailey about is focusing not on national cinemas but on cinemas of the city" (Personal interview), which I interpret as his agreement with the theme of George Melnyk's *Film and the City: The Urban Imaginary in Canadian Cinema*. Melnyk links specific cities to auteurism by insisting that the city in which a specific filmmaker has spent their life significantly informs the representation of that city within the film on an ideological level. Nevertheless, Melnyk remains fundamentally more concerned with auteurism than with urban centers; the latter is represented as little more than incidental to the auteur's vision.

Certainly, however, in the case of the TNW, much of the content revolves around the theme of urban alienation. As mentioned in the Introduction, virtually every article that comprises Geoff Pevere's *Toronto on Film* (2009) collection makes reference to this urban alienation as the defining characteristic of the TNW films (Handling "Foreward" xiv, Gravestock 151, Pevere 25). Both Bailey and Longfellow also go a long way in initiating such a trajectory of analysis, even if it does not end up being their analytical focus. Longfellow argues that "[i]n almost all instances, the city is represented as a largely dystopian landscape, soullesss and alienating" ("Surfing" 125) and that under this governing thematic, the TNW introduced a "new cinematic archetype against which all other [Canadian] feature films began to be measured" (115). Bailey agrees by first disclaiming an economic-industry approach to understanding the TNW. "[T]his movement wasn't about commerce, at least not at first. Each filmmaker reacted against the local film industry" ("Standing" 7). Bailey, perhaps more optimistically, however, describes how this reaction manifested as a preoccupation with "urban alienation" and the ways it brought the filmmakers of the TNW together (8-9). He claims that a specific "trend rose

up in the 1980s and '90s. Filmmakers began to try to find community in alienation ... [T]hese films are marked by ensemble cast, dispersed storylines and a classically comic move toward integration rather than isolation" (9). All of these analyses, however, still tend towards a neo-Marxist industry-economic approach. Steve Gravestock, for example, reiterates that "Pevere suggests ... this thematic shift [towards urban alienation] is, to some degree, the result of a propitious change in the economic circumstances of the [TNW] filmmakers" (151-2). Again, as stated in the Introduction, at least Longfellow makes the important analytical contribution of suggesting that there might be something more to these otherwise insular stories of urban isolation that reflects even broader material circumstances than those of national industry economic policy changes.

For example, Longfellow also invokes 'globalization' as another material influence on the TNW in its changed cinematic practices. In "Globalization and Canadian National Identity," Longfellow defines globalization in terms of the anxiety it induces in Canada as "the threat to cultural sovereignty posed by new information and communications technologies" (3–4). Two of the films she surveys in this particular essay, Peter Wellington's *I Love a Man in Uniform* (1993) and Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* (1993), are certainly of the TNW ilk, and it is in the third of her categories of inquiry in "Surfing the TNW" that Longfellow lists an explicit concern with the "social, political and economic impact of globalization in this period" in which the TNW films emerged (112).

> The Toronto New Wave defined its own response to the reality of globalization and to the globalizing monolith of American mass commercial cinema ... with an aesthetic preference for critical distance, multi-levelled reflexivity and ironic detachment. Branded with a bold sense of style and distinctive authorial thematics, preoccupied with the themes of urban alienation and the disappearance of authenticity from mass-mediated consumer societies, the films of the New Wave addressed an international taste *habitus* or niche market forged through its cinematic connoisseurship and cosmopolitan affinities (124).

Having introduced these abiding characteristics in conjunction with her reference to the Bourdieuian notion of "*habitus*,"[16] however, Longfellow is not left with the space or time in her contribution to provide specific analyses of the films.

[16] Bourdieu famously claims that "[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" in a process he describes as "bound up with the systems of dispositions (habitus) characteristic of the different classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu 1813).

Longfellow's only extensive formal analysis privileges the urban alienation thematic and focuses almost exclusively on the reformulation of "space" within these films ("Surfing" 125-6); she begins by establishing that "one of the distinguishing characteristics of the New Wave films is the frequent replacement of an explicit geographic reference to place by a representation of a highly stylized, abstract and artificial space [as in] the set of Vincenzo Natali's *Cube* (1997) where space takes shape as the concretized extrusion of a paranoid psyche" (125-6). Longfellow expands her thesis:

> As with the empty, deserted streets and supermarket in *Last Night*, space is continually transformed into something that is at once generic, unmarked by any specificity of location, and also profoundly *unheimlich*, uncanny – resistant to any sense of belonging or home. ... One has only to think of how many of the New Wave of films employ a mosaic structure of intertwining or parallel narratives to understand how their formal articulation provides a commentary on the experiential shape of urban life, Podeswa's *Eclipse* [1994] being perhaps the most paradigmatic case in point ("Surfing" 126).[17]

As noted, Cameron Bailey had already agreed with at least the urban focus of the TNW films. Along "[w]ith ... Cronenberg, [Atom Egoyan] made Canadian cinema urban ... a new, urban body of work ... To date, no film better builds on that foundation than Don McKeller's *Last Night*" ("Standing" 8). Cumulatively, this short list of TNW films (*Cube*, *Last Night*, *Eclipse*) is telling, inadvertently introducing the thematic vein within the films of the TNW with which this dissertation is concerned, the logical philosophical extension of the local and urban anxieties surrounding globalization: apocalypse.

The Apocalypse Pedigree and New Waves

Apocalypse themes were not new with the TNW, however. Canadian cinema maintains a pedigree of apocalyptic propensities. Building up to and following the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, nuclear apocalypse films underwent a paradigm shift towards less fantastical scenarios and more naturalism, an austerity that reflects the move of the nuclear anxiety away from what had been done to Japan, and towards what might happen in the West. Canadian feature-length narrative film at this time is strangely silent on the nuclear apocalypse issue, although this is more a symptom of the generally moribund production of narrative cinema following the

[17] According to Jesse Cohn in "Anarchist Cultural Studies," an "interest in spatiality has even deeper anarchist roots, extending back to Proudhon himself" (410). Podeswa's *Eclipse* is briefly discussed in Chapter 4.

Canadian Cooperation Project rather than any sort of ideological evasion.[18] In the stead of narrative cinema were a series of influential experimental films out of the studios of the NFB, at least three of which maintain specifically apocalyptic characteristics: Norman McLaren's *Neighbours* (1952), and Arthur Lipsett's *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961) and *21-87* (1964). Bruce LaBruce candidly states,

> I love the films of Arthur Lipsett, who is kind of like the Canadian Chris Marker, and I also love the formalist films of Norman McLaren. I'm really into avant-garde cinema and experimental cinema, which is how I started out. I like films that raise questions or expand the notion of form as well as content. I'm also into apocalyptic films. I love Dr. Strangelove, and Colossus: The Forbin Project, The Andromeda Strain, Planet of the Apes, The Man Who Fell To Earth – 70's films expressing anxiety about the future of humankind. They had a big effect on me as a teenager, making me think about the world in more geo-political terms (LaBruce).

Reflecting concerns of global internecine destruction from atomic holocaust, McLaren's *Neighbours* employs pixilation animation to tell the story of two bourgeois homeowners, living in harmonious idyll on contiguous property, until the possession of a flower on their property divide creates tension. They proceed to beat and maim each other, destroy each other's homes, and murder each other's families (cut from the original release but re-inserted later) before mutually succumbing to their wounds and dying. The film's brief coda splashes the words "Love Thy Neighbour" across the screen in fourteen international orthographies before English. Not long after, in 1961 and 1964 respectively, experimental filmmaker Arthur Lipsett produced *Very Nice, Very Nice* and *21-87*. Both films, pieced together from cutting room scraps, present a series of jump-cuts and often erratic sound to create a cacophony of otherwise unrelated images, but their juxtaposition and governing logic is clearly apocalyptic. *Very Nice, Very Nice* opens with a series of shots of urban decay, accompanied by the narration "In the city, marches an army whose motto is …" The narration abruptly cuts off to the startling blare of a car horn and the word "NO," immediately followed by the image of an overturned car. Following a rapid-fire set of images of harrowed faces accompanied by militaristic marching music, the narration mentions "a dissolving phantasmagoria of a world." At a minute and 40 seconds, the scene cuts to stock footage of a nuclear mushroom cloud concomitant with a narration that asks "what the

[18] "The Canadian Cooperation Project, which lasted between 1948 and 1958, was the notorious agreement in which the Canadian government pledged not to promote the growth of a Canadian commercial film industry in exchange for Hollywood's promise to mention Canada in as many of its films as possible (in the hopes of boosting tourism)" (Lowenstein 151).

future holds. What's ahead of us?" Preceding Maria Lisboa's insistence upon the notion of renewal that the term apocalypse implies, and the generally apocalyptic notion of a New Jerusalem, a later splice-cut narration in the film states, "We believe … warmth and brightness will return, and renewal of the hopes of men." However, juxtaposed against the harrowing images of nuclear destruction, these words can only be taken as ironic. The rest of the short plays out in very much the same way, as does Lipsett's *21-87*. Ultimately, the jarring nature of these experimental films leave the viewer with a distressing sense of imminent apocalypse and social alienation to which the films of the TNW certainly seem to respond.

Perhaps more clearly identifiable as a specific influence on the TNW, it seems the TNW adopts its moniker from the eponymous French *Nouvelle Vague* (F*NV*) from the 1960s, popularly believed to have been initiated primarily by Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffault and recognized as implementing a radical shift in filmmaking conventions. Indeed, Longfellow states that the TNW is guilty of "modelling itself around a European art cinema" ("Surfing" 124) although she is vague as to which art movement she is referencing. Cameron Bailey similarly states that the TNW filmmakers "had no soft spot for Royal Canadian stories. Their view was international, their sensibility European and their stance outsider" ("Standing" 9). Based on the moniker "New Wave," it is reasonable to assume both are alluding to the F*NV*. Longfellow specifically mentions Godard when she contends that any "new wave is constituted not out of individual films but on the bodies of its auteurs. These bodies generate a sense of expectation, a branding, connected to the textual, narrative and aesthetic recognition of the director's product: counter-cinema, semiotics and politics in Godard, marginality and melodrama in Fassbinder" ("Surfing" 116). Even more specifically, Aaron Taylor claims that in Bruce McDonald's *The Love Crimes of Gillian Guess* (2004), for example, "The aggro-aesthetics of Oliver Stone and Quentin Tarantino come to mind ..., but so, too, does that of Godard and his meditations on ... cinema itself" (220). McKellar personally verifies this influence in his own work: "I was mostly interested in ... the big European art filmmakers of the time, Antonioni, Fassbinder, and ... Godard. Godard specifically, actually. Mostly Godard. I worked really, really hard to see all the Godard films" (Personal interview). Thus, Canadian film historian Paul Salmon is right to define the TNW as characterized by "a rejection or at least deep questioning of the entrenched Canadian tradition of documentary realism, an openness to experiment in terms of narrative structures and subject matter, and a willingness to embrace collaboration

and artistic versatility" (376), the latter two of which have been variously assigned to the F*NV* as its *raison d'etre*.

As with the experimental films of Lipsett and McLaren, post-WWII atomic anxieties also found dramatic and experimental expression in the F*NV*, largely comprised of a set of films that embed urban alienation within particularly apocalyptic narrative representations. Some of the films of Godard, for example, such as *Alphaville* (1965) and *Weekend* (1967) maintain violently apocalyptic themes and have been closely associated with anarchist cinema practices (Dixon 105, Porton 140-9, 250). Similarly, the films of the TNW under scrutiny here all, in some way or other, marry their propensity to explore urban alienation with apocalyptic themes, although many of these are more concerned with an apocalyptic re-birth of a new social fabric than with the mere sweeping away of the old.

However, Cameron Bailey and Bruce McDonald both distinguish the TNW films from the F*NV* based on what they characterize as a lack of political impetus. "[T]hese films never connected to the new Toronto they put on screen with any kind of political change ... In fact, politics is one of the areas where the Toronto new wave and the F*NV* truly diverge ... 'It is definitely not a political cinema or a cinema of urban realism,' [Bruce McDonald] wrote" (Bailey "Standing" 9). Aaron Taylor agrees that "This new wave was 'urban, intimate, underdog, migrant, and art-fuelled. Not political. Not commercial" (202). Taylor, like Bailey and McDonald, links the "intensely personal" and "resolutely unconventional" nature of the narrative content of these films to the absence of political concerns (202).

In this, I think they are wrong. Not only do Bailey and McDonald summarily overlook the significantly political-apocalyptic tenor of the TNW films, I argue that, particularly in their apocalyptic thematics, the TNW films demonstrate both an aesthetic unity and an explicitly anarchist political dimension in their ideological underpinnings that is particularly reminiscent of the films of the F*NV*. Certainly one might also identify the films of the F*NV* as "intensely personal" and "resolutely unconventional" while remaining almost alarmingly political. At the very least, the TNW filmmakers certainly inherited a pedigree of conventions from the F*NV*, particularly Godard. Taking its name from the F*NV*, then, only makes sense for the TNW, since, although perhaps surprisingly, the films of the TNW similarly demonstrate a shift away from conservative nationalist socio-political concerns by cohering around a set of specifically apocalyptic themes and anarchist philosophical tenets in the context of the urban alienation that otherwise unites them.

At least one other influential international filmmaker worthy of mention here is Andrei Tarkovsky. Peter Mettler explicitly lists Tarkovsky as "a huge influence" (Mettler). This influence has a specific apocalyptic inflection that is particularly significant. Both *Solaris* (1972) and "*The Sacrifice* [1986], which thematized [Tarkovsky's] time's greatest eschatological anxiety, the fear of nuclear apocalypse" (Ljujić 155), are cinematic models that realize a number of the themes with which some of the TNW films are concerned. Echoing both Robert Fothergilll's and Margaret Atwood's understanding of Canadian culture as fundamentally diseased, "Tarkovsky's fear of the impending disaster toward which contemporary society seems to be moving [was rooted in] his understanding of the problem in terms of a 'spiritual disease'" (Ljujić 153).[19] And ironically echoing particularly anarchist sentiments (ironic because of how religious Tarkovsky's films may be said to be),

> Tarkovsky fervently argues that "true freedom" must be rooted in one's inner, moral person rather than in the social contract … "Freedom is not something that can be incorporated into a man's life once and for all," Tarkovsky writes; "it has to be constantly achieved through moral exertion" coupled with awareness that one's "*inner* experience is of *social* significance." Individualism in this sense is irreconcilable with a pursuit of personal liberation that is irrespective of other people and the society (Ljujić 153).

The summary conclusion of Ljujić's exploration of Tarkovsky's work is that his nearly debilitating anxiety regarding nuclear apocalypse was expressed in cinematic catharses, a vehicle of self-emancipating cinematic praxis that might also be recognized in the works of the TNW filmmakers.

Second Wave Nuclear Anxiety and the Anarchist Context

Certainly Cold War holocaust fears were significantly heightened again during the era in which the TNW auteurs were coming of age. In the early 1980s, ultra-conservative American President, Ronald Reagan amplified the industrial military complex arms race, and squared off politically against the U.S.S.R.'s Leonid Brezhnev. Although their political rivalry was alarming, the Cold War arms race seems to have destabilized even further following Brezhnev's death in 1982. The tenuous political leadership of Russia that followed with Andropov, Chernenko, and later Gorbachev gave rise to heightened fears of global thermonuclear Armageddon. These

[19] Adam Lowenstein concicely summarizes both Atwood's and Fothergill's depiction of Canadian cultural identity as "diseased" (147).

apocalyptic sentiments certainly found expression in cinematic forms. In 1983, the American made-for-television movie *Special Bulletin*, explored domestic nuclear terrorism. In the same year, another American made-for-television movie, *The Day After* shocked television audiences with a graphic depiction of a Soviet nuclear assault against a sleepy Midwestern town in Kansas. Hollywood movies such as *War Games* (1983), music videos such as British progressive pop-rock band Frankie Goes to Hollywood's *Two Tribes* (1984) (that depicts Reagan and Chernenko in a bloody wrestling match), and melodramatic songs such as Sting's *Russians* (1985) provide a popular culture touchstone of the contemporary fears and preoccupations of the Western world.

In this same era, significant Canadian nuclear apocalypse films also emerged. In an apparent response to *Special Bulletin* and *The Day After*, Canadian producers released *Countdown to Looking Glass* (1984), yet another made-for-television movie that also addressed nuclear fears. And the first production of Salter Street Films (now a predominantly television-based production company) was *Def-Con 4* (1985). Kim Newman, the only author that I encountered to give the film an even cursory mention, lists the film as amongst the last in what he refers to as the "Norms and the Mutates" cycle (103), a language that echoes Robin Wood's categories of "reactionary" and "progressive" films. "In … Paul Donovan's *DefCon 4* (1984) [*sic*] … pre-holocaust heroes are projected into a blasted future. Invariably the heroes side with the Norms" (K. Newman 103) which makes the only possible sense in *Def-Con 4*; it features a hardly post-adolescent preening melodramatic villain, the only character in the narrative still affected with 1980s "preppie" fashion choices, who is so irrationally evil that, even without any ability to invest in the characters, the viewer really just wishes him dead. Perhaps more interesting than *Def-Con 4* is the NFB's *The Big Snit* (1985), an award-winning animated short in which an obsessive-compulsive husband engages in petty irritations against his wailing spouse until they reconcile and escape the confines of their stuffy apartment into a pastoral post-apocalyptic heaven, the result of a nuclear war that they were too distracted by their bickering to notice. While this film takes influence from the NFB's tradition of award-winning avant-garde animation characterized by such films as the now canonical vignette *Log Driver's Waltz* (1979), it also clearly feeds from the nuclear concerns depicted in many other films of the era and establishes a tradition in Canadian apocalypse film of criticizing the pettiness of bourgeois social relations in the face of impending apocalyptic disaster, first visited in

McLaren's *Neighbours* and fully realized in Natali's *Cube* (1997) and McKellar's *Last Night* (1998).

This context of nuclear anxiety and its attendant cinematic incarnations must have been formative for the TNW filmmakers. Robin Wood's most celebrated acolyte, Andrew Britton, argues that this era of "Reaganite entertainment [which is, according to Britton, painfully replete with narratives of second-wave Cold War nuclear anxiety] has ... had a decisive effect on the Hollywood cinema and its audience," amongst whom we can count the TNW filmmakers (124). McKellar is clear that a context of the rising consequences of global industrialization and potential internecine nuclear apocalypse had a palpable effect on him and his filmmaking.

> I'd always been interested in those end-of-the-world narratives. ... It was definitely something that was talked about when I was in public school at the time. ... I remember really well, I was in grade ... five or something, and one of the teachers saying, "How do we think the world is going to end? Will it be from pollution, population, from nuclear destruction, or ...?" ... and thinking, "Good god! That's bleak," definitely disgust about it, and I had nightmares about it when I was a kid. ... All through those years, it was scary. ... There's a trickle-down effect, to use a Reaganite term, [that found some expression in *Last Night*] for sure" (Personal interview).

Bruce LaBruce similarly remembers "the feeling of precariousness and having the realization that the world could easily be destroyed in an instant by military aggression, or even by accident, as per *Dr. Strangelove*" (LaBruce). He also concedes, "I suppose that kind of anxiety seeps into any kind of artwork I do" (LaBruce). At this point in history, however, the *economic* effects of globalization had not played a substantive role in the production and distribution of Canadian apocalypse film (other than quashing it), and even within Canada much Canadian cinema production was relegated to the position of second-rate entertainment worthy of cultural pity more than widespread distribution. Thus, it is not surprising that, relegated to the position of cinematic underdogs on both the domestic and global stages, and inundated with industrial-nuclear terror, anti-establishment anarchist sentiments might have taken root with the filmmakers of the Toronto New Wave.

In fact, part of what makes an anarchist-apocalyptic method of analysis appropriate to an understanding of the TNW narratives, reflective as they are of the circumstances of social alienation that the city seems to have inflicted upon the TNW filmmakers, is the fact that, at the height of Toronto New Wave production, Toronto was a hotbed of anarchist thought and praxis. In *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (2005), Richard Day points to a number of direct action factions working in Canada at that time, especially in

Montreal and Toronto (31). And *Only a Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology* edited by Allan Antliff provides an overview and survey of anarchist activity in Toronto during the 1980s and 1990s. In his review of the book, George Fetherling explains that "Toronto was an important centre of commotion with such periodicals as *Bulldozer* (founded 1980, raided 1983) and *Kick It Over* (published since 1981, though rather discontinuously)" (Fetherling). Indeed, the index for the book lists some 44 pages that mention activity in Toronto, more than for any other city listed (Antliff *Only* 401-406). Antliff further reports that he "first encountered Art and Revolution at a weeklong anarchist conference held in Toronto, Canada in 1998" ("Strategies" 67), the year McKellar's *Last Night* and McDonald's "Elimination Dance" were released.[20] This year was apparently important for new waves in anarchism as well. In a discussion of the open source anarchist periodical *Anarchives*, which "had been restricted in the main to Toronto," compendium contributor Dave Fingrut explains that "[t]he conference brought hundreds of North American anarchists to Toronto, ... and trained a new wave of anarchist organizers who went on to work in various anti-poverty, anti-capitalist, and grassroots media organizations" (qtd. in Antliff *Only* 53). In "Adrian Blackwell," Antliff also describes one of Blackwell's anarchist art projects in Toronto in the same year (165). "In late September 1998, after considerable negotiations with city administrators and local businesses, Blackwell installed a portable toilet near the corner of Queen and Spadina in Toronto's downtown" (Antliff "Blackwell" 168). This installation is particularly interesting because of the way in which it uses the mirror in a practical fashion that aligns with the theoretical application of prosopopoeia established in the analytical methodology in the next chapter. In a way that inverts the Foucauldian panopticon, "every time a street person used the toilet the watched became the watcher" from behind the empowered gaze side of the one-way mirror (Antliff "Blackwell" 171). Antliff goes on to describe Blackwell's art as characterized by an "aesthetic of tension" that works to "bridge the gap between artist and audience" (177). As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, this contention might also be applied to the films of the TNW in its intentionally philosophical and prosopopoeiac aspects.

[20] The year in which *Last Night* was released was the most significant of McKellar's career. As Paul Salmon states, "There is no doubt that 1998 [was] [t]he most remarkable single year of Don McKeller's career thus far" (Salmon 371). George Melnyk reports that "McKellar was only in his mid-thirties when *Last Night* won the Prix de la Jeunesse at Cannes in 1998 and the Jutra at the Genies for his directorial debut. That same year, Mckellar shared the best screenplay Genie for his script writing on *The Red Violin*" (*One Hundred* 217).

Indeed, hailing from within the anarchist urban context of Toronto in the 1980s, McKellar, LaBruce, and Mettler all at least superficially articulated an affinity with anarchist political sentiments, while John Greyson was less committal. However, even regardless of the political affinities of the TNW filmmakers, in Richard Porton's *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*, he explains that "the Godard/Gorin concept of film as something of a provisional aesthetic experiment, not a closed system, does not preclude fortuitous political insights that [even] clash with the directors' stated ideological convictions" (142). Thus, it is telling that in Robé's *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas*, he mentions John Greyson on at least three occasions throughout his chapter on ACT UP AIDS activism in New York. Robé does not identify Greyson as an anarchist-active filmmaker in particular, but his worthiness of mention highlights his affiliation with anarchist groups, and suggests a continuum of left activism rather than membership in any specific left-philosophical tradition. In any case, it is in this unique ferment of urban, anarchist-philosophical, and apocalyptic considerations that the films of the TNW emerged.

A 'Quietist' Anarchist-Apocalypse

As I will demonstrate, the thematization of apocalypse that runs through the films under consideration here is astonishingly consistent, even in the face of disparate generic applications (Mettler primarily works in the documentary genre; Natali, McDonald, and McKellar in narrative fiction; and Greyson in an innovative combination of the two), and just as specifically politically anarchist. If looked at for their artistic contributions, a philosophical unity emerges that indicates the ideological underpinnings of the social context of late 1980s/early 1990s Toronto common to these filmmakers that laid the groundwork for (or at least reflected) a shift in the use and distribution of cinema, as well as in the socialist-oriented ideology that informed the narratives. The intricately detailed interpersonal micro-relationships of social alienation that so densely populate these narratives certainly supersede the larger macro-political messages that are embedded within them but do not evacuate the latter's presence. Having acquired from the F*NV* and Cronenberg an apocalyptic-alienation thematic and its concomitant aesthetic conventions, in concert with an ubiquitous 1980s nuclear holocaust anxiety, these films all betray an anarchist disillusionment with authoritarian social normativity.

However, an anarchist analysis reveals that, as radically progressive as many of these films are, the narrative content is fundamentally anthropocentric: the Apocalypse is only tragic/relevant to human subjects. All other life forms caught in its wake are ignored, a symptom of its urban preoccupation. And much like the filmmakers of the F*NV*, the apocalyptic themes and anarchist theoretical tenets with which many of the films are shot through are admittedly presented in an idiom that is characteristic of the demographics of the group. Following Bailey's membership, and including Natali, they are predominantly bourgeois male WASP Canadian filmmakers from Toronto, the contributions of Rozema and Wright notwithstanding. In fact, Patricia Gruben observes that Alberta filmmaker "Gary Burns's work shares a broad aesthetic and a set of values with other filmmakers of his generation who grew up white, middle-class, and suburban — whether … in Toronto, like Bruce McDonald; or in Calgary like Burns himself" (310). Burns's *waydowntown* (2000) is exemplary in this regard. It also features McKellar and, as I will show in the last chapter, shares his apocalyptic sensibility. Jesse Cohn further argues that "anarchist communities ... tend to be homogeneous, largely composed of young white males from middle-class backgrounds" ("What" 419). Similarly, controversial anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey observes that the "anarchist 'movement' today contains virtually no Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans or children … even tho [*sic*] in theory such genuinely oppressed groups stand to gain the most from any anti-authoritarian results" (qtd. in Day 161). Bey goes so far as to ask if anarchism even "offers [any] concrete program whereby the truly deprived might fulfill (or at least struggle realistically to fulfill) real needs and desires" (qtd. in Day 161). However, Allan Antliff explains that "[t]hese gross generalizations speak more to the authors' limitations than the realities of the global anarchist movement, which is predominately not 'white' or 'middle class.'" The "white, middle-class, and suburban" homogeneity amongst the TNW filmmakers is more likely a reflection of a demographic that was privileged enough to have access to filmmaking resources in the particular Canadian production environment in which they were working.

The radical nature of their anarchist politics or apocalyptic musings is always already informed in their films by a social privilege towards which these filmmakers demonstrate a discomfort while using it as an ironic position from which to create art-cinema unconstrained by a profit-motive that putatively would dilute its ideological content and evacuate their efforts to create some sort of mildly radical "outlaw" cinema. As the progeny of Cronenberg's "kitchen," this characteristic is unsurprising. "Cronenberg ... has always stressed that he is a

middle-class Canadian, for whom anti-social or dangerous behaviour (beyond the making of his films, of course) is anathema" (Rodley 164), although Cronenberg himself insists that "when I see what true middle-class values are, they're not mine" (Cronenberg *C on C* 3). Ironically, it takes a great deal of capitalist bourgeois privilege to be critical of it, especially through the cost-intensive medium of cinema that is unlikely to bear significant short-term returns on investment. Cultural theorist Terry Eagleton states that "Industrial capitalist society produces the wealth to create such institutions as art galleries, universities and publishing houses, which can then take that same society to task for its greed and philistinism. In this sense, it is the role of culture to bite the hand that feeds it" (18). As a cultural product, the radical impulses in these TNW films are thus, in some ways, determined by the class-based identities of the filmmakers, even as they challenge conservative cultural/social norms. Eagleton goes on to state that though identity politics and multiculturalism can be radical forces, they are not for the most part revolutionary ones" (160). This non-revolutionary but radical political ideology may be the defining characteristic of a male-dominated bourgeois filmmaking group from Canada's largest urban centre that seeks to criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded.

Therefore, their movie-making might be viewed as a solipsistic process of shedding themselves of the false consciousness of various forms of privilege – cultural, gendered, class-based – or onanistic ventures into self-revelation and vehicles through which to negotiate the nuclear fear they inherited from their experience of the 1980s. McKellar's *Last Night* (1998) seems the strongest evidence of this self-emancipating *modus operandi*. Clearly modeled after the structure of Kubrick's nuclear apocalypse film *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), complete with an ironically comical narrative that concludes with a disturbing apocalyptic aperture, McKellar may well have been creating his own *Strangelove* to displace the nuclear fear of the original into his praxis. However, it seems that the films were intended for wider audiences than such exclusively self-emancipating interpretations imply, even if the likelihood of their distribution remained scant. As Robé states, "[t]he process of media-making restructures identity individually *and collectively*, as well as becoming an inherent practice of direct action and political engagement" (351, my emphasis). Indeed, according to Peter Kramer, there were a number of viewers "who saw in [the] confrontation and contemplation" presented to them by *Strangelove*, "the possibility of a transformative experience *not only for individuals*, but perhaps for *humanity as a whole*" (48, my emphases). Kramer also reports the observations of "an academic" who "noted that *Dr. Strangelove* was [also] the kind of artistic work that could help

bring about a 'more sensible and sensitive society'" (47), a contention that could readily be applied to the apocalyptic films of the TNW. It is in this way that the TNW filmmakers exercise the anarchist philosophical tenet of praxis: their films are an active attempt to work through the contradiction of privilege for themselves in a medium that at least holds out the possibility of sharing their philosophical musings at the level of social ideology with their collaborative teams and whatever scant viewing audience such cinema might garner. In relation to the influence of the F*NV*, Richard Porton also observes that, with their film *Tout va bien* (1972), "Godard and Gorin ... invariably find novel visual metaphors to pinpoint their own complicity in the system they seek to indict, without engaging in unproductive self-flagellation" (146). As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, this characterization might duly be applied to the filmmakers of the TNW as well. As a determining factor in their filmmaking practices, the otherwise homogeneous and privileged demographics of the TNW filmmakers certainly unfold in their particular anarchist versions of apocalypse as an anxiety in which they seek to discover where they might fit into a world that is not encumbered by authoritarian oppression that manifests, as I will demonstrate, primarily in patriarchal social politics. Ultimately, in order to escape ideological recuperation, these filmmakers have been driven to cinematic imaginings of an anarchist-apocalyptic sweeping away of the social system that incarcerates them.

Cumulatively, these films of the TNW demonstrate an abiding concern with what Douglas Kellner refers to as "social apocalypse" (15) in a particularly anarchist-theoretical idiom, an effort to deploy a sort of philosophical praxis, as well as a lingering influence on wider-spread and more contemporary filmmaking practices in Canada. As I attempt to show in the remainder of this dissertation, these filmmakers imagine the apocalypse as the necessary cultural annihilation and the dissolution of what they represent primarily as a stultifying patriarchal ideology and its concomitant capitalist-mediated social relations. This propensity can be traced directly to the films of the French *Nouvelle Vague* and to David Cronenberg's earliest works in the 1970s, and in it, the TNW filmmakers attempt both to find catharsis in representation and to disseminate a philosophy of anarchist-apocalyptic embrace.

Chapter 2: Anarchist-Apocalyptic Cinema Analysis and the 'Progressive' Double-Entendre

In this chapter, I seek to introduce post-anarchist theory into a framework of analysis that examines the progressive nature of apocalyptic intimations or representations in select films of the TNW. Such a framework should further allow for an exploration of the ways these filmmakers produce or reproduce political ideology within the Bourdieuian economy of cultural capital that is specific to Canada.[21] As a point of departure, I review the anarchist body of literature that is specifically concerned with cinema analyses. I then move to incorporate these contributions into the development of a framework of analysis that might add to our understanding of the apocalyptic TNW films I identify by answering a series of somewhat stilted, but categorically useful questions. What is anarchist philosophy? How is the notion of apocalypse embedded within it? What value remains in the categories of "progressive" and "reactionary" as analyses of social politics? How can these be used in concert with existing anarchist-theoretical contributions to media criticism as a vehicle of cinema analysis? How is this vehicle consonant with an analysis of the films of the TNW? As this last question indicates, the chapter will conclude with a section that argues for the ways in which the analytical methodology developed herein is particularly useful as a tool of analysis of the films of the TNW. I contend that an anarchist-apocalyptic cinema analysis methodology is simply the most appropriate theoretical vehicle through which to understand the ideology, unity, purpose, and efficacy of the TNW films.

While there have certainly been significant and valuable anarchist contributions to cinema analysis, many of these have remained concerned with seeking anarchist sensibilities within ostensibly anarchist cinematic representations or with varying degrees of cinematic production as either direct action resistance or philosophical praxis, rather than with the development of a particularly anarchist-inflected methodology of analysis. Richard Porton explains that these analyses have emerged under specific historical periods of theoretical orientation. His tripartite periodization all occurs in a "post-World War II period," before which he claims there is negligible "anarchist commentary on film" (247-8). The first "critical orientation" is "strongly reminiscent of … the Frankfurt School's mass culture thesis, which

[21] Drawing upon a number of theoretical contributions, particularly those of Roland Barthes in "Myth Today" (1957), Louis Althusser in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), and Slavoj Žižek in *Living in the End Times* (2010), I define ideology as any set of practices, beliefs, or perceptions that are naturalized or normalized within a culture, frequently in the service of maintaining the status quo.

dismisses most Hollywood films as irredeemable sludge" (Porton 247-8). The second is "a more concrete 'Enzensbergerian' orientation," even though this phase "actually predates publication of Enzensberger's essays" (248). Porton explains "Enzensberger's prognostication that the 'new media' have the potential to be deployed as a 'means of production,' not merely 'means of consumption'" and that such action "was contingent upon a socialist transformation" (225). The third phase is comprised of "articles and books which reflect the influence of post-structuralist thought and postmodern genre theory" (248). Porton's own analyses hover mostly at the level of representation with some engagement with thematics and the ideological concerns of the films he surveys, especially in the direction of anarchist cinema as philosophical praxis. Nevertheless, he delineates some profoundly insightful methodological contributions to which I will return below.

Porton also makes reference to anarchist media theorist Paul Goodman's contributions, now almost fully collected in Taylor Stoehr's *Format & Anxiety: Paul Goodman Critiques the Media* (1995). Goodman's essays, very much in the spirit of the Frankfurt School, largely revolve around his perspectives concerning the stultifying ideological effects of media more generally, rather than specifically cinema. "In fact, Goodman moves beyond glib pronouncements on the moribund state of the cinema and looks forward to the media criticism of Chomsky, as well as scores of lesser-known anarchist scribes" (Porton 252). As much as in Goodman's preconception of Chomsky, there are also hints of Marshall McLuhan's axiom that "the medium is the message"; while McLuhan focused on the form (rather than the content), Goodman similarly draws attention to the format of television and media. However, this contribution is not particularly useful in the present analysis of TNW cinema.

Finally, Porton also makes reference to Susan White's unfortunately all-too-brief "Anarchist Perspective on Film," available in Howard J. Ehrlich's compilation, *Reinventing Anarchy, Again* (1996). Porton sets White's contribution in sharp contrast to the mass culture thesis of Goodman and Dwight Macdonald. According to Porton, White "promotes a critical approach derived from reception aesthetics that 'assumes that people are not taken in by the defeatist messages of' reactionary films but can 'use' them to control their own lives" (252). Porton concludes that "White's cautious optimism is one of mediating between anarchism's emphasis on self-activity and potentially libertarian currents within academic theory" (252). Indeed, as a point of departure, White begins her essay by arguing that anarchist philosophy provides "a perspective that is the most powerful available tool for analysis" (273). She

explains that this is "[b]ecause it lays bare the fundamental power structures at work in any cultural production — including film — without privileging any particular determinants, such as the economy (as does Marxism) or the personality of the filmmakers" (273). Nevertheless, White's essay largely resolves into a panegyric regarding the value of discussing films in order to attempt to mitigate the reproduction of the reactionary ideology they may prompt, or even to instigate more progressive anti-authoritarian thinking in response to them.

Other significant and useful, anarchist-inflected contributions to the study of cinema include Chris Robé's recent *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas* (2017); Stuart Christie's *Arena One: Anarchist Film and Video* (2009); Jesse Cohn's *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics* (2006) and "What is Anarchist Cultural Studies [ACS]? Precursors, Problems and Prospects" (2009); and, perhaps most useful, Nathan Jun's "Toward an Anarchist Film Theory: Reflections on the Politics of Cinema" (2010). Robé's text is an opus survey of anarchist media praxis, but his analysis is largely in the tradition of political economy as he traces the history of numerous grassroots media movements and their difficulty in realizing prefigurative anarchist social harmony within their ranks while they attempted to resist capitalist interests and the neo-liberal messages of dominant commercial media.[22] *Arena One* does much the same in an even larger historical-geographic survey that looks at media and cinema contributions as early as the Spanish Guerilla insurrection surrounding WWII and the tradition of left-resistance in early 20th-century France.

Cohn's contributions are certainly more theoretically oriented and provide useful foundations for the development of a specific methodology of analysis, especially in a section of *Crisis of Representation* where he introduces a Proudhonian-inflected methodology of looking at the material conditions of production as a text's origin and the content of a narrative as a philosophical guide to where the viewer might take such knowledge (*Crisis* 111).[23] Cohn's

[22] Prefiguration is the practice of refusing to exercise authority or coercive power over others in the process of constructing social alternatives to dominant patriarchal modes.

[23] In what Cohn refers to as an "Ecological Reading" (*Crisis* 106), he takes Proudhonian philosophy as a point of departure. "When Proudhon defines 'the object of *metaphysics*' not as the accurate description of a preexisting order of things, but as 'the *production* of order,' this resonates with Howard Richards's claim that metaphysics is 'the construction of unifying symbols' and symbol-systems that serve to help organize communities and societies" (*Crisis* 60). Cohn also explains that "for Proudhon …, it is possible to distinguish between 'the real' and 'the truth,' or between mere empirical fact and reality in a broader sense; the first, strictly speaking, 'has no meaning in itself,' while the latter includes the dimension of the ideal, and therefore a dimension of meaning" (81). He concludes this first section of his text with specific reference to Proudhon in arguing, "What we try to do through our ecological

much less dense "What is Anarchist Cultural Studies" similarly implies the discussion-oriented analysis of cinema advocated by Susan White, especially in the context of educational practices. And Nathan Jun's essay, rather than rejecting Frankfurt School prespectives, as Porton claims White does, surveys its contributions for useful Marxist-oriented understandings of the ideological function of popular cinema, and puts them to use in his own anarchist-inflected methodology that, in the end, is similar to Cohn's and White's. Cumulatively, this limited cross-section of anarchist-inflected contributions to cinema studies is an already impressive canon of useful and insightful literature. However, as Richard Porton concludes, "it seems safe to say that the future will bring novel permutations of the ever-evolving anarchist aesthetic" (253), and, in terms of introducing an anarchist-inflected analytical tool, there certainly remains room for theoretical contribution. Before constructing such a methodology, however, it will be necessary to define just what anarchist philosophy comprises.

What is Anarchism?

The answer to such a question could readily fill several volumes. (Indeed, it has.) Most contemporary theorists agree that anarchism, as a body of theory, is significantly more multi-valent than the 'grand narratives' that were typical of modernism. In his study, *Anarchist Modernism*, Allan Antliff refers to "the articulation of many 'anarchisms' within and outside the movement, sometimes in conflict, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in formation or decline, or simply maintained in uneasy coexistence" ("Insurrection" 74). More broadly echoing Porton's periodization of anarchist cinema criticism outlined above, Matthew Adams and Nathan Jun begin by identifying "traditional anarchist concerns" in the canonical works of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and their contemporaries through to such philosophers as Emma Goldman (Adams and Jun 247). They then identify a mid-twentieth century interim phase comprised of both "a strident, Lyotardian *Post*anarchism, that rejects traditional anarchist concerns, and instead proposes the adoption of new critical approaches and tactics that live beyond the remit of anarchist orthodoxy" and "a redemptive post*anarchism* that seeks the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven existing practices" (247). Lastly, they identify a more contemporary "postmodern anarchism (which corresponds

and ethical engagement is to spell out what *kinds* of relationship a text encourages us to build between ourselves and the world that it 'frames' for us. We seek simultaneously for genetic and quantum meanings, casting back into the history from which the text emerged, projecting into the texts possible future development" (111).

to the last version of post-*Marxism*), that reapplies anarchist analyses of methods to the new globalized ... political economy, and concentrates on the actions of oppressed subjects" (247). Cumulatively, anarchist theory encompasses a wide array of philosophical tenets all of which are mutually concerned with reticulations of the social pitfalls of power and authority as is at least implied by the very definition of the term.

Simple etymological definitions of anarchy have been invoked as relevant for better than a century (Armand ctd. in Jun *Anarchism* 117, Malatesta 1). According to Nathan Jun, "the term 'anarchy' is derived from the Greek word … *anarkhia* ... which can be translated roughly as [the state of being] 'without a ruler.'" (*Anarchism* 113). He explains that "The earliest Greek philosophers believed that the universe as a whole was subject to government by a fundamental organizing principle known as the *arché*, a term which means 'chief,' 'authority,' or 'head.' The *arché* brings order from chaos, defining the laws, relations, and hierarchies of nature" (*Anarchism* 1). However, Jun adds that "*Anarkhia*, in turn, comes from ... *anarkhos* ... which can be translated variously as 'without chief, ruler, leader, or authority' ... Thus anarchy does not principally mean 'without a government' or 'without a state,' but rather, 'without authority'" (113). Jun concludes that "[i]f anarchy refers chiefly to the absence of authority [in the form of domination or coercion], then all anarchist theories share in common 'the universal condemnation of all forms of coercive authority … hierarchy and domination'" (113). As Matthew Wilson makes clear, however, these essentializing reductions of anarchist philosophy to its etymological basis raise as many questions as they answer, and do not offer a sophisticated theoretical position from which to critique the esoterics of authority as they manifest in contemporary social constructs.[24]

Contemporary anarchist theory has given rise to the articulation of more specific anti-authoritarian philosophical mechanics. In its varied attempts to articulate understandings

[24] Almost all post-anarchists have grappled with the construction of a definition that reconciles the simple contradictions of the originary etymology of the term with a more nuanced understanding of the realities of power and authority as they manifest in human social relations. For example, Jesse Cohn reports that "For Bakunin, as for Newman, power is the natural product of society. Nor does Bakunin wish to abolish power as such – an impossible project; rather, like Newman, he wishes to abolish 'domination'" (*Crisis* 70). Richard Day describes a critique from "anarchist and anarchist-influenced groups" which describes "positive modes of social organization in which there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity" (195). And Richard Porton loosely outlines Noam Chomsky's distinction between the blind rejection of *all* authority and the rejection of coercion or authority *which cannot be legitimately or rationally justified* (215). (For example, the intervention of a father forcibly restraining his three-year old child from running into urban traffic is patriarchal, coercive, and authoritarian, but fully justifiable).

necessary for an escape from coercion, authority, patriarchy and their attendant alienation, much anarchist philosophy pivots on a recurring set of theoretical tenets. Anarchist theorist Randall Amster goes a long way in recounting an overview of all that populates this list. He states that, following Proudhon, "anarchists around the world began creating a theory and practice that was diverse yet centered around some basic points of agreement: (1) opposition to hierarchy, (2) decentralization [of state authority], (3) a commitment to freedom and autonomy, and (4) an opposition to vanguardism as it was expressed in authoritarian socialist traditions" (Amster "Introduction" 3). This list should further include: a vehement rejection of the state as an ostensibly necessary governing agent for complex social organizations; the refusal or rejection of unjustifiable coercive power in all its forms,[25] of authority, and of alienating and exploitative capitalist social relations;[26] distrust of property ownership of the means of production by either private (capitalist) or state (socialist) interests; rejection of (in fact, a deep disdain for) institutionalised (state-supported and/or hierarchically organized) religion as an oppressive ideological force;[27] faith in social formations founded on a practice of mutual aid; praxis in both the forms of direct action and philosophy; prefiguration of non-hierarchical and affinity-based communal social organization;[28] concomitant with a refusal of socio-political blueprints, part of a larger philosophy described by Allan Antliff that "pointedly refuses determinism" ("Insurrection" 73); further concomitant with a dedication to social experimentation; rejection of at least political representation;[29] the distinctions and political

[25] In *Anarchism*, Nathan Jun methodically comes to the conclusion that anarchists fundamentally oppose "opaque authority" and all forms of "coercion" (Jun *Anarchism* 114-5). Matthew Wilson quotes Nikolas Rose as reaching a similar conclusion in the context of certain liberties having to be quashed by state-sponsored coercion supported by "the argument that the constraint of the few is necessary for the freedom of the many" (Rose in Wilson 47). Especially Michel Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari further elucidate the ubiquitous nature of socio-political power and its immanence within the social fabric which I will discuss further below.

[26] Todd May quotes Frankfurt School critical theorist Theodor Adorno's succinct report that "'Men pay for an increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power.' That alienation includes, of course, alienation from themselves" (May *Political* 25).

[27] Many anarchist theorists from the earliest forefathers to the most contemporary express this sentiment in their own rhetorical fashion. Perhaps the most succinct example comes from Emma Goldman who states that "Anarchism, then, really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion" (Goldman 62). For a more extended survey of examples, see also: Mark Antliff 28; Bakunin in Jun *Anarchism* 139-40; Day 125; Deleuze and Guattari via Leitch 1596; Foucault via Jun *Anarchism* 184; Jun *Anarchism* 107-8; Kropotkin in Jun 119; Marx via Singer 82; Nietzsche 54; Proudhon in Jun *Anarchism* 118; Read 132; Stirner in Antliff "A,P, and P" 62; Ward 35.

[28] See Note 22 on "prefiguration."

[29] Richard Day also criticizes the "right-wing" press for "functional (mis)representation" (2). Jun contends that, "The most objectionable form of abstraction for Deleuze, as for the anarchists, is representation; … Deleuze believes that representation at the macro political level arises from representation at the micro political level"

conflicts inherent to different definitions of freedom; and an eternal vigilance against authoritarian social politics and the perpetual threat of their return in ever-protean forms.

Embedded in the fundamental difference between Marxist and anarchist theory (engendered in the notions of vanguardism, the totalizing class-based model of Marxism, and the mutual mechanics of Marxism and anarchism) is an indication of the way anarchist theory can be deployed as a corrective to traditional Marxism. It is specifically the postanarchist contribution to an understanding of the social fabric that is most significant in this regard. As Day explains, "*there is no single enemy* against which the newest social movements are fighting. Rather there is a disparate set of struggles" (5). As such, Jun, Day, May, Cohn, and others are quite right to invoke Deleuze and Foucault, amongst other poststructuralists, as theorists who make invaluable contributions. Firstly, Jun explains how "Foucault and Deleuze … reject the concentration thesis—that is, the idea that repressive forces emanate from a unitary source rather than multiple sites" (*Anarchism* 172). Jun argues that "[f]or Foucault, power is not and cannot be centralized in the form of a single coercive apparatus such as 'capitalism.' It exists not only at the macro-level of society (e.g., in ideologies, governments, etc.) but also with the micro-level of subjects (as in disciplinary power)" ("Toward" 146). Jun further references Foucault's oft-cited metaphor of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon which meakes clear that punitive authority is "a form of power that is dynamic, ubiquitous, and diffuse" ("Toward" 146). In his more extended argument in *Anarchism and Political Modernity* (*Anarchism*), and in a language that intimates Gramscian hegemony theory, Jun also points out that, *pace* Foucault, "forms of power always produce forms of resistance" (172). He installs an erudite anarchist spin on this Foucauldian position: "Although the rejection of the concentration thesis entails a greater number of *explananda*, which in turn requires a greater number of *explanantia*, we have already seen, in the case of the anarchists, that different and multiple forms of domination ensure that different and multiple forms of resistance are possible" (*Anarchism* 172). Invoking

(*Anarchism* 173). What Todd "May terms the 'antirepresentationalist principle,' holds that 'practices of representing others to themselves — either in who they are or in what they want — are, as much as possible to be avoided'" (Jun *Anarchism* 176). However, this contention quickly runs into a socio-political contradiction when it rejects the representational nature of art. Jesse Cohn, in *The Crisis of Representation*, at least distinguishes between types of representation, political or mimetic, the former of which he rejects and the latter of which he fully embraces. Recognizing this distinction, Allan Antliff explains that "Anarchism interrogated relations of domination with the goal of destroying all representational forms of power, precisely because such politics are always already at one remove from the represented" ("A,P, and P" 56). Antliff further describes forms of anarchistic artistic praxis in "Insurrection" that challenge state-sponsored forms of ideological misrepresentation or lacking transparency.

Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the rhizomatic social fabric, Todd May also indicates that their poststructural theory works as a corrective to more traditional modes of anarchist thought (*Political* 87). According to Deleuze and Guattari, "The rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization is the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature" ("*Thousand*" 1605). It is clear that Deleuze's "rhizome" model of the social fabric further influenced Hardt and Negri's understanding of the multitude under Empire, the eponymous term for the title of their text which Richard Day cites at length: "at times Hardt and Negri present the multitude as a 'plane of singularities, an open set of relations, which is not homogeneous or identical with itself'" (152). At the very least, postanarchist theory convincingly foregrounds that the social fabric is more nuanced, especially in the theoretical field of hegemony so repellant to Day, than the Marxist model of class factions allows.

Thus, into the population of anarchist theoretical mechanics listed above, Richard Day introduces specific forms of direct action which he refers to as the "*affinity for affinity*" (an extension of Kropotkin's notion of the much repressed human social propensity for "mutual aid," which Malatesta sets in opposition to mutually disadvantageous competition or outright internecine conflict [Malatesta 16-25]) and the refusal of a "*politics of demand*" engendered by the "hegemony of hegemony" (Day 8, 9, 14-15). Day explains the "politics of demand" as a hegemonic mechanism in which oppressed social subjects are systemically kept from realizing autonomy by perpetually deferring to an ostensible (and always patriarchal) authority from which they are compelled to plead for "the gift of *recognition* and *integration*" (14-15, 75-6, 83). Day's solution to this problem is what he refers to as "exodus" praxis in which anarchist-minded social subjects simply refuse to participate in the social, economic, and political constructs of global capitalism (148, 210, 214-15).[30] Day argues that an exodus has the ability

[30] In the context of other anarchist mechanics, such as direct action, prefiguration, and experimentation, Day initially describes exodus as a form of refusal of the institutionalized social system. He lists "an array of non-hegemonic tactics [which include] dropping out of existing institutions [and the] construction of alternatives to existing forms that render redundant, and thereby take power from, the neoliberal project" (Day 19). Towards the end of Day's text he describes exodus as "limiting our participation in, and draining energy from, the neoliberal order" (214-15). Jesse Cohn also refers to "the theme of 'exodus' as strategy" ("What" 417), to which he adds a definition provided by Graeber: "The theory of exodus proposes that the most effective way of opposing capitalism and the liberal state is not through direct confrontation but by means of what Paolo Virno has called 'engaged withdrawal,' mass defection by those wishing to create new forms of community" (417). Herbert Read calls for the

to "achieve the goals of revolution and reform here and now, rather than putting them off to some distant place and time. And, in theory at least, if everyone joined the exodus at once, then the whole world *could* change in the way that those who believe in a simultaneous transformation desire" (Day 215). Such a solution duly invites criticisms of utopianism and unsophistication, even from within the anarchist camp; Matthew Wilson, for example, challenges the pragmatism of any such practice in *Rules Without Rulers* (2014), a text that is exclusively concerned with such theoretical gaps and contradictions. In the context of media distribution, Paul Goodman contributes an unambiguously anarchistic model for the control of televised media. Staunchly rejecting the practice of centralized corporate control, he suggests that resources should be distributed amongst local but otherwise autonomous television production centres that would speak to interests on the level of community rather than nation (Goodman in Stoehr 176-9). However, this model, redolent of Proudhon's model of communal autonomy and federated mutualism (Day 110-11), invites questions such as those posed by Wilson in *Rules* in which he systemically interrogates the material pragmatism of such organizations in practice. In this context, media criticism exposes the fundamental contradiction at the heart of the exodus 'solution.' In the face of the overwhelming ideological effects of capitalist reification, those seeking radical emancipation risk sinking into obscurity without the useful and necessary dissemination vehicle of mass media. However, in a material-ideological paradox, by making use of industrial media technology and networks, anarchist media radicals certainly risk reproducing the hegemony of hegemony.[31]

In any case, Day's 'exodus' at least points towards the myth of Apocalypse. With its unabashed allusion to the biblical Book of Exodus and its intimation of the ways that it might visit upon capitalist culture its final dissolution, his exodus theory certainly has a specifically apocalyptic tenor. In a more anarchist vein, the notion is also reminiscent of the phrase so regularly invoked by Žižek, "I would prefer not to," plucked from Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853). With this statement, the Bartleby character refuses to participate in the system of labour exchange that surrounds him while continuing to

artistic poet's "withdrawal from the social contract" (9). And Colin Ward reports that "many small businessmen" in their entrepreneurial bid to escape corporate authority "are closer to a kind of drop-out" (50).

[31] Even in Day's effort to minimize its less savoury intimations, he is forced to question the logical conclusion of exodus praxis. "But those who leave must have somewhere to go; as Deleuze and Guattari are careful to point out, no line of flight can be continued forever. The question, then, is: how it is possible [to] re-territorialize sustainable alternatives rather than return to the status quo or slide out into individual psychosis/community self-destruction?" (Day 210).

occupy its space. The ostensible 'authorities' that surround him find themselves compelled to compromise the system in order to accommodate him out of a sense of duty and guilt. Ultimately, Bartleby meets his death as a result of his excessive exodus, but not before forcing the capitalist subjects that have surrounded him to experience an apocalyptic dissolution of the hierarchy of authority.

The Anarchist-Apocalypse

Equipped with a working understanding of some of the tenets of anarchist theory, and how they might generally be applied as a corrective to neo-Marxist theory, it is feasible to shelve these generalizations and focus on the specific mechanics of apocalypse embedded in each. In order to do so, it will first be necessary to clarify what is meant by the term "apocalypse." "Apocalypse" is an unwieldy term that has come to signify a wide range of social, mythological, and narrative phenomena. Almost universally, as with efforts to pin down a definition of the term "anarchism," critics who explore the concept of apocalypse as a cinematic motif reference the etymological origins of the word. As stated in the Introduction, the term, first appearing in the biblical Book of Revelation (although its conceptualization has even further antecedents), derives from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which refers to an unveiling or revelation, presumably of God's plan to destroy the world to make way for a New Jerusalem. Indeed, Kirsten Thompson reports that, "the apocalypse is commonly confused with doomsday, disaster, catastrophe, and terminus. These popular misconceptions overlook … the apocalypse's other dialectic meaning—those of revelation, triumph, order" (3). According to Bruce Powe in his somewhat hyperbolic and poetic prognostications concerning Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan and his University of Toronto colleague Northrop Frye, "The word 'apocalypse' means 'revelation,' the tearing of the curtain, the opening of the eye, the rift in the temple veil, the lifting of the mind to the blaze of brightened consciousness. This revelatory moment may lead to a new way of life (a conversion of sorts)" (16). John Lyden less floridly agrees that what he refers to as the "apocalyptic predicts a radical change in the present state of things, a disaster to come that will eliminate the normal world we know, and in this way, it is associated with judgment and destruction" (36). However, Maria Lisboa states that "apocalypse (in the original meaning of the term), usually tends to be not an absolute wipe-out, merely a clearing of the decks in the anticipation of a new beginning" (8). Elizabeth Rosen agrees that "despite the emphasis on the destructive wrath of God, an emphasis which is

made clear both through the pointedly detailed descriptions of the devastation and the proportionately larger amount of time devoted to it, New Jerusalem is still the *raison d'etre* of the traditional apocalyptic narrative" (xiv). In a telling similarity of conceptualization and phrasing, Richard Day summarizes Bakunin's philosophy thusly: "It would be necessary to overthrow 'all the heavenly and earthly idols' in order to organize a new world on 'the ruin of all churches and all states' … However," Day reminds us, "after the stage of destruction had ended, [Bakunin] argued that reconstruction could be expected to go on for 'an indefinite period', until the dawning of the day when the 'triumph of [the principle of social revolution] throughout the world removes its *raison d'être*'" (Day 113-14). Echoing Bakunin's call for "reconstruction ... for 'an indefinite period'" (Day 113-4), James Berger argues that an ongoing modernist "sense of crisis" has taken on a postmodern sense that the "conclusive catastrophe has already occurred" (Berger xiii). But according to Elizabeth Rosen, "it seems more accurate to say that our mode of fear is constantly evolving both to defer and reimagine what this conclusive catastrophe might be … and often we perceive multiple crises, rather than a single crisis" (Rosen xviii). Again, as already summarized in the Introduction, it is with these cumulative definitional foundations that the term can be understood to signify four clear political concepts: 1.) the unmasking of an ideology of domination judged to be corrupt and undesirable; 2.) the destructive sweeping away of an entire social system that supports such ideology; 3.) creativity towards an impossible-to-imagine "New Jerusalem" (Lisboa 63, 132) that will emerge to replace such a system; and 4.) an ongoing and continuous (progressive, if you will) "indefinite period" of permanent evolution in the apocalyptic transition.

To these, Slavoj Žižek adds even more historically specific definitions. According to Žižek, "There are at least three different versions of apocalypticism today: Christian fundamentalist, new age, and techno-digital-post-human [which] all share the basic notion that humanity is approaching a zero-point of radical transmutation" (*End Times* 336). In the third of these he describes the apocalypse as a fundamental reprogramming of the subjectivity that defines humanity as such. In "Digital Civilization," he explains that "[t]he apocalyptic process will reach its zero point when [technological] prostheses will no longer merely supplement the human body and brain, but they will in a way supplant it, leaving behind the notion of a human being as a worker" ("Digital"). Uri Gordon addresses a similar apocalyptic concern in "Dark Tidings." Nanotechnologies are not only an enabling technology that enhances corporate power in all sectors, but also a platform for the potential convergence of biotechnology, computing,

and neuroscience, as the life/non-life barrier is broken on the atomic scale (U. Gordon 256). In more traditionally apocalyptic terms, he states that "nanotechnology – the direct manipulation of atoms and molecules – is increasingly entering the consciousness of activists as the latest front of technological assault on society and the biosphere" (256). This latter account resonates further with Žižek's understanding of the workings of ideology and introduces a contemporary technophobic[32] element into the definition of apocalypse that is particularly relevant to an analysis of Cronenberg's *Scanners*, *Videodrome*, and *eXistenZ*.

Similar to some of the content of Cronenberg's even earlier apocalyptic films, Canadian cultural theorist Gad Horowitz, whose text *Basic and Surplus Repression in Psychoanalytic Theory: Freud, Reich, and Marcuse* resounds with anarchist sentiment, sees such a technological apocalypse as more hopeful in the construction of a sort of 'New Jerusalem.' Rereading Freud's apocalyptic *Civilization and its Discontents* and reformulating Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, he states that

> [i]n and through the project of mastery, man's knowledge and power increase at a geometric rate. The technological apparatus expands, and with it reason and science, at the expense of superstition, animism, religion. … [M]an is now entering the evolutionary stage at which knowledge and power can be used in the service of freedom … When knowledge and power – the products of surplus repression – are combined with liberation – the abrogation of that dominance of nature and human nature which has become obsolete as a result of its own achievements – the result is freedom" (Horowitz *Repression* 183).

In more apocalyptic language, Horowitz states that "Marcuse finds 'the germ of a different reality principle … transforming this world into a new mode of being'" (*Repression* 202). Horowitz concludes that "It is possible to be optimistic and radical" (*Repression* 196). In a similar tenor, Alex Comfort, who has been identified as anarchist by both David Goodway and Peter Marshall,[33] sees Romantic art as necessarily apocalyptic, a philosophy he intimates is worthy of embrace:

> romanticism today is not a destructive or a defeatist force. Its adherents in the sociological field predict the destruction of megalopolitan societies as a historical probability, and for that reason they tend to concentrate their practical activity in the

[32] In their seminal article, "Technophobia," Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner see this contemporary and particularly capitalist social anxiety as predominantly occurring in dystopian science fiction to which apocalypse film is as close kin as it is to horror (Ryan and Kellner 58).

[33] See Goodway's "Introduction" to *Writings Against Power and Death: The Anarchist Articles and Pamphlets of Alex Comfort* (London : Freedom Press, 1994), *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (2006), and Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (1992).

> cultivation of mutual aid, direct action, and the other communal activities which are the basis of culture, and in terms of which human life will survive (54).

Cumulatively, these definitions of apocalypse all seem to embrace the call for a clean sweep of contemporary culture followed by an ongoing period of creative rebuilding.

Equipped with these understandings of apocalypse, it is nothing short of astonishing how consistently embedded the notion is in much anarchist philosophy, evident in a survey that traverses the entire spectrum of anarchist theoretical periodization recounted by Matthew Adams and Nathan Jun. Although anarchist theory throughout these phases is more difficult to pin down than Marxist, populated as it is by a kaleidoscopic set of tenets, some of these tenets are regularly articulated while others are more subversively embedded. Apocalypticism is both, and represents perhaps the most abiding universal within anarchist thought.

The "classical anarchists" were perhaps the most explicit in their turn to apocalyptic thinking, especially in their call for a sweeping away of a corrupted culture to make way for a "New Jerusalem." In *An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), Godwin states that, in the quest for "Political change, ... it will then be incumbent on [the friend of mankind] actively to assist in unfolding the catastrophe" (Godwin 313). Nathan Jun further explains that "William Godwin … openly advocated the abolition of the state" (*Anarchism* 121). As mentioned in the Introduction, Godwin concludes, quite summarily, that "though [anarchy] be a dreadful remedy, it is a sure one" (Godwin 291). Likewise, amongst his myriad references, Nathan Jun cites James Guillaume as stating in 1876 that

> The character of the revolution must first be negative, destructive. Instead of modifying certain institutions of the past, or adopting them to a new order, it will do away with them altogether. Therefore, the government will be uprooted, along with the church, the army, the courts, the schools, the banks, and all their subservient institutions (qtd. in *Anarchism* 116).

Proudhon too put forth apocalyptic prognostications. Although "For Proudhon, federalism had to be achieved not by destruction of current social arrangements," it nevertheless required "building a new society from the ground up" in order to realize "the alternative form society should take" (May *Political* 57-8, 59). And, as invoked by Woodcock, "Anarchists believe in the need to destroy, but only in the sense that, as Bakunin said in his famous aphorism, 'the urge to destroy is also a creative urge'. ('Destruam et aedificabo' as Proudhon somewhat differently ... phrased the same continuing libertarian idea). But what they wish to destroy are the artificial and anti-creative structures of authority and coercion" (Woodcock qtd. in M. Antliff 37).

Richard Day similarly makes several references to Bakunin's rhetoric. "[H]is vision was millennial and apocalyptic ... A 'popular social revolution', [Bakunin] declared, 'destroys everything that opposes' its flow ... It is a totalizing global force" (113-14). Day reveals this same sentiment in the works of Kropotkin.

> In *The Conquest of Bread*, written in 1892, he sees expropriation [of property by the 'the people'] as a singular event made possible only 'when the revolution shall have broken the power upholding the present system' ..., and the people have made 'a *clean sweep* of the Government' ... Like Bakunin, Kropotkin seemed to believe that the old order had to be pushed aside before it would be possible to begin anything new. He also held that expropriation must 'apply to everything ...' ... Because of the resistance that could be expected, ... expropriation would have to be violent (118, my emphasis).

Kropotkin also refers to the aspect of apocalypse that works as an unveiling of ideology, as it is "against the abstract trinity of law, religion, and authority that we declare war. By becoming anarchists we declare war against all this wave of deceit, cunning, exploitation, vice — in a word, inequality — which they have poured into our hearts" (qtd. in Jun *Anarchism* 119). Gustav Landauer was no less apocalyptic. "'Let us destroy', Landauer suggested, 'mainly by means of the gentle, permanent, and binding reality that we build'" (Day 123). Landauer's sentiment is particularly valuable in recuperating Bakunin's sentiment of creative destruction so readily dismissed by Porton (see Introduction) in suggesting that such destruction would only manifest as the necessary side-effect of a "permanent" process of the "gentle" building of an alternative material reality.

Moving forward in time to the interim anarchist theoretical phase of the mid-twentieth century, Matthew Adams reports that Herbert Read too envisioned an apocalyptic sweeping away of a dystopian urban reality to make way for a more suburban utopia.

> Like a latter-day Bakunin, … [Herbert] Read also called for the destruction wrought by the [second world] war to be treated as an opportunity to build a better world. 'When Hitler has finished bombing our cities, let the demolition squads complete the good work', he wrote, dismissing 'our capitalist culture' as 'one immense veneer … hiding the cheapness and shoddiness at the heart of things'. As the V2 and the wrecking ball offered a clean slate, Read saw this as a chance to replace Britain's labyrinthine slums, its urban sprawl, and its industrial desert, with a rationally-planned environment that was 'spacious, with traffic flowing freely through … leafy avenues [and] with children playing safely in their green and flowery parks' ("Hell" 30).

Read frankly concluded that "Unless the present economic system is abolished, its roots eradicated and all its intricate branches lopped, the first conditions for a democratic alternative

to the fake culture of our present civilization are not satisfied" (26).[34] Indeed, the titular sentiment of his *To Hell with Culture* (1937) from which this selection is culled is unambiguously apocalyptic; after analysing "capitalist" culture, Read cites Eric Gill in declaring, "to hell with [such a] culture ...!" (Gill qtd. in Read 10). Contemporary with Read, although usually associated with Marxism rather than anarchism, is cultural theorist Walter Benjamin, whom Richard Porton lists as a philosopher of otherwise apocalyptic revelation. Porton refers to "Benjamin's materialist chiliasm, his belief that the examination of catastrophe can help us to perceive a 'devastating flash or illumination'" (191-2). Even an avowed pacifist such as Canadian anarchist thinker George Woodcock (M. Antliff 15) vociferously took up Bakunin's mantle. He explains that

> [n]owadays, because the consequences of our choices can be so disastrous, we are perpetually driven towards absolute conclusions, towards the knowledge that there are some situations which can only be solved by the extremity of a clean sweep. I suppose, despite a temperamental rejection of violence, a distaste for noisy rhetoric and its practitioners, I have always realized this fact. It led me, when I was young, to become an anarchist, believing with Bakunin that the "urge to destroy is also a creative urge" (Woodcock *Rejection* 100).

In "What is Anarchism?" Woodcock declares that "To many English people anarchism remains what it has been represented by the ruling classes of the world since, seventy years ago, Michael Bakunin first lit the fire of social revolution across the skies of Europe — a creed of terror and destruction, of chaos and fratricidal social strife" (19). He passionately indicates that "[t]o the ruling classes it is indeed a creed of terror and destruction, for its success means the end of their world, the end of ease for the few at the cost of misery for the many, the end of privilege and exploitation, of the empire of money and greed" ("What" 19). Jun also cites David Wieck's similar notion, noting his call for the "negation of all power, sovereignty, domination, and hierarchal diffusion, and the will to their dissolution" (David Wieck, 1979, qtd. in Jun *Anarchism* 118).[35] Paul Goodman similarly argues that "[t]he process [of repression in civilization] is irreversible; our culture has experienced too much of it to ban it, or frighten it,

[34] Setting this interim phase apart from more contemporary post-anarchist thought, Read's metaphor of "the present economic system" as a poisonous tree complete with "roots" and "branches," written in 1937, is the exact same metaphor of the social fabric that Deleuze rejects in favour of a "rhizomatic" understanding.

[35] As stated in the Introduction, Todd May also cites David Wieck. "Basic to anarchism is the opposing view that the abolition of dominion and tyranny depends on their negation, in thought and when possible action, in every form and at every step, from now on, *progressivel*y, by every individual and group" (Wieck qtd. in May *Political* 49, my emphasis).

out of mind. Therefore the only recourse is to try to get, as methodically and safely as possible, to the end of it" (Goodman in Stoehr 78). He later reiterates this sentiment with even less mitigating 'safety.' "When we once have to ask what are the national goals, we have admitted that our system is a failure. Then stop it. End it. It has gotten us to that point, change it altogether" (Goodman in Stoehr 159). End it altogether: this accurately sums up the anarchist-apocalyptic creed.

Contemporary anarchist thinkers maintain a concern with an apocalyptic viewpoint that can be set in opposition to the conservative inability to see the dismantling of the current system as anything but horrific. These anarchists offer a theoretical counterpoint to those who cannot fathom the constructive side of the project of apocalypse. Isaac Berk, for example, claims in his particularly anarchist discussion of the serial television show *The Walking Dead*, apocalypse is the advent that might allow for a social emancipation that is otherwise always-already recuperated by a ubiquitous and protean capitalist social ideology: "the apocalypse allow[s] for a new social organization where people work together using their personal abilities (fixing cars, smashing heads with bats) to protect one another" (49). Other contemporaries, however, took a more nuanced approach to apocalypse, in which the Nietzschean footprint on anarchist philosophy remains evident. For example, "a recent article in Anarchist Studies on 'Contemporary Anarchist Aesthetics' [by] the late John Moore [argues that] [i]f anarchist art is to be revolutionary then it has to encapsulate 'the anarchist utopia [that] lies over the edge, in the abyss, beyond the veil of the future' … To this end anarchist art should reject all traces of present reality" (Antliff "Strategies" 80-1). Antliff's own somewhat apocalyptic philosophy is more materially grounded. Reminiscent of Bakunin's creative destruction, and significantly concerned with the mechanics of reception, he states that "anarchism's 'aesthetic of tension' … involves self-actualization and transformative modalities. It … seeks to intensify ruptures that are generative, unleashing imaginative freedoms that find their indexical grounding in the artwork's relational power and communicative efficacy" ("Aesthetics" 229). Jesse Cohn, in merely recounting the function of anarchist critical theory, inadvertantly indicates that it may be fundamentally linked with the unveiling aspect of apocalypse: "the anarchist tradition ... does indeed attribute considerable importance to ... the unmasking of ideologies" ("What" 412). And, contrary to his dismissal of "the apocalyptic" as merely empty violence, Richard Porton views the unveiling aspect embedded in the definition of apocalypse (although Porton does not assert this correspondence) as an equally anarchist

perspective that suggests validation of a melioristic apocalypse over an annihilating one. “Paulo [sic] Freire's concept of *conscientizacao* ('the awakening of critical consciousness') is supremely applicable to the educational pursuits of anarchists ... inseparable from a belief that learners should ‘make history,’ while continuing to be transformed by the world they inhabit” (Porton 220-1). Even works that would not otherwise be considered apocalyptic in any traditional sense carry this philosophical taint. For example, Matthew Wilson's *Rules Without Rulers* might be deemed an anti-anarchist text in that much of his discussion foregrounds anarchist communes that ultimately failed; Richard Day's text loosely foregrounds a number of similar instances. Wilson makes painstaking efforts to mitigate these failures by highlighting the philosophical, and perhaps an ideologically contagious, usefulness of such experiments. Overall, however, his examples suggest that when an anarchist initiative is begun, it cannot survive, since it is surrounded by an environment of global neoliberal capitalism from which it must harvest its resources. That is not to say the efforts are in vain, but taken to a logical conclusion, it suggests that only under the circumstances of a widespread “clean sweep” can anarchist social constructions hope to enjoy longevity. Hakim Bey’s insistence on “*temporary* autonomous zones” (Day 35, 163, my emphasis) only buttresses this perspective. In sum, the footprint of apocalyptic mythology and its contemporaneous reformulations on anarchist thought is profound.

The Post-Anarchist Apocalypse

In their continued subversive concern with notions of apocalypse, the ‘classical’ post-anarchists, Todd May, Saul Newman, Nathan Jun, and Richard Day, however, tend to focus more on the manifestation of power as it is articulated by Foucault and Deleuze. If one accepts that much anarchist philosophy maintains a kinship with the notion of apocalypse, then this turn is unsurprising; according to James Berger, “The desire to see the old order disintegrate links such religiously and politically disparate apocalypticists as the romantic anarchist Henry Miller, the poststructuralist theorist Michel Foucault, … and Christian New Right theologians” (Berger 7). In apocalyptic terms that invoke the destruction of particular aspects of the social fabric in an act of revelation, Richard Porton celebrates “Foucault’s longing for ‘the intellectual who will *destroy* whatever is obvious and universal and who will seek out and *reveal* the weak spots, the openings, the lines of force … to be found amidst the constraints of the present day,’” a sentiment that Porton argues “seems implicitly anarchistic” (218, my emphases). In an

allusion to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic "lines of flight" ("*Thousand*" 1605), Todd May states that "[g]iven the naturalness with which much of our current practice, especially our practises of knowledge, appear to us, if we are to alter or even *destroy* some of the relationships of power that they create, it may be necessary not only to allow already constituted alternative practises to flourish but, beyond that, to encourage their appearance" (*Political* 135, my emphasis). He goes on to intimate a desire for apocalypse in his reformulation of the Marxist base-superstructure model: "in keeping with Lenin's theory of the 'weakest link,' it is possible that the weak point of the system, the point that needs to be pressed *in order for the system to collapse*, is in the superstructure rather than the substructure" (33, my emphasis). He is less ambiguous when he states that "[t]he destruction of capitalism is most profoundly the destruction of the distinction between directors and executants. A socialist society is a society in which all are directors: economically, politically, and personally" (*Political* 42). May concludes that "revolution ... is a change or set of changes whose effects sweep across the society, causing changes in many other parts of the social domain" (54). Returning to Nietzsche via Deleuzian theory, May further references Deleuze's warlike nomad. "What makes such nomadism a war-machine is both the idea that in its creativity it destroys (it destroys as it creates, a Nietzschean motif) and the fact of its resistance to the state, with which it is always in an antithetical relationship" (May *Political* 105). Similarly paraphrasing Bakunin's aphorism, Richard Day explains, "By radical activism I mean conscious attempts to alter, impede, destroy or construct alternatives to dominant structures, processes, practises and identities ... My focus is quite literally those struggles that seek change to the root, that want to address not just the content of current modes of domination and exploitation, but also the forms that give rise to them" (4). Echoing the more recent sentiment of George Woodcock, Day alludes to the four horsemen of the apocalypse adapted from the Book of Revelation in a statement he sees fit to reiterate twice in his text: "In an archetypal nightmare of European civilization, the nomadic war machine gallops in off the steppes, sweeping away everything that matters: fields, walls, houses, castles" (138-9,173). Lastly, Day suggests that the fomentation of such praxis lies in a form of unveiling: "the strength of anarchist perspectives is in their ability to unmask" recuperative socio-political strategies (254).

The recuperative ideological mechanisms inherent to such self-perpetuating social formations as capitalism are, indeed, the very reason that anarchist philosophy may turn to an all-encompassing apocalyptic solution.

> Todd May notes ... that "positive intervention [is] impossible; all resistance [is] capable either of recuperation within the parameters of capitalism or marginalization […] [T]here is no outside capitalism, or at least no effective outside". ... Absent any program for organized, mass resistance, the only outlet left for the revolutionary subject is art: the creation of quiet, solitary refusals and small, fleeting spaces of individual freedom (Jun "Toward" 141).

Of course, May only recounts this Frankfurt School perspective to criticize it as a reductive "deep pessimism" (*Political* 26). However, it remains his strongest explanation as to why the Marxist revolutionary project failed, and under the current conditions of global capitalism its prognosis appears increasingly tenable.[36] In terms of film criticism, Susan White asks, "If we are functioning within what Marxists have called the 'ideological apparatus of the state,' how can we really critique its cultural products?" (273). More specifically, she inquires after "the effect of performing such criticism within the context of academic institutions, the Hollywood film industry, or the popular press" (273). Paul Willis proactively disavows the questions. "Commercial cultural forms have helped to produce an historical present from which we cannot now escape" (qtd. in Storey 8th 265). But what of non-commercial (or at least less clearly commercial) "cultural forms," such as Canadian cinema? For Jun, Deleuze's apocalyptic nomad (described above) is the only escape from the ideological recuperation loop: "what Deleuze calls the 'nomadic' [are] social formations which are exterior to repressive modern apparatuses like State and Capital" ("Toward" 154). Todd May employs more clearly apocalyptic language in his critique of Habermas (and again alludes to Foucault and Deleuze) in his search for a solution to the recuperation deadlock.

> For Habermas, the social space is configured not by sets of intersecting practices, each with its own power relationships that sometimes coalesce with others at certain points. Instead, capitalism covers the whole of social space; it is unitary in its colonization of the lifeworld. Thus, every act of resistance is an arrow aimed at the same target. The ultimate goal can only be the destruction ... of this target (May *Political* 30-1).

Again, however, May includes Habermas amongst a group of Marxist theorists in his chapter entitled "The Failure of Marxism" and only makes this reference in order to refute what he sees as Habermas' Marxist implications, that such destruction must effect "one end to all the multifarious struggles" that exist under capitalism, and that power is concentrated in such a singular abstraction as capitalism (31). What May does not so clearly refute is that "the

[36] Cf. Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

ultimate goal can only be the destruction" of a "target" that he sees as more than strictly "capitalism."

Radical contemporary cultural theorists and activists do not let capitalism off the hook so readily. These same sources give evidence that there are two strands of apocalypse embedded in anarchist thought. Anarchists desire apocalypse on their own terms: a sweeping away of the established system to make way for ideological revelation and its inevitable social reconstruction rather than a wholesale extinction event brought on by an industrial-capitalist driven eco-catastrophe. These theorists see the current ideological and material manifestations of capitalism as harbingers of the insuperable inevitability of apocalypse. Robé, for example, foregrounds anarchist filmmaker Franklin López's web show *It's the End of the World as We Know It* (353). In one episode, "López plays the Stimulator, our disembodied, postmodern/sci-fi, foulmouthed host who floats over the screen ... Digitized fuel clouds burn postapocalyptically behind him ... The Stimulator [recounts] recent ecological, political, and economic disasters along with anarchist-based and indigenous resistance news" (Robé 373). Robé explains that a contradictory "anticivilization strain reaches its highest pitch in anarcho-primitivist thinking. It argues *for* a collapse of civilization" (356, my emphasis). Robé then introduces "Deep Green Resistance" leader Derrick Jensen. According to Robé, Jensen "became celebrated by many anarchists with the release of his two-volume set [of the books] *Endgame*" (357). In *End Game*, Jensen sees colonialism and industrialism as sub-categorical variants of capitalism, both of which, according to Jensen, spell certain doom for humanity. Similarly, Slavoj Žižek posits that

> the capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point. Its 'four riders of the apocalypse' are comprised by the ecological crises, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions (*End Times* x).

Contrary to this lament, however, Žižek then posits a more anarchist-oriented embrace of apocalypse. Echoing sentiments that refuse the politics of demand and the hegemony of hegemony, Žižek differentiates "the 'organic' solution (solving the problem by returning to the purity of [an] original non-corrupted system) [from] the truly radical solution (identifying the problem as the 'symptom' of the entire system, the symptom which can only be resolved by abolishing the entire system)" (*End Times* 23). Of course, some of these sources do not identify as anarchist. Jensen, in fact, polemically attacks what he understands anarchism and anarchists to be (Lilac). Nevertheless, the kinship amongst López's, Žižek's, and Jensen's understandings

of apocalypse with similar anarchist philosophies positions their work as useful touchstones in the context of this investigation.

Richard Day, Randall Amster, and Uri Gordon, for example, are openly anarchist theorists who articulate nearly identical insights. Gordon insists that, due to the effects of industrial-capitalism, "[t]here is no real question about the eventuality of collapse, only about its pace and consequences" (249-50). Randall Amster observes that "[i]n these times of wholesale environmental degradation, the technological eclipse of natural morality, and a looming global apocalypse that has lodged itself in the popular consciousness, it appears that present-day society is not sustainable and is nearing its structural and historical limits" ("Anarchy" 290-1). Similarly, Richard Day states that "disasters [are] being brought upon all of us by the ongoing intensification of the worst effects of capitalism, the state form, racism, heterosexism, and the domination of nature" (204), all of which are fundamentally patriarchal in their logic. Gordon and Amster posit the very likely catastrophe brought on by these authoritarian phenomena as an opportunity for anarchism to finally come to the fore (Amster "Anarchy" 290-1, U. Gordon 251). Of course, Gordon and Žižek are referring to the undesirable inevitability of an eco-catastrophe under the conditions of global capitalism rather than an anarchist-driven social apocalypse as imagined by anarchist predecessors, but rather than taking such inevitability as an excuse to evacuate social responsibility and capitulate to the status quo, Gordon takes it as an opportunity to begin the process of radical social transformation.

Gordon is also acutely aware of the recuperation dilemma. "Recuperation is the process whereby capitalist society defuses material or cultural threats to itself by re-coding and absorbing them into its own logic" (U. Gordon 251). According to Gordon, "recuperation remains a central strategy for preserving the hegemony of hierarchical social institutions" (251). One might read an apocalyptic call to unveil corrupt ideology embedded within the concentration principle when presented with Gordon's observation that "thinking of a system as a whole obscures its own internal contradictions" (251). Gordon, however, also explains that "[t]he anticipation of establishment responses to collapse is crucial if anarchists and their allies are to remain ahead of the game, rather than merely reactive, considering that hierarchical institutions are already reconditioning themselves to govern collapse" (251). Indeed, Day explains that "protests are limited, when they 'work' at all, to temporarily impeding or slightly reforming existing structures" rather than "addressing the fundamental problems associated

with the expansion and consolidation of the racist, heterosexist, system of neo-liberal-capitalist nation states" (3). Cumulatively, what can be gleaned from Žižek, Day, Amster, and Gordon, as well as from the notion of apocalypse as the only escape from the recuperation dilemma, is that radical political thought must *embrace* the idea of an apocalypse, and engage in anarchist praxis to actively bring it about.[37]

It is important to distinguish the embrace I posit here as distinct from capitulation to the status quo and the evacuation of any responsibility to effect change; it should rather be understood as either a vehicle of ongoing change or as Gordon's opportunity for the rise of anarchism.[38] Perhaps the most profound iteration of this sentiment comes from self-avowed anarchist photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson who, in his famous 2000 interview with Charlie Rose, defined one aspect of anarchism as the skill of "living in this society, … in a world collapsing" (Cartier-Bresson). He seems, as one might expect, to be lamenting the less savoury aspects of this apocalyptic collapse while refusing its pessimism and insisting on the maintenance of life within it. "Indeed, such practices may be our only hope for passing through collapse in a way that will result in liberatory and life-affirming social realities, rather than in nightmares of authoritarianism or wholesale destruction" (U. Gordon 257). Žižek makes a similar point in *End Times* that resonates more with anarchist sentiment than Marxist. Translating Paul from Ephesians 6:12 "into today's language" (*End Times* xv), Žižek agrees that

> "Our struggle is not against actual corrupt individuals, but against those in power in general, against their authority, against the global order and the ideological mystification which sustains it." To engage in this struggle means to endorse Badiou's formula *mieux vaut un desastre qu'un desetre*: better to take the risk and engage in fidelity to a Truth-Event, even if it ends in catastrophe, than to vegetate in the eventless utilitarian-hedonist survival of what Nietzsche called the "last men." (xv).

The apocalyptic distinction between the desire to sweep away a "corrupt ... global order and the ideological mystification that sustains it" and the fear of an industrial-capitalist driven end

[37] Although Žižek cannot be identified as an anarchist amongst this group, he champions practices that anarchists would likely identify as direct action and praxis. Building upon a famous aphorism from Fredric Jameson, Žižek asks

> How come it is easier for us to imagine the end of all life on earth, an asteroid hitting the planet, than a modest change in our economic order? Perhaps the time has come to set our possibilities straight, and to become realists by way of demanding what appears impossible ... The surprising explosion of Occupy Wall Street protests, the mass mobilization in Greece, the crowds on Tahrir Square, they all bear witness to the hidden potential for a different future. There is no guarantee that this future will arrive, no train of history on which we simply have to take a ride. It depends on us, on our will [i.e. on praxis] (Žižek *Pervert's* 2:12:31).

[38] Žižek states that "acceptance" manifests when "the subject no longer perceives the situation as a threat, but as the chance of a new beginning" (Žižek *End Times* xi-xii).

times is central to understanding the progressive nature of an anarchist-apocalypse. However, this distinction gives rise to yet another important question.

What Must be Swept Away?

Now that the degree to which the notion of apocalypse is embedded within anarchist discourse has been established, it is necessary to turn to some of the problems with which this discourse has long grappled. What specific ideological content must be unveiled? Exactly what must be swept away? One answer to these questions lies in the distinction between a Marxist conception of apocalypse and its anarchist counterpart. Maria Lisboa argues that in the world of a post-apocalyptic-revolution, "Under utopia, citizens must be docile, homogenous and (in the disparate but also oddly akin readings of ... Marxism ...) loyal to the interests of the greater good, rather than to the narrow ones of individual desire" (169). However, as Richard Day variously points out, "anarchists have long advocated what they have called social rather than political revolution" (15). Day understands political revolution as the way in which "Marx and Engels saw civil society as necessarily expressed in/expressive of a system of nation-states, at least until the end-time has come and history has produced its final flower, the classless society" (56, 65). The Marxist apocalypse is based on capitalism devouring itself from within and resulting in a class revolution. As Nathan Jun explains,

> In Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, to cite just one example, bourgeois capitalism automatically introduces commodification (or "reification") across society that, in turn, produces revolutionary class consciousness among the proletariat. As proletariat consciousness grows, it will eventually "overcome reification by overthrowing the capitalist order" and replacing it with a communist society (*Anarchism* 18).

Gordon and Žižek make clear, however, that a more likely scenario is one in which an eco-catastrophic global-capitalist empire *will* devour itself, but in mass annihilation, not in a proletariat translation to a classless utopia. Cumulatively, these understandings indicate how Marxism *waits* for a capitalist collapse,[39] or at least a hegemonic adjustment to the social code in what might be considered a progressive direction, while anarchism *seeks* a direct-action driven apocalypse-for-capitalism now, to avoid catastrophe.

[39] Richard Day explains how Leninism 'accelerated' this process, which resulted in "The disastrous historical experience of state socialism" (Dyer-Witherford in Day 158).

In opposition to the Marxist class-based apocalyptic scenario, Deleuze provides valuable insights as to how an anarchist apocalypse might work, rather, as a class-leveler from which no faction could emerge as the vanguard. "In the poor or the rich, impulses have the same goal and the same destiny: to smash into fragments, to tear off fragments, gather up the scraps, form the great rubbish dump and bring everything together in a single and identical death impulse" (Deleuze 129-30). Thus, as Richard Day explains, "the distinction between social and political revolution ... develops out of an anarchist theory of social change that challenges, and ultimately breaks down, the dichotomy between revolution and reform" (91, 113).[40] Colin Ward's citation of Bakunin indicates his understanding of such a social revolution as significantly apocalyptic: "Social revolution, [Bakunin] asserted, will be much more potent than all the theological propagandism of the freethinkers to destroy to their last vestige of the religious beliefs and dissolute habits of the people" (35). Given the embeddedness of apocalyptic thinking within anarchist discourse, it is unsurprising that this language is repeated verbatim with what Douglas Kellner refers to as "Social Apocalypse in Contemporary Hollywood Film."[41] Kellner reports that "Hollywood films in the contemporary era put on display historically specific fears, hopes, conflicts and political ideologies within the contested terrain of 2000s U.S. society" (14). Of course, the populist and conservative films that he examines indicate a Marxist *anxiety* about the emergence of a socio-political apocalypse, rather than the anarchist *desire* for it. The key distinction to be noted here, however, is between a Marxist apocalypse that is class-based and universal, and an anarchist apocalypse that is socially rhizomatic and radically subjective.

The question of what must be swept away is informed by the definitions of anarchism outlined above, part of a discourse that clearly grapples with what it is specifically that anarchism stands to oppose. Allan Antliff lists "bureaucratic procedures and institutional authoritarianism" ("Strategies" 75) under which he includes more specific examples that are characterized by "the exercise of authority – parental authority, political authority, cultural authority" (79). Indeed, the sites of authority against which anarchism struggles pervade the

[40] "Buber ... saw the characteristics of the political principle to be power, authority, hierarchy, and dominion, while the social principle was visible to him in all spontaneous human associations built around a common need or common interest. The problem that arose was that of identifying the reason for the continual ascendancy of the political principle." (Ward 26).

[41] Contemporary, in this example, refers to a "cycle of Hollywood films from the early 2000s through 2008" (Kellner 14).

social fabric at all levels from the state and state-capitalism through to the power imbalances within interpersonal relationships that are determined by identity politics. Nathan Jun summarizes this entire field with the phrases "coercive power" and "blind authority" which he argues encompass all variants of the types of authoritative or power-driven social relations that anarchism opposes (*Anarchism* 114-5). In contrast, pre-poststructuralist anarchists speak a language that is still governed by Godwin's initial position that specifically targets the state and the economic institutions that support it. As late as the mid-twentieth century, George Woodcock stated that "It is clear, then, that if men are to become free and are to enjoy anything approaching a complete development of their faculties, the state must be abolished, together with a system of property, and other means of exploitation, such as the wage system, which are contingent to it" ("What" 21). His mention of exploitation would obviously include capitalism and its attendant social alienation. However, under the material conditions of global capitalism, and what Hardt and Negri refer to as *Empire*, just as under the conditions of global apocalypse, the distinctions between these sites of authority are rendered increasingly untenable if not altogether redundant; it is increasingly difficult to see any clear distinction between such abstractions as "capitalism" and "the state," each of which appear to mutually comprise the other. Imagined as two circles of a Venn diagram, they have come to overlap so completely under the conditions of globalization that they are entirely immanent. Day argues that "While it is a commonplace to suggest that nation-states are less important now than they were in some era 'prior' to capitalist globalization, it is clear that the state form and capital have grown up together" (142). He concludes that "It is quite possible to be as critical of the state form as one is of capitalism, while holding the state to be neither powerless nor homogeneous — one simply needs to see these apparatuses, in an Althusserian way, as overdetermined components of a system that exceeds both of them" (Day 51). However, as I have indicated, May, Jun, and Day all reject resistance that is aimed at a singular abstraction such as the state or capitalism on the grounds that it recapitulates hegemonic social relations by granting ontology to the very abstraction of power against which such resistance is aimed.

On this issue, I think May and his contemporaries are not quite correct. Telling in this regard is the way in which they all fail to adequately define what is meant by the now nebulous significations of the term "capitalism," which, under the conditions of globalization, seems to have subsumed all of the offensive power relations that anarchism rejects. All of this is summarized in Jesse Cohn's citation of Gustav Landauer's warning "in his 1907 *Die Revolution*

against conceptualizing 'the state' as 'a thing or as a fetish that one can smash in order to destroy it': rather 'The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, emotive behavior between men; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently toward one another …'" (*Crisis* 69). In this light, "the state" as an abstraction is at least one that can be destroyed. Landauer more philosophically defines the abstraction of "the state" as the "emotive behaviour between *men*" (my emphasis), a symptom of the language of patriarchal normativity that permeated even anarchist philosophy, and that underpins contemporary manifestations of both the state and capitalism.

Sweeping Away Patriarchal Normativity

While earlier strands of anarchism seem most concerned with systemic forms of authority/power on a larger scale, such as the state, or the capitalist system, rather than interpersonal power politics, poststructuralist theory makes it difficult to understand how even these levels can be disentangled. According to Foucault, power is immanent to all social relations, particularly in what he defines as discursive practices, and what Deleuze defines as a rhizomatic social fabric. Hardt and Negri explain that "[i]n the biopolitical context of *Empire* … the production of capital converges evermore with the production and reproduction of social life itself" (qtd. in Day 153). As such, both the traditions of Marxism and anarchism have given rise to more nuanced understandings of the social fabric. Day agrees that "politics today occurs on a complex terrain of relations within and between particular identities, corporations, states and groups of states" (73). With this nebula of sites to resist and oppose, the more global aspect of anarchist apocalypse gains currency. Furthermore, Jun argues that beyond the poststructralist foreclosure on any outside to power, "Anarchists recognize that there are many types of authority relations, not all of which are coercive (thus, objectionable). As Richard Silver notes, 'consider, for example, the relation of a student to an authority in some field of knowledge who can in turn back up expert judgements by appeal to a further range of assessable evidence …'" (Jun *Anarchism* 113). The question that remains is how this "objectionable" coercive power and blind authority specifically manifests in *all* of their *many* guises.

Louis Althusser's distinction between repressive and ideological state apparatuses is instructive here, at least in a preliminary way. The former category includes such obviously repressive institutions as the police and military. Mark Antliff quotes Simone Weil's 1945

theorization of this category's oppressive maneuvering that must be unveiled: "As Weil concludes 'whether the mask is labeled fascism, democracy, or dictatorship of the proletariat', the real adversary is 'The Apparatus — the bureaucracy, the police, the military'" (M. Antliff 21). The ideological category is populated with myriad social relations under capitalism that reproduce its alienating socio-politics. A problem for anarchist theory, however, is that Althusser's distinction continues to rely on the fundamental abstraction of "capitalism." Todd May describes this as a "strategic" fallacy. The defining

> feature of strategic political philosophy according to May is that it usually "involves a unitary analysis that aims towards a single goal." Marxist philosophy, for example, locates the source of power within the substructure of economic relations with a mind to the eventual abolition of capitalism: "Political and social change, if it is to be significant, must rest upon a transformation at the base … All problems can be reduced to the basic one." The same is true of certain strands of radical feminism, which reduce all oppression to patriarchal dominance. Strategic feminist philosophy of this sort therefore relies on radical critique of gender relations with a mind to "overthrowing" patriarchy. In all cases, the basic idea is that oppressive power emanates from a unitary source that must be combatted and destroyed in order to achieve the goal of liberation (Jun *Anarchism* 19).

In their critique of these renderings of political power, I think that both Jun and May fail to understand either capitalism or patriarchy as the capacious signifiers they are, the former delineating only the global environment in which the complex rhizomatic social fabric of the latter currently manifests, but in which the latter precedes the former. Whereas criticisms of capitalism are largely dependent on faith in Marxist economic determinism, patriarchy manifests as the result of a much wider set of social, rather than strictly economic, social determinants. Therefore, the more progressive analysis should privilege criticisms of patriarchal ideology that do not allow capitalism to be its exclusive encompassing framework, but that understand capitalism, rather, as only the most dominant of its multifarious sites of oppression.

Patriarchy might better be understood as the pervasive ideology of masculinist privilege that underpins all social constructs and power relations under the contemporary conditions of global capitalism and that manifests in multiple sites of oppression. As Robin Wood convincingly argues, "[t]he battle for liberation, the battle against oppression (whether economic, legal, or ideological), gains enormous extra significance through the addition of the term patriarchal, since *patriarchy* long *pre*cedes and far *ex*ceeds what we call capitalism"

(107).[42] Indeed, the rejection of patriarchy is the fundamental reason that anarchist theory precedes Marxist; even in psychoanalytic theory, Canadian theorist Gad Horowitz argues that "Patriarchal domination precedes class domination," very likely the source of Wood's reformulation of this contention (*Repression* 116). Horowitz relies on an anthropological theory to support his thesis. "Patriarchal domination appears *before* the emergence of the alienating divisions of labour and class societies ... The proof of this contention is that the classless hunter-gatherer societies … studied by modern anthropology are, without a single exception, patriarchally organized. ... Authority is male authority" (116-7). Horowitz goes so far as to claim that "[t]he feminist quarrel with patriarchy is inseparable from the radical quarrel with class society. Toil cannot be abolished without the abolition of patriarchal domination" (123). In fact, according to Sigmund Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, patriarchal social relations are the fundamental characteristic of all human civilization that dates back to an allegorical prehistory when a primal horde, driven by instinctual sexual desire, murdered the clan 'father' and installed their guilt over having done so into a patriarchal super-ego, which according to Freud manifests primarily in the form of organized religion. Moreover, Daniel Pick, in his summary of psychoanalysis, argues that in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud "amplified his view that we always in part hate the societies and communities that constrain us, while we may value or seek to build them up, another part of us also wants to tear them down" (77). Freud's allegory also claims that there is in every Oedipalized subject an ontogenetic recapitulation of these phylogenetic developments.

Nathan Jun seems to take Freud's allegory largely at face value. "Society comes into existence in the private lives of families, which are themselves units of a larger social whole" (Jun *Anarchism* 94). And Day too argues that "every 'historical' society has been to some extent patriarchal" (197).[43] Day further explains that "Oedipalized subjects [readily acquiesce to a logic in which] daddy-mommy-me easily morphs into state-corporation-me" (173), a problem endemic to the social fabric on a global scale. If patriarchy is understood in Freudian terms as the Oedipal law of the father, then it was as early as 1913 when Kropotkin realized the

[42] In what might be deemed an anarchist sentiment, Horowitz observes "Marcuse's apparent inability to conceive of domination (in *Eros and Civilization*, at any rate) as anything other than that which imposes toil. … For Marcuse patriarchy becomes domination only insofar as it takes the form of class society. Marxists have always been too quick to identify domination per se with the forms of domination of class society" (Horowitz *Repression* 123).
[43] Gad Horowitz makes this same argument with an extended psychoanalytical defense of it in *Repression* (Horowitz *Repression* 117-8).

problem: "Anarchism … attacks not only capital, but also the main sources of power of capitalism: law, authority, and the State" (Kropotkin qtd. in Jun *Anarchism* 119). Canadian film scholar George Melnyk adds an apocalyptic spin to this sentiment: "since civilization is a patriarchal construct, the end result is the monstrous male, monstrous in what he creates and monstrous in what he destroys" ("Cronenberg" 84). Contrary to the reductive claims of much criticism, Freud does not naturalize his patriarchy 'myth' so much as indicate that it *can* be toppled, but, according to Freud, this can only occur at the level of civilization. If there is any validity to Freud's allegory, then what is needed is a phylogenetic reset at the source of the 'primal horde.' Thus, in *Culture*, Terry Eagleton argues that "we should treat the faults of the state as we would 'the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude'" (69). There are, nevertheless, more practical examples of patriarchy as a governing social foundation over the types of objectionable social relations anarchism rejects.

Certain contributions from feminist theory are instructive here. As Todd May indicates, "The affinity that many feminists have shown for anarchist thinking is no accident" (*Political* 50). Richard Day adds that "radical feminism works for the elimination of patriarchy in all its forms" (4) and again that "radical feminism's rejection of patriarchal values, cultures and social movements can be seen as a challenge to the integration paradigm" (87). Colin Ward agrees that a "more significant 'quiet revolution' has been the women's movement, rejecting the universal convention of male dominance" (70). Ward goes on to quote classical anarchist "Emma Goldman, with her trenchant pamphlet on *The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation*, arguing that the vote, which had failed to liberate men, was not likely to free women. Emancipation, she argued, must come from the woman herself, ... [']by refusing to be a servant to God, the State, society, the husband, the family etc.[']" (Ward 71-2).[44] This sentiment is loosely reiterated by Chandra Mohanty when she states that "[t]he interwoven process of sexism, racism, misogyny and heterosexualism are an integral part of our social fabric, wherever in the world we happen to be. We need to be aware that these ideologies, in conjunction with the regressive politics of ethnic nationalism and capitalist consumerism, are differentially constitutive of all our lives in the early twenty-first century" (qtd. in Day 184). In a more apocalyptic tenor, Vivian Sobchack argues that "there seems no viable way for

[44] More recent feminist theorists have certainly taken up Goldman's line of thinking: "Like Haraway, Braidotti also avoids postulating Woman as an identity to be liberated and suggests that feminists must open themselves to 'issues which at first sight seem to have nothing to do specifically with women' at all" (Day 187).

patriarchy to symbolically envision a satisfying future for itself. All it can do is deny the future. There is no narrative resolution for patriarchy in a horror film – except the denial or death of the father, finally impotent and subject to the present power of his own horrific past. ... All these films symbolically enact the death of the future" (159). And even though Žižek makes a dubious claim that patriarchy has dissolved under the legal imperatives of late capitalism, it is important to note that he does so only under a reductive understanding that brackets patriarchy as a paradigm for family relations (*End Times* 49-50).

Some anarchist theorists vehemently reject the view expressed by Žižek that patriarchal domination is no longer socially manifest. Matthew Wilson is succinct on this point. "Perhaps most disturbingly, ... patriarchy, perhaps the most prevalent form of hierarchy throughout human history, remains firmly in place" (Wilson 32). Richard Day laments that "even if some Aboriginal communities manage to avoid the worst effects of a rational-bureaucratic domination and capitalist exploitation in their quest for self-government, there remains yet another gift of Western liberalism that many are reluctant to accept: patriarchy" (87). In a more nuanced reading, Todd May articulates a complex topology in which patriarchy stands as the governing ideology to a number of oppressive power relations:

> the operations of patriarchy are more, and other, than just economic ones. They constitute a realm of oppression that requires distinct address. In addition to the critique of patriarchy, anarchists have been drawn to critiques of psychotherapy, plant management, prisons and, more recently, treatment of the ecosystem. In some of their analyses, capitalism is seen as the overarching enemy; however, even those analyses remain distinguishable from their Marxist counterparts by focusing upon the specific mechanisms of oppression within the criticized context, while capitalism becomes a name for contemporary society more than a specifiable source of that context" (*Political* 50-1).

Robé points out that patriarchally-inflected social practices permeate and poison even grassroots anarchist communities (248, 340). He describes a number of progressive video-activist movements torn asunder by the unwillingness of male group leaders to respect female agency within their ranks. If this ideology is so deeply entrenched within the rhizomatic social fabric at all sides of the left-right political continuum, and at all levels of class stratification, in at least one sense it might be understood as yet another call to sweep away that fabric. Indeed, in Toronto during the formative years of the TNW in spring 1983, the anarchist periodical *Kick It Over* published an entire issue "under the heading of a 'No More Patriarchy'" (Dan Alexander ctd. in Antliff *Only* 98). Clearly at least these examples of anarchist thought recognize that

patriarchal ideology and its attendant economic, political, and social practices, is a fundamental source of social antagonism that needs to be swept away.

Thus this investigation comes full circle to the etymological significance of the term "anarchy" with which my survey of its otherwise multi-valent significations began. Žižek convincingly explains that "In Hegelian dialecticism, an antagonism is never just a binary opposition. We never have just two. We have two but we have others as well, which intrude on the neatly constructed binary" ("Digital"). *Matri*archy is perhaps the gendered semantic opposite of *patri*archy but *an*archy is the radical other, the outright refusal of "*archy*" as such. Todd May insists that "anarchist struggle is conceived not in terms of substituting new and better *hier*archies for old ones, but in terms of getting rid of hierarchic thinking and action altogether" (*Political* 51, my emphasis). Murray Bookchin calls for "a serious challenge to society with its vast, *hier*archical, sexist, class-ruled, state apparatus and militaristic history" (qtd. in Ward 94, my emphasis). Richard Day opines that "the most invisible hierarchies [are] inherent even in the most anti-authoritarian organizing styles" (201) and thus describes "the *right* sort of organizational structure [as] one based on 'decentralization and autonomy' rather than hierarchical command" (191, my emphasis).[45] Randall Amster insists that "In rejecting this original hierarchy, a space is created for conceiving an egalitarian integration of self, society, nature" ("Anarchy" 295). This critique of "archy" also resonates with "Beverly Baines, a Canadian anti-racist feminist activist [who makes] reference to anti-oppression, which expands the field of anti-racist feminism to include a stand against *hierarchical* orderings as such" (Day 184-5, my emphasis). And Uri Gordon explains that "the ultimate goal of ... recuperative strategies is to buy time, prolonging the period of manageable crisis so as to allow *hierarchical* institutions to adapt away from capitalism" (252, my emphasis). Thus, the solution to the problem of patriarchy is not matriarchy, nor any other "archy"; it is the abolition of "archy" as such, an *an*(*ti*)-archy. In an apocalyptic formulation, this reads as the following *ergo* conditional: if civilization = patriarchal authority (as Freud argues), then *an*-archy = the end of civilization.

[45] Richard Day is emphatic on this point in several places. In addition to the quotes cited above, he is troubled by "hegemonic thinkers who are clearly frightened by the implication of non-*hierarchical* relationships" (Day 179, my emphasis); "the anarchist and anarchist-influenced ... modes of social organization in which there is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no *hierarchy*, and no separate ruling entity" (Day 195, my emphasis). This latter description is also vaguely reminiscent of a society necessarily characterized by the stereotype of Canadian politeness.

However, this contention, too, runs into the hegemonic tautology that Day warns against by focusing all dissenting practices on a singular monolithic abstraction (regardless of how evident its material ontology is). Anarchist theorists thus extend the '*object*' of patriarchy into the realm of normative ideological *practices*. Nathan Jun reports that, historically, "'individualist anarchists' followed William Godwin in endorsing a broadly deontological concept of rights, liberties and obligations" (*Anarchism* 132, my emphasis). In Jun's interpretation, "deontology" refers to a *normative* set of moral standards for action based on prescribed rules regardless of the outcome of their application rather than the justification of action based on the ostensible morality of situational outcomes.[46] Jun indicates that this perspective of the "individual anarchists" was in stark contrast to that of the "classical" anarchists (specifically Proudhon), which called for the rejection of normative ideologies (132). Allan Antliff similarly reports that the anarchist "morality [posited by Kropotkin] entailed the unceasing interrogation of existing social *norms*" ("Anarchy, Power" 58, my emphasis). Foucault explains that a social "institution moulds behaviour according to a *norm*, subordinates individuals to institutional demands, examines and watches over all subjects, and punishes deviants" ("*Discipline*" 1618, my emphasis). Nathan Jun also explains that "Instead of prescribing opposition to coercive authority anarchism calls attention to the problems that generate both descriptive and normative political theories" (*Anarchism* xvii). Indeed, according to Jun, "anarchists and poststructuralists alike categorically reject normativity" (xiii) even though Richard Day laments that "very few human subjects seem even momentarily to escape normalization" (187). This patriarchal normativity is so embedded in the cultures of late capitalism that, according to the feminist critic of globalization Caitlyn Hewitt-White, "None of us are immune from the grasp of patriarchy" (qtd. in Day 197). Richard Day's anarchist solution to the problem of patriarchal normativity lies in the Deleuzian, praxis-oriented concept of "the smith."

> Where the practice of the citizen is oriented to 'staying on the road', as it were, and that of the nomad to destroying all roads, the smith is guided by [a] will to the 'involuntary invention' … of new strategies and tactics. Rather than attempting to dominate by imposing all-encompassing *norms*, the smith seeks to innovate by tracking and exploring opportunities in and around existing structures (Day 174, my emphasis).

[46] Jun, like Porton, mentions Nechaev as the exemplar of an (apocalyptic) philosophy of justified violence (*Anarchism* 37-8). "The revolutionary … knows only one science, the science of destruction. … His sole and constant object is the immediate destruction of this vile order" (Nechaev qtd. in Jun *Anarchism* 38).

Uri Gordon calls for an "anarchist praxis" of delegitimation rather than a rejection of normativity, although they are certainly kindred concepts (253). "Delegitimation refers to anarchist interventions in public discourse, verbal or symbolic [which would include radical cinema], whose message is to deny the basic legitimacy of dominant social institutions and ... patriarchy" (U. Gordon 253). Gordon posits that useful "messages of delegitimation are directed against the very existence of hierarchical institutions and implicitly or explicitly call for their abolition" (U. Gordon 253). In sum, it is clearly the sweeping away of a *normative* patriarchal ideology that an anarchist apocalypse calls to obliterate, rather than patriarchy as such.

It seems to me that the fundamental project of anarchism is to maximize the benefits of large-scale social organization (currently manifesting as urbanization and capitalism) and to minimize or entirely eliminate the negative impact of a normative patriarchal ideology and its attendant eco-catastrophic effects of global-capitalist industrialism. However, as a variety of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and anarchist theorists have observed throughout the twentieth century, such a project always runs into some form of recuperation to an authoritarian status quo under the conditions of capitalist reification, and can never escape the co-optation of its own resistance, requiring, if taken to its logical conclusion, a sweeping away of the entire system. Rather than seeing the desire to sweep away "patriarchy" as an essentializing or a universalizing term in the order of the concentration principle (which would require the term to have a fixed and singular definition), it works better as an umbrella term under which there are a wide range of power relations and multiple sites of oppression that can each become the object of a focused gaze of progressive criticism. Patriarchy should not be understood as any concentrated locus of power, but as an *a priori* milieu for the types of inequity it engenders and that anarchist theory opposes. If patriarchal ideology is understood as a normative set of masculinist socio-political relations that permeate and determine the social fabric, and if the power structures embedded within it "come from everywhere" as Foucault insists, then escape from it, I would argue, can only come in the form of a general apocalypse.

However, all of this theoretical contradicting and commiserating by anarchist and Marxian theorists regarding the distinctions between capitalism and state and the nature of the social fabric that are at the heart of the anarchist and Marxist debate, and the implied call for general apocalypse, to borrow a phrase from Slavoj Žižek used in a different context, does little to "offer concrete solutions for the very real problems [that the corrupted social fabric] evidently posed for them" (*End Times* 46). Žižek's corpus of works cumulatively indicate that

he perceives ideology as the inescapable and underlying problematic of what anarchism correctly identifies as the governing contradiction, that of patriarchal power and authority (as it materially manifests at all levels of the social fabric, but especially in the bureaucracies of state, repressive state apparatuses, and capitalist corporations). An underpinning assumption to Žižek's work, and that of the Marxists from whom he takes his cue, as well as to many anarchist philosophies, and even the theories of poststructuralists which Cohn reads as somewhat caught in a paradox of anti-representationalism, is that ideology is not immutable; it can change.[47] An anarchist analytical methodology would thus examine how cinematic narratives reproduce or challenge ideological constructions of patriarchal authority or coercive power on the narrative level, and how they operate to resist recuperation, not merely as commodity, but as a form of Bourdieuian cultural capital at the industry level as well.

Anarchist-Apocalyptic Cinema Analysis and the 'Progressive' Double-Entendre: Apocalypse is in the Eye of the Beholder

With all of this in mind it is now feasible to begin the construction of an anarchist-apocalyptic methodology of cinema analysis. Fortunately, all of this theory maps quite readily onto just such a useful methodology that finally brings us to the intention indicated in the introduction, to explore how, within the larger context of Bourdieuian cultural capital represented by the TNW films, anarchist theory can work as an ideological framework of analysis to examine the specifically apocalyptic content at work in the narratives.

Both Susan White and Jesse Cohn see media in general, and cinema in particular, as an opportunity to effect emancipatory ideological change. Similarly, Jun refers to the "liberatory potential of film" that is realized specifically when "[d]rawing upon the ideas of Foucault and Deleuze" ("Toward" 139). Cohn, in fact, insists that philosophy is a form of praxis, a contention which governs his framework of analysis.[48] Based on his readings of the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin, Cohn specifically describes "Contextual Methodologies" which seek to interpret "the text as … the *effect* of a given set of social relations, a time and place" (*Anarchism* 103). Cohn's

[47] See, "Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism" on classical anarchism, power, and the ideological function of 'fixed truths' as well as anarchism's realization as a constant 'work in progress' founded on life experience, as opposed to Lenin's blueprint authoritarianism.

[48] A similar and somewhat more accessible argument for cinematic philosophy as a form of praxis is defended in Phillip Schmerheim's *Skepticism Films* (2015), although this text is not concerned with anarchist philosophy in any specific way.

"Functional methodologies" more explicitly implicate the anarchist tradition of praxis and "treat the text as an action taken to realize some purpose" as well as considering it "an instrument with powers" (105). Cohn concludes that a "functionalist analysis of the text will ask what problems it offers to solve: the range of possible answers is the range of possible meanings" (106). These types of analyses, which Cohn labels "ecological" methodologies (84), "spell out what kinds of relationships a text encourages us to build between ourselves and the world it 'frames' for us … casting back into the history from which the text emerged, projecting the text's possible future developments" (111). All of these point in an analytical direction that views the text as more than merely something to be read, but rather as something to be understood as a vehicle of action towards ideological change within the specific socio-political contexts in which it emerges.

Building on these insights, I incorporate Robé's and video activist Jeffrey Juris's perspectives on direct action praxis into the model I develop with specific attention to affect theory. According to Robé, the "affective dimension of … video serves a vital purpose" (135). Robé cites Juris who argues that "these affective dynamics are not incidental; they are central to processes of movement-building and activist networking … They constitute platforms where alternative subjectivities are expressed through distinct body and spatial techniques, and emotions are generated through ritual conflict" (Juris qtd. in Robé 135-6). Thus, Robé concludes that "[d]irect-action video … attempts to approximate these affective dynamics to its viewers in order to mobilize them" (136). I further take Jun's succinct summary of the project of cinema-psychoanalysis as central to the model I develop: "The film ... must be projected, not only in the literal sense of being displayed via appropriate technology, but also in the sense of being forced upon the world of ordinary sense perception" ("Toward"150). In a similar context, Jun just as succinctly summarizes Deleuze's *Cinema 1* in a single sentence: "viewing a film requires an analysis of visual, oral, etc. *movements* that *affect* [my emphasis] the senses differentially in space and time. It is the relation of said movements, more so than the discrete images and sound that comprise them, which encapsulate the meaning(s) of a film" (Jun "Toward" 150). This Deleuzian notion of affect is central to an anarchist analytical methodology that invites the philosophical program and subjective agency endorsed by White, Cohn, and Jun.

However, while Jun's, Cohn's, and White's contributions are invaluable to this work as a point of departure, aside from otherwise vague gestures toward communal cinema viewing and group discussion, none of them primarily indicate a specific methodology for cinematic

analysis. Thus, perhaps even more useful as a preliminary point of departure, especially in the context of apocalypse cinema, is Robin Wood's distinction between progressive and reactionary horror cinema. In "An Introduction to the American Horror Cinema," drawing heavily from Herbert Marcuse and Gad Horowitz, Wood claims to identify patriarchal-capitalist-determined representations of horrific identities in conventional horror cinema inevitably returning from a form of repression that is surplus to the normal repression explained by Freud (108). Wood's most hotly debated contribution, however, was his claim that horror films fall into two polarized categories: progressive and reactionary (133). The latter of these represent horror films in which monstrous identities are successfully vanquished before the narrative closure and repression triumphs in a return to 'normalcy,' "the 'happy ending' (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression" (Wood 113). Progressive horror cinema, by contrast, featured narrative aperture in which the monster remained at large, was not re-contained by normalcy or repression, and was frequently an ambiguously sympathetic character, oppressed by a culture unwilling to recognize and satisfy its needs. A primary problem with Wood's distinction is perhaps best summarized by Cohn when he accuses traditional critical theory of "reducing the politics of popular culture to a simplistic dichotomy of 'reification' versus 'resistance'" ("What" 412). However, in "Beyond The Veil of the Flesh," (an exploration of that most Canadian of horror filmmakers, David Cronenberg), Lianne McLarty explains that

> What needs to be questioned is not whether the contemporary cultural scene is tension filled and marked by diversity — it clearly is — but rather the conclusions and consequences for analysis often drawn from this ...: that is, that diversity means equivalence, equivalence leads to alternatives, and alternatives render discussions of progressive and reactionary representations of the world obsolete. ... The recognition that a notion of homogeneous (dominant and dominating) mass culture is seriously outmoded does not mean that the categories of progressive and reactionary have become indistinguishable or equally and simultaneously present. In fact, the existence of contradictory and conflicting discourses within a context that is tension-filled necessitates, rather than obliterates, such distinctions (249).

It is apparent that Richard Day remains comfortable with the two terms. He quips, for example, that "liberal reform has gone neoliberal – that is, it has become reactionary rather than progressive" (203). It is in this sense of the term "progressive" signifying any positive movement/gesture towards a left-ideological emancipatory politics that I wish to apply the categories of reactionary and progressive here.

Horror film and apocalypse film are structurally related in the way that the former is generally concerned with trauma to the physical body, often in the form of its violent dissection and dissolution, whereas the latter is concerned with trauma to the social body or the body politic, also by its dissection or dissolution. These converge in Cronenberg's work. According to Wayne Rothschild, in "Cronenberg's work ... the body is the metonymy of society: in this social critique of the body, the body may stand for society itself. In that case, the disfigured body, so familiar in Cronenberg, stands in for disfigured society" (161). Richard Day utilizes this same metaphor when he chastises "racism, patriarchy, heterosexualism, ableism, the domination of nature and any other discourse that *carves up* [my emphasis] the social-natural field into a hierarchy of identities, or apparatuses of *division* that undermine community, solidarity and thereby facilitate capture-exploitation" (142). Maria Lisboa also argues that, "[w]hether realistically or not, when we envisage annihilation (brought about by destructive deities, random forces of nature or destructive man-made machines), we create the horror narratives (and rules) we deserve, and we simultaneously polish the hand mirrors in which we can glimpse ourselves, in a glass darkly" (105). Extending Wood's logic into apocalypse narratives, then, dictates that narratives in which the apocalypse is averted, such as in the spate of Hollywood blockbusters that emerged at the same time that McKellar's *Last Night* was released in the late 1990s, fall into a reactionary category in which a return to the normalcy of a capitalist society governed by patriarchal normativity is restored. By contrast, narratives in which the apocalypse (either metaphoric, allegorical, or literal) is realized would be progressive in their refusal to return to the 'normalcy' of the current patriarchal social world. For the purposes of the forthcoming taxonomy, this might be considered a Level 1 distinction. However, as Cohn makes clear, the categories of reactionary and progressive are too limited when considered as mutually exclusive. The political representations in any apocalyptic narrative are surely more nuanced. Thus, following Todd May's model of the "poles" (*Political* 4) of political philosophy, it is more useful to consider these categories as theoretical poles between which more nuanced distinctions must be articulated; 'higher' level distinctions and analytical foci are needed within the ostensibly progressive category.

In fact, even in the first level distinction, it is necessary to make further divisions within the reactionary category. The distinctions revealed by Žižek and Uri Gordon between a capitalist driven eco-catastrophe and some other external source of doom (but not revelation in this instance) are significant here.

> Against the campaign of induced collective amnesia intended to detach environmental and social chaos from the capitalist system that created them, anarchists and their allies would be drawn to put forward the clear message that the same social forces and structures responsible for this mess should not be trusted to get us out of it (U. Gordon 254).

A narrative in which the apocalypse is averted but blame for its ascent remains on the shoulders of capitalism, the state, or patriarchal ideology is at least more progressive in that regard than a narrative like *Armageddon* (1998), for example, in which the apocalypse is not only averted, but responsibility for its ascent is displaced onto such unlikely external sources as aliens or asteroids. *Armageddon* goes so far as to compound the exploitative and eco-catastrophic practice of oil-drilling with the industrial-military organization of NASA, duly equipped with nuclear missiles, as our combined vehicle of salvation. Thank the heavens (pun intended) that Bruce Willis, as a paternal and industrial patriarch, was a capable enough oil baron to have designed a drill for NASA to expropriate and save us all!

On the progressive side of this dichotomy, even more nuanced distinctions can be made. For example, following the Marxist treatment of commodity, or Bourdieuian cultural capital, leaving any narrative in aperture provides a ready opportunity for sequelization that macro-recuperates any progressive ideology that might be contained within the narrative. Fortunately, this seems less a characteristic of apocalypse cinema, and certainly of Canadian cinema in general, than it is typical of horror cinema. What remains to be accomplished in the establishment of 'higher' *progressive* levels of analysis is the task of integrating an anarchist philosophical approach into an even more nuanced analytical model. Drawing upon the distinction within the reactionary category described above, certainly a narrative in which the apocalypse is realized, but blame for its ascent is displaced from the sites of authority/coercion/patriarchy already described, is closest to the reactionary side of the dichotomy from within the progressive category. If the displacement, however, is onto some form of progressive social revelation that drives a sweeping away of the entire order, the displacement is certainly more progressive. This can be considered Level 2a in our progressive continuum. Such a revelatory apocalypse is certainly desirable, but only on anarchist terms, i.e. the sweeping away of patriarchal ideology as opposed to a capitalist-driven apocalypse (which will either be wholly annihilating, and therefore evacuate the possibility of revelation, or allow for an aversion/recuperation). Thus, a revelatory apocalypse set in contradistinction to wholesale annihilation will constitute our Level 2b. The next level, Level 2c, addresses the

problem of the concentration principle. In this sense, even narratives that locate responsibility for the ascent of apocalypse onto authoritarian/coercive/patriarchal sites of authority can be more reactionary than narratives that reject the concentration principle as such. These forms of apocalypse are more Marxist than anarchist in their faith in a *political* apocalyptic sweeping away of a perceived singular site of oppression, such as capitalism, rather than an apocalyptic representation in which power is more immanently dispersed throughout a rhizomatic fabric of patriarchal *social* relations. Level 2d is comprised of a social apocalypse that sweeps away patriarchal social relations on an interpersonal level but still imagines it as a revolution with its attendant ideological result of a new 'socialist' order potentially still suffused with patriarchal values. The more progressive apocalypse in the level 2d distinction refuses any such imagination of accommodating either a patriarchal-socialist or abstract-utopian future. Cumulatively, these second levels are mutually concerned with the unveiling of the ideology of patriarchal normativity and/or the politics of demand in their various modes. However, in respect of a rhizomatic model of analysis, these levels should not be considered mutually exclusive, but, rather, as reticulations of progressively apocalyptic representations that can readily interact and overlap.

Beyond the narrative topology with which Level 2 progressive distinctions are concerned are the more direct implications of the audience in their own perception of the cinematic content. Thus, the third level of analysis brings this discussion into contact with the properly psychoanalytic theories of perception and identification that overlap with certain anarchist theoretical approaches. Adams and Jun, for example, describe the unveiling aspect of the work of "Sigmund Freud, the grand diagnostician of the irrational impulses lurking behind the veil" (257). If the project of psychoanalysis is to unveil repressed desires that are wreaking havoc with healthy consciousness, the project of Apocalypse is surely to unveil ideology within "the social unconscious" (a term I borrow from Eagleton 121-2) that is doing the same to healthy social consciousness. The philosophy of anarchist praxis ('direct action') is useful here. When Richard Day recounts contemporary examples of anarchist direct action, he specifically invokes what he refers to as the "politics of the act" (15, 150, 192). Matthew Wilson agrees that "throughout anarchist thought there is in fact a strong emphasis on praxis, on anarchy in action, which, however much this may rely implicitly on some metaphysical view or another, is really concerned with *uncovering* what these views might be" (12, my emphasis). Allan Antliff

similarly refers to "anarchism's core values of self-organization and direct action" ("Strategies" 68) that, as Jun indicates, might well manifest in the artistic practice of cinema production.

Surely, such a philosophical praxis works on the level of ideology, via the mechanisms of cinematic perception and identification, which is neither coercive nor necessarily covert. As Jacques Lacan argues in *The Four Fundamentals of Psycho-analysis*,

> the process of the philosophical meditation throws the subject towards the transforming historical action, and, around this point, orders the configured modes of active self-consciousness through its metamorphoses in history. As for the meditation on being that reaches its combination in the thought of Heidegger, it restores to being itself that power of annihilation — or at least poses the question of how it may be related to it (81).

As such, "[s]pectators, in turn, are free to assign multiple meanings to a given film, none of which can be regarded as the 'true' or 'authentic' meaning" (Jun "Toward" 142), all of which, however, induce a certain "power of annihilation" in the sense of a Cartesian solipsism in which the fundamental subjectivity of any interpretation of individual representation to oneself annihilates the subject's certitude of anything outside that interpretation (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 81). In this regard, even the earlier progressive levels of analysis already described constitute a form of praxis in their function of unveiling normative ideology.

A progressive narrative could embrace the apocalypse (an otherwise Lacanian unideal *par excellence*), at least in anarchist terms. Thus, a mirror-stage identification with apocalypse through prosopopoeia is the type of progressive narrative an anarchist-critical analysis seeks. In their discussion of "Žižekian" cinema theory, both Matthew Beaumont and Fabio Vighi point to the literary function of prosopopoeia as a mechanism through which capitalism is endowed with an independent agency that evacuates personal responsibility for its negative effects. "Žižek recently observed [that] 'we do indeed seem to have witnessed the rise of a new prosopopoeia where the thing [that] speaks is the market itself, increasingly referred to as if it were a living entity that reacts, warns, makes its opinions clear, etcetera, up to and including demanding sacrifices in the manner of an ancient pagan god'" (Beaumont 82). If anarchist praxis turned this agency back upon itself, it might apply the same sort of prosopopoeia to representations of the apocalypse. In his discussion of various cinematic narratives of zombie apocalypse, for example, Kyle Bishop argues that "[t]he American gothic manifests the anxieties associated with historical crimes and taboo desire through innovative thinkers and tropes, especially *prosopopoeia*, which is the personification of abstract ideas, usually as a ghost"

(*American* 124). In fact, Bishop indirectly describes prosopopoeia in terms of an apocalyptic alteration of normative ideology. "More specifically, *prosopopoeia* may be conceptualized as the master trope of gothic's allegorical turn, because *prosopopoeia* … disturbs logocentric order, the common reality of things" (*American* 125). Žižek more directly sees prosopopoeia as a vehicle for the modification of ideology when he states that

> [i]n his "learning play," *Der Ozeanflung*, Brecht not only offers nice examples of prosopopoeia (the pilot is addressed by mist, snowstorm, and sleep; and even the city of New York talks — "here speaks the city of New York"), he also offers a statement of "practicing materialism" to be opposed to the "practicing idealism" of our daily ideology, turning around the ideological "I know very well, but…" in which *I act as if I believe even if I do not believe* (*End Times* 134).

In more specifically psychoanalytical terms, Gad Horowitz argues that "[p]rimary identification persists in the adult in the form of temporary, reversible experiences of fusion 'not only with our love objects *but with our whole environment*' (Jacobson, 1964, 40)" (*Repression* 49, my emphasis).

The ideological function of a mirror-stage-like identification with a prosopopoeiac apocalypse, however, leads to yet another question: what cinematic mechanisms might suit the purpose of representing such an apocalypse with an eye to progressively modifying ideology? How can a cinematic representation create the desired *affect*? In *Skepticism Cinema* (2016), a text that is timely for its concern with existential solipsism in this era of epidemic mediated social relations that nearly realize Jean Baudrillard's model of the simulacrum in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Phillip Schmerheim turns to Stanley Cavell for answers to such questions.

> Cinema presents a screen, i.e., projected version of the world that, as Cavell roughly puts it, satisfies our normal senses because it simply is present to them, *affects* them, but the world created through this sensorial satisfaction is ultimately unavailable because it is inaccessible to us. Film stages a projection of a world we cannot interact with as film spectators (295, my emphasis).

This foreclosure on complete sensorial access may well heighten the affect of desire in recognition of the Deleuzian desiring-machine.[49] Indeed, the intentionally philosophical aspect of the TNW apocalypse films is particularly concerned with an ideological communication with

[49] In his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Mark Seem cites the recognizably apocalyptic terms of Deleuze and Guattari who argue that "If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors" (Deleuze and Guattari xxiii).

the viewer, which is congruent with at least one classically-anarchist perspective. Proudhon "reached a conclusion appropriate to an anarchist outlook: that art is autonomous, but at the same time — because it communicates between artist and audience — is a social activity and therefore has its part to play in the transformation of society" (Antliff "George Woodcock" 107). Similarly, according to Matthew Adams, "The ink-smudged paper leaving the desks of a Kropotkin or Bakunin for the type setter and printer was intended to inspire, invigorate, and inflame" (Adams and Jun 259). And Robé recounts Sandra Elgear's comments regarding the anarchist practice of "videotaping" that she expresses in sentiments that are nearly verbatim. "We wanted it to be used as an activist tool. That was absolutely what it was for. It's a tape to show, to get people thinking and get people out there and get people angry [i.e. 'inflame' above]" (140). According to Robé, Elgear and her Testing the Limits collective comrades were immediately concerned with the ideological affect for which cinema provides.

It is fortuitous that the postanarchist turn to Deleuze for insight brings with it a body of theory readily equipped with its own methodology of cinematic analysis that is also concerned with affect. While it is not feasible to rehearse the complex reasons that Deleuze feels his cinema theories are an extension of his political theories,[50] it is certainly necessary to address the former. In his most succinct contribution that is salient here, he states that "[t]he affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face" (Deleuze 87). Deleuze, however, does not limit this definition to the human face. Indeed, the very etymology of the term "prosopopoeia" implicates the face as a more metaphorical concept. "Prosopopoeia comes from two words in ancient Greek. *Prosopon* translates to face or person. *Poiein* means to make or to do" (Jain). Deleuze extends *his* definition of the face to include any object in close-up that manifests visually between what he refers to as the "two poles" of "reflecting surface and intensive micro-movements" (88).[51] The former of these works in the order of the Lacanian mirror-stage,[52] while the latter is the vehicle through which an internal emotional response is generated within the viewer, or at least within another character in the mise-en-scene.[53] In the context of

[50] These explanations are available in extended form primarily in his *Anti-Oedipus*.

[51] He gives the examples of the face of a clock and the glimmering knife that tempts Jack the Ripper in Pabst's *Lulu* (1929).

[52] "For Deleuze, the affection-image is at the same time 'a reflecting and reflected unity' …, i.e. a mirroring surface which constitutes the image that it reflects and the image itself" (Elsaesser 6).

[53] "'*The affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face.* …' By directly tying the larger-than-life face of cinema projection to the affection-image, Deleuze explicitly harks back to the views of Balazs, particularly the latter's idea of the image as a spatio-temporal abstraction" (Elsaesser 60).

traumatic mirror-stage identification, and in a Nietzschean language that might well reflect an apocalyptic prosopopoeia, Deleuze explains that

> the single and ravaged face unites a part of one to a part of the other. At this point it no longer reflects or feels anything, but merely experiences a mute fear. It absorbs two beings, and absorbs them in the void. And in the void it is itself the photogramme which burns, with Fear as its only affect. The facial close-up is both the face and its effacement. Bergman has pushed the nihilism of the face the furthest, that is its relation in fear to the void with the absence, the fear of the face confronted with its nothingness (100).

Deleuze then moves on to explain the ways in which an appropriately affective image in turn generates the impulse-image and then a concomitant action in a section summarily entitled "From affect to action: The impulse-image" (123). Delueze outlines two cinematic narrative scenarios that follow from his theory, Action-Situation-Action (ASA) and Situation-Action-Situation (SAS). The former of these loosely aligns with the more empirical research of communications scholar Soo Jung Moon who confirms that, in their media consumption, "people move through a series of stages between their initial awareness [of] an issue and any subsequent … behavior toward it" (Baran & Davis 267). In Moon's model, "cognitive effects (C) [which may result from eudaimonic cinema reception] lead to affective effects (A), which lead to behavioral effects (B)" in the "C-A-B sequence" (Baran & Davis 267). In a language that is less ambiguously apocalyptic, Deleuze explains that the result of the affection-image is the creation of a properly cinematic "originary world" to which the representation refers, an analogue to Lacan's Real,[54] which in turn generates a radical possibility of hope. "The originary world is the beginning of the world, but also an end of the world, and the irresistible slope from one to the other; it carries the milieu along and makes it into a closed world, absolutely closed off, or else opens it up on to an uncertain hope" (126). Ultimately, the affection-image resolves into sentiment or impulse.[55]

Christopher Vitale describes the impulse-image as the footprint in cinematic images of a force of attraction, such as the energy of sexual desire created by the image of a nude body ("Part II"). And Philip Turetzky describes an impulse as "an active force present in an action

[54] See Stephen Ross's "A Very Brief Introduction to Lacan," Ms. University of Victoria (2002), pp. 3-5.

[55] All of this is summed up nicely in dialogue in Manon Briand's apocalyptic *Chaos and Desire* (2002), a French-Canadian film that was arguably influenced by the TNW (Genevieve Bujold was participant) in which the lead character Alice "encounters an old man who refers to the perception that the moon is larger when it is closer to the horizon and comments that we do not realize how much we are governed by our minds" (Leach *Film* 145).

once it is separated from any determinate milieu that could provide the action with a coherent sense, cause or rational justification" (106), such as an apocalyptic event. As Deleuze explains,

> [t]he affect is the entity [that] does not exist independently of something which expresses it ... What expresses it is a face, or a facial equivalent (a faceified object) or ... even a proposition. ... In a state of things which actualises them the quality becomes the 'quale' of an object, power becomes action or passion, affect becomes sensation, sentiment, emotion or even impulse [*pulsion*] in a person ... But now we are no longer in the domain of the affection-image, we have entered the domain of the action-image (97).

In more explicitly anarchist-theoretical terms, Nathan Jun explains "that power actively *affects* both internal (subjective) existence as well as external (intersubjective) existence" ("Toward" 152, my emphasis). As Elizabeth Rosen argues in *Apocalyptic Transformation*, "Apocalypse, then, is not a matter of destroying some physical reality, but is the 'result of a radical change of consciousness achieved through art' and an extension of the Romantic tradition in which 'imagination is a divine attribute and a way to participate in the ongoing creation of the universe'" (34). Thus, the power of the affection-image as it is described by Deleuze gives rise to the action-image and its relationship to the "originary world." Jun further quotes Jesse Cohn in explaining "that this reality is in a continuous process of change and becoming, and that at any given moment, it includes an infinity – bounded by, situated within, or 'anchored' to the concrete actuality of the present — of emergent or potential realities," but which can only manifest as an ideological change in an otherwise sedentary viewer (Jun "Toward" 152, Cohn "What" 413).

As Jun's citation of Cohn suggests, embedded in this third level of analytical theory are the intimations of the fourth and 'highest' level of cinematic praxis within the narrative in which the apocalypse can be simultaneously progressive (in Robin Wood's sense of the term) as well as ongoing (in the sense of a syntactic predicate). Rather than rejecting the apocalyptic implications of a desired 'clean sweep' that pervades much anarchist philosophy, discourse should explore these implications to discover a more nuanced understanding of apocalypse that might (eventually) engender a clean sweep while still observing other anarchist tenets. In terms of cinema narrative, according to Barbara Klinger,

> The issue of closure is … crucial. The progressive film must escape the compromising forces inherent in the conventional procedure of closure. Whereas closure usually signals the ultimate containment of matters brought out in the narrative — the network of cause-and-effect is resolved, and the narrative returns to a final state of equilibrium — progressive films end in such a way as to refuse closure. Certain critics maintain that

> these endings cannot contain the excess of meaning produced in the course of the film, cannot solve all the conflicts ... The amount of violence and destructiveness centered on the social institutions is not adequately resolved through the conventional device of closure (38).

Whereas the Marxist apocalypse is conceived of as an event, even if a lengthy one, the anarchist apocalypse will be indefinite and ongoing, fundamentally 'progressive.' According to Allan Antliff, "[r]ather than seeking to 'emancipate "everyone at once"', [anarchists] propound 'a non-hegemonic theory of social change … that [does] not seek to free anyone at all but [is] focused on how each of us, as individuals and members of communities, must free ourselves, in an effort that cannot be expected to terminate in a final event of revolution'" ("Insurrection" 77). Most traditional apocalypse films, whether ideologically reactionary by displacing the cause of apocalypse onto an external force, or progressive in that they lay blame on capitalist-industrial eco-catastrophe and social alienation, imagine it as an *event* – an eschatalogical epistemology that sees the apocalypse as occurring at a specific point in historical time. By doing so, notions of an *ongoing* apocalypse are effaced. Imagining the apocalypse as a finite event locates it as an identifiable temporal *objet a*, through which fantasies of aversion and dissolution, either before or after *the event*, can allow for ideological management of the fear, and evacuate ideological responsibility for what is ongoing, what is happening now.

Moreover, with respect to even the possibility of meliorism or praxis in the face of apocalypse, Peter Manley Scott asks, "*If apocalypse is an event the script of which is already written, in what sense do human beings participate in apocalypse?*" (265, italics in original). Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta argued long ago, "It is absurd to believe that, once the government has been destroyed and the capitalists expropriated, 'things will look after themselves' without the intervention of those who already have some idea, however loose or tentative, about what has to be done, and who would immediately set about doing it" (qtd. in Jun *Anarchism* 142). This contention, however, comes dangerously close to validating the need for some sort of party vanguard. Day points to Hannah Arendt's extension of this logic: "the 'Glorious Revolution' — that fixed the notion of sudden, violent social change in the western imaginary was, in fact, a restoration of English monarchical power after its usurpation by Oliver Cromwell. Revolution originally meant what it sounds like it should mean – a return of the same, repetition or recovery" (Day 51-2). An anarchist apocalypse refuses the fomentation of such a vanguard through an endless apocalypse.

Within this endless apocalyptic reconstruction, however, as Amster indicates, the re-emergence of undesirable social relations remains a constant threat. However, poststructuralist theory clearly indicates that escaping power as such is a utopian social fantasy.[56] "Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the state form, capitalism — as an apparatus of exploitation — must also be seen as an ever-present potential, a way of being with others that is always possible, if we desire it – perhaps unconsciously — and must always be warded off if we do not" (Day 142). Understanding that power relations are immanent and pervasive, there emerges an endless concern against their return, or the emergence of something worse, after an apocalyptic-revolutionary adjustment. Anarchist theory posits an ideology of continuous responsibility as a way out of this deadlock. Again according to Allan Antliff, "[a]ffinity figures as a means of strengthening these values while 'warding off and working against those whose practices perpetuate division, domination, and exploitation'" ("Insurrection" 77). As such, Richard Day calls for "the ongoing displacement of the hegemony of hegemony by an *affinity for affinity*" (9). However, Day further argues that the "subtle currents of affinity and disaffinity point to the need for an ethic of infinite responsibility" against the latter. Jun similarly calls for "eternal vigilance" as part of a "process" of "eternal revolution against domination wherever and however it arises – eternal because ... domination cannot be killed" (*Anarchism* 184). Thus, Matthew Adams encapsulates Kropotkin's understanding of the revolutionary 'event.' "Once the struggle was won, the struggle would continue" ("Uniformity" 166). In this interpretation, it is desirable for the event that sweeps away undesirable social relations to never end, and for apocalypse to become the new status quo, or as Allan Antliff puts it, to become "an enduring commitment to antiauthoritarian values within and between communities" ("Insurrection" 77). Indeed, there is a distinction to be made here between "revolution" and "revelation." As Porton argues, "The resourceful teacher believes that 'capitalism is collapsing,' but does not partake of the stale temptation to proclaim that revolution is around the corner" (191-2). Thus, an anarchist apocalypse does not seek "progress" in the sense of a long and large historical journey towards social utopia such as that offered by Marxism, but "progressive" in the sense of any more immediate and ongoing move

[56] Of course, "poststructuralist theorists such as Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, and to some extent Derrida have worked intensively on the question of how we might continue to struggle against repression without reproducing the modern fantasy of a final event of totalizing change (the revolution), or falling back into the abyss of liberal pluralism" (Day 9).

towards egalitarianism and social emancipation. Therefore, in contrast to Marxist conceptions of cultural *revolution* and its concomitant notion of apocalyptic 'closure', an anarchist apocalypse constitutes itself as a cultural *revelation-evolution*, an ideological metamorphosis, brought on by the ongoing destruction of 'civilization' as such: a phylogenetic reset that sweeps away patriarchal normativity and all its attendant domination, authority, as well as the deeply entrenched ideologies and institutions that have been built on its tenets.

However, as David Miller astutely observes, "If *evolutionary* laws meant that bourgeois society would inevitably be swept away to be replaced by a higher form of social organization, what place was left for active intervention by anarchists?" (qtd. in Adams "Possibilities" 58, my emphasis). If the progressive and melioristic answer lies in cinematic praxis and apocalyptic prosopopoeia, then the question is really one of what form this "higher ... social organization" might take in a state of ongoing apocalypse. According to Tatjana Ljujic "it is not the *event* of the world coming to an end that is central to the notion. It is the revelation of what lies *beyond* history that makes a text about the end of the world 'apocalyptic'" (147). However, there is an anarchist theoretical dispute regarding the construction of social blueprints and the opposing refusal to do so. An anarchist apocalypse as it is laid out here privileges one side of this debate; it remains unclear how, if "this reality is in a continuous process of changing becoming" (Jun "Toward" 152), it could possibly give rise to any form of teleological blueprint for a future society. Randall Amster cites D. Pepper from *Eco-Socialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice* (1993), who explains that

> [b]oth Marxism and anarchism reject the idea of utopia [because] it could become a template imposed by present on future generations. It could restrict their freedom by creating a prescribed blueprint for living, and therefore become a basis for totalitarianism" (qtd. in "Anarchy" 291-2).

In fact, the anarchist recognition of a constant threat of the return of patriarchal normativity, its rejection of the apocalyptic "event," and its further rejection of authoritarian vanguardism all *demand* an open refusal of a grand narrative of social engineering or Utopian teleology. Thus, Jun offers the more open solution of "emergent or potential realities" ("Toward" 152, Cohn "What" 413). The true anarchist may have the *aim* of achieving an egalitarian solution but has the *drive* of maintaining the antagonistic social tension. Such is the foundation of the anarchist tenet of praxis or direct action, and it is in this maintenance that anarchist cinema criticism should seek radical narrative content, even as it "reject[s] all traces of present reality" (Moore qtd. in Antliff "Strategies" 81). Imagining any specific future must always maintain at

least a trace of "present reality" and effectively posits a dialectical 'solution,' evacuating the necessary conditions of the apocalyptic/antagonistic energy required to continue the struggle.

As such, the refusal of blueprints and the call for an ongoing apocalypse are necessarily complementary. "Eschewing utopian blueprints for humanity's liberation, anarchists regard creativity and improvisation as integral to dismantling" the social "relations" of "capitalism and state formations" (Antliff "Insurrection" 77) and towards the construction of a truly emancipatory "New Jerusalem." And as Andreas Sofroniou states in *Philosophy and Science of Eschatology*,

> Much apocalyptic fiction does not deal with the "end of time" but rather with the end of a certain period of time, the end of life as it is now, and the beginning of *a new period of time*. It is usually a crisis that brings an end to current reality and ushers in a new way of living, thinking, or being. This crisis may take the form of … a change in the environment, or *the reaching of a new level of consciousness* (77, my emphases).

Therefore, an anarchist apocalypse would be soteriological rather than eschatological. Soteriology is a religious doctrine often set in opposition to eschatology. Whereas eschatology refers to a final judgement resulting in the apocalyptic destruction of mankind, soteriology offers an opposing perspective in which an apocalyptic event will result rather in the complete salvation of mankind through redemption. Certainly I do not intend the mystical religious origins of these concepts here. Anarchist philosophy would generally reject such dogmatic origins. I intend only the notion that underpins the distinction, that is to say, the ways in which apocalypse may result in humanity's salvation rather than its wholesale destruction. In progressive films that represent such an apocalypse, it should be understood as either a metaphor of change or a harbinger of the outcome of current trajectories of the social fabric. Furthermore, an anarchist apocalypse would imagine an *ongoing* change within the rhizomatic social fabric, rather than a wholesale movement from one totalizing phase of history to another, although it may narratively use the latter to prompt change. Nathan Jun assigns to the necessarily ongoing process of the anarchist-apocalyptic project to sweep away normativity, patriarchal or other, its replacement by a normalization of Deleuzian "deterritorialization." According to Jun, "[t]he concept of normativity as deterritorialization … does not generate norms. Rather, it stipulates that 'what "must" always remain normative is the ability to critique and transform existing norms, that is to create something new …'" (*Anarchism* 178). Jun concludes this contention with another that is even more specific to the notion of refusing blueprints. "[O]ne cannot have preexisting norms or criteria for the new; otherwise it would

not be new, but already foreseen'" (178). Translated into the construction of an anarchist-apocalyptic cinema analysis, the prosopopoeiac identification with apocalypse cannot be allowed to stabilize. Thus, the fourth and 'highest' level of the progressive in analysis gives rise to a double-entendre in which the most progressive apocalypse with which a viewer might experience a third-level prosopopoeiac identification (in Wood's sense of it being socially emancipatory by rejecting normative patriarchal ideology) must be continuous and ongoing (in both Wood's and Klinger's sense of rejecting narrative closure or apocalyptic finitude). In other words, it is *progressive*.

In Defense of Commensurability

From the TNW, Peter Mettler's work can be taken as a meta-cinematic exemplar of this highest level of progressive cinematic representation. His works are experiments in ongoing philosophical dialogue. "His open dialogue ... with issues relevant to Canadian philosophical discourse ... is ongoing in his work" (J. White 38). Alluding to the typically intellectual nature of such philosophical discourse, George Melnyk also states that "[e]ven though Canadian cinema in the age of Cronenberg and Egoyan has remained for the most part 'art,' and as 'art' has been marginalized from the majority of the Canadian public, it nonetheless offers some insight into the cultural agendas of the Canadian intelligentsia" (*One Hundred* 165). This is the very reason that particularly Allan Antliff's art-analytical contributions to anarchist theory work so well in understanding the TNW films. Herbert Read had already indicated his belief that "art is radically different from amusement. It does not leave us without *affecting* us, and *affecting* us, according to some scale of value, for the better," a contention through which he preconceives Deleuze's model of the affect-image (172, my emphases). Richard Porton echoes this sentiment when he refers to "the anarchist avant-garde's belief [in] *progressive* social transformation" (245, my emphasis). In this regard, viewing the films of the TNW as artistic philosophical praxis aligns with their narrative content. One particularly obvious example from amongst many in the TNW is John Greyson's *The Making of Monsters*, which obviously has a political agenda to unveil the normative patriarchal ideology at the heart of much homophobically-driven violence in Toronto at the time of its production. Moreover, according to Richard Porton, Paul "Goodman's 'proposal to countervail brainwashing' has never been enacted, but numerous scrappy guerilla video organizations keep alive his hopes that 'little media' can contribute to a genuine 'schola videotica.'" (Porton 252). Similarly, many of the works of the TNW, by directors

that had close associations with television by virtue of the nature of the Canadian cinema industry, might even realize Goodman's proposal, at least in the limited context of the Canadian cinema distribution industry.

Indeed, in relation to the third level of analysis listed above, at least the TNW filmmaker Peter Mettler was explicitly "concerned with representations, and the degree to which our understanding and perceptions, even our very experience of the world, are shaped by the images of cinema" (qtd. in White *Of This Place* 32). Similarly, Ernest Mathijs' opinion of Cronenberg's diegetic thematic indicates an overlap with the perception of the viewer.

> Cronenberg's films are about subjective interpretations of reality that are seen as (or become) objectively real—either in the conviction of the characters or in their experiences. *Much, then, is in the eye of the beholder* [my emphasis]. ... Cronenberg believes our perception of reality is not necessarily the ontologically truest one, but it is essential we hold onto it for dear life because it is the only thing we have. ... In that sense, Cronenberg is, as he has often indicated, a true existentialist. A dedicated atheist, he sees no reality outside our own mundane life, no greater scheme besides biological evolution and no general path mankind follows besides the one we carve out for ourselves (including the mistakes we make while trying) (6).

For all the things on Mathijs' list that Cronenberg does *not* believe in, there is a certain anarchist inflection to his contention that Cronenberg *does* believe in evolution, and that Cronenberg privileges significant agency in praxis ("the path we carve out for ourselves") and experimentation ("mistakes ... while trying") as part of that process. Mathijs' brief introductory coda, entitled "Reality and what we make of it," thus, indicates another double-entendre to "what we make of it" as both how we understand it and how we participate in constructing it (8). "Film studies should not be blind to the ways in which films operate as cultural artefacts that help shape reality as well as represent it. Cronenberg's films create trouble, raise consciousness, and create strong feelings" (Mathijs 8). They are films that trade on viewer affect to effect considerable political-thematic reception. Likewise, in even more specifically apocalyptic language, in his analysis of Mettler's work, Jerry White goes on to reference Albert Hoffman's philosophy as one that resonates with Mettler's own. Hoffman describes "the material world" as a "transmitter" of the "signals" that affect sensorium. "They pass through our antennae: eyes, ears, touch, smell. And in us, the receivers, the signals are transformed into experience: sight, sound, music. *Every person basically creates the entire world for themselves*" (Hoffman qtd. in White *Of This Place* 45, my emphasis). This, like Cronenberg's comment above, is notably egocentric rather than communal or collective, but if the egocentric world that is

created is informed by the anarchist tenet of mutual aid, such a cinematic mental creation may reconcile egocentrism and collectivity in such a way that the advantages to each are only realized by concern for the other.

These cinematic considerations wholly realize the anarchist-apocalyptic philosophy and praxis with which a significant vein of the Toronto New Wave films is concerned. As such, an anarchist-apocalyptic analytical methodology is the right vehicle for understanding the films of the TNW because, just as there is a distinct vein of apocalyptic philosophy that runs through an otherwise divergent history of anarchist theory, so too is there a noticeable vein of apocalyptic concern permeating the narratives within the films of the Toronto New Wave. Moreover, in George Melnyk's *Film and the City: The Urban Imaginary in Canadian Cinema* (2014), he observes "[t]he rejection of patriarchal norms that foster images of victimization requiring male protection" in a wide range of Canadian cinema (79). In these regards, anarchist theory and the TNW films exemplify Michael "Freeden's suggestion that otherwise distinct political traditions may be seen as bearing a 'family resemblance' to one another in so far as they share a kind of 'DNA' — that is, core concepts — in common" (Adams and Jun 246). One such example manifests in what Mathijs describes as Cronenberg's refusal of what Richard Day refers to as the "hegemony of hegemony." For "Cronenberg's [early] films ... the inspiration did not lie with the search for a new order, but rather with the dismissal of all systems of order" (Mathijs 12). This influence from Cronenberg is clearly visible in so many of the TNW films. An anarchist form of apocalypse and its application as philosophical praxis is recognizable in all of the films that will be discussed in what follows. The film analyses that follow will attempt, according to the analytical methodology established in this chapter, to see just how *progressive* the films of the TNW are in doing so.

Chapter 3: The Cronenberg Effect[57]

As Piers Handling clearly points out as early as 1984 in his essay "A Canadian Cronenberg," Canadian cinema inherits a variety of conventions from its domestic lineage while simultaneously rejecting others. Clearly, however, the apocalyptic vein in Canadian cinema, and even in the larger context of Canadian art in general,[58] takes a particular turn with the TNW, an effect that can be traced directly and most substantially to the influence of David Cronenberg. Echoing the anarchist praxis of apocalyptic affect outlined in Chapter 2, William Beard sees through all of Cronenberg's works

> the persistence of a set of affective reactions provoked by his films ... and an alarming destabilization of identity and sense of reality that began with the scientific attempt to make human sexuality more overt in *Shivers* (1975), continued through the mad hallucinatory transformations of *Videodrome* (1983), and stretched all the way to the complete undermining of perception, subjectivity, and the world itself in *eXistenZ* ("Traces" 210).

In this chapter, I will look at the particularly apocalyptic and anarchist aspects of Cronenberg's work, and the ways in which he specifically influenced the Toronto New Wave, an influence that is all the more prevalent due to the fact that he remained participant with several of the filmmakers of the TNW throughout their careers, especially Don McKellar. However, while both Cameron Bailey and Jerry White posit the influence of Cronenberg on the TNW, no study has extensively explored the specifics of this influence (Bailey "Standing" 7, J. White 3, 19). Jerry White simply states that "[t]here is no doubt that this group followed the lead of David Cronenberg rather than, say, Alan King, in what appeared to be an explicit reaction against the documentary-influenced realism that then dominated so much of Canadian cinema" (3), but I argue that the connection runs much deeper.

In the decade that followed the era of the F*NV* that also so clearly influenced the TNW, Croneberg's career was kick-started (but with setbacks) with the implementation of the Capital Cost Allowance between 1974 and 1987. In an ongoing effort to compete with American

[57] I observe upon research conducted after the writing of the first draft of this dissertation that Wayne Rothschild also uses this title for his contribution to the *North of Everything* compilation of essays on Canadian cinema following the 1980s. However, rather than referring to the effect Cronenberg had on the TNW, he defines the Cronenberg effect as upon the viewer, in exploring Cronenberg's propensity to dramatize "that unhappy union of the body and technology" in which "the body is the metonymy of society" (Rothschild 160-1).

[58] Both Margaret Atwood in *Survival* (1972) and Linda Hutcheon in *Splitting Images* (1991) survey a range of Canadian literature and art which they both highlight as particularly apocalyptic.

distribution interests, "the financing of Canadian films was aided by two federal policies, special Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) provisions and direct lending from a government film agency" (Acheson and Maule 1). Bruce LaBruce explains, "It's well known that Cronenberg's early films were financed by Canadian tax shelter money, a financial structure that actually rewarded producers who made films that weren't particularly financially successful. So they encouraged outlandish and outrageous films that would be difficult to sell, which Cronenberg happily provided" (LaBruce). CCA films were nearly universally panned as low-quality and unworthy of Canadian recognition. Marshall Delaney (Robert Fulford) characteristically states that "[m]ost of us understand now the national disgrace of the movie industry: how, under the federal government's capital cost allowance, it became a tax shelter playground for underemployed stockbrokers and overpaid dentists" (14). More infamously, he reacted to Cronenberg's *Shivers* with a headline in the September 1975 edition of Toronto's *Saturday Night* Magazine that insisted "You Should Know How Bad This Movie Is—You Paid for It" (Beard "Thirty-Two" 157). Nevertheless, Cronenberg's films have come to be recognized as having significantly contributed to the development of the Canadian film industry and to horror film more broadly, and have thus attracted substantial critical attention. Perhaps the most comprehensive analyses have been produced by William Beard, Lianne McLarty, and Ernest Mathijs, all of whom at least intimate the apocalyptic aspects of Cronenberg's works. In fact, *all* of the critics who have examined Cronenberg's work *intimate* the apocalyptic and even anarchist underpinnings of his thematics, but very few take up this trajectory and follow it through to any specific conclusion.

Most critics consider Cronenberg in the context of his concern with abject sexuality and bodily transmutation, often accusing him of the same misogyny that characterizes reactionary slasher-horror films. Otherwise his works are endlessly debated as to their 'Canadianness' (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg"; Delaney; see Introduction). In an exceptional turn, however, horror film critic Charles Derry notes the particularly apocalyptic nature of Cronenberg's films. "[I]t seems that no discussion of contemporary horror film can conclude without reference to the films of David Cronenberg, which are consistently derived from Armageddon and apocalyptic sensibilities" (Derry 172). Of particular interest and "Contributing to [a] mini-trend of after-the-end movies were … a few screen originals like David Cronenberg's glacial *Crimes of the Future* (1970)" (K. Newman 179), and *Stereo* (1969); the more explicitly apocalyptic films *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977); the more thematically apocalyptic films *Scanners* (1981),

Videodrome (1983), and *The Fly* (1986); and framing the TNW cycle at the other end, *eXistenZ* (1999).

According to Piers Handling, "David Cronenberg's films are looked upon as aberrations in the cinematic landscape of this country; stylistically and imaginatively the films apparently do not belong" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 80). It is perhaps for this reason that Robin Wood has been one of Cronenberg's most vocal detractors (along with Marshall Delaney), accusing Cronenberg of being a reactionary filmmaker, especially in his depiction of monstrous female sexuality. Such may be the case if his work is examined as a generic depiction of a monstrous Other and the horrors of bodily transformation, as it typically is. However, when viewed as an apocalypse narrative, it betrays a wholly progressive aspect. One of the ways in which this becomes evident materializes in Cronenberg's penchant for narrative aperture, a significant vehicle in the realization of progressive narratives according to both Barbara Klinger and Robin Wood (Wood 10, Klinger 38). Handling summarizes these ideas in their relation to Cronenberg.

> The concept of narrative closure has come under scrutiny recently because it is suggestive of a number of unspoken ideological implications: that the world can be reduced to identifiable problems that are resolvable; that the resolution of these problems reassures the audience and reaffirms its belief in societal standards; that good always wins out over bad, and so on. Yet a great deal of Canadian cinema has resisted this notion. By the end of many of our films little has been resolved, and often we are left with more questions than answers … Endings without resolution [suggest] that the world cannot be reduced to simple schematic equations. This is particularly relevant to Cronenberg (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 89).

Given Wood's explicit definition that defines narrative aperture as progressive and narrative closure as reactionary, it is ironic the level to which he vehemently insisted on Cronenberg's narratives as reactionary. Particularly in his early and explicitly apocalyptic work, Cronenberg's narratives unabashedly refuse closure and its attendant return to the status quo.

It is further instructive to examine the ways in which Cronenberg's films may be progressive or reactionary following a more nuanced anarchist-apocalyptic analytical methodology that calls for the sweeping away of patriarchal social relations. According to both Cronenberg and William Beard, it is through the convention of social apocalypse that a deeply repressed society experiences catastrophic backlash. Cronenberg states that "institutions aren't evil. They are almost noble in that they are an attempt by human beings, however crazy, to try and structure and control their own fate. On the other hand, they may be the cause of their own

destruction" (*C on C* 27). In *Rabid*, for example, the source of the infection is a form of modified cosmetic surgery, a sort of capitalist hedonistic 'mask' of vanity that is governmentally sponsored (in Canada) through universal healthcare and which gives birth to its own monstrous demise. William Beard argues that in *Shivers*, *Rabid*, and *The Brood* "society (and in *The Brood* society's extension, the family) is presented as believing itself to be rational, orderly, coolly functional, under control" ("Visceral" 3). According to Beard, "[t]hese qualities are signaled by architecture and decor, by the social behaviour of the characters and by the ambitious optimism of the high priest of modern society, the scientists" ("Visceral" 3). The result of such suffocating social hubris is inevitably apocalyptic. "There is a denial here of instinct and appetite, of the irrational and the uncontrollable: these are repressed. And having been denied and ignored, they erupt with a destructive force that smashes habitual order, confounds all assumptions and rages with a wild energy" (Beard "Visceral" 3). However, these apocalyptic musings had been percolating in Cronenberg's art well before the films mentioned by Beard above.

Both *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) are highly experimental narrative entries produced before Cronenberg had found his commercial appeal. In fact, Cronenberg reports that "*Crimes of the Future* (1970) was financially supported by the Canadian film development Corporation (CFDC) to the tune of about Can. $15,000. It was maybe the first and last experimental film they put money into" (*C on C* 22). And it is experimentation to which both films dedicate their themes. *Stereo* follows a group of volunteer subjects who have been artificially endowed with telepathic abilities. In *Crimes*, a nomadic and cenobite-like Dr. Tripod effects a desultory journey between nascent medical institutions following an apocalyptic plague called "Rouge's malady" which has decimated the world's entire population of reproductive-aged human females. Cronenberg describes his purpose for these films in terms that might be read as a corollary inversion of Bakunin's aphorism regarding creative destruction. "We're all trying to experiment to find a way to live, to solve problems, to fend off madness and chaos. So, to me, those characters in my films represent people in general, who somehow have to figure out … what their relationship to society is, how to use their creative energy and how to deal with their destructive energy" (Cronenberg *C on C* 7). These films, both set in post-apocalyptic dystopias of psychological technocracy, established the conventions for many of Cronenberg's later apocalyptic works.

In the post-apocalyptic setting of *Stereo*, Cronenberg introduces a number of identifiably

anarchist themes. In their fictional telepathy, the "dominant personality in psychic link perforce determines susceptibility to commune." Rejecting this authoritarian hierarchy, Ron Mlodzik's character becomes angry and walks out. Taking telepathy as a Metzian[59] metaphor for the ideological impact of cinema, Cronenberg seems to be suggesting that viewers must avoid this type of perceptual authoritarianism in cinema. And this is only the first example of how the film is intentionally philosophical. The hyper-intellectualized voice-over audio, added after filming by Cronenberg who admits he had not yet figured out how to match these separate components, never aligns diegetically with the image, creating a perceptual dissonance; that is to say that the viewer must work to make/create their own meanings and thereby voluntarily invest in the narrative both intellectually and affectively. Through prosopopoeia, the telepathic post-apocalyptic commune is personified through the otherwise absent character of Dr. Stringfellow with whom the viewer is invited to sympathize. The narrative explicitly states as much in a language of interrogative anarchist experimentation.

> We understand that the unique way in which an individual perceives and reacts to his environment is a function of his own experiential space continuum. When object events enter the experiential space continuum of that individual, they become an integral, organic part of that space. They are actually changed, qualitatively modified, in accordance with the creative nature of that space. ... In theory, the experiential space continuum of two or more telepathists can merge, can blend together far beyond the range of normal human experience. What would be the organic nature of communal experiential space? ... Would one ... experiential space continuum dominate ...? Or would each mind participate in the synthesis of a uniform, newly created emergent space ...? How would the physical and social functioning of members of this group be altered? (*Stereo*).

Cronenberg speaks a language of experimentation in which perceptual media becomes a form of anarchist "social experiment" similar to that Mark Antliff had ascribed to the periodical *Now* (M. Antliff 15) in which Woodcock expressed his anarchist pacifism.

> The politics of experience on the level of individuals is a correlative of the politics of social groups. The politics of telepathic [cinematic] experience may be studied as a projection of the power struggles among individuals [not classes] into the extremity of psychic potency and complexity, a projection of ideas into the future of human social evolution (*Stereo*).

These sentiments are loosely reiterated by Richard Day paraphrasing Rosi Braidotti. "Forces

[59] See Metz, Christian, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Transl. C. Britton et al, Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 1984.

and intensities, Braidotti adds, necessarily involve interactions with others, and therefore ethical and political commitments – particularly a commitment to 'a space of becoming … posited as a space of affinity and symbiosis between adjacent forces'" (Day 143). In this context, Cronenberg brings the anarchist tenets of affinity and mutual aid introduced in Chapter 2, as well as a critique of patriarchy that is mapped onto sexuality recognized by McLarty and Beard as common to his narratives. The film indicates the development of "polymorphous sexual relations" through which the neo-telepathic participants might realize "acts of faith and love as a positive replacement for the obsolescent [patriarchal] family unit." In *Stereo* Cronenberg unabashedly expounds his critique of patriarchal normativity. The primary justification for the normality of heterosexuality is reproduction ... This argument collapses however once it is demonstrated that sexuality involved in reproduction represents only a very small, almost accidental segment of the total human sexual spectrum (*Stereo*). Finally, in a suggestion wholly prescient of contemporary progressive understandings of sexual identity, Cronenberg positions "omnisexuality" as the non-repressive norm (*Stereo*).

However, deployed as a scathing parody of the pretentious, monotonous, and obfuscating nature of stereotypical academic language, it is never clear just how seriously one is to take any of the narration. Part of the problem with any absolute interpretation is that it overlooks the ambiguity of a text that may or may not be ironic, a problem similar to the anarchist refusal to stabilize authoritative meaning, and an abiding theme of TNW films. Moreover, the psycho-social impact of the experiment in the narrative is ultimately catastrophic for the participants. As they become increasingly telepathically catatonic, they are forcibly separated which results in physical violence and suicide. The narration states that, for one subject whose individual identity was becoming lost in the telepathic milieu, "The true self began to express its moribund existence through the telepathic emission of violent images of decay, vampirism, disintegration. … The intensity and frequency of this emission of morbid telepathic images rapidly increased until it began to create the same depressed mode in those close to her" (*Stereo*). In this regard, the film very much realizes William Beard's contention that, although Cronenberg envisions the possibility of progressive anarchist social relations, he cannot escape a reactionary tendency to code these as alienating, monstrous, and annihilating.

As such, the film works as a thematic microcosm of the whole anarchist-apocalyptic problem. Herbert Read states that "[t]he psychology of the individual cannot be separated from the psychology of the group, and for that reason alone the old conception of individuality will

not serve for the new order of society" (131). The narrative literalizes this axiom: "[C]ertain unexpected results ... threw the future of the project into doubt when preliminary confrontations between any two subjects" emerged, causing an unwillingness to commune (*Stereo*). Thus, *Stereo* stages the unwillingness to commune that is similarly the very contradiction inherent to Richard Day's call for a praxis of exodus. In *Stereo*, when three members of the group are forcibly excluded, the other five "immediately retreated into a state of self-encapsulation refusing to communicate in any way with ... each other. ... Two of the five subjects committed suicide ... Another pierced his skull with an electric drill, an act of considerable symbolic significance" (taken up again by Cronenberg with the character of Revok in *Scanners*) (*Stereo*).

Under these new conditions, the previous close-up scenes of sexual frolic (practicing on a cinematic mode consistent with Deleuzian affect) are replaced with long-shots of physical violence between the subjects of the experiment. Nevertheless, in a more progressive move, the human close-up is replaced with dissonant imbalanced images of close-ups of the landscape with the human subject decentred; the god-like gaze from above that dominates most of the previous narrative is abruptly replaced with a panoptical mechanical-looking eye hidden in a rabbit-hole (subsequently shown to be the location of the gaze), obviously an apocalyptic perceptual end-result of the experimentation. Eventually, the scene resolves into a bizarre combination Japanese-Victorian tea ceremony with a marital-like heterosexual pair-bond, but the scene is highly ironic: the two participants seem deadened, zombified, or at least stultified compared with their previous interactions while the voice-over continues to validate omnisexuality. Unfortunately, Cronenberg falls prey to a conclusion that might validate Robin Wood's insistence on his reactionary propensities. The female character strips off her top while the male pulls her hair and slaps her, an obvious sexual signification of the restoration of patriarchal power. However, the film ends on an apocalyptic high note. According to Maria Lisboa, "Central to [such apocalyptic narratives], lies the presupposition that the weak chain of humanity's dominance is individualism, an inbuilt trait which may in the long term limit communication and the transfer of knowledge, thus obstructing collective species interests" (37). The experiment in *Stereo* results in a revelation of the inclusive social reciprocity between telepathic and non-telepathic subjects in the incorporation of a larger social fabric, and concludes with a long-shot of cars in a parking garage eerily prescient of the apocalyptic closing scene of *Shivers*.

Crimes of the Future trades on very much the same experimental aesthetic as that in *Stereo*, but introduces an explicitly global apocalyptic concern, a substantial departure from other 1970s Canadian films with their localized tales of alienation. The disease at the centre of the narrative is obviously global. In its post-apocalyptic dystopia, the tone of the film is chillingly ambivalent as it explores the horror of inducing premature puberty in females which leaves the young subject vulnerable to Rouge's malady – a veiled and prescient editorial on the damaging effects of the commoditization and increasing sexualization of young women in popular entertainment. While the choice between the death of the species and violating young girls to avert it is fundamentally horrific, the glacial narrative ambivalence evacuates much of the melodrama and creates significant ambiguity. The film is highly progressive in the way it depicts an all-male population in the process of transition from homosociability to homosexuality. Tripod's homosexual kiss of Rouge's necrophiliac bloodied mouth is the same type of *verfremdungseffekt* employed, and amplified, by Bruce LaBruce in both *Otto* (2008) and *L.A. Zombie* (2010). However, it is just as reactionary in the way it presents a misogynistic narrative device in which women have been annihilated, and in the way it depicts men beginning to be afflicted by the disease in their journey towards the omnisexuality introduced in *Stereo*.

Moreover, Tripod's motives remain ambiguous throughout the film: he is apparently seeking Antoine Rouge but undresses with the young girl at the end of the film. In *Cronenberg on Cronenberg*, he indicates that the young girl *is* Antoine Rouge re-incarnate (*C on C* 25), which can only be read as a bizarrely reactionary heterosexual-pedophilic coding of Tripod's progressive homosexual desires for Rouge and/or his disease. Nevertheless, while the narrative is typical of Cronenberg's highly sexualized horror themes and its attendant bodily transmutation, it may be the first Canadian film to represent a truly global apocalypse in the form of a disease, a theme that Cronenberg fervently revisits in *Shivers* and *Rabid*. What is unclear in both *Stereo* and *Crimes*, however, is whether Cronenberg sees the apocalyptic event as one in which new, less alienating social relations can emerge, or if it is merely a horrific inevitability of the patriarchal social order. However, the films are at least anarchist in their refusal to posit a solution.

Still early in Cronenberg's career, Cronenberg produced another short experimental film entitled *Secret Weapon* (1972), an oft-overlooked entry in Cronenberg's portfolio. This film also demonstrates his early preoccupation with apocalypse, along with his mainstay concern with

psychological aberration. The film is set in a 'futuristic' 1977, in which a pharmaceutical mega-corporation has "succeeded in its take-over of technology and ... all of society" during a vague North American civil war. The film is awful, primarily due to the complete inability of Cronenberg's inexplicable casting choice of his co-director Norman Snider (with whom he would later work on *Dead Ringers*) as the lead actor to even articulate his lines, much less perform them with any convincing virtuosity. Nevertheless, the context is unambiguously apocalyptic and just as Canadian, with a mise-en-scene replete with CN rail tankers and Cronenberg's early go-to actor, Ronald Mlodzik, who plays Mr. Lee, an unsympathetically bureaucratic agent of the corporation.

In a typically anarchist criticism, in Cronenberg's narrative, Lee champions a government "working for the good of its people" in his conduct of a "true reign of terror." Thus it is not merely capitalism, but specifically state-capitalism that is identified as the corrupted element. Cronenberg then implicates a third of anarchism's targeted ideological sites of authority when he introduces the religious quality of "the holy police" who regulate the government-sponsored belief in magic, which may or may not be merely a term for scientific rationality. Finally, Cronenberg speaks the language of a specifically anarchist criticism when another bureaucrat demonstrates his governance of "power, pure power. And you can be a part of it. All you have to do is take the oath" (*Secret Weapon*). Nevertheless, Cronenberg falls into a number of clichéd signification traps that are typical of the contemporaneous imagination, not the least of which is his polarization of a post-60s tweed-jacket wearing pseudo-liberal protagonist against an oddly UK-imperial population of bureaucrats. The protagonist is involved with the development of a drug that turns its user into a killing soldier. Eventually he escapes to join a revolutionary vanguard. Contra vanguardism, however, the character's final revelation is that "We used to be the people, but the people didn't dig it," to which his comrade astutely concludes, "So I guess you're not revolutionaries anymore." Our protagonist finally concludes that "In the continuing revolution, there is no place for ethics," a sentiment that implies an ongoing struggle and invokes the problem of ethics in any political labour (variously addressed by May, Jun, and Day).

Cronenberg's next two films, *Shivers* (1975) and *Rabid* (1977), his first commercial ventures, are more mainstream, even though they were panned as offensive to more conservative Canadian sensibilities. *Shivers* and *Rabid* are also significantly more apocalyptic. William Beard argues that "[t]he horror in *Stereo* (and in *Crimes of the Future*) remains on the

level of unease. Not until *Shivers* and *Rabid* do the forces involved in *Stereo* rise up and join together in a general apocalypse" ("Visceral" 13). Both trade significantly on the emerging zombie zeitgeist initiated primarily by George A. Romero with his *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). *Shivers* depicts the various inhabitants of a luxury condominium complex in Montreal besieged by a fecal-looking parasite that renders the victim ravenously sexually uninhibited and aggressively contagious. By the end of the film, even the most resistant inhabitants have been infected and they cumulatively exercise an exodus from the stultifying bourgeois prison of the complex in a vehicular convoy on its way to infect the larger city and presumably the world. *Rabid* follows a very similar narrative to the one presented in *Shivers* but expands the depiction of the spread of the disease into a larger urban setting and with more specifically violent and diminished (although still ambiguous) emancipating overtures in its representations. Beautiful, young Rose, played by pornography star Marilyn Chambers, having undergone a botched experimental plastic surgery at the Keloid Institute, develops a monstrously phallic protrusion in her armpit through which she infects others with uninhibited id once she seduces them.

Regardless of the more commercial nature of *Shivers* and *Rabid*, Cronenberg maintained the experimental propensities he demonstrated in *Stereo* and *Crimes*, at least with casting choices and subversive apocalyptic narratives, if not so much with cinematic form (Cronenberg "C on C," Salmon 378). "*Rabid* (1976), continued and extended Cronenberg's concern for the breakdown of social order ... Taking its cue from the end of *Shivers*, the film broadened its negative context from a high-rise community to the entire city of Montreal. *Rabid* … fits neatly into the genre's concern at that time for the apocalyptic vision" (Rodley in *C on C* xix). Thus, in Cronenberg's worlds to date, what might be considered mutually anarchist experimentation and apocalypse are always intimately connected. Moreover, according to Richard Porton, in an analysis of Griffith's *The Voice of the Violin* (1909) that might just as readily be applied to *Shivers*,

> it is beside the point to insist that 'the film seems commercially rather than politically motivated, capitalizing on the widespread fear of the bomb-throwing anarchist legions that the popular press conjured up at the time.' ... [I]t is also true that the film reflects a common ... conception of anarchism as an odd form of depraved, and more often than not criminal, contagion. Most notoriously, Cesare Lombroso was convinced that 'impulsiveness' and 'love of orgies' were anarchist devices (17-18).

However, just as Cronenberg's association of social emancipation with sexual contagion is thematically ambiguous, it is not entirely clear if Porton is validating or criticizing the equation

of anarchism and unbridled sexuality.

Certainly Cronenberg has been criticized for the way he presents progressive sexual liberation as horrific (or apocalyptic), but an astute read of *Shivers* reveals that it is imbued with irony, not least apparent in the almost comically detached and sexually ambivalent local physician, Dr. St. Luc (arguably the blueprint prototype for McKellar's Patrick in *Last Night*). And echoing what might be deemed an anarchist concern with the communal liberation introduced in *Stereo*, St. Luc, again like Patrick in *Last Night*, is much more a member of an ensemble than a singular masculine hero: "Although St. Luc has a certain protagonist-like function, most of the movie's time is spent with the many secondary characters affected by the plague. In this respect *Shivers*'s real protagonist is collective — inhabitants of the complex and, by extension, people in general" (Beard "Visceral" 17). Even if one considers St. Luc the central protagonist, he merely demonstrates Cronenberg's predilection for the destruction of such a patriarch. Under the conditions of apocalyptic duress, St. Luc's "relaxed manner and air of confident assurance soon begin to appear not just inadequate, but smug and out of touch. It doesn't take long for his public relations sangfroid to crack, revealing the hard, brittle ego underneath" (Beard "Visceral" 19-20). Beard describes the punishment for/emancipation from such conventional patriarchal folly as potentially cathartic for the viewer. "Cronenberg co-opts the viewer's sympathies for St. Luc's eventual destruction. In that final, horrifying/ecstatic climax, he is in some respect getting a richly deserved come-uppance" ("Visceral" 19-20). Moreover, Rodley at least vaguely identifies the liberation of sexual libido as an anarchistic motif: "given *Shivers*' reputation as the first 'venereal horror' movie, it was the film's interest in sex and violence, playful anarchy rather than their disease-obsessed, philosophical tendencies, that made them function so well as exploitation movies" (*C on C* xix). Indeed, Bette Gordon reports that "Cronenberg has said that his films should be seen 'from the point of view of the disease', and that, for example, he identifies with the characters in *Shivers after* they become infected with the anarchic parasites. Disease and disaster, in Cronenberg's work, are less problems to be overcome than agents of personal transformation" (B. Gordon). Adam Lowenstein agrees that

> [w]hat Cronenberg does in *Shivers*, and continues to do in various ways throughout his career, is literalize, defamiliarize, and subvert this discourse of Canadian identity as diseased. In Cronenberg's cinema, disease is not just the enemy of identity, it is also the source of identity. Parasites, plagues, and mutations ... surely bring pain and death, but they simultaneously endow his "diseased" characters with ... an undeniable power and fascination that also structures the films themselves (148).

These interpretations certainly echo the call for an anarchist embrace of apocalypse outlined in the preceding chapter.

According to William Beard, in Nurse Forsyth's monologue regarding her dream, "delivered significantly in the dirty basement of the complex rather than its antiseptic living area, whoever is finally balanced with a positive urge to reach out and accept everything that seems disturbing or frightening" will experience a liberation otherwise unknown in repressive bourgeois culture ("Visceral" 20). Piers Handling concedes that "[w]hen St. Luc … is finally trapped in the swimming pool, the response is different [to revulsion]; at last he has been 'humanized.' Even one's sense of what constitutes humanness continually shifts throughout" the narrative ("Canadian Cronenberg" 86). In fact, Cronenberg himself insisted that the

> characters in *Shivers* [only] experience horror because they are still standard, straightforward members of the middle-class high-rise generation. I identify with them after they're infected. … They're going to be dragged kicking and screaming into this new experience. But, underneath, there is something else, and that's what you see at the end of the film. They look beautiful at the end. They don't look diseased or awful (*C on C* 82).

In *Canadian Cinema*, David Pike takes Cronenberg's perspective as his point of departure.

> As Cronenberg noted of the zombies, 'They look very beautiful at the end of the film. They don't look diseased or awful, they're well-dressed.' This beauty is embodied in St Luc's love interest Nurse Forsythe (played by cult exploitation actress Lynn Lowry) rising out of the water to stand waist-deep in the middle of the pool … The moment … transforms Lowry's character … into a sublime and irresistible vehicle of fate. Rather than kicking and screaming, St Luc, at this crucial moment will meet his doom with the fatalistic implosion of desire … It is a transformative moment in the film, as if the only way the beauty can emerge from the brutally ugly environment of modern life is through the vehicle of a deadly parasite (48-9). (Images 2a and 2b)

In this context, *Shivers* actually insists on the unveiling of an otherwise masked beauty. "There it seems to be, thrown up on the screen in all its truly perverse and initially repulsive splendor, unmasked and unashamed" (Cronenberg *C on C* 40). Echoing the global parameter present in *Crimes*, the film concludes with a convoy of vehicles populated by the now serene zombies, having undergone their apocalyptic transformation, into the city – a narrative aperture that suggests the disease has only begun what will become a globally apocalyptic spread.

Apparently, this apocalyptic parameter was not received well by many. "*Adverse analytical reaction to Cronenberg's cinema also regarded his vision of societal upheaval and destruction as offering no positive political alternatives, merely contagion and death* (Rodley in *C*

on C 66, italics in original). It also drew inevitable comparisons with Romero's contemporaneous *Night of the Living Dead* (1969), which was received more kindly.

> *Some critics preferred the 'walking dead' revolutions of George Romero's Zombie series, perceiving these movies to be a radical political commentary on consumer society run riot (people return from the grave to eat those who are still 'alive'). The glimmer of political hope in Romero — that society is forced to find alternative ways to restructure and reorganize itself post-zombie apocalypse — was viewed as a more positive subtext and a more subversive criticism of existing structures. In short, their reading of the genre was that there were progressive film-makers working subversively within the conventions of the horror film, and that there were film-makers — Cronenberg among them — who represented the reactionary tendencies of the genre* (Rodley *C on C* 66, italics in original).

The dismissal of Cronenberg in this way as reactionary seems to overlook the significant irony embedded in his text as much as the serenity and beauty envisioned in the apocalyptic transformation.

Lowenstein's essay on *Shivers* (1975) draws even more compelling comparisons. Lowenstein sees both *Shivers* and *Rabid* as engaging with "social history" and as having value for their "social commentary" (154). In this light, he challenges Robin Wood's description of Romero's film as progressive and Cronenberg's as reactionary (155). The crux of his argument, through a formal analysis of both films, is that Cronenberg's film challenges the corporate appropriation of the 1960s sexual revolution while Romero's film "allows viewers to channel its horror through signposted value judgments that, however boldly pessimistic, work to absorb any further challenge to the audience's complicity in that horror" (Lowenstein 160). For example, Cronenberg's published screenplay reveals that Cronenberg had been just as concerned with empowering women as with toppling patriarchy. While Forsythe is twice physically attacked, she is otherwise presented as a strong and confident woman with at least some agency. Janine Tudor, by contrast, is a wholly disenfranchised housewife, abusively rejected by her husband, and in the throes of emotional woe throughout. It is notable that in the screenplay, it is Janine, imbued with confidence and strength under the influence of the infection, rather than Forsythe (as in the actual movie – see Images 2a and 2b) who brings St. Luc down.

> *Betts swims up beside St. Luc, grabs him, and holds him under.*
> BETTS (*to Janine*):
> A kiss!
> (*laughter echoes in the pool room*)
> Give him a kiss. Give him a kiss.
> …

> *Betts allows St. Luc to rise to the surface as a laughing Janine splashes over to him and fastens her mouth to his.*
> *As they kiss, Janine's hands hold St. Luc's head fiercely. Betts assists her by pinning St. Luc's arms behind him.*
> …
> *St. Luc twists out of Bett's grasp. He and Janine, still locked together, sink beneath the surface* (*Screenplays* 99).

Freed from the fetters of her sense of marital responsibility and opened to her lesbian romance with Betts, she undergoes an apocalyptic transformation, and becomes a formidable force of liberation. In fact, this change in the film, along with the addition of a Romero-esque army of zombies emerging upon the berm in the film (Images 1a and 1b), are the only significant departures from Cronenberg's meticulous and thorough original screenplay. One can otherwise imagine the exact scene and cinematic moment in every page of the text.

As such, Piers Handling astutely asks, "to what extent is a subversion of society depicted in the films? If the individual cannot really change the course of events, does Cronenberg imply that society needs to be changed? Some critics have noted a political subtext in Cronenberg's work ... Certainly in both works the bourgeois world is completely undermined" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 88). Within this foundational undermining of the bourgeois world, Handling's own response lists sexualized identities that are typically disenfranchised by traditional patriarchy: "Incest, lesbianism and homosexuality all appear in *Shivers*, and 'normalcy' in all its forms is almost universally ridiculed" (88). However, Handling's analysis ultimately effaces the ascription of any progressive subtext.

> No freedom or 'liberation' is achieved through these transexual mutations … In the final analysis the individual is powerless to change anything. All fail to a greater or lesser extent. If the films are not determinist, there is nevertheless a grim overtone of fatalism it is difficult to ignore. Society, in all its guises, conspires against the individual or the couple (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 88).

However, buried within his analysis is an admission of what might be considered an anarchist consideration hiding in Cronenberg's refusal to endow these characters with any type of traditional "power." In fact, Beard identifies what might be considered Cronenberg's prefigurative refusal to exercise such power as embedded in the formal construction of the film: "the director's camera is inevitably calm, formally objective and detached. It is a stance that conveys aesthetic distance and a sense of the inability (as well as the unwillingness) to interfere" (Beard "Visceral" 22). Handling also claims that the final scene (of the convoy of

infected residents headed for the city) is recuperative: "there is implicit in the last shot [of *Shivers*] a feeling of a new conformity that will replace the old" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 85). However, if his previous understanding of St. Luc's transformation as one in which he is "humanized," and Pike's similar contention that it is "beautiful," then clearly the narrative conclusion, imbued more with a *disturbing* sense of calm than with a *disappointing* return of the status quo, indicates an apocalyptic spread of this beautiful transformation.

Just as *Stereo* and *Crimes* might be deemed sister films, so too are *Shivers* and *Rabid*. In some ways, *Rabid* picks up where *Shivers* left off, depicting what the spread of uninhibited sexual id might look like on a city-wide level of infection. Lianne McLarty observes that Rose "is both a 'vampire' (she develops a hunger for human blood) and the original source of a form of rabies that reaches epidemic proportions by the end of the film" (236). And, just as in *Shivers*, "[t]raditional bourgeois patriarchal morality is consistently subverted in *Rabid*." (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 88). One of the ways Cronenberg achieves this goal is through the visual depiction of the physically abject and bodily taboo. Blood, effluvium, and images of infectious pseudo-genitalia dominate the film. In this context, Cronenberg invites the viewer to participate in a conventional mirror-stage cinematic identification with the stereotypically abject monstrous-feminine. Early in the narrative, a particularly masculine patient at the Keloid clinic auspiciously examines his eyes in a mirror with a vaguely authoritarian gaze (Image 3a). Immediately thereafter, a terrified Rose awakens abruptly with her own horrified gaze aimed squarely at the camera (Image 3b). The affect of this close-up could hardly be more compelling. The screen image invites the viewer to identify with Rose, the closest proxy for the personification of apocalypse in the narrative. In the next scene, she aggressively assaults and infects the same character whose masculine gaze was so explicitly foregrounded before.

Handling intimates the progressive way the film valorizes an embrace of apocalypse through a prosopopoeia in which Rose embodies the apocalypse. "Rose's embrace … signifies both attack and affection in a tension that Cronenberg consciously explores" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 86). Beard observes "the deep ambivalence of attack-as-embrace latent throughout the film" ("Visceral" 28). And when affection is evacuated from the embrace, its violence is aimed squarely at patriarchal masculinity: "the drunken farmer who tries to rape [Rose in *Rabid*] is stabbed in the eye – a symbolic attack on the male 'look' or 'gaze'" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 88). Dr. Keloid, the patriarch of his eponymous clinical institute, is

similarly reduced to a slavering victim, also at the hands of Rose's embrace. This embrace is identical to that used in *Shivers* as the way in which the apocalyptic infection is spread.

In another distinct similarity to *Shivers* (and *Stereo*), *Rabid* deploys a more democratic communal casting practice that refuses a single masculine hero, even moreso than *Shivers*. In *Rabid*, "as in *Shivers*, the action has a social basis. The characters are many, there are a multitude of cameo-like anecdotal episodes, and in general the scenario anatomizes the impact of the problem on a large number of people" (Beard "Visceral" 24). Handling observes that typically patriarchal constructs of bourgeois society are systemically subverted: "a Santa Claus is machine-gunned in a shopping plaza, a woman goes berserk in a subway and attacks a man, policemen have to shoot other policemen, and a group of workers take their jackhammers to a government minister's car. …The nuclear family … is systematically destroyed. It is seen is the root of all evil" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 88-9). It is these circumstances through which Cronenberg intimates specifically anarchist concerns regarding the current status quo in what might be read as an ironic critique of hegemonic consent, what William Beard reads as the presentation of "civic unrest and municipal labour unrest as horror" ("Visceral" 29). According to Beard, "Cronenberg's interest in all these scenes is to examine the reaction of society to peril of an unfamiliar kind" ("Visceral" 24). The necessary use of ensemble casting to do so and the elliptical interlacing of disparate narrative strands is a practice that is unabashedly taken up by both Egoyan and McKellar, perhaps the most consistent feature of both of their cumulative works.

However, in his resistance to fully validate the progressive aspects of Cronenberg's work, Handling argues that "*Shivers* and *Rabid* take radically different looks at the notion of the epidemic. In the former, the release of sexuality is seen as a liberation from sterility. In the latter, the release of the disease is only viewed with horror. It must be exterminated because it serves no social function" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 86-7). The narrative closure in which Rose's discarded body is unceremoniously tossed into the back of a garbage truck, a symbol of the waste of the epidemic, certainly supports Handling's claim. In fact, according to Cronenberg, some took the content of *Rabid* as a prompt to retroactively evacuate the progressive aspects of *Shivers*. "*The sheer visceral repulsiveness of the overthrow in* Shivers *and — to a greater extent – the vision of a disease-driven apocalyptic revolution in* Rabid *led them to certain conclusions: Cronenberg obviously bemoaned the passing of the status quo, greatly feared repressed forces and evinced a degree of sexual disgust*" (Rodley *C on C* 64-5, italics in original). One must concede

that prosopopoeiac identification with the vehicle of apocalypse in *Shivers* might be a more difficult identification to achieve than it is through the character of *Rose* in Rabid. "[*S*]*ome critics find it hard to identify with* Shivers*'s phallic/faecal and faceless parasites* (Rodley *C on C* 64-5, italics in original). However, Handling interprets the sexual disgust in both films in revolutionary terms that are emptied of the apocalyptic closure they promise: "for someone as interested in the repressed consciousness as Cronenberg is, there is a surprising lack, or failure, of rebellion in his work. If the order of society is sterile and controlled, the forces of chaos, when they are released, never result in apocalypse or the complete destruction that we find in a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 85). It is difficult to put stock in this conclusion. Not only might one read the lack of explicit rebellion, the lack of initial embrace of the disease amongst the characters as a critique of bourgeois complacency, it also demonstrates an anarchist rejection of revolution in favour of mere transformation.

According to Beard, however, *Rabid* is *more* progressive than *Shivers* in this regard. Rose is at least imbued with what might be considered an individualist anarchist agency. "Whereas the characters in *Shivers* are essentially pawns to be shifted this way and that by the forces of repression and animality, Rose in *Rabid* is partly an agent, at the edge of consciousness in the exercise of her aggressive appetite" (Beard "Visceral" 48). Beard indicates that such agency promises a control of the apocalyptic process that makes it more progressive. "We have here a first step towards the conversion of idlike animality into power, which in turn may be wielded by the will instead of merely exploding chaotically at the dictates of instinct" (Beard "Visceral" 48). In contradiction to some of his previous contentions, Handling concludes that "[t]he final shot of all the infected inhabitants serenely driving out of the building, apparently to infect the rest of the world, seems to indicate that Cronenberg approves of the release of this sexual energy" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 85). This understanding is reiterated by George Melnyk in *One Hundred Years of Canadian Cinema*. "Cronenberg wrote and directed both *Shivers* and *Rabid*, and they expressed his view that human beings are 'little pockets of private and personal chaos brewing in the interstices in the structure of society, which likes to stress its order and control.' Eventually this personal chaos explodes and becomes public, engulfing everyone" in an apocalyptic epidemic (150). At the very least, *Rabid* certainly demonstrates an escalation in Cronenberg's unabashed relish in violently ravaging the social order. If Handling is correct that "[*e*]*veryone* is a victim of one sort or another in the Cronenberg world" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 87, my emphasis), then Cronenberg's form of apocalypse levels the

class playing field, evacuates all power from all quarters, and *always* results in a general apocalypse from which no-one will escape.

Handling argues that the Cronenbergian apocalypse is duly visited upon the bourgeois society that created its own oppressive institutions (a thematic vehemently taken up by Natali in *Cube* [see Chapter 4]). "All of these organizations are dangerously out of control and have to be stopped. Everywhere bourgeois society is shown to be bankrupt and in retreat, using the army, the police, or its technology in attempts to restore order when it can within the hypocrisy and sterility of this society" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 89). Cronenberg argues that this apocalypse must be ongoing. "Even political revolution often ends up this way. You tear down something that's ugly and repressive, and you create something that's even more ugly and repressive. That doesn't mean you have to stop. It's a given of human existence that you just don't stop. You never stop. What seems revolting at the time is later incorporated into the mainstream of cultural flow" (Cronenberg *C on C* 65). And Cronenberg and Handling agree that nobody is in control of society as it is. Handling, nearly verbatim to Cronenberg's own comments, states that, in Cronenberg's worlds, "no one is in control, no one is master or mistress of individual destiny" (Cronenberg *C on C* 67, Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 87). But this need not necessarily mean the apocalypse is undesirable. At least one interpretation of anarchist tenets would welcome the absent power in a lack of control. However, Handling may be right that "the absence or failure of rebellion within the films [generates] the feeling of powerlessness that is so pervasive" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 87). While there is much to recognize as progressive in Cronenberg's embrace of apocalypse, and while powerlessness might be considered valuable in a certain anarchist interpretation, it is just as easy to argue, as Handling has, that such powerlessness lends itself to a return and capitulation to the status quo (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 82).

If the powerlessness that pervades *Shivers* and *Rabid* is understood as an apocalyptic hopelessness and an inability to effect change, then, according to William Beard, *Scanners* (1981) is the antidote. "Flanked by *The Brood* and *Videodrome*, Cronenberg's deepest and most painful films, *Scanners* seems to be anomalous in its relative ease and optimism" (Beard "Visceral" 47). Beard goes to great lengths to distinguish *Scanners* from *Videodrome* in this regard. With an observation articulated in a language similar to Bakunin's destructive creativity aphorism, Beard states that "[a]t the end, Vale, having overcome the dark, id-like Revok, inhabits his body, underlining the suggestion that the constructive part of the self can

not only defeat the destructive part but also unite with it, co-opting and assuming the id's strength for good purposes" ("Visceral" 49).

Nevertheless, *Scanners* might be understood as just as ambiguous as Cronenberg's previous fare. Beard concedes that "*Scanners* is not so much positive as wildly idealistic" ("Visceral" 49). More pessimistically, Beard observes that the "[t]elepathy in the film," reminiscent of *Stereo*, "is practically synonymous with strong will, and the combination in Vale and Obrist of moral purity with superhuman will that can manipulate the world carries overtones of Fascist idealism — the most extreme form of romantic idealism yet devised" ("Visceral" 49). Significantly, Beard recognizes in this ambiguity a potentially apocalyptic force. "Disturbing questions raised by the scanner phenomenon achieve real force. Is the ability to scan a gift or a curse? Is it (as both Ruth and Revok assert) 'brilliant and glorious,' or is it destructive and horrifying (as their actions would seem to suggest)?" (Beard "Visceral" 42). This ambiguity governs the character dynamics that are superseded by an anarchist thematic in which *any* power is undesirable. "For example," Beard argues, "neither Vale nor Obrist is wholly good. When each of them is using the scanning gift there is inevitably a suggestion of great power and an insidious and disturbing suggestion of the pleasure each takes in wielding that power" ("Visceral" 43).

As with Cronenberg's previous films, the struggle over power results in at least the intimation of a general apocalypse, in this case with specifically biblical imagery: "the majestic final duel with Revok, with its Christ-like icons of power and transcendence (Vale's arms outstretched, his upturned palms cradling tongues of fire, his torso enveloped in flames, and his bloody face wearing an expression of godlike serenity)" (Beard "Visceral" 45). This biblical imagery occurs within "the ambiguity of the final shot, with Vale's voice coming from the evil Revok's body after the scanning battle, [which] points toward an uncertain future" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 83). Charles Derry explicitly rejects the "uncertain future" of *Scanners* as optimistic in any way, but he at least accepts its apocalyptic intimations as necessarily ongoing: "*Scanners* ends bleakly and ambiguously, implying that the horror and destruction will continue until we have succeeded in advancing to an even greater destructive capability" (173). However, while this future is uncertain, I agree with Beard that the film at least suggests that it is not necessarily an undesirable future. This future will surely be populated with communal telepathy (à la *Stereo*) as much as with power struggle. The most identifiably patriarchal characters in the narrative, Dr. Paul Ruth and corporate mule Braeden Keller, are

duly dispatched. And with regard to patriarchy, the importance of the blinding of Vale during the final showdown cannot be overstated. Vale's eyes violently burst from his skull while Revok's turn a blinded milky-white. But in the Vale-Revok conflation, it appears as though Vale's eyes have been reborn in Revok's body. In the process of the hero Vale's embrace of the apocalyptic Revok, the patriarchal conflation of the two into one body is evacuated of its invasive gaze. Where it will go from there remains unrepresented. At the very least, the narrative refuses to posit blueprints or imagine the unknown future in accordance with an anarchist model of apocalypse.

Scanners is explicitly concerned with this type of transformation by spectral identification. When Vale is unable to find suitable mental connection, the psycho-social noise in his head is chaotic and debilitating. Frequently he stares at the camera/viewer in his attempt to find this connection, thus implicating the viewer in the narrative (Images 4a and 4b). One can hardly imagine a more explicit example of the facial close-up that Deleuze describes as apocalyptically transformative (see Chapter 2). Shortly thereafter in the narrative, Vale's otherwise jarring and agitated gaze is contrasted to Revok's disturbing calm. Revok's face, also staring at the camera, fades in and out over the three scanners that Vale killed, or at least violently disabled (two of them show up in a later scene), and eventually into Vale's face again, implying the mutually communal nature of their telepathic connection (Image Sequence 5a to 5f). It is a sympathetic moment which strangely invites the viewer to enjoin a mirror-stage identification with Revok, the narrative personification of apocalypse, and some of those whom he has ideologically proselytized. This same imagery is again deployed between Vale's face and another would-be assassin later in the film. In the communal identification the film invites, apocalyptic transformation is made possible.

True to anarchist tenets, this commune is not necessarily coercive, at least on the ostensibly "good" side of the ensemble of characters. In the group scanning séance, each participant is told, you are "free to lose yourself to the group self." This highly socialist/communist ideology rings very much of the post-apocalyptic culture that certain strands of anarchism (and *Stereo*) envisages, or at least intimates. The film also suggests that a more productive form of social power might emerge in such a commune. "The power we can generate when we focus our scans together is fantastic," the obverse of the apocalypse that Žižek describes with the powerless horror of unrecognized mind control, rather than the voluntary mind commune in *Scanners*. Of course, these characters are promptly dispatched by

Revok's henchman, but even this apparently pessimistic eventuality might be read as an allegory of the need for anarchists to band together and communally embrace the apocalypse before more conservative forces annihilate their efforts.

Having commenced his career with the apocalyptic films aforementioned, Cronenberg finally explicitly addresses the nuclear fear that had been rising at the time, and it is perhaps more with the conservative group of 1980s nuclear apocalypse films discussed in the last chapter that Cronenberg's anomalous and commercial *The Dead Zone* (1983) belongs. Piers Handling observes that "*The Dead Zone* is a departure of sorts for Cronenberg. Apart from *Fast Company* [1979] it is the first film of his that he has not scripted and this may account for its uniqueness. [It is b]ased on a Stephen King novel" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 90). It would seem that as soon as Cronenberg was influenced by an American text, he moved away from his propensity for narrative aperture in favour of the more conservative conventions such a source would likely require; *The Dead Zone* ends at least slightly 'happily' and certainly with closure. George Melnyk states that "[i]n *Videodrome* the world is unredeemed, while in *The Dead Zone* the hero receives the parting kiss of his true love, a perfect testament to narrative closure" (*One Hundred* 151). Piers Handling states that "[i]f *Videodrome* traces Max's increasing withdrawal from the world and from reality, *The Dead Zone* depicts Johnny's initial withdrawal, but also his subsequent attempts to save the world" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 90). Indeed, in *The Dead Zone*, "Johnny becomes increasingly obsessed with the visions he has of Senator Greg Stillson destroying the world in a nuclear holocaust" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 90). Eventually Johnny (indirectly) succeeds in his effort to assassinate Stillson, but, as Handling observes, Johnny "does not kill Stillson to protect Sarah (Adams) but to save the world" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 90). At the moment of heightened global tensions regarding mutual nuclear destruction, Cronenberg adopts a nuclear narrative, but moves away from holocaust towards the American *save* the world (as it is) epic, not a *transform* the world tale.

In this context, according to Handling, with *The Dead Zone*, Cronenberg's "vision has broadened from the personal to the collective" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 90). In *Videodrome* "Max's hallucinations are primarily sexual and intensely personal and private, [whereas in *The Dead Zone*] Johnny's visions are social, impersonal and often benevolent" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 90). At least Cronenberg's concern with "the collective" and the "social" resonates with anarchist thinking even if the conservative narrative of salvation does not. And in his analysis of the film, Andrew Britton foregrounds Cronenberg's now recognizable convention of

depicting "patriarchal monsters, each of whom asserts his potency through mass murder. The last of them, the aspiring Senator Stillson (Martin Sheen) who, as president, inaugurates the holocaust, is used to link the radical populism of the American New Right to fascism and is associated ... by theme and imagery with Reagan" (Britton 123).[60] Thus this narrative of salvation might be read more as a vehicle through which to dispatch yet another unsavory patriarchal allegory, and leave the world intact for a more progressive apocalypse than nuclear annihilation.

In *Videodrome* (1983) Cronenberg continued to capitalize on the apocalypse mytheme with variations on his critique of subjectivity informed by the techno-revolution and from an increasingly subjective perspective. *Videodrome* is an astonishingly prescient realization of both Žižek's "new point of apocalypse" in which prosthetic media technology effects "the real terror" of "remote control" still recognized as "acting spontaneously" ("Digital"), and Uri Gordon's fear in which "anotechnologies are not only an enabling technology that enhances corporate power in all sectors, but also a platform for the potential convergence of biotechnology, computing, and neuroscience, as the life/non-life barrier is broken on the atomic scale" (256). Scott Bukatman observes that the "subject of [*Videodrome*] is hardly human action: it is instead, as [Christopher] Sharrett states, the structures of external power and control to which the individual (in body and soul) is subjected" (203). Bukatman also states that personal agency is diminished by exposure to the world of corporate media: "the power granted to the 'Videodrome' viewer to observe and relish its brutality masks the programme's actual function: to increase social control and establish a new means of dominance over the population" (205). Obviously, the indictment in *Videodrome* is not only of the invasive power of media broadcasting in general, but of its powerful corporate/governmental source as well.

Videodrome realizes these versions of apocalypse in a narrative that maintains an anxiety regarding the encroachment of U.S. popular culture (following the illusions of nationalism that obviously affected Cronenberg to this degree) but in which Cronenberg continues to revel in the destruction of the patriarchal 'hero,' regardless of nationality. In *Videodrome*, Max Renn is the president of a Toronto television broadcasting station who becomes enamored of an addictive pirate signal that broadcasts aggressively violent sexual acts of sadism. Max acquires

[60] "Ironically, Boam had completed his first draft of *The Dead Zone* for Lorimar the day Ronald Reagan was elected president" (Rodley in *C on C* 113).

a video from an enigmatic patriarchal media critic named "O'Blivion" in which O'Blivion articulates the primary fear the film depicts. "The battle for North America will be fought in the video arena. The Videodrome." Nevertheless, according to George Melnyk, "Cronenberg made a definitive statement about technology from a Canadian perspective" ("David Cronenberg" 86). However, Melnyk follows with a thematic analysis that is a more universal critique of patriarchy and the type of undesirable apocalypse it must engender. "If the human being, specifically the male creator of civilization, is basically a sexually rapacious creature, then whatever emanates from his mind, including science and technology, is fundamentally sexually rapacious. The suicidal nature of the libido blends with the self-destructive nature of socialized technology, which propagates itself by eliminating its previous incarnations" (Melnyk "David Cronenberg" 86). Melnyk sees this thematic at work in *Videodrome*. "Cronenberg's judgement of the human condition exposes the male psyche (and the society it has spawned) as nothing more than a self-destructive monstrosity" (Melnyk "David Cronenberg" 86). Certainly, in *Videodrome* Cronenberg abandons his more ensemble-oriented protagonists in favour of a clearly *individual* patriarchal 'hero,' a trajectory he commenced in *Scanners* with the character of Cameron Vale.

In fact, according to Beard, the "quasi-allegorical functions" within the film are laden with patriarchal conventionality ("Visceral" 64). "Convex and O'Blivion are competing father figures — the former calculating, realist, power-hungry, … the latter passionate, idealistic, mystical ... Convex is a castrating Freudian father, punishing sexual fantasy; O'Blivion educates Max about what is happening to him and emphasizes that Max must follow in his path" (Beard "Visceral" 64). Following his *own* path implicates Max as well. "[A]lthough Max is manipulated by these exterior forces, he is not simply a victim, for what happens to him, and even the destructive acts he eventually performs, have an equal and perhaps even more authoritative source within his own personality" (Beard "Visceral" 51). Cumulatively, "insofar as there is any agent outside Max that can be held responsible for the destruction caused by loosed sexuality, it is either society in general or the patriarchal male (O'Blivion and Convex)" (Beard "Visceral" 76). Both Max and Convex are certainly patriarchal in their own right: "Max is a small-time capitalist, a pirate who is in business for the fun of it; Convex is the smooth face of the large awesomely powerful conglomerate. … Finally, Convex is like a father — adult, mysterious, powerful" (Beard "Visceral" 63). And eventually both are destroyed. The videodrome invades

Max's body and annihilates him, but not before Cronenberg conflates media, corporate lust for power, and patriarchal hypocrisy into Max's singular bodily coordinates.

Beard also inadvertently articulates a number of other anarchist-apocalyptic concerns, such as the aspect of judgment inherent in all of Cronenberg's work that is dramatized in *Videodrome*. "It is ... very dreamlike — or rather nightmarelike — …, with Harlan and Convex harshly embodying Max's own conscience and sitting inexorably in judgement" (Beard "Visceral" 62). This judgment is a manifestation of the intentionally philosophical aspect of Cronenberg's works, especially in *Videodrome*, or what Rodley refers to as "[*t*]*he formal adventurousness of* Videodrome*, its narrative complexity and overt philosophical dimensions*" (*C on C* 102). In an uncharacteristically immodest admission, even Cronenberg agrees that the pessimism in *Videodrome* is mitigated by "the consolation of philosophy" (*C on C* 103). This philosophical function resolves into another convention of apocalypse narratives, that of the oft-ignored harbinger. "There is a terrible justice in what happens to Max — and *Videodrome*, is thus like *Shivers*, *Rabid* and *The Brood*, another grim cautionary tale from Cronenberg" (Beard "Visceral" 67) regarding the inevitable danger so precariously contained within a sickly patriarchal society.

Beard interprets the entire Cronenbergian project as one in which the narrative seeks a fundamental social transformation for its protagonists. "Cronenberg's work represents a search for wholeness, first by articulating the absence of wholeness, and then by beginning a process of restitution, or reconstitution. (The "transformational" endings of *Scanners* and *Videodrome* are leaps, still faltering in their different ways, in this direction.)" (Beard "Visceral" 78). However, the product of social transformation is always thwarted by larger societal obstacles, a reflection, perhaps, of some of the debilitating contradictions experienced in anarchist projects of experimental communal societies outlined by Day, Wilson, and Robé. "Even when it is present it is usually complicated by, amongst other things, the equal and different problem of the influence of society and environment on individuals, and by an intermittent philosophical pessimism" (Beard "Visceral" 78). However, Martyn Steenbeck more optimistically suggests that "[t]he fact that these alternatives also lead to death and destruction is perhaps less to do with a deep-rooted pessimism or negativity than the need to seek a hard and realistic optimism" (qtd. in *C on C* xiv). The apocalyptic transformation in Cronenberg's films, as Elizabeth Rosen calls it in regards to other films, is perhaps imbued with more hopeful intimations than the pessimism that Beard ascribes to them overall.

Indeed, it is the ostensibly hyper-pessimistic *Videodrome* that most closely resembles the concerns of anarchist media theory. For example, while Bianca O'blivion defends her father's preference for the media "format," perhaps Cronenberg's nod to Paul Goodman's observations in *Format and Anxiety*, her hypocrisy is in evidence. Complete with a view aloft the abject conditions supplied for the addicts of the "Cathode Ray Mission," her office is a vision of decadence, replete with baroque and Victorian art and sculpture that would make even an avowed aristocrat blush. Moreover, in "Anarchist Media Studies," Jesse Cohn argues that a significant

> degree of active engagement would entail attempts, in the words of Neil Nehring, 'not only [to] recover moments of dissent in lived or 'ordinary' culture [. . .] but [. . .] to propagate them, as the avant-garde did' (73). Thus, O'Connor advocates an 'activist cultural studies' model: 'Instead of theorizing about encoding and decoding,' for example, 'students can learn by trying to create and find an audience for an alternative television program' ("Problem" 409, 409n9). Bratich concurs: rather than functioning purely as critical interpreters of media, we can and should 'be the media,' helping to produce alternatives ('From Embedded to Machinic Intellectuals' 38)" ("What" 418).

Videodrome demonstrates similar concerns: after insisting that Max is very much like "one of father's [homeless] derelicts", Bianca states that "Watching TV will help them patch back into the world's mixing board." Ultimately, for Max, plugging into the videodrome results in his apocalyptic demise. O'blivion had warned him, "Max, your reality is already half video hallucination. If you're not careful, it will become total hallucination." And echoing David Ketterer's definition of apocalypse as the replacement by *New Worlds for Old*, O'blivion concludes that Max will "have to learn to live in a very strange new world." Of course, Cronenberg leaves it ambiguous as to what any one of the other derelicts might do with their newfound television media access. It is possible that under the apocalyptic circumstances of the narrative that they might make the same progressive use of it as suggested by Cohn.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is the function of *Videodrome* to narrativize and critique the ideological effects of perceptual input that are central to a model of intentionally philosophical praxis in post-anarchist apocalyptic cinema.

> Another important motif that is largely conveyed by mise-en-scene is that of seeing. … Video images are transmuted from passive to active things and change their viewers from active watchers to passive victims (one might paraphrase Nietzsche: "Look not too deeply into the television screen, lest it begin to look into you"): and finally video and actuality become impossible to tell apart (Beard "Visceral" 70).

This interpretation inverts the anarchist model in which video might work to transform viewer passivity into active resistance, but at least demonstrates Cronenberg's concern with such transformational possibilities (that had already been introduced in *Scanners*). Moreover, this perceptual element is mapped onto the apocalyptic aspect of revelation. "Metaphorically, Max passes through one door after another into new realms of experience—a voyage of discovery and revelation" (Beard "Visceral" 70). In perhaps the most famous scene in *Videodrome* (Image 6), Cronenberg takes the mirror-stage identification with screen images that he utilized in *Rabid* and *Scanners* to its diegetic limit. Max is no longer separated from the images by the screen; instead his face fuses with Nikki's mouth in an apocalyptic erasure of the screen that otherwise safely separates fantasy from reality.

Cronenberg explicitly represents the notion that such video experiences not only transgress the boundary between representation and reality, but may have a transformational effect as well. In *Videodrome*, the hyper-cinematic media prophet Brian O'Blivion states that "I think that massive doses of the 'videodrome' signal will ultimately create a new outgrowth of the human brain, which will produce and control hallucination to the point that it will change human reality … "After all there is nothing real outside our perception of reality, is there?" Cronenberg observes this recurring theme in his middle-phase works. "That's maybe a connection between *Naked Lunch*, *Dead Ringers* and *Videodrome*. By affecting the body – whether it's with TV, drugs (invented or otherwise) — you alter your reality" (Cronenberg *C on C* 145). However, as one might have come to expect with Cronenberg, he refuses to represent the potentially utopian future to which the entire narrative of *Videodrome* points. Nevertheless, in terms of apocalyptic embrace, and the distinction between soteriology and eschatology, William Beard argues that "there is plainly at least a wish to believe that such a process may result in salvation rather than destruction" ("Visceral" 67). After all, it is only through his transformational hallucinations that Max is prompted to execute the corrupt corporate forces of Spectacular Optical embodied in Convex.

Cronenberg takes up the promise of an apocalyptic transformation in *The Fly* (1986). In terms of extending the anarchist-apocalyptic considerations with which Cronenberg had already demonstrated a preoccupation, its narrative does not disappoint. In the opening line of the film, delivered by the idiosyncratic anti-hero Seth Brundle in regards to his prototype teleportation pods, he explicitly states "I'm working on something that will change the world and human life as we know it" (*The Fly*). In fact, *The Fly* may act as a microcosmic accumulation

of all of the simultaneously pessimistic and optimistic apocalyptic concerns raised by Cronenberg in his films to date. He certainly seems to revel in the destruction of his patriarchal male lead, although Piers Handling describes "Cronenberg's attitude to his scientist/father figures" as one in which "[a]ll of them are visionaries, and some are philosophers. Within a sterile world they are trying to recreate human contact" ("Canadian Cronenberg" 84). Certainly Seth Brundle is sympathetic and compelling in this regard. However, especially with respect to what seems to be Cronenberg's recurring theme of scientific hubris as a faux-solution to patriarchally-driven social malaise, it is inescapable that all of these characters are violently and/or emotionally destroyed within each of their narratives.

What is of particular interest, however, is the way in which these characters meet their demise. *The Fly* introduces "[t]he idea of a creative cancer; something you would normally see as a disease now goes to another level of creativity [beyond *Shivers*, *Rabid*, and even *Videodrome*] and starts sculpting" (Cronenberg *C on C* 80). In this respect, it is noteworthy that Cronenberg never reduces the potential for "infection" to his strictly patriarchal characters. As implied in *Shivers* and *Rabid*, "[t]hroughout Cronenberg's films there is the implication that the various contaminations can affect or infect any of us" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 84). It is merely patriarchal male 'heroes' for which Cronenberg reserves a demise that is particularly satisfying for the viewer, "getting [their] richly deserved come-uppance" (Beard "Visceral" 20). Brundle-Fly's failed attempt to force this transformation on Ronnie is the ultimate critique and failure of patriarchy. As with *Rabid*, when the patriarchal scientific authority fails to salvage the social order, and instead gives birth to an anti-patriarchal apocalypse, Brundle-fly's monstrously masculinized physical superiority fails against her defensive tenacity, and ultimately he can only plead for a humane death. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Vivian Sobchack explains, "there seems no viable way for patriarchy to symbolically envision a satisfying future for itself" (159), and *The Fly* leaves the viewer with all of the ambiguity of Cronenberg's simultaneous reactionary misogyny and progressive apocalyptic prognostications in an unresolved stew.

More than 15 years later, with *Existenz* (stylized *eXistenZ*, 1999), Cronenberg extended his social critique to the "new age, and techno-digital-post-human" (Žižek *End Times* 336) with a mixed ensemble cast comprised of both international superstars and TNW mainstays. With *eXistenZ*, Cronenberg certainly maintained his concern with world-changing narratives and their affective potential. More fundamentally, the film seems primarily concerned with the

post-millennial question posed by Canadian cultural philosopher Arthur Kroker. "To live as cybernetic beings, part digital/part flesh, in an 'adventure' that demands enthusiastic assent to the disappearance of the real, what order of values must silently be set in place as its fundamental precondition?" (Kroker 86). In *eXistenZ*, protagonists Allegra Geller and Ted Pikul find themselves trapped in the escape-loop of a virtual video game that interfaces directly with their nervous systems. While navigating multiple 'levels' of the game, none of which seem to be the exit into 'true' reality, the characters face a narrative that progressively degenerates into revolutionary war and murder. In a typically Cronenbergian fashion, their complicity with the validation of either of the factions of 'reality' or digital existence remains ambiguous.

Elizabeth Rosen highlights a set of similar techno-subjectivity films "such as *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), *Dark City* (1998), [and] *Total Recall* (1990) [that] share a close family resemblance to *The Matrix* since these stories also revolve around (computer) simulated realities" (98). This list could easily also include *eXistenZ*. "The ... films are ... part of [an] apocalyptic tradition, a tradition which relocates the apocalyptic scenario to an internal landscape" (Rosen 98). Rosen does not hesitate to implicate the viewer in her explanation of why these films are apocalyptic. "Because as viewers, the audience understands the world in which the narrator is operating largely through the narrator's perception and description of it, to learn that the narrator's perception has been false means that we, too, experience the destruction of that world" (Rosen 98). In fact, *eXistenZ* takes this apocalyptic destruction to its tautological extreme; by failing to identify *any* world as the authentically real one, all worlds therein are mutually destroyed – a Baudrillardean apocalypse in which it becomes impossible to distinguish reality from simulacrum.

Žižek validates as therapeutic the ostensibly negative aspect of a narrative that thusly effaces the border between reality and fantasy. "When faced with such a paranoid construction, we must not ... mistake it for the 'illness' itself: the paranoid construction is, on the contrary, an attempt to heal ourselves, to pull ourselves out of the real 'illness,' the 'end of the world,' the breakdown of the symbolic universe, by means of this substitute formation" (Žižek "Reality" 344-5). Žižek tellingly takes the life and works of self-identified anarchist artist Mark Rothko as an example.

> If we want to witness the process of this breakdown – the breakdown of the barrier real/reality – in its pure form, we only have to follow the path of the paintings produced in the 1960s, the last decade of his life, by mark Rothko ... In the canvases immediately preceding his death, the minimal tension between black and gray changes for the last

> time into the burning conflict between voracious red and yellow, witnessing the last desperate attempt at redemption and at the same time confirming unmistakably that the end is imminent" (Žižek "Reality" 345).

Žižek even recognizes a visual metaphor in Rothko's works that is similar to what I identify as the white nothingness of enlightenment at the narrative conclusions of both *Cube* and *Last Night* (see Chapter 4). He describes the "white background surface" of these Rothko paintings (inspired by Malevich) as "the '*liberated* nothingness'" of "reality" ("Reality" 345, my emphasis). Thus, at least according to Žižek, the apocalyptic erasure of boundaries between perceived levels of reality is both therapeutic and liberating, although he is clear that the re-establishment of the border is the condition upon which sanity depends.

One might also understand the narrative to be one that depicts the characters in the throes and embrace of the new digital flesh that was left unrepresented at the end of *Videodrome*. Effectively picking up where *Videodrome* left off (in its concern with the apocalyptic effects of prosthetic technology), *eXistenZ* creates another pair of sister films (as do *Stereo* and *Crimes*, and *Shivers* and *Rabid*), although Lia Hotchkiss claims that "*eXistenZ* ... refuses the extreme shedding of the old flesh that we see in *Videodrome*" (19). Hotchkiss describes an integration of technology with the flesh rather than its replacement, and an indication of the attendant anarchism such integration invites, although she is surely utilizing the term in its generic/pejorative sense. In *eXistenZ*, she sees evidence of "[c]yberpunk as 'an integration of technology and ... the underground world of pop culture, visionary fluidity, and street-level anarchy,' somatically emphasizing invasions of body and mind through 'prostheses, implanted circuitry, … brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, [and] neurochemistry'" (19). Now at the end of the TNW cycle, Cronenberg uses this world of technology-integrated subjectivity to bring closure to his propensity to destroy patriarchal male leads. "The minds of the male protagonist in *Scanners*, *Videodrome*, *The Dead Zone*, and *Naked Lunch* (1991) are invaded, with the result that they are no longer in control of their own thoughts" (McLarty 234), the very type of apocalypse described by Žižek, whereas in *eXistenZ* the male lead replaces patriarchal underlings as a social radical. The only even remotely patriarchal characters in the movie are Kiri Vinokur (Ian Holm), and game-designer genius Yevgeny Nourish (ironically played by Don McKellar). Of course, both are summarily and unsympathetically dispatched. In contrast, Pikul is hardly a patriarchal authority. He

systemically capitulates to Geller's knowledge and leadership. And both of them are clearly in control of their own minds, even if they are eternally disoriented.

More importantly, "[w]here *Videodrome* 'captures the alarming nature of the cinema's invasion of the passive self,' *eXistenZ* portrays 'the interactive self invad[ing] cinema'" (Hotchkiss 15). In this way, *eXistenZ* insists on the agency of the subject within the diegesis, a subject whose participation in the ongoing reconstruction of the world is not coercive. "Where *Videodrome*'s new flesh is the victimized, videated body left after the elimination of material body, *eXistenZ*'s new flesh is the voluntary mutated cyborg" (Hotchkiss 26). Jerry White connects this effect to Marshall McLuhan's "*Understanding Media*—which is, after all, subtitled *The Extensions of Man*" (J. White 18) with his statement that intimates the embrace of such a potentially globally apocalyptic transformation: "after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace" (McLuhan qtd. in J. White 18). Charles Derry similarly observes this evolutionary aspect of all of Cronenberg's apocalyptic films, especially in such media-technology driven entries as *Videodrome*, and by extension *eXistenZ*, even if their narratives are mired in a fatalism that is contradictory to the emancipatory embrace of an anarchist-apocalypse. "These films seem to resonate — in a genuine and sincere way — with contemporary life as it is presently being lived and is *evolving* [and] show human beings whose bodies are transformed by disease or mutation into a more advanced, [even] if psychologically traumatizing, state" (Derry 173, my emphasis). Derry foregrounds by reiteration his contention that such a process is specifically an evolutionary one. "Cronenberg's films also deal with the future apocalypse, brought about by technology that is now being hailed as *evolutionary*, but that nevertheless may destroy civilization" (Derry 173, my emphasis). Perhaps more than any of Cronenberg's previous films including *Videodrome*, *eXistenZ* incorporates the extra-diegetic viewer into its thematic by presenting a cinematic narrative with a concluding aperture that leaves the viewer involved with its interrogation of (virtual) reality long after the film has ended. In the "closing shot of Pikul's and Geller's unreadable faces," (Hotchkiss 18) they visually threaten to annihilate the viewer for their complicity in the world of reality as it is, while inviting the viewer to participate with them in a mirror-stage identification (Image 7); the invested viewer thus experiences the same final disorientation as the characters, one of whom astutely asks at the very end, "Are we still in the game?" In *eXistenZ*, the inability to escape the mediated world of the game requires the subjects it contains to maintain a perpetual state of reconstruction in an

inevitably ongoing apocalypse, and invites its viewing audience, either through the anxiety to escape the psychic media cycle it has trapped them in, or by prompting revolutionary fervor, to participate in this social reconstruction.

Cronenberg left many of these scenarios ambiguous or unresolved, as though inviting the filmmakers of the TNW to continue such experimental investigations, or even to effect the psycho-social transformations he depicts. Important to such an anarchist motivation is Cronenberg's dedication to a form of philosophical cinema that is not coercive in its project to effect ideological transformation away from the status quo, but that certainly follows the anarchist-apocalyptic cinematic praxis outlined in the previous chapter. "In the Cronenberg Project, the creation of art must ultimately free itself of specific — and potentially paralyzing — political, social and cultural concerns. Only then can it first reach the viscera, before being filtered to the mind" (Rodley *C on C* xxiv). Cronenberg is just as clear regarding his rejection of coercive mind transformations. "I don't want to have unfettered access to the brains, nervous systems and sensibilities of my audience. I want them to have unfettered access to mine. Then they can reject it, absorb it, be affected by it or misinterpret it" (Cronenberg *C on C* 20). Cronenberg concludes this sentiment with an apology indicating that he is invested in an apocalyptic optimism. "The reason my films can be so dark is that I have a real compulsion to make optimism real, to have it be based in reality. … If I can still find beauty and grace in tears, that starts to be more real. That's something I can use, build a philosophy on" (Cronenberg *C on C* 20). All of this remains within the context of his belief that perception is central to change; he states that "[w]hen something comes along that is enduring, and really represents a basic change, it will take root and establish itself. Its period of being ugly and provoking will pass. ... [T]rue revolution will cease to be revolting and ugly and become beautiful. Our *perception* of it will make it so" (Cronenberg *C on C* 66, my empasis). Indeed, all of Cronenberg's earlier films trade on varying themes of perception and its transformative potential.

Certainly at least *Videodrome* is explicit in its concern with mediated perception and as a reflection of Cronenberg's own work as philosophically subversive. Cronenberg's most sympathetic character, Masha, states that the videodrome institution "has a philosophy, and that is what makes it dangerous." In perhaps his most particularly philosophical and apocalyptic language, Cronenberg similarly states that

> [t]his is something that's very straightforwardly perceived by tyrants of every kind. The very existence of imagination means that you can posit an existence different from the one you're living. If you are trying to create a repressive society in which people will

> submit to whatever you give them, then the very fact of them being able to imagine something else — not necessarily better, just different — is a threat. So even on that very simple level, imagination is dangerous. If you accept, at least to some extent, the Freudian dictum that civilization is repression, then imagination — and an unrepressed creativity — is dangerous to civilization. But it's a complex formula; imagination is also an innate part of civilization. If you destroy it, you might also destroy civilization (*C on C* 168-9).

One can hardly imagine a description of cinema praxis that is closer to the post-anarchist apocalyptic functions identified in the previous chapter.

Finally, echoing Woodcock's paraphrase of Bakunin (see Chapter 2), Cronenberg was just as concerned with apocalyptic destruction as a means of potential creativity. "At a certain point the chaos equals destruction. But at the same time the potential for adventure and creative difference is exciting" (Cronenberg *C on C* 29). Cronenberg later explains, "I don't think that films have to be positive or uplifting to be valid experiences. A film can be depressing and still be exhilarating" (*C on C* 67-8). And, in a sentiment that apparently embraces even nuclear apocalypse, he eventually concedes that

> Perhaps it all means that we are just beginning a very important phase of our evolution, which I think will primarily be a physical one. And I suspect that the way we are changing the earth — which seems very destructive to us right now — might be very much involved. I don't think natural selection, as Darwin understood it, is really at work anymore as far as human evolution is concerned. I think something more along the lines of nuclear disaster is perhaps a natural part of a revolution. It may be a strange philosophy, I'm not sure (*C on C* 79-80).

A strange philosophy, indeed, but a particularly anarchistic one, that had compelling and widespread influential potency.

It would be the project of the TNW filmmakers to take up Cronenberg's mantle of anarchist and apocalyptic concerns and begin to work through their ambiguity with more clearly articulated thematic premises. It is clear, as I will demonstrate through the evidence of the cinematic practices that I will explore in the next chapter, that Cronenberg, the F*NV*, and to a lesser extent, the fundamentally apocalyptic and experimental nature of Canadian cinema in general, have all had a significant impact on the filmmakers of the TNW. In fact, according to William Beard, the first two of these even conflate to a certain degree. "Both *Stereo* and *Crimes of the Future* recall Godard's *Alphaville* in their ability to convert present-day locations into the landscape of an imagined future by skillful control of the camera" (Beard "Visceral" 15-16). And Rodley concedes that "Cronenberg is an auteur, perhaps more in a European than a North

American sense: he writes as well as directs most of his material and continues to work outside systems which threaten to wrest control in any important sense from production" (*C on C* xviii). More specifically, in "Cronenberg's elliptical narrative style: action comes first and explanations are almost always deferred until later" (Beard "Visceral" 40). This aspect of Cronenberg's work may be the defining characteristic of the films of the TNW, which in turn provide ample material with which to apply Deleuze's models of the action-images that follow from perception and affection (Action-Situation-Action and Situation-Action-Situation) to their narrative trajectories and the social politics or ideological underpinnings they imply (Deleuze 141-51, 161-4).

Chapter 4: The Toronto New Wave and its Anarchist-Apocalyptic Underpinnings

Cronenberg's work had a palpable influence on the filmmakers of the TNW, and it is clearly visible in many of their works. For example, although Peter Mettler states that Cronenberg was not really an influence for him *per se*, Mettler also indicates that he was preoccupied with such questions as "What is this thing, 'the recorded image'? How do they work in terms of how we see what we are?" (Mettler). Therefore, Mettler says, he became very interested in *Videodrome*, *Dead Ringers*, and *Crash*, citing Cronenberg as "not an influence, but a later inspiration" (Mettler). In terms of more commercially celebrated Canadian filmmakers, Cronenberg and Atom Egoyan are almost always mentioned in the same sentence, even regarding their influence beyond the TNW. For example, Calgary-based Gary Burns's "work seems to reflect a generational North American zeitgeist. 'I've been really lucky, being based in Calgary, but I have never really had some mentor,' he told the Calgary weekly FFWD. 'I never wanted to be Atom Egoyan or David Cronenberg. …'" (Gruben 298). Giving more credit, George Melnyk states that

> [t]hose who followed after Cronenberg would do radically different films, but always within the space of strangeness, angst, and torment that he established. … When the leading representative of the next generation of feature film-makers, Atom Egoyan, said, 'I'm really attracted to patterns of behaviour which seem delusional and bordering on the pathological but society has embraced as quite normal,' the echoes of Cronenberg are loud and clear (*One Hundred* 157).

And in their discussion of TNW auteur Thom Fitzgerald's works (which include *The Hanging Garden* and *The Event*), Chivers and Markotic state that "[s]imilar to director David Cronenberg's approach to his subject matter, Thom Fitzgerald pushes against the edges of social propriety when depicting physical difference" (342-3). Chivers and Markotic argue that "Fitzgerald resists [the] stereotyped bodily representations" in Cronenberg's films" (342-3). Even so, Fitzgerald is evidently influenced by "Cronenberg's approach" in his resistance to it. In his resistance, "Fitzgerald explores ambiguities of both sexual desire and disability through techniques analogous to those employed by director Atom Egoyan" (Chivers and Markotic 342-3). Obviously, both Cronenberg *and* Egoyan have become touchstones for analytical comparison.

However, while Cronenberg and Egoyan are frequently touted as the central forces of the TNW, I argue that the relationship between Cronenberg and McKellar is more significant

and more visible in the apocalyptic vein of the Toronto New Wave films and that an anarchist apocalyptic perspective is what cements the cohesion between them. In contrast, in *One Hundred Years*, George Melnyk separates his chapter on Cronenberg and Egoyan from his chapter on the TNW by three interim chapters as though in an effort to honour the historicist status quo and create a discursive disconnect between Cronenberg and his more direct progeny. Melnyk goes so far as to attempt to create an auteurist kinship between Cronenberg and Egoyan grounded in ethnic alienation. "Atom Egoyan (1960-) became the leading film-maker to branch off the past prepared by Cronenberg. Both men were from ethnic minorities — Cronenberg is Jewish and Egoyan, Armenian — which suggests the important role of the outsider in refreshing a natural culture" (Melnyk *One Hundred* 157). However, unlike Egoyan, Cronenberg is explicit in *Cronenberg on Cronenberg* that he certainly does not identify as an ethnic outsider. "I think of myself as being resolutely middle class … Both my parents were anti-religious, but not in a proselytizing way. … But I never grew up with a disdain or hatred of any particular religion, or Judaism itself. I just don't feel part of it" (Cronenberg *C on C* 3). Egoyan's almost pathological concern with diasporic identity crises bears much less resemblance to Cronenberg's work than McKellar's more apocalyptic preoccupations do.

At least Aaron Taylor recognizes McKellar as an equally significant force when he states that "standing out in an otherwise nondescript landscape of bland English-Canadian filmmakers [are] the vaguely nerdy personae of the grand triumvirate – Cronenberg, Egoyan, and Mckellar" (200). Adam Lowenstein and Ernest Mathijs agree. "The link with McKellar is interesting … The quintessential film through which Cronenberg asserts his 'authorial signature' over Canadian cinema is, according to Lowenstein, [McKellar's] *Last Night*" (Mathijs 199-201). Indeed, there is a far more direct lineage between Cronenberg and McKellar in both collaboration and style. It is true that McKellar performed in Egoyan's films (*The Adjuster*, *Exotica*), which invites an interpretation of a lineage of influence that runs from Cronenberg to Egoyan to McKellar, but a much more tenable lineage runs from Cronenberg to McKellar to Egoyan. McKellar has also performed in the films of Bruce McDonald and Thom Fitzgerald, frequently with his artistic/life-partner Tracey Wright and colleagues Callum Keith Rennie and Sandra Oh. McKellar has also extended his influence with his participation in the films of such TNW outsiders as Gary Burns (who is really not such an outsider), Fernando Mereilles, and Edgar Wright.

Surely, as Cameron Bailey states, it is Cronenberg's "kitchen," but McKellar is the glue that keeps the TNW category viable, and it is only this glue that connects the otherwise anomalous work of Egoyan to it. Perhaps "[m]uch of Cronenberg's work reveals a consciousness alienated from the world" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 82), and like Egoyan's urban worlds, "[a]ll of these environments [in Cronenberg's films to 1984] are dehumanizing and alienating" (Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 82), but

> Mckellar is also one of a number of the Toronto new wave figures for whom David Cronenberg is an important mentor. Mckellar has frequently mentioned Cronenberg in interviews and writes cogently about him in program notes for the 2004 Toronto International Film Festival catalogue on the occasion of a retrospective screening of Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1979):
>
> > *… it taught me the secret of great horror — allegory. It showed me how someone could transform personal pain — and the subject was clearly autobiographical — into imaginative, grotesque, liberating metaphor…*
>
> Yet, the Cronenberg influence on members of the Toronto new wave runs even deeper. For instance, he has exerted a strong influence on this group in terms of revealing how old artistic hierarchies can be usefully collapsed. Cronenberg has taken the horror genre, traditionally viewed as lowbrow, and used it to fashion highly personal, sophisticated works of art. … While filmmakers like Mckellar, Egoyan, Rozema, and McDonald have not tended to follow Cronenberg in terms of a specific interest in the horror genre, Cronenberg constitutes a potent pioneering figure (Salmon 377-8).

However, many of the TNW filmmakers *did* follow Cronenberg, if not specifically in the hrror genre, then at least in terms of his anarchist-apocalyptic considerations. "On the most obvious level, the mutual admiration between [Cronenberg and McKellar] can be seen in several professional interactions between them, including McKellar's ability to lure Cronenberg to play in *Blue* and *Last Night*, and McKellar returning the favour with his performance in *eXistenZ*" in 1999 (Salmon 377, see also Mathijs 199-201), a film which effectively incorporates Cronenberg *into* the TNW rather than making him merely its progenitor, and a film that bookends the TNW apocalyptic cycle at its ostensible end.

In the analyses that follow, I will explore three distinct lines of TNW cinema production, each concerned with apocalypse in its own right. The first of these consider the works of Patricia Rozema, Jeremy Podeswa, John Greyson, and Peter Mettler whose earliest narrative works readily betray concerns with both anarchist political thought and apocalyptic themes, and which effectively set the stage for all TNW production to follow. Mettler was certainly a determining inspiration on the second and most significant line which moves from Bruce McDonald to Don McKellar and includes their various connections to Cronenberg, Atom

Egoyan, Tracy Wright, Callum Keith Rennie, Sandra Oh, and Sarah Polley, as well as, of course, to each other. These films are the most explicitly apocalyptic, although perhaps not as progressive from an anarchist perspective as they might initially appear. The last line is populated exclusively by director Vincenzo Natali and his own collaborative coterie of performers and technicians. While Natali is a bit of a latecomer and outsider to the core group, his concern with both anarchist and apocalyptic themes in *Cube* (1997) is significant, and more fully realized in his *Nothing* (2003) and *Splice* (2009) (in which Sarah Polley is featured) in the new millennium.

But let us begin at the beginning. According to Brenda Longfellow, "the *annus mirabilis* [of the TNW] which reignited hopes at the end of the decade was 1987, the year *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* made the most spectacular debut in the history of Canadian cinema, garnering the *Prix de la Jeunesse* at the Cannes Film Festival and coming home to open the Toronto Festival of Festivals ("Surfing" 111). In identifiably anarchist terms, "Rozema points to the parallels between 'organized art and organized religion', both of which depend on 'authority': the moral of both the film and its production processes is, she says, 'don't listen to authorities. Trust yourself'" (Leach *Film* 174).[61] While Rozema's film is anything but apocalyptic, there is at least one compelling scene at its closure which speaks to some of the apocalyptic concerns regarding the personally transformative value that cinematic representation might hold. Following a series of intrigues involving intimations of lesbian romance and fraudulent art authorship, at the moment of narrative closure, the lead character Polly opens the door of her urban Toronto flat onto the world of "an idyllic wooded glen, a metaphor for the beautiful world that supposedly plain and unnoticed people like Polly inhabit" ("*I've Heard*"). Effectively erasing the realist world of urban Toronto in which the rest of the narrative takes place, this fantasy world is one in which patriarchal social relations seem to have been evacuated. Populated exclusively by Polly and her two amorous female companions, the setting is reminiscent of an earlier scene similar to the narrative coda that is used by Bruce McDonald many years later in *Pontypool* (2008), in which Polly engages in a sort of Victorian romance with the female object of her budding affections. In this new world, Polly is cured of her social awkwardness and expresses, in terms equally anarchist and erudite,

[61] I note, upon late inquiry, that Cronenberg's influence is material here as well. During the writing of *Mermaids*, Rozema "apprenticed as assistant director on David CRONENBERG's *The Fly* (1986)" (Armatage).

> I think a relativist mentality would resolve a lot of conflicts, politically, aesthetically, religiously, and even in terms of relationships. If everyone believed that there was no "right" way, that no human being has a direct communication, if you will, with the [often patriarchal] ominopotent, then the world would be a much kinder place. ... I believe that gender is irrelevant in matters of the heart. Desire follows the heart [in a state of] polymorphous perversity ... a state that we must actively cultivate.

Polly concludes her speech whilst walking on water, a direct reference to the biblical Jesus and all of the apocalyptic intimations it implies. Finally, when Polly observes that, in this dreamworld, she becomes "intelligent and enlightened," Rozema connects this revelation to the specular nature of apocalyptic transformation when Polly observes that it is, after all, her "vision." Most importantly, in the moments in the film depicting an apocalyptic but upbeat world of urban erasure and feminine emancipation, the invasive force of patriarchal normativity is entirely absent.

Also in the late 1980s, another young neophyte director continued queering up the Toronto independent movie scene with his earliest feature length films. John Greyson's work is not specifically apocalyptic, but neither is it void of either anarchist sentiments or apocalyptic aesthetics, many of which were adopted with more fervor by later members of the TNW. For example, his 1988 *Pissoir* (also entitled *Urinal* in some countries) takes aim at authoritarian police brutality against the homosexual community in Toronto at the time. In it, "Frida Kahlo, Ukiyo Mishima, Langston Hughes, Frances Loring, Florence Wyle, and Sergei Eisenstein — are resurrected and given the 'mission impossible' (complete with self-destructing message) of investigating a crisis in the gay community: police surveillance" (Gittings "Activism" 132). In a tenor that echoes the concerns of Adrian Blackwell, Greyson was specifically concerned with the ways in which such repressive state apparatuses were operating with unchecked authority against an already disenfranchised community.

Perhaps even more significant is Greyson's *The Making of Monsters* (1991). The film is a satirical critique of the most homophobic aspects of patriarchal culture. The absurdist narrative follows filmmakers Bertolt Brecht (re-incarnate as a fish) and Georgy Lukacs (hilariously confused in the narrative with George Lucas of *Star Wars* fame) in their bid to make a documentary about the real-life "monsters" who murdered Kenneth Zeller in 1985 in a homophobic hate crime. According to Christopher Gittings, "Greyson's work is informed by an awareness of what Louis Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). *The Making of Monsters* interrogates the dominant heteronormative ideology of a popular culture and

education system that interpellates homophobic subjects who murder their homosexual teacher" (*Canadian* 285). The title of the film, acting like a Lacanian double-entendre, refers to the making of the ersatz movie *Monsters* within the narrative as well as the notion of a socio-political big Other[62] that created these monsters by passively condoning gay oppression. Unfortunately, the documentary within the film that might have shed light upon homophobic hate crimes is never realized, a sort of unobtainable *objet a* for the gay community in Toronto. According to Christopher Gittings, the film is, in fact, very much intended to *affect* the audience on this note (as one might suspect Deleuze would have it).

> Brecht's term *umfunktionierung* (refunctionalization) best describes the transgressive work Greyson's films perform upon their audiences. Roswitha Mueller defines Brecht's refunctionalization as "the structural reorganization of the relationship between the stage, the author, and the audience…in order to bring about a more democratic structure of communication." As [Walter] Benjamin understands this process, the cultural apparatus, whether it be the theatre stage or the cinema screen, "is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers – that is, readers or spectators into collaborators" (Gittings "Activism" 129).

The film "closes with [a] musical number that refuses victimization, advocating the 'bashing' of the ideological and patriarchal sources of homophobia:

> Bash back baby the street is ours
> Bash the schools
> Bash the churches
> Bash the courts
> Bash the liberal fools" (Gittings "Activism" 135).

If the project of an anarchist-apocalyptic praxis is a call to action in sweeping away the infrastructure of patriarchal capitalism (schools , churches, courts), one can hardly imagine a more provocative chant. Although Greyson insisted that his work is in no way intended to be apocalyptic (Greyson Personal interview), one cannot help but wonder if he is engaging in the same sort of denial I have identified in anarchist discourse: the apocalyptic imagery that he in fact deploys is alarming. *Making* concludes with the image of a massive tire fire, clearly a reference to the inevitable apocalyptic outcome of a synthetic commodity culture in the order of Timothy Morton's description of "hyperobjects" (130) and a metaphor for a social world

[62] In "The Big Other and the Event of Subjectivity," Žižek explains "The big Other ... as a secret master [and] as the surface of the innocent gaze for whom appearances should be maintained. ... In [Lacan's] *Seminar 2* ... The Big Other [emerges] in the standard, structural sense, in the sense of an anonymous, symbolic mechanism which really runs the show."

burning under the aegis of a patriarchal homophobia (Images 8 - 11). This imagery very much established a visual convention for more specifically apocalyptic narratives: it is the very type of footage that is deployed by Peter Mettler in *Scissere* (1982) and *Petropolis* (2009), and in other apocalyptic films more loosely associated with the Toronto New Wave such as *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) (starring Sarah Polley) or Gary Burns's *Radiant City* (2006).

Also in the 1980s, even predating Greyson's and Rozema's work, young experimental neophyte Peter Mettler was finishing his studies in film at Ryerson (the place of study of so many of the TNW filmmakers) under the tutelage of R. Bruce Elder (Mettler). Perhaps as much a TNW "glue" as McKellar, Peter Mettler worked as a cinematographer on films for Rozema, Podeswa, Wieland, Egoyan, and McDonald (Mettler). McDonald had already returned the favour. Bruce "McDonald virtually lived [at the LIFT offices] while working on sound for Mettler's *Scissere* (1982) — a film he still cites as being one of the major influences on his early work" (Taylor 203). When I asked Mettler how he identified socio-politically, he stated that he had never thought about specifically labeling himself, but felt he might be described as a "discrete anarchist" (Mettler). He describes this term as one he derives from understanding his films as "almost like a drug trying to alter [the viewer's] perception upon their own situation, trying to alter their perspective, trying to take the audience somewhere else in a process of synapse or epiphany brought upon by the juxtaposition of images" in his films. Mettler also confirms that his films are informed by apocalyptic themes. But he insists, in a version of apocalyptic embrace that might now be readily recognized as anarchist, that his films are only apocalyptic "in a kind of opposite way that is less about fear and more about the wonder of what exists, what is possible to exist" (Mettler). Mettler asks, "How does what exists come to exist and how does it manage to perpetuate itself without self-destructing? I celebrate how nature takes over things that we've created" in its refusal to be dominated (Mettler).

Although Mettler's *Scissere* is not preponderantly apocalyptic, it does introduce visual and narrative themes into its experimental structure upon which Mettler draws extensively for his more apocalyptic follow-up features. *Scissere* obviously takes much of its influence from the style of such apocalyptic experimental films as Arthur Lipsett's *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961), and, accordingly, scenes of industrial decay are embedded within the explicitly urban setting of the film. According to Jerry White,

> Mettler is very much in line with the Toronto New Wave [but] diverges from their concerns in a way that recalls the relationship Arthur Lipsett had with the NFB's unit B during its golden age. Like Mettler, Lipsett placed more importance on innovation than

> on community — on experimenting with what cinema could achieve … [In] Lipsett's tortured found-footage movies, such as *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961) or *21-87* (1964) … [c]haos is the defining characteristic of Lipsett's worldview; though he does not share in the spirituality that defined Mettler's work, both filmmakers explore the psychological cost of making sense of that chaos" (3).

Some twenty minutes into *Scissere*, the ambiguously diegetic audio track proffers excerpts of an interview discussing the imminent alignment of the planets. In concert with the lower than standard frames-per-second of the cinematography that intimates a convention of media surveillance, the film betrays the same tripartite concern with radio media excess, the cosmos as a harbinger of apocalypse, and the cosmos as a sort of deified surveillance kino-eye that Mettler will take up again in *The Top of His Head*.

However, rather than a mere critique of authoritarian surveillance, Jerry White, via Heidegger and Darrel Varga, likens Mettler's propensity for cinematic self-referentiality to an apocalyptic unveiling that simultaneously embraces the revelatory capacity of technology and refuses ideological conversion by coercion. "Mettler's desire to unveil the mechanics of the camera, the mechanics of the illusion, is fully consistent with ... Heidegger's ... take... on technology. 'Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing,' writes Heidegger" (J. White 30). According to White, "[t]his is, in essence, what Mettler is doing: summoning forth the camera, revealing its mechanics, and trying to figure out his reasons. However, he's doing this not in the name of some sort of mastery, but in search of the truth to which Heidegger alludes" (30). And in a language that is most tellingly apocalyptic, "[a]s Darrell Varga puts it, 'Mettler's cinema is one of unveiling rather than of surveillance'" (J. White 30). Later in *Scissere*, another radio discussion of the aligning planets is intercut with apocalyptic images of rows of dead bees; the radio interview then takes an explicitly apocalyptic turn. "You don't think ... that the world will fall apart tonight?" The answer can only be read as the ironic ennui that might be generated by an alienated capitalist lifestyle in the face of a genuinely apocalyptic threat. "Oh, I hope not. I got bills to pay tomorrow." With the establishment of this ironic apocalyptic tenor, Mettler proceeds into more experimental cinematic territory that even further aligns with anarchist-apocalyptic analytical standards of measure.

At just under an hour into the film, the viewer (now lulled into a sense of desultory experimental malaise) is regaled with what has developed as a motif in the film of slow-motion close-ups of human faces, realizing Delueze's description that the "affection-image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face" (87). Such representations, according to Deleuze, generate the

impulse-image and then a concomitant action (123). If there is any intention of praxis by the filmmaker to effect an ideological, or at least an ethological,[63] shift towards a prosopopoeiac embrace of apocalypse, it is surely in such representations that its most powerful effects might be realized. As Deleuze explains, the "ravaged face unites … two beings, and absorbs them in the void. And in the void it is itself the photogramme which burns, with Fear as its only affect" (100). Mettler transcends the screen barrier and repositions such mirror-stage identifications back within the diegetic confines of the film. In perhaps the most narratively coherent moment in the film, Mettler depicts a group of thirty-somethings organized in a bourgeois dinner party configuration. The male 'head of the table' stares into the eyes of one of the female guests and attempts to assert a patriarchal authority by imposing an identity on her. "I know you now as Jasmine. [The name he had tellingly chosen for a daughter in the last scene.] You are a telephone operator." His head and posture loosely match the clinical faux Roman bust perched behind and above him – a symbolic patriarchal gaze looking down on them both, an oppressive and ossified cultural big brother presiding over their social interaction. She responds with a refusal of his banal proletariat identity imposition and instead posits her own fantasy of identity construction – an actress and the name "Natasha." In a visual binary contrast against the male bust, however, is a similarly postured female bust behind her – an indication that a matriarchal authority might be just as suffocating, and implying that only the universal rejection of "archy" as such might be emancipatory for them both. Lastly, symbolizing the ideological effects of patriarchal culture, he repeats his telephone operator insistence and she falls into a trance-like hypnosis. Under the symbolic authority of patriarchy, she is unable to escape the hypnotic seizure of its mandate. If this scene does not demonstrate the socially alienating effects of patriarchy poignantly enough, the next scene amplifies its implications. A young man, obviously deeply disenfranchised, shoots up with heroin in a scene that is anything but glamorous. Clearly, patriarchal culture is destructive to both gender identities in this stilted world.

Ultimately, the affection-image resolves into sentiment or impulse, one possible manifestation of uncertain hope. In this context, the film concludes with the juxtaposition of scenes in a university science lab and an elderly bee scientist against the social activities of a

[63] For an extended exploration of Deleuze's cinematic theory in the context of the ethology embedded in representations of violence, death, and destruction, see Elena del Rio's *The Grace of Destruction* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

younger adult generation. These social identities could not be more clearly disparate, and the scene thusly intimates the distanciation between the intellectual vanguard/scientific rationalism and the real social effects of the patriarchal order in which they are both mired. To clarify, Mettler depicts a massive and unruly fire in front of fireman on a ladder. His coughing on the soundtrack further indicates the suffocating and undesirable apocalyptic effect of contemporary urban social relations, a theme very much taken up by Vincenzo Natali in *Cube*. However, Deleuze had already explained that such transformation does not have to be annihilatory; it might well represent a desirable apocalyptic ideological transformation (Deleuze 97). Mettler's film resolves into an alienating cacophony of sounds and images, and a visual metaphor of humans as bees in a hive – frenetic and apocalyptic. The scientist who had hitherto been elated to identify a previously unknown genus of bee reduces it to merely a different species rather than any significant new social manifestation. The film concludes with an image of the bee dead in the lab. Perhaps Mettler, in the same vein as Uri Gordon, is calling for a transformative apocalypse that effaces patriarchal social relations, before an annihilatory apocalypse evacuates such a possibility.

With *Top of His Head* (1989), Mettler moves into the arena of more conventional narrative, but he does not abandon the themes introduced in *Scissere*. Mettler explains that with *Top of his Head*, he was "trying to infuse mainstream ideas with some form of rupture via experiential experimentation" (Mettler). *Top of his Head* opens with a cacophony of media generated images intercut with more traditional Hollywood realism images of the same and fades to an equally cacophonic overlap of a number of talk-radio sound edits each giving different meaning to the scene of the monkey-birth just witnessed. The opening scene makes clear that "Top of his Head" refers to the device attached to the monkey's head as part of its object-use for scientific experimentation, although there is a looming sense that such experimentation will be visited upon human characters within the narrative as well. The scene cuts to a planetary view that gives way to an urban vista indicating a more global-industrial aspect to the urban alienation theme introduced in *Scissere*. At this point, picking up nearly exactly where *Scissere* left off, the main character begins violently coughing and convulsing at the mere sight of a billowing smoke stack.

Gus's somewhat mismatched choice for a fiancée, a radical performance artist who is under perpetual police surveillance, is the catalyst to his apocalyptic transformation. Echoing Richard Day's call for an act of social "exodus," she instructs him on how to be more

spontaneous. “You just take the things you normally do and you don’t do them.” As part of this transformation, Gus later argues with his authoritarian uncle against state politics in a language that recognizes the lack of power in his life. “Politicians push their personality, I push [satellite] dishes ... it brings you a certain kind of power.” In other words, Gus comes to realize that his dreams might come true if his own motivated desire transforms them into concrete action – a narrative example of philosophical praxis. A more specifically patriarchal character, Gus’s father, rather argues with Gus during a disagreement regarding the changing direction of Gus’s lifestyle in favour of a need for Gus to capitulate to authority. Gus’s father describes Gus’s “free and easy lifestyle” as a problematic one in which Gus might “dream [his] life away.” He concludes by again referencing Gus’s increasingly disheveled appearance and insists that you “have to follow the rules, Gus. At least look like it.” By contrast, Mettler ironically embeds radical anarchist ideology into the dialogue of even the corporate patriarchs. When Gus accounts for his disheveled appearance as the result of “a little accident this morning,” his corporate superiors dismissively state, “Good. It’ll lead to innovation.” Eventually Gus’s innovation is to abandon the corporate world and engage in a journey of experimental self-reflection.

While the film starts by suggesting that it will narratively follow the radical anarchist Lucie, it is in fact more about tight-laced Gus and his identification with an elusive ideal-other (as opposed to a Lacanian ideal-ego) in the guise of Lucie (Lacan “Mirror” 256). Gus is frequently framed as a reflection viewed in the rear-view mirror of his car, a backward looking specular image seeking a satisfying identity. The film is replete with such layers of mediated images. Indeed, the very title indicates a thematic concern enacted in the frequent overhead canted angles of the cinematography. The movie is visually concerned with some sort of judging, apocalyptic deified kino-eye looking down on poor Gus from above. As he and Lucie walk along the beach of the Toronto shoreline, she laments the industrial practice of “putting the garbage into space.” A characteristically oblivious Gus notes in his response that “[t]here are over 5000 operative satellites orbiting around us,” to which Lucie responds, “Sort of like God watching us and telling us what to do.” Mettler himself states that he was “impressed by the god-like perspective that [the advent of] the satellite dish was giving” (Mettler). He says he wondered “what kind of future that could *evolve* into” (Mettler). The intimation that the satellites are part of some Orwellian scheme of covert mind-control resonates quite specifically with Žižek’s “new point of … apocalypse … when prostheses will no longer merely supplement

the human body and brain, but they will in a way supplant it ("Digital") and Uri Gordon's concern with "nanotechnology [as] the direct manipulation of atoms and molecules [and] the latest front of technological assault on society and the biosphere" (256).

As the conversation between Gus and Lucie continues, he articulates the first truly prosopopoeiac identification with this apocalyptic interstellar media surveillance. Intimating a mirror-stage identification with the very universe itself, he explains that the clear starry nights "up north" will "knock your eyes out." However, this spectacular gaze is one that is returned. The canted angles for which Mettler has a propensity are framed variously from above and below in a perpetual oscillation of the direction of the camera gaze. As Gus and Lucie glare upwards at the "satellites beaming down at us," their vision indicates something of a reciprocity of information sharing with the satellite. Appropriating the oppressive agency of the surveillance satellites, Gus concludes that "It's like God, yeah." It is astonishing how readily one might apply Bruce Powe's words regarding Marshall McLuhan as an avowed apocalypticist in *Apocalypse and Alchemy* to Mettler's narrative: "his attempt to turn the ecstasy and terror of the global village, 'resonant with tribal drums,' into a theatre of revelatory oratory and debate. The theatre could be a cathartic awakening from the narcosis of media; but the theatre of global communications is under constant surveillance by satellites" (Powe 18). If Powe is correct in his analysis of McLuhan's work as intrinsically apocalyptic, the genetic lineage into Mettler's work is apparent. "McLuhan's impact on Mettler is very clearly felt in *The Top of His Head* (1989), especially in terms of Mettler's portrayal of the mass media" (J. White 3-4). Moreover, White argues that "while *The Top of His Head* is certainly concerned with technology and human connection in a way that echoes *Scissere* …, a closer comparison can be made to contemporaneous English-Canadian films like David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*" (J. White 16). This proximity emerges "through the films' shared engagement with the impact and meaning of the video and broadcast technology emerging in the early eighties" (J. White 16). Nevertheless, Jerry White defends Mettler's work as the more optimistic in its apocalyptic embrace.

> *The Top of His Head* features some of the critique of technological materialism we see in *Videodrome*, but it's nowhere near as viscerally paranoid about the effects of that technology. … *The Top of His Head* picks up on a different aspect of McLuhan and has a gentler take on technology. Mettler is aware, like Mcluhan, of the inanely materialist aspects of techno-fetishism; however, Mcluhan truly believed in the possibilities of techno-connection. He asks in *Understanding Media*: "[M]ight not our current translation of our entire lives into the spiritual form of information seem to make of the entire globe, and of the human family, a single consciousness?" (J. White 19).

One can only assume that White did not consider Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* when he wrote this.

In the case of *The Top of His Head*, the lead character is *experiencing* the apocalypse as a form of radical ideological transformation rather than *embodying* it per se. Nevertheless, the viewer is unambiguously invited to identify with him in his transformation. If one doubts this intent in Mettler's work, one need only look to his next film for clarity. According to Jerry White, in Mettler's only other conventional narrative, *Tectonic Plates* (1992), "which uses plate tectonics as a metaphor for the ways in which people shift and merge their identities," the narrative thematic is explicitly concerned with the type of ideological transformation an anarchist-apocalyptic embrace seeks, although White uses none of those terms (J. White 20). In *Tectonic Plates*, "people and places collide with each other and gradually, sometimes painfully, evolve into something entirely new" (J. White 20). Throughout the narrative of *Top of His Head*, Gus slowly withdraws from his salesman lifestyle into what seems to be an increasingly apocalyptic mental breakdown: his previously bourgeois home gets trashed; his uncle Hugo's house is burned; and Lucie is seen perched atop a fully dilapidated derelict homestead that has been either bombed or burned or both. Like the increasingly dilapidated and apocalyptic world of Godard's *Weekend* (1967) and the fires that conclude both *The Making of Monsters* and *Scissere*, Gus's world slowly descends into apocalyptic dissolution. The scene in which he drives along a highway of decay and destruction at an hour and fifteen minutes is nearly identical to similar scenes in both Godard's *Weekend* and *Breathless.* However, for all of the narrative focus on the individual and his personal apocalypse, the mise-en-scene visually amplifies the particularly natural world that surrounds him and the industrial decay: the shell of a larger *lebenswelt* being implicated in his apocalyptic end. At the film's closure, after staring at the camera/viewer (Images 12 and 13) in another attempted cinematic identification with the viewer (as in *Scissere*) Gus closes his eyes while driving through an increasingly dilapidated industrial landscape. The camera angle switches to an apparent eyeline match that looks skyward once again but careens out of control towards Gus's inevitable doom, followed immediately by the same disorienting view of the earth from the perspective of a satellite careening through space or perhaps the trajectory of a nuclear missile on its intercontinental ballistic journey of destruction (Images 14 - 16). Jerry White concludes that "Mettler finds ... in these images ... a moment of connection that has a very real emotional impact" on the viewer (21). However, the scene is otherwise strangely serene. In identifying with this perspective, the

image invites an interpretation of the narrative 'closure' that suggests Gus's apocalypse will remain an inescapable and ongoing transformation for character and viewer alike.

It is with these early films of Mettler's that Jeremy Podeswa's *Eclipse* (1994) maintains the greatest aesthetic kinship. As an experimental pastiche of elliptical narrative, traditional documentary, and interconnected narrative strands, *Eclipse* helped to further establish many of the conventions that Mettler, and later McKellar, significantly set down. In its loose narrative, a number of characters engage in uninhibited but alienated sexuality in urban Toronto during the days building up to a total solar eclipse. In the film, a young Matthew Ferguson (who is also featured in Greyson's *Lilies*, Fitzgerald's *Love and Human Remains*, and *Cube 2: Hypercube*) continues his participation in the depiction of radical gay narratives epitomized in the works of Greyson, Fitzgerald and later LaBruce, with a scene in a hotel room where he fails to emotionally connect with his anonymous "John." Also part of this fledgling community of filmmakers, a young Tracey Wright, so closely associated with McKellar, performs a braces-slurring teen who awkwardly catalogues some of the eclipse memorabilia offered by the souvenir shop in which she works. Her comical performance can only be read as an ironic critique of the petty commodification of such an otherwise profoundly affecting event as an eclipse.

The imminent event is vaguely associated with apocalypse in the catch-phrase on the promotional still that asks, "Where will you be when the lights go out?" The eclipse is more explicitly associated to apocalypse in one of the documentary interludes in which a young astronomer from Munich emotes, "'Apocalyptic's the only [word that] I know, uh, for this event, for this feeling, is 'apocalyptic.'" Perhaps most significantly, however, midway through the film, underscored by an ersatz Sociology Professor's banal narration (much in the same vein as the research Professor's presence in Mettler's *Scissere*), an interim scene of downtown Toronto that would typically operate merely as a segue establishing setting depicts a massive digital billboard that reads "FIVE MORE DAYS ... AND COUNTING," a countdown to the unknown that preconceives the same type of barometer rising in McKellar's *Last Night*. Indeed, the beginning of the climactic scene depicts throngs of people crowding the streets of Toronto's downtown core underscored by a desultory radio news narrative which mirrors an almost identical climactic depiction in McKellar's *Last Night*.

The film certainly demonstrates cinematic virtuosity on Podeswa's part, and provides another example of a desire to connect criticisms of social connection to the notion of

apocalypse. Indeed, Podeswa's haunting and expertly constructed piece perhaps epitomizes the characteristic of urban alienation ascribed to the TNW films. It also evacuates traditional patriarchal hegemony by normalizing homoerotic intimacy and framing it in the banal emotional disconnect that plagues many heteronormative urban social relations. Ultimately, the climactic eclipse of the narrative surveys images of all its characters locked in thrall at the heavenly ballet and intimates an apocalyptic cleansing pregnant with pathos and hope for a new beginning. Indeed, the Professor character's voice-over that accompanies the visual countdown describes "an eclipse, in the middle of the day, that hits you with so much grandeur, ... it overwhelms you with the drama of all this natural phenomena. But it comes, and suffuses you with some feeling for the world, ... and so it's irresistible I think." One might read this evaluation as an apocalyptic embrace except that it is presented ironically by a comical socially awkward and academically disinterested university Professor. Also absent here is any sort of direct mirror-stage commune with the viewer. Yet the moment is deeply affecting and still works to accomplish an invitation for apocalyptic embrace on the narrative level.

Unfortunately, as poetic and intelligent as these early films by Mettler and Podeswa may have been, none of them garnered any significant popularity either domestically or on the international festival scene. Mettler reports that *Scissere* was "unexpectedly successful, winning the Norman McLaren Student Prize" and that *Top of his Head* had a minimal theatrical release in Toronto at Cineplex, the repertory theatres, … and in the Festival of Festivals (now TIFF)" (Mettler). For *Scissere*, Ferguson was nominated for Best Actor and castmate Montpetit was nominated for Best Supporting Actress, but neither won, and these films certainly did not enjoy any sort of wide distribution by the standards of conventional commercial cinema. In fact, the defining characteristic of Canadian cinema may well be that most Canadians have never seen any of it, a symptom of both distribution compromised by American media dominance and of what Jim Leach referred to in 1984 as "[t]he common lament that Canadian films offer a negative and pessimistic vision that nobody wants to see" ("Second" 106), a sentiment he reiterates in his 2006 book (*Film* 17, 218). This lament may have been dispelled with the works of Bruce McDonald and Don McKellar. While working within the inherently despondent genre of apocalypse, their films were more characterized by an ironic levity.

Although McDonald's films celebrate his obvious passion for indie rock and road trips, his works are almost universally apocalyptic as well. It is not surprising, then, that "McDonald admires Jean-Luc Godard's films" (Melnyk *One Hundred* 213). And in an anarchist vein,

"McDonald was a rebel with a cause — the cause of anti-corporate Canadian nationalism, in the tradition of Joyce Wieland" (Melnyk *One Hundred* 216). His first two features, *Roadkill* (1989) and *Highway 61* (1991), still concerned with local characters in nihilistic narratives in the tradition of the putative 1970s canon, emerge at what Naomi Klein identifies as the moment of globalization: "1988—the exact year that marked the dawning of what came to be called 'globalization,' with the signing of the agreement representing the world's largest bilateral trade relationship between Canada and the United States, later to be expanded into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the inclusion of Mexico" (18-9). More to the point, the influence of Cronenberg's filmmaking practices was certainly in evidence with the films. Echoing Cronenberg's collaborative approach, and invoking anarchist tenets of communal experimentation and a refusal of authority, in an excerpt from a 2004 interview included on the verso insert of the DVD case for *Roadkill*, McDonald states that the film "is a fun first feature made by me and Colin and Don and Valerie, Miro and the rest of the gang. We had no one telling us what to do or how it should be" (McDonald). Moreover, these films established a tradition of ironizing the apocalypse, investing them with a new levity to counter their reputation as unpleasantly pessimistic, a much needed reprieve that recalls the effect of *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) for American audiences in the throes of the Cold War and in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In terms of both globalization and apocalypticism, the narrative of *Highway 61* is the most salient of McDonald's films. According to Christopher Gittings, the protagonists, Jackie and Pokey, are established as characters playing at being American and avowedly Canadian respectively (*Canadian* 156-7). In apocalyptic terms, they are chased out of Canada and into the U.S. (on a bungled mission to smuggle cocaine south) by Satan (a character also called Mr. Skin – perhaps a name with intertextual implications to Cronenberg's reputation for "bodily horror," or perhaps indicating McDonald's knowledge of his performance in McKellar's *Blue* which was released the following year and may have already been in production) who is purchasing and collecting souls along the way. In the protagonists' confrontation with him, like the messianic Canadian sacrificial lambs they have been established to be, and just as in the book of Revelation, they almost uneventfully but assuredly defeat him. According to Gittings, Jackie experiences an "anagnorisis," a sort of silent revelation when she relinquishes the corpse she has used as a drug mule to the depths of a Louisiana backwater. "After a brief, silent ceremony in which Jackie places a flower and one of her earrings on the coffin and tenderly pushes it

down stream, she submerges herself under the muddy waters, surfacing to the strains of Pokey's coronet to enact what Pevere describes as 'a form of born-again, moral baptism'" (Gittings *Canadian* 156-7). As with many apocalyptic films, Jackie undergoes a moral cleansing, in this case via "baptism," and emerges to a "New Jerusalem" in which a new Canada, according to Gittings, is freed under globalization from the fetters of American (cinematic) hegemony. Cronenberg's influence is again certainly visible here. Jackie emerges from the water in a stylized fashion that might well have been plucked from cut footage of the baptismal moment of transformation for Nurse Forsythe in *Shivers* (Images 17 - 20). And just as with *Shivers*, both *Roadkill* and *Highway 61* render the otherwise horrifying aspects of their narratives, such as the shooting massacre at the end of *Roadkill*, with an ironic comic ennui that invites the viewer to embrace the horror as risible, if not outright desirable.

This same comic irony is taken to even greater heights with McDonald's 1998 short, *Elimination Dance*. The opening scene, in which the desultory lead characters meet in a comic mishap, is subtly underscored by the sound of an air raid siren, and followed promptly by a montage that depicts a global apocalypse, or at least a holocaust, complete with stock footage of dissenting crowds being violently subdued with fire hoses and, of course, the apocalyptic bonfire image that had become conventional under Mettler and Greyson. These images are juxtaposed in rapid intercuts against serene images of musical performers in a conventional 1950s aesthetic, an unambiguous reference to the hysteria and hysterical fervour of crowds surrounding popular cultural icons from that era. In concert, the elimination dance "craze" becomes a metaphor for a global apocalypse brought on by the violence of a social revolution. The stylized authoritarian news media voice over reports that

> The Elimination Dance now spans the globe ... The Elimination Dance crosses social and political borders seducing young and old in its often gruelling competition of humiliation. ... As the ranks of the eliminated swell the authorities grow concerned. For wherever the Elimination Dance occurs it is followed by social unrest, … political upheaval, ...

On that note, a Canadian Mountie fires a starting gun, and the comic characters enjoin their opportunity to embrace the "competition of humiliation."

It quickly becomes clear that the more serious apocalyptic tenor of the opening images are to be superseded in the 'narrative' by elements of absurdism and cinematic reflexivity. The viewer follows the competition adjudicator announcing the ridiculous elimination criteria to which contestants must capitulate (e.g. "those that have accidentally stapled themselves," a

clear intertextual reference to Gary Burns's *waydowntown* [even though the line appears in Ondaatje's original poem] in which McKellar performs a depressed corporate employee who staples suicide notes to his chest). McDonald punctuates these scenes with staccato cuts to black-and-white tableaux or postcard animations that dramatize the ridiculous scenarios, as well as an onscreen intertitle in which McDonald asks a real life junior high school sweetheart to contact him by telephone This metacinematic technique denies any sort of *involuntary* identification with the characters in the narrative as much as it refuses any psychic investment in an imaginary signifier of realism. However, the arbitrary meaninglessness of the announcer's criteria might also be read as a metaphor for the futility of any revolutionary action since it is so readily contained by such a controlled bourgeois environment, or at least by the cinematic eye of the filmmaker. In contrast to the images at the beginning and the end of the short, although they are rendered benignly ironic, these aspects of the narrative can only be read as a call for full apocalypse over mere revolution.

And as one might have come to expect, the narrative intimates a methodological "Level 3" attempt at a prosopopoeiac mirror-stage identification with the viewer on the level of the Lacanian Imaginary Order.[64] In the midst of the strangely erotically-charged announcements of the elimination criteria, in their efforts to survive the grueling apocalypse-competition, McKellar's character says to his recently acquainted dance partner, "Just *imagine* I'm someone you care for" (my emphasis). When it is finally announced that "anyone with pain" must vacate the dance floor (the last line of Ondaatje's poem), they deny even that, and remain steadfast. Their refusal to be eliminated, even in the face of the apocalyptic closing images that are intercut with the credits, certainly suggests an embrace of apocalypse in the painfully ongoing process of the dance. These images include rioters overturning a city bus (another explicit intertextual reference to McKellar's *Last Night* released in the same year as "Elimination Dance" [1998]), police chasing rioting crowds, and burning buildings. While the directorial credential goes to McDonald, one cannot help but feel that Mettler's presence in the filmmaking on second camera may have had something to do with the inclusion of these particular images – another practical example of the communal ethos incorporated into the experimental TNW filmmaking practices. Certainly credit for the three of Bruce McDonald's films discussed herein should go as

[64] See Stephen Ross's "A Very Brief Introduction to Lacan," Ms. University of Victoria (2002), pp. 5-9.

much to Don McKellar as to McDonald. Significantly, McKellar starred in and wrote the screenplays for all three of *Roadkill*, *Highway 61,* and *Elimination Dance*.

McKellar's neophyte detour through the early works of Bruce McDonald primed him for his own apocalyptic breakout directorial debut with *Last Night* (1998) in which he would reformulate some of McDonald's conventions. For example, almost all of the diegetic radio music in *Last Night* is Canadian as opposed to the situation in *Highway 61* in which "both Sandy's and Pokey's dreams of elsewhere are structured by the soundtracks of their lives and their respective film narratives, which, like Canadian radio, are dominated by American pop music" (Gittings *Canadian* 154). Overall, McKellar's work marks a return to the types of transformation in the viewer called for by Mettler but in terms less arcane than in the works of both Mettler and McDonald on the thematic and narrative levels respectively. Nevertheless, George Melnyk contends that *Last Night* "had much in common with McDonald's trilogy" (*One Hundred* 217). Melnyk explains this contention with a typical blend of economic and thematic determinants. "First, it was made for a mere $2 million, while Cronenberg's contemporaneous sci-fi extravaganza *eXistenZ* [in which McKellar also performed] cost $31 million. Second, *Last Night* was filled with an 'awkward charm' that made comic heroes and villains ordinary mortals with common emotions and attitudes" (Melnyk *One Hundred* 217).[65] And while *Last Night* is otherwise reactionary in many of its representations, it at least openly embraces apocalypse in the first narrative in this survey that *explicitly* addresses the issue, and it does so in an anarchist-inflected idiom.

Last Night (1998) is an ironically comic film with a powerful and disturbing apocalyptic undercurrent: it follows the interconnected narrative trajectories of various characters as they live out their final hours on earth. Through both this narrative structure and its less spectacular imagery, the film sets itself in opposition to the *fin-de-millénaire* deluge of Hollywood apocalypse blockbusters with which it was contemporary, such as *Independence Day* (1996), *Armageddon* (1998), *Deep Impact* (1998), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), and *2012* (2009). As George Melnyk reports, "*Last Night* was positively reviewed in the foreign press as 'the perfect

[65] These aesthetics may have been prompted by the industry conditions in which *Last Night* emerged, at a time when the effects of globalization were accelerating. "By 1998 Canada had forty-four coproduction treaties in force with 52 countries … [Celebrated Canadian filmmaker] Gary Burns ... suggests that it is getting 'harder and harder to make a purely Canadian film financially' and that most people he knows in the industry are 'moving toward international co-production'" (Gittings *Canadian* 100-101).

antidote to … [Hollywood] fire-and-fury apocalypse'" (*One Hundred* 217).[66] Like *Last Night*, these Hollywood films articulate fears regarding the demise of a predominantly patriarchal culture in the face of interstellar or ecological disaster. Unlike *Last Night*, however, they all focus on possible causes of apocalypse, and how the actions of predominantly male American heroes, under the patriarchal leadership of the American military-industrial complex, might save the world from disaster. The fundamental question these films pose is, "If we found out the world was going to end, what could American men do *to stop it*?" *Last Night* revolves around a different set of concerns which address the notion of a satisfying death and a more open-ended question: "If you found out the world was going to end, simply, what would you *do*?" While surviving the apocalypse is central to the Hollywood blockbuster, *Last Night* contains no such hope for survival. Instead, the main characters all seem to experience social revelations from their interactions under such duress. Reasons for the characters' fear and unhappiness are all personal and social. Larger ecological causes or causes stemming from lacking governmental intervention, distant from any heroic individual and beyond their control, are irrelevant to the narrative. *Last Night* ends with what seems to be the death of all life on earth (depicted exclusively as urban Toronto). Thus, as Level 3 of the progressive anarchist-apocalyptic scale would have it, hope, in the form of social revelation within the diegesis of *Last Night* is aimed more directly at an audience that will survive the fictitious apocalypse and puts the audience in conversation with the narrative rather than distancing them from it.

As such a sophisticated narrative, of course, the opening scene is rich in its layers of meaning. Patrick is framed from above, alone and supine on his apartment floor, reminiscent of a similar image of Gus from *Top of His Head* in a similar moment of deep reflection (Images 21 and 22), and listens to his own disembodied voice emanating from an answering machine, a material commodity orally masquerading as himself – in fact, part of the joke he makes in the outgoing message is to pretend it is the *real* Patrick answering the phone in real time. His voice

[66] McKellar agrees, "I was definitely trying to [make a spectacle of non-spectacle] with *Last Night*,' partly because "I always feel that [spectacular] movies lack dramatic tension and suspense" (Personal interview). In this, he betrays the influence of Tarkovsky on his work. According to Ljujić, "the cinematic aesthetic through which [Tarkovsky's apocalyptic films] aim to convey the sacred is anything but 'spectacular'; indeed, the 'antispectacularity' of the manner in which his films deal with the transcendent is the feature often remarked on in Tarkovsky scholarship" (148).

is answered by another disembodied voice, that of Cronenberg in the role of a utilities bureaucrat, obsessively and ritualistically repeating a pointless service message in gratitude for patronage, an empty platitude from a disembodied entity, reproduced through a mechanical commodity – a wholesale and ironic critique of the emptiness of bureaucracy, power, and social interaction mediated through commodity culture and its mechanical offspring. The orientation of the camera above Patrick positions his head at the bottom of the frame in which he appears upside down. This world upside down (or is the world of the viewer upside down?) might be read as an allegory of the viewer's skewed ideological perspective via the non-coercive vehicle of the cinematic image. This opening scene immediately destabilizes 'normal' perspective to such an extent that the location of the viewer's voyeuristic gaze that is rendered 'invisible' in traditional Hollywood narrative is, rather, made uncomfortably obvious; the viewer is immediately and reflexively aware of their position as "the 'active' eye, [with its] corresponding look of power and desire" (Elsaesser 88). The viewer is thus uncomfortably empowered as a sadistic patriarchal scopophile (as Laura Mulvey might describe it) gazing, ironically, at an already 'castrated' (or at least emasculated) Patrick (who has recently lost his wife and labours at a pointless vocation) with whom the viewer will subsequently be invited to identify. Since Patrick embodies an apocalypse that has already occurred, he takes the role of apocalyptic proxy, and this invitation fully realizes the non-coercive embrace of a prosopopoeiac apocalypse that Level 3 calls for. From this point of departure, the clock starts ticking in the countdown to a less allegorical narrative apocalypse.

Even though the apocalypse is realized in the narrative, however, the source of it is displaced onto an ambiguous heavenly source. Nevertheless, unlike Hollywood blockbusters which displace eco-catastrophe to such interstellar threats and call in the industrial-military complex to save earth's populace, *Last Night* more effaces the threat. The cause of the impending apocalypse is conspicuously absent from the narrative and the progressive aspect of this representation lies in its ambiguity. None of the characters are even remotely concerned with averting it. It is already inevitable. As Žižek insists, there is

> something deceptively reassuring in our readiness to assume guilt for the threats to our environment: we like to be guilty since, if we are guilty, then it all depends on us, we pull the strings of the catastrophe, and so in principle we can also save ourselves simply by changing our lives. What is really difficult for us to accept (at least for us in the West) is that we are reduced to the purely passive role of an impotent observer who can only sit back and watch what his fate will be (*End Times* 423).

The apocalypse at the end of *Last Night* places both its characters and the viewer in "the purely passive role of an impotent observer," but allows for agency on the ideological level. It does so by leaving the tension of curiosity unresolved – the viewer is *never* afforded a clear understanding of the cause of apocalypse within the narrative. It remains an elusive unknown after which there is no point in inquiring. According to Steven Ross in his useful and succinct explication of Lacanian theory, "[p]erhaps the most memorable instance of this logic is that driving Charles Foster Kane in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*. Had Kane succeeded in retrieving rosebud he would nonetheless have found his desire unresolved and be forced to move on to some other object of desire" (27). Free from the desire to resolve this tension and the concomitant necessity to build the narrative around averting the apocalyptic cause, the characters in the diegesis of *Last Night* are left to explore more profound revelations, sweeping the viewer along with them, even to the last moment of the film.

Last Night is replete with apocalyptic revelation. The narrative explores the artificiality, constructedness, hierarchy, and sheer ridiculousness of established social codes. Much of the film renders the established social code entirely risible, especially in the face of the inevitably mortal human condition. Rather than valorize bourgeois society, as one might suspect is imminent from the representation of Patrick's family home life early in the film, the film represents this life in distinctly ironic terms, belittling while celebrating the warmth and comfort represented at the same time as representing the arrogant provincial attitude endemic in such racially enclosed bourgeois enclaves of society. Meanwhile, at the gas company office, Donna admits to her boss Duncan that she took a drink every night at 6pm. He responds, "I could fire you for this." They both chuckle at how ludicrous the notion is. Similarly, Craig and Patrick have an argument over the ownership of a car. Since the apocalypse is imminent, ownership is, of course, academic – a longstanding anarchist sentiment perhaps best exemplified in Proudhon's opus, *Property is Theft*. Nevertheless, in response to Patrick's request to give Sandra the car, Craig states that he "wanted to die the owner of three cars." This dialogue satirizes and interrogates commodity fetishism and how it can supersede social relations when they are mediated by material goods. When compared against the importance of assisting a fellow human being in the face of imminent mortality, materialism loses its lustre.

Regardless of his materialism, Craig is perhaps the most socially progressive character in the film. He is certainly the least repressed. Craig is coded as a metaphor for the acquisition of self-awareness and self-actualization. As he is about to have relations with Lily he awkwardly

informs her, “I’m not doing this because you’re black.” She blithely responds, “Yes you are. You don’t have to lie.” Throughout the film Craig plays out a release of sexual repression that echoes models of post-structural political emancipation. Todd May argues that “[f]or Deleuze, as for Foucault and Lyotard, the activity of political reflection must have as a primary goal the freeing of an individual (be that individual a person, group, or a practice) for new practices, practices that change, undermine, or abandon the power relationships that keep old practices in place” (*Political* 113). Craig advises that Patrick could benefit from such a release. Patrick is mourning the death of his wife at the expense of his own continued socialization. Craig observes, “What is one death compared to the fact that in a couple hours every human soul on earth is gonna evaporate?” Craig goes on to articulate some of the film’s most didactic notions that, in fact, echo anarchist notions of praxis.

> You have to take life in your own hands. You have to fulfill your own destiny. I’m sure there are things you feel ripped off about . . . I tried to ask myself what did I want. What were those experiences that I had hoped for that were now just passing me by . . . Some of these things were hard to achieve. Some of these things were hard to admit . . . I’m not going to my grave with any regrets.

He concludes by making the motives of his speech clear to Patrick. “I was trying to inspire you.” Against Craig’s sexual liberation, Patrick is characterized as someone who desperately needs to escape the social gulag of his mourning.

And as one might expect from such a progressive anarchist-apocalyptic narrative, there is substantial critique of patriarchal ideology. Playing on Sandra Oh’s professional status (her name in the film remains Sandra), the film repeatedly points out that she “looks like a movie star,” ironic considering her visibly Asian heritage compared against a history of the painfully white ethnic landscape of English-Canadian cinema. Nevertheless, in *Last Night*, Sandra’s narrative remains in the service of Patrick’s. Although her story seems more compelling, as was Lucie’s in *The Top of His Head*, it is only used to bring Patrick out of his shell and provide him with a romantic catharsis before it is too late. Her narrative seems designed to recuperate Patrick to a patriarchal role, but since the narrative never really allows for that, the viewer is compelled to discover more egalitarian purposes for her character arc, and to seek less traditionally authoritarian characteristics in Patrick with which to identify. George Melnyk argues that the type of hero represented by Mettler and McKellar are fundamentally appealing to “Canadian audiences [who] value the unusual screen presence that seems to characterize these young Canadian stars precisely because they lack conventional Hollywood sex appeal”

(*One Hundred* 218). *Last Night* intimates that Sandra falls in love only with Patrick's anti-patriarchal whimsy in a world unable to escape its patriarchal constructs; thus a world that must end.

McKellar unabashedly revels in a critique of patriarchy on both a narrative and an allegorical level. The patriarchal bureaucrat, Duncan (Cronenberg) is associated with state-run corporate leadership; the anti-patriarch, Patrick (McKellar) is associated with unachieved infrastructure development – an architect whose designs have never been realized. Žižek might well describe this lack of production as a failure of Patrick to enter into a (post)modern patriarchal symbolic order.[67] Following Jean-François Lyotard's contribution to defining the term, Žižek claims that "'[p]ostmodernism' effectively functioned as a new Master-Signifier which introduced a new order of intelligibility into the confused multiplicity of historical experience. We can thus easily apply ... the Lacanian triad of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary, vaguely corresponding to the triad of realism, modernism, and postmodernism" (*End Times* 246). Ironically, contra McKellar's claim to progressive anarchist political thought, *Last Night* (and *Blindness*) surely depict Godwin's understanding of anarchy as unmitigated violence in the streets. However, the only fatality in the narrative induced by this anarchy is visited upon the character played by Cronenberg. McKellar asks and answers, "Cronenberg's character? Why did I kill him? I think of him as ludicrous, but also heroic in an extremely naive, classic Canadian way. ... He seemed to be the one to take a stand against the anarchy of the streets" (Personal interview). Almost surely McKellar is using the term "anarchy" in a generic sense here, but his statement might also be interpreted as an admission that those who do not embrace anarchy, especially the "heroic" patriarch, must be destroyed. The Cronenberg character, comically loyal to his employment as a state-sponsored utility service managerial patriarch, is violently murdered well before the narrative closure.

With his dual role as a character ludicrously loyal to the machinations of the crown corporation he heads, and as an extra-diegetic filmmaking mentor to McKellar and other filmmakers of the New Wave, it is hard not to suspect that McKellar did not relish this episode as an allegorical changing of the guard from the former cinematic patriarch to the *new wave* of filmmaking practice in Toronto. McKellar states, "He sort of represents the Canadian establishment to me, in a good and bad way," in a statement in which it is difficult to discern

[67] Jacques Lacan, Gad Horowitz, and Charles Altman, amongst others, indicate the ways in which the symbolic order is decidedly inscribed in patriarchal culture.

whether McKellar is referring to Cronenberg or his character in the film (Personal interview). In fact, it is difficult to avoid interpreting even an Oedipal allegory between the two filmmakers —a passing of the torch from an older generation of anarchist-apocalypticists to a younger, or the prurient sacrifice of a cinematic patriarch (Cronenberg) to open the way for a more radical anarchist (McKellar): in the narrative of *Last Night*, Patrick (McKellar) 'inherits' the "movie star" Sandra from her now-deceased husband (Cronenberg).[68] Rendering the meta-cinematic allegory even stronger, in the shot/reverse-shot in which the Cronenberg character faces down his gun-toting malefactor, he stares into the camera in yet another proferred moment of mirror-stage identification and, intertextually referencing his own horror films, delivers an apostrophe from within the diegesis directly to the viewer insisting, "I'm not afraid. You're the one who's afraid," before he fades into the shadows—a patriarchal silhouette that dissolves into cinematic darkness (Images 23 and 24, see Mathijs 201). Cronenberg's gaze into the camera further maps his auteurism of intentional philosophy onto the apocalyptic character proxies in his own films demonstrated in Chapter 3. Finally, placing McKellar and Cronenberg in visual contrast, at the moment Patrick 'takes possession' of Sandra, Cronenberg is depicted

[68] Similarly, Genevieve Bujold, who plays Mme. Carlton in *Last Night*, might play the same matriarchal role to Sarah Polley, who plays Patrick's sister. Like Duncan and Patrick, they never meet within the diegesis (with the exception of Cronenberg's voice on Patrick's answering machine at the beginning), and like Cronenberg and McKellar, they are both auspicious representations of different filmmaking generations. David Pike gives this analogy an extended analysis in *Canadian Cinema*.

> Don McKellar's casting of Bujold in his apocalyptic drama *Last Night* (1998) suggests a consciousness of her presence within the psyche of his generation (he was born in 1963): she's next to last on Craig's (Callum Keith Rennie) list of women he wants to sleep with before the end, the French teacher he lusted after back in high school. Again, what could easily be a pitiful throw away instead becomes a more complex study and motivation: Mrs Carlton is at least as deeply involved psychically with her former students as they are with her. In one of the final sequences of the film, the camera focuses on her face, pointedly aged but eyes intact, sitting in the sparse audience at Massey Auditorium as another of her former students plays his first public piano recital. The casting is something of a generational passing of the torch staged by McKellar to himself, as he also gives us Cronenberg, Bujold's exact contemporary, [Cronenberg had worked with Bujold in *Dead Ringers* (1988)] playing a gas company manager. Both of them are, as Amy Taubin put it in the *Village Voice*, 'silly, sweet, and valiant.' Both receive an inter-textual treatment analogous to their influence: Bujold, a scene of complex sexuality and extended, unglamorous yet movingly beautiful close-ups; Cronenberg, an encounter with death and brutal violence as he confronts a clean-cut teenager who follows him in with a shotgun, a later shot revealing the erstwhile 'Baron of Blood' awash in a pool of his own red stuff. And both, as Mckellar knew full well, represent a particularly ecumenical approach to cinema more valued in filmmaking and critical circles with every year that passes (Pike *Canadian* 114).

in the same supine posture in which McKellar was framed at the beginning, only slightly canted, and now duly dispatched (Image 22).

And just because the narrative ends with a heterosexual bourgeois pair-bond (secure on the apartment rooftop aloft the unwashed masses in the street) doesn't necessarily code the "closure" as reactionary. Žižek observes that "[t]his logic of the production of a couple has a long history in Hollywood. Whatever the story is about – it may be about the end of the world, an asteroid threatening the very survival of humanity, or a great war, whatever – as a rule we always have a couple whose link is threatened, and who somehow through this ordeal, at the end happily gets together" (*Pervert's*). *Last Night* perverts this logic and overwrites the reconciliation of the married couple with the unorthodox establishment of a platonic romance between Sandra and Patrick. This ending is more about self-realization before inevitable death than a normalization of the heterosexual romantic couple. Patrick and Sandra are not merely in a dialectic relationship in which he represents progressive thinking, and she represents more conservative thinking, which is, in turn, resolved by a romantic union between them. Sandra and Patrick remain in a dialogic relationship in which both are changed by their communication.

One still might interpret as reactionary the fact that in *Last Night* there is plenty of communication, and even commune, but no community. Each individual pursues his/her own individualized agenda, and most, apparently, quite happily, coming together only briefly and never in groups of larger than three, with the exception of Patrick's family dinner, which both he and his sister quickly vacate. Community only emerges in the streets where the classless rabble dominates and chaos rules - a sort of anti-anarchism, a parody of anarchist philosophy, and an insistence on the inevitably apocalyptic result of anarchism: communal chaos or individualized harmony. However, both of these are reactionary interpretations of anarchism, and the satire in *Last Night* is aimed just as squarely at anarchist theory's detractors. In a state of stateless anarchy in which there is obviously no authoritarian law enforcement, murder and violence do *not* run rampant. With the exception of the death of Duncan (Cronenberg), there is very little violence in the film at all. When Sandra is attacked, Patrick's sister's boyfriend comes swiftly (albeit violently) to her defense – a narrative indication that in a state of anarchism, at least Toronto will be populated by people who defend each other out of altruistic mutual aid rather than out of concession to legal authority. As Isaac Berk claims, "the apocalypse allow[s] for ... smashing heads with bats ... to protect one another" (49). Similarly, Sandra and Patrick

reject the gun violence with which they had agreed to end their lives. In the same sort of revelation as that described by Deleuze regarding "Nicholas Ray's *Last Period*, the characters have mastered the level of abstraction and serenity, the spiritual determination which allows them to choose, and necessarily to choose the side which allows them to renew, to re-create …, whilst at the same time accepting the world" (Deleuze 135). Or as Mark Antliff puts it in more specifically anarchist terms in reference to Jankel Adler's art, the characters have achieved "the empathy between individuals that enabled them to transcend their pain and rediscover their humanity" (27). Only in the moment of Patrick's embrace of apocalypse, in his rejection of the authority of his own patriarchal family, in his refusal of gun culture, and in his embrace of another lonely traveller (a visible ethnic 'minority,' who has abandoned the traditional morality of her own marital responsibility), does Patrick finally find any affective commune with another soul in the narrative.

This still might seem like little more than typical Hollywood romantic closure in which the heteronormative family structure can reproduce itself. However, Sandra is carrying another man's child – a child that can never be born – and the romance between Patrick and Sandra can never be fulfilled. It begins at the moment the world ends. This narrative construction stands in stark contrast to the early Canadian films that Christopher Gittings discusses in *Canadian Cinema* "where the myth of the white woman as the inert womb through which white patriarchal nation is produced becomes 'natural'" (*Canadian* 263). Sandra in *Last Night* complicates this simple construction in various ways. Not only is she pregnant with a baby that can never be born, but her visible identity as Chinese-Canadian averts the white patriarchy inherent in these early films. In *Last Night* Sandra questions her pregnancy as a heresy, an aberration (in this inverted world, heteronormative reproduction is the aberration), since she will be unable to (re)produce but has chosen to carry the child anyway. Similarly, Patrick is an architect (a designer of phallic urban signifiers) whose works never produce any material 'offspring.' In contrast, Sandra's husband continues producing power/natural gas "until the very end," an ironic 'crime' which is rewarded in the narrative with a violent death. Rather than "produce," then, the narrative suggests that the only logical thing left to do in the face of apocalypse is "create" social bonds, the inevitable outcome of an apocalyptic "sweep" according to Woodcock via Bakunin.

In *Last Night*, for the newly created union between Sandra and Patrick to have life at all, all life on earth must end. It's quite beautiful, really, just as Cronenberg's apocalyptic zombies in

Shivers were beautiful, and there's actually a lot that is "progressive" in it. It all ends with a kiss as Patrick and Sandra succumb to the passion of the moment. Again, what seems merely a conservative heteronormative conclusion is underscored with a progressive subtext. Since it occurs at the moment of apocalypse within the narrative it can be read as an embrace of apocalypse, a metaphorical kissing of the world goodbye. This moment represents a motif in some of the apocalyptic films already discussed. The moment of apocalyptic transformation in Cronenberg's *Shivers* is similarly sealed with a kiss (Image 26), and the opening scenes of *Elimination Dance*, as the apocalypse sets in, also feature a couple embracing the chaos with a kiss (Image 27). This iconic moment in *Last Night* enacts the mirror stage embrace of apocalypse with which the films of the TNW are concerned. As they stare into each other's eyes, pointing handguns at each other's temples, they abandon the violent and antisocial coercion of taking each other's lives and embrace with a kiss (Images 28 and 29). The scene is narratively merged with the moment of apocalypse which works to pass the embrace on to the viewer. Indeed, according to Pearson and Ellis in their article entitled "Dead Narratives," with an inadvertent, coincidental reference to the title of McKellar's appropriately named narrative, "the key function of Last Night stories is to begin to establish a connection with others, those who shared this one moment, even if it was the only thing they had in common … [T]hese stories serve to re-create a community, however brief, with a shared past and an uncertain but nevertheless possible future" (173). Since the scene is not fully abstract, the representations of identity and social politics remain an unavoidable part of the scene, but the moment seems to refuse the most egregious symptoms of patriarchy and masculinity while effacing the politics of gender and race. Only an unfortunate class distinction remains in a Bourdieuian metaphor of taste distinctions. McKellar stratifies the urban populace into the relatively complacent bourgeois couple seated safely aloft the tasteless revelry of the noisy rabble in the streets below. In these circumstances they can securely realize their own progressive apocalypse. Just as in another Canadian film, Lynn Stopkewich's *Kissed* (1996) (yet another clear intertextual reference embedded in the kissing scene), "the 'explosive' energy generated when life turns into death'" allows for the "search for bliss (or transcendence), represented by white light, [and] involves a disturbing and provocative entanglement of the physical and the spiritual"

(Leach *Film* 141). Only as Sandra and Patrick abandon their mutual final plans, both of which have already largely gone awry, can the liberating explosion of Eros and Thanatos occur.[69]

Indeed, as the film ends the apocalypse is depicted by a fade to light that consumes everything on the screen – a wash of blinding white that refuses all representations of reality as we know it. Deleuze poetically describes such a practice as characteristic of at least one practitioner of the F*NV*. "There is a pedagogy of the image, especially with Godard, when this function is made explicit, when the frame serves as an opaque surface of information, sometimes blurred by saturation, sometimes reduced to the empty set, to the white or black screen" (Deleuze 13). Allan Antliff describes such a representation as a specifically anarchist art practice, a scene that "pointedly refuses determinism" and in this way it leaves the tension of curiosity regarding the realization of the apocalypse unresolved ("Insurrection" 73). This less spectacular cinematic apocalypse also offers a metaphor of enlightenment experienced by the characters and shared with an audience that can now carry the film's message of hope out of the viewing experience and into the rest of their lives. In this context, Deleuze, quoting Goethe and following Sternberg, offers a direction for such enlightenment that is infinite in its possibility.

> [E]verything happens between the light and the white. … Goethe's splendid formula [states that] 'between transparency and white opacity there exists an infinite number of degrees of cloudiness [trouble]. … One could call white the fortuitously opaque flash of pure transparency'. This is because the white, for Sternberg, is primarily that which circumscribed a space corresponding to the luminous. And into the space is inserted a close-up face which reflects the light. … The affect is made up of these two elements: the firm qualification of a white space, but also the intense potentialisation of that which is going to happen there (Deleuze 93-4).

In *Last Night*, the close-up faces inserted into the light are those of the two protagonists locked in their mirror-stage moment of apocalypse, a mutual identification of emancipation, which is transferred to the audience in the wash of white light that consumes them and the gaze of the viewer. As an intentionally philosophical work, McKellar clarifies that particularly "the runner" character (played by Jackie Burroughs who also appears in Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone*) was intended to be "a sort of sentinel. … Someone to remind us that it is, in fact, happening. … Trying to get [people] to wake up and face reality" (Personal interview). By attaching the apocalyptic moment in the narrative to the closure of the film in a blinding wash of light, the

[69] "In a diary entry from 1980, Tarkovsky wrote: 'The one thing capable of resisting the universal destruction is love. … I believe that only love can save the world.'" (Ljujić 158).

cinematographic moment transcends diegetic boundaries and engenders a continuity into the imagination of the viewer at the moment that perception emerges from the diegesis into an extra-diegetic reality, the very progress of the affect image through the impulse and into action described by Deleuze. Thus, viewers might have the opportunity to apply some of the film's socially didactic messages before it is too late to achieve their own satisfying death. Admittedly, such a message of hope is fundamentally morbid, but at least it is imbued with levity, inviting the viewer to embrace the apocalyptic moment along with the characters in the film.

Thus, the apocalyptic event in *Last Night* should not be interpreted in the same light as other such movies that imagine the apocalypse as a singular event, especially ones in which aversion results in the re-establishment of the status quo. The film obviously intends the viewer to identify with Patrick, not the Apocalypse itself via prosopopoeia. However, Patrick acts as a proxy for the apocalypse who eventually identifies with/embraces it himself, very much like Gus in Mettler's *Top of His Head*. In *Last Night*, Patrick has already undergone a personal apocalypse with the death of his wife, which is why he has retreated from social relations. In the face of impending apocalypse, he finds himself needing to make peace with his suffering for the sake of another lonely traveler. In his efforts to do so, he rejects socialization within traditionally patriarchal constructs, which are openly ridiculed, such as his own family or his comically unproductive employment as an architect. The narrative thematic indicates social emancipation at the moment of embrace in both its senses: the embrace of Patrick's kiss with Sandra as a result of their mutual embrace of the apocalypse.

This embrace resides somewhere between Woodcock's call for a clean sweep and Uri Gordon's acceptance of eco-catastrophe as the final opportunity for the realization of anarchist social policies. In any case, *Last Night* quite readily moves past the narrative of inevitability and seems to relish actively bringing on the apocalypse. Inherent to the fact that the characters all die in *Last Night* is the fact that its life lessons must be aimed at an audience that will survive the end of the film. With *Last Night*, the viewer's emotional investment in the narrative has less to do with a suspension of disbelief and more directly implicates the viewer in its moralizing message. The film is replete with the apostrophes voiced by Craig, Alex, and Patrick that are absent in the Hollywood apocalypse blockbusters and that might be read as directly addressing the audience. For example, Mme. Carlton offers the encouragement that Patrick will reiterate to Menzies. "We all knew you had it in you." It is the only phrase in the film repeated more than once (other than the observation that Sandra looks like a movie star). The repetition of this

message invites the viewer to examine its implications on a personal level. As the apocalyptic moment occurs at the narrative closure, it emphasizes the impossibility of imagining the future. The film's message is one that insists on ideological emancipation now, not later; later is too late. Thus, its disturbing apocalyptic message is affectively motivating to the viewer to enact this new emancipatory ideology in their own lives, now, and to enjoy the ongoing progress this revelation affords.

In close temporal proximity to the release of *Last Night* in 1998, was Vincenzo Natali's *Cube* only a year earlier. Perhaps the most apocalyptic of all the films in this survey, *Cube* was the first feature length production "financed entirely through the Feature Film Project, which has been renamed now" as the Canadian Film Centre, the same organization through which McKellar produced *Blue* (Natali). With *Cube*, Natali maintains his own cinematic coterie within which the only overlap with the McKellar group occurs in Sarah Polley (another TNW 'glue,' like McKellar and Mettler, who appeared in *Last Night*, Egoyan's *Exotica*, Cronenberg's *eXistenZ*, and Fitzgerald's *The Event*, all with McKellar; and Natali's *Splice*). The ensemble cast of *Cube* also includes David Hewlett (with whom Natali works again in *Nothing* [2003] and Splice [2009]), and Andrew Miller (also in *Nothing*) as the autistic savant.

The premise of *Cube* (1997) is relatively simple. Unsuspecting victims are imprisoned in a labyrinth of cubicles, some of which are equipped with deadly booby traps. *Cube* allegorically addresses the alienating effect of a suffocating post-industrial environment and its concomitant social paranoia, while at the same time implicating its victims as ideologically complicit with the construction of such an environment, a horrifying inversion of what Jameson refers to as "Junkspace." "Junkspace is like being condemned to a perpetual Jacuzzi with millions of your best friends . . . A fuzzy empire of blur, it fuses high and low, public and private, straight and bent, bloated and starved to offer a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed" (Rem Koolhaas' "Junkspace" qtd. in Jameson "Future City" 75). None of those imprisoned within the cube are familiar, and in their incarceration, the "seamless patchwork" of their disparate social identities becomes decreasingly blurred (Rem Koolhaas' "Junkspace" qtd. in Jameson "Future City" 75). As such, *Cube* also explicitly interrogates the Canadian myth of multi-identity (frequently reduced to 'multi-cultural') harmony with a motley crew of representative social identities who are literally at each other's throats by the end of the narrative, having suffered too much proximity in a forced integration.

Cube represents an astonishing array of apocalyptic characteristics in a horror/science-fiction hybrid that is similarly concerned with the contradictions of social relations under industrial capitalism as *Last Night*. *Cube* makes use of almost all conventions of apocalypse. The machine itself acts as a sort of deity, a faceless industrial-military mechanism that has magically kidnapped them from their homes and placed them into the millennial industrial labyrinth. Dialogue throughout the film indicates the ways in which each character experiences judgment for their all-too-ambivalent complicity with capitalist society. This might just as much be considered an anarchist conundrum. Jesse Cohn explains that, especially for anarchist critical scholars, "to survive within the system is to be complicit in it" ("What" 415). Cohn refers to this situation under a heading that reads "In the Belly of the Beast" ("What" 415), a notion that reflects the narrative of *Cube* in the same sort of apocalyptic language that describes Satan in the Book of Revelations. The result for the characters in *Cube* is death, with the exception of the one ostensibly morally pure character, an autistic savant who escapes into the blinding whiteness of a New Jerusalem, but not before social harmony amongst the others dissolves under the threat of the machine and the relentlessness of their forced proximity.

In this regard, *Cube*, like *Shivers*, is a narrative that plays out very much like Romero's apocalyptic *Night of the Living Dead*. "[T]he characters in the living dead films are cut off from established codes of ethics, forced to survive on an existential precipice" (Grant 205). And in a description that might well have been written about the main character in *Cube*, Kyle Bishop explains that

> [i]n a very real sense, *Night* is the story about humanity's struggle to retain its sense of humanity. Ben and the others fight the zombies just to stay alive, but they also clash amongst themselves. Although he remains uninfected by the zombie plague, Ben's civility suffers and crumbles under the stress of the siege: he strikes Barbara for being hysterical, beats Mr. Cooper for disagreeing with his plans, and eventually shoots and kills Mr. Cooper. Ben is almost as violent and irrational as the zombies themselves, although he is the closest thing the movie has to a real hero ("Raising" 204).

In a subsequent essay, Bishop states that under the conditions of a zombie siege, "cabin fever can make those inside the strongholds more dangerous than the zombies on the outside ... In addition, the journey from survivor to vigilante is a short one; with the total collapse of all governmental law-enforcement systems, survival of the fittest becomes a … grim reality" ("Dead Man" 22). In *Cube*, it is not the collapse of law enforcement in the face of a zombie apocalypse, it is law enforcement itself that has become the threat. Quentin, who identifies himself as "a cop," and who "is the closest thing the movie has to a real hero," becomes a

greater threat than the cube in the social dynamics that evolve. According to Sheila Kunkle, "[f]or Quentin, the increasingly belligerent and overbearing cop, there is a descent into psychosis, where he is unable to distinguish others as people and allies" (287). The violent aspects of the repressive state apparatus of law enforcement are exposed in *Cube* under the duress of the cube's carceral space.

The monster in *Cube* is the machine itself, although *Cube* is more specifically concerned with the subjects' demise at the hands of the machine they helped create. According to Vincent Leitch et al, this text "presents Foucault's sweeping, bleak, and all-too-convincing portrait of modern society since the 1740s as a series of increasingly prisonlike institutions that aim at "the accumulation and useful administration of men," conceived as docile subjects ("Foucault" 1618). The characters in *Cube* are all variously accused of being docile in their lacking resistance to the abstract institutions that may have been responsible for the creation of the cube, very much in the way Handling argues that the Cronenbergian apocalypse is duly visited upon the bourgeois society that created its own oppressive institutions in *Shivers* and *Rabid* (see Chapter 3, Handling "Canadian Cronenberg" 89). Moreover, in her discussion of Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, Elizabeth Rosen describes such a construction as the cube as inherently apocalyptic.

> The paradoxical New Jerusalem is not the only apocalyptic element destabilized by Gilliam's approach. Both the notion of judgment and the question of who is deserving of reward and punishment are similarly destabilized in postmodern apocalypse. Because Sam has spent his life trying not to get involved and avoiding responsibility for his part of the bureaucracy he willingly and apathetically works for, Gilliam has always maintained that Sam gets exactly what he deserves. According to the director, Sam is "the guilty party. He is the bureaucracy. Ultimately he's being punished for his guilt of all those years of being one cog in the machine that just kept the machine going." Because of this, it is right that Sam should no more escape the clutches of the system he has participated in building and maintaining than anyone else. In fact, he deserves his ending because he has turned a blind eye to the bureaucracy (Rosen 80).

Correspondingly in *Cube*, all the characters in the film participate in the construction of their own horror. At least one blogger on the stackexchange.com webpage entitled, "What's the purpose of the cube?" explains that "for me the deep horror was the suggestion not only that the cube had no purpose, but that no one was responsible for it. As if it was an idea that somehow grew and flowered by itself, like a parasite on the human military-industrial complex. *We* built it" (Wolff). In the narrative, Worth "finally admits to having been one among scores of people contracted by an unidentifiable source to help design the outer shell of the huge

structure itself" (Kunkle 284). Worth explicitly implicates himself by defining the unseen malevolence as an abstraction in which he participates. He asks, "What do you think the establishment is? It's guys like me." *Cube* similarly implicates the others imprisoned within it as complicit with the machine's ambivalence on the level of complacency and political inaction. Worth's admission is framed within the characters' conversation regarding their respective professions and suggests that they have all been directly or indirectly complicit with its construction. In *Cube*, before his grisly death, Rennes offers the thematically well-scripted double-entendre "you have to escape yourselves." Unable to escape, and implicated as guilty for their passive complicity in an alienating capitalist social milieu, the film stages Foucault's description of the virtual panopticon, "placing over the slightest illegality, the smallest irregularity, deviation or anomaly, the threat of delinquency [a] subtle, graduated carceral net" ("*Discipline*" 1636). Thus, the film realizes "the Cronenbergian conception that we are all prisoners of our identities and obsessions" (Derry 173). However, if they are all guilty of complicity, with what, specifically, have they been complicit?

The cube is first and foremost a prison. Natali explicitly states that he envisioned "a prison escape film" (Natali). More broadly, the narrative in *Cube* operates as a social metaphor for the way in which capitalist ideology and the military-industrial complex imprisons the subject within a social environment that is contradictory, if not openly malevolent. The metaphor is ironically embedded in the simple allegories of the characters' names, which cumulatively make reference to a number of prison institutions. For example, a reference to Leavenworth Prison in the U.S. can be read in the names of the characters David Worth and Joan Leaven. The police officer named Quentin seems an even more ironic allusion to the San Quentin State Prison in California. And in an ironic nod by Natali to the fall of Soviet communism, the only character to survive in the narrative is named Kazan, obviously taken from the Kazan Prison in Russia. More cinematically, many of the scenes feature low camera angles and extreme close-ups of the characters creating a claustrophobic sensation of confinement (Image 31). In *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction*, Colin Ward explains that "Anarchists are against imprisonment and have an impressive history of releasing the confined. Kropotkin claimed in 1886 that a society built around cooperation rather than competition would suffer less anti-social activity: time spent in prison is time to think and learn more sophisticated criminal techniques" (Ward 41). Indeed, within the cube, its incarcerated become capable killers.

This anarchist concern with incarceration certainly resonates with Foucault's "The Carceral," the final section of his *Discipline and Punish*. According to Foucault, in analysis that echoes the post-anarchist concern with rhizomatic power relations in a complex social fabric, "[t]he modern individual is produced by a power that individualizes precisely in order to better control. A panoptic (all-seeing) power keeps subjects under constant surveillance (Leitch et al "Foucault" 1618). What makes *Cube* so terrifying is its panoptical aspect in which it does not seem that there is any human agency observing them, a trajectory inherited from Mettler's *The Top of His Head* and taken to a horrifying extreme. "In this panoptic society … incarceration is the omnipresent armature" (Foucault "*Discipline*" 1642). And like the labyrinth of the *Cube*, "[p]rison continues … a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline. By means of a carceral continuum, the authority that sentences infiltrates all those other authorities that supervise, transform, correct, improve" (Foucault "*Discipline*" 1643). Perhaps most importantly, and implicating its own victims, "[t]he carceral network, and its compact or disseminated forms, with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support in modern society, of the *normalizing* power" (Foucault "*Discipline*" 1645, my emphasis). In "[s]uch a society, Foucault argues … The institutions that administer individuals (schools, factories, the army) use the same strategies and techniques of control that prisons employ" (Leitch et al "Foucault" 1618). Interestingly, the institutions singled out by Foucault bear a startling resemblance to those that Greyson calls for the gay community to "bash back" against in the closing musical number of *The Making of Monsters*.

Indeed, *Cube* is much more than a mere allegorical criticism of a problematic prison system. The carceral aspect of the narrative works to further implicate the military-industrial complex. According to Louis Althusser, both prisons and the military are amongst the repressive state apparatuses that participate in reproducing economic social relations beneficial to the dominant classes (*marxists.org* 11-12, 14). Holloway makes the connection that "It's all the same machine, right? The Pentagon, multi-national corporations, the police." Her statement speaks to Althusser's broader thesis that all elements of a culture, whether repressive or ideological, work towards the maintenance of a singular goal – reproducing the dominant system. The narrative of *Cube* implicates the military-industrial complex through both dialogue that eliminates the possibility of any other source and images that identify the machine as a product of industrial manufacturing. Angel Mateos-Aparicio observes the

"virtually identical steel cells shaped as cubes" (2). Both the steel and the cubical shapes he highlights indicate industrial manufacturing. Natali's own description simultaneously implies industrial design and apocalypse. "I had this idea that it would be interesting to make a film that took place entirely in hell, but not in a Dante hell, but a modern one, you know symmetrical and free of all those Gothic trappings" (Natali). The symmetrical aspect that Natali mentions is another visual feature of the cube that indicates its fictitiously industrial origin. Interestingly, in the Book of Revelation, it is the post-apocalyptic New Jerusalem that is cubical. Lisboa observes that "[f]ollowing the general apocalypse due to afflict humanity's remaining descendants at the end of the world, an angel will sketch out the New Jerusalem using earthly measurements (63-4). Quoting from Revelation, 21: 15-17, Lisboa reports that "[t]he length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (63-4). Comparing the biblical narrative against Natali's, then, indicates that an industrial version of this cubical New Jerusalem is anything but utopian or heavenly, and complicity with industrial-capitalism or the industrial-military complex manifests an anti-utopian carceral hell.

However, this industrial implication is not absolute. The threat in *Cube* remains an ambiguous non-identity that annihilates individual subjects – an elusive and unidentifiable superstructure that has enclosed around its victims and threatens their every move. In *Cube* the locus of anxiety in the narrative pivots on the enigma surrounding its malevolent source. *Cube* provides neither prologue nor epilogue to explain the enigma, unlike its sequels which use prologue and epilogue to clarify the source of the cube. *Cube* prefers to leave the source of the cube more ambiguously coded in its dialogue and visual environment. Angel Mateos-Aparicio states that "the film's main symbol, the cube, substitutes (and constitutes) the universe in terms of characters, setting and plot, and the discussion of its symbolic and metaphorical meanings (no 'rational' or 'objective' signification is evident) becomes the characters' as well as the spectators' task" (6). In this regard, *Cube* acts as something of a foil to *Last Night*. Both movies leave the source of the threat shrouded in mystery, but whereas *Last Night* suggests the embrace of apocalypse by its characters, the characters in *Cube* enjoy no such social revelation. Instead, the characters become a greater threat to each other than the machine itself. By the end of the narrative, all save one have been killed, more by each other than the machine. In this regard, even for all its progressive criticism of the contemporary prison system, *Cube* is significantly reactionary in its refusal to embrace the apocalyptic environment as one in which social commune and mutual aid might emerge.

Nevertheless, its closure participates in establishing the TNW convention for apocalyptic resolution. Just as with *Last Night*, at the end of *Cube*, Kazan escapes into an ambiguous white void, a representation that carries with it all of the significance described in relation to *Last Night*'s closure. The unidentified ethereal whiteness into which he escapes remains another of the film's many ambiguities. Natali states that the mandate of the CFC was simply "fostering film makers" and that the organization does not have any covert project of fostering Canadian nationalism (Natali), but the CFC actually demanded an epilogue and a prologue, which Natali provided in a revised version of the script. In this version, the viewer meets the character "Worth in the outside world at the beginning, and then at the end you see Kazan walking into the city" (Natali). Fortunately, Natali reports that the prologue was never shot due to time constraints, and that the epilogue "was so bad that it never survived the first day of the edit" (Natali). Ironically, it is the lack of the epilogue and prologue that is one of the major differences with the sequels, and marks the first film in the trilogy as specifically Canadian; the sequels use epilogue and prologue to challenge the vilification of the military-industrial complex in the first *Cube* and re-code its nationalist implications. More significant is the nature of the only surviving character. Just as *Last Night* posits an anti-patriarchal hero with whom to identify, the only character allowed to survive at the end of *Cube* and emerge into the enlightenment of a New Jerusalem is a new model of the male hero, void of patriarchal authority or power of any kind.

Following hot on the heels of both *Cube* and *Last Night*, and closing out the pre-millennium cycle is, appropriately enough, Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999). This film has already been examined in the previous chapter, but as the bookend to the era of the TNW-proper, it will be instructive to make just a few further observations here. It is notable that in *eXistenZ*, the main characters Allegra Geller and Ted Pikul both openly embrace the apocalyptic erasure of the boundaries between technological virtual reality and reality as such, even though Pikul had to be compelled to do so by his rising romantic feelings for Geller. Just as with *Shivers* and *Last Night*, the moment of anagnorisis for Pikul's avatar, his acceptance of the apocalyptic digital world in which he is immersed, is sealed with a kiss, when he cannot resist what might be read as a Deleuzian "impulse" to satisfy his lust for this new digital experience embodied in Allegra Gellar (Image 30). Thus, following the convention of 'kissing this world goodbye,' *eXiztenZ* represents their mutual embrace of an ongoing apocalypse from which the perpetual destruction of worlds might never cease.

And this is why, I think, *eXistenZ* is so much more interesting than *The Matrix* (both of which came out in 1999) – even an extra-diegetic viewer can never be sure that they have escaped the videated dream. "'As in a dream, the pursuer never succeeds in catching up with the fugitive whom he is after, and the fugitive likewise cannot ever clearly escape his pursuer; the dream [represents a] paradox of a continuous approach to an object that nevertheless preserves a constant distance" (Žižek "Reality" 333). In this ongoing state of apocalypse, "The closing shot of Pikul's and Geller's unreadable faces give no reassurance that one can ever transcend either game or life" (Hotchkiss 18), but the pleasure of remaining within these techno-apocalyptic confines is derived from the social emancipation they engender. All three of *Last Night*, *Cube*, and *eXistenZ*, emerging in the last three years before the turn of the millennium, are obviously symptoms of a palpable *fin-de-siecle* anxiety (which adopted the moniker "Y2K" in media-space), but which also perhaps indicate unconscious millennarian desires for a new *post*-postmodern era, and with it, a New Jerusalem.

In the fifth and final full chapter that follows, I will explore what became of the TNW anarchist-apocalyptic impulses under the changed filmmaking conditions in Canada in the new millennium. While one might expect these impulses to have dissipated under the globalizing conditions of increasing cross-border collaboration, the filmmakers in question, simultaneously liberated by their new canonical status and constrained by new industrial standards, demonstrated significant virtuosity in maintaining their concern with anarchist-apocalyptic socio-political philosophies in a virtual explosion of creative energies. If, as *eXistenZ* implies, the ongoing apocalypse can be imagined as a socially or perceptually immersive gaming experience, then these new millennium films seem to answer the character at the end of the narrative who astutely asks in a panic-stricken delirium, "Are we still in the game?" As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, indeed, we are.

Chapter 5: Beyond the Toronto New Wave

The end of the 1990s, coincided with the end of the century, the end of the millennium, and, apparently, the end of the TNW. As explained previously, Cameron Bailey concludes his now canonical article "Standing in the Kitchen," with an historicist taxonomy of what he deems the significant moments in the emergence of the TNW and claims that in "1995… Mike Harris comes to town. The Tories slash funding to the OFDC and the Ontario Arts Council… The party's over" (11). And both Brenda Longfellow and Charles Tepperman outline the economic changes that resulted in the birth and decline of the TNW, or what has more broadly been recognized as an initial move from social realism to auteur cinema, and then from auteur- to producer-driven cinema in Canada. Much of this drive to more commercially viable producer-driven cinema is a symptom of the introduction in 2000 of The Canadian Feature Film Fund (Gasher, Skinner, and Lorimer 224). "The Canadian Feature Film Fund ... contributes more than $90 million annually to film development, production, distribution, and marketing" (Gasher, Skinner, and Lorimer 224). In fact, according to George Melnyk, "In the twenty years after [Bruce] McDonald's 1985 call for the recognition of his contemporaries, the established structural barriers remain, with state funding being a prerequisite for new Canadian cinema" (*One Hundred* 223). This state funding had shifted, however, from its mandate to protect Canadian cultural sovereignty towards a more market determining orientation. In this chapter, I investigate what became of the significant anarchist-apocalyptic cinema practices of the filmmakers of the Toronto New Wave and their acolytes in the new millennium under these new conditions of production and funding.

As one might expect, following 9/11, apocalyptic representations, as well as social criticism, took on a renewed significance, an accelerated urgency, and a varied aesthetic. As mentioned previously, in *Living in the End Times* (2010), Žižek is clear that "the capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point" (x), and in "Dark Tidings: Anarchist Politics in the Age of Collapse" (2009), anarchist theorist Uri Gordon similarly states that "industrial civilization is coming down. … [W]hat we are encountering is the final confrontation between neoliberal capitalism's need for infinite growth and the finite resources of a single planet" (249). Naomi Klein echoes similar concerns. In her 2014 text, subtitled "Capitalism vs. the Climate," she argues that time is rapidly running out before an imminent apocalyptic eco-collapse. "The corporate quest for natural resources will become more rapacious, more violent.

Arable land in Africa will continue to be seized to provide food and fuel to wealthier nations, unleashing a new stage of neocolonial plunder" (48). Derrick Jensen calls for open revolt. He states that "[u]nless it is stopped, the dominant culture will kill everything on the planet, or at least everything it can" (864). Under these anxious conditions of globalization, numerous critics, especially Kevin Wetmore, take note of a renewed cycle of apocalyptic disaster films including *War of the Worlds* (2005), *The Mist* (2007), and *Cloverfield* (2008) which he describes in terms of the horror embedded in the mass mediation of 9/11 that they reflect, and of the rise of torture pornography, which he suggests reflects the fear of indiscriminate violence perpetrated on members of a humanity all of whom are guilty of some sort of sin. All of these films foreground a specifically apocalyptic form of judgment by mythical forces that exceed the subject. According to Kristen Thompson, the advent of 9/11 gave rise to a "displaced form" of "apocalyptic dread" that is "conflated with a pervasive anxiety about terrorism" (25). However, this displacement did not evacuate the understanding of patriarchy as a social ill. "While Hollywood's disaster spectacles of the nineties suggest truly apocalyptic dread in their anxious imaginings of the end of the world, ... case studies of hybrid horror ... suggest more coded anxieties about family [and] patriarchy" (Thompson 25). Thus, in the reductive comparison of Canadian cinema against American, then, the anxiety regarding patriarchy remained an authority against which the filmmakers of the TNW could continue to react. In concert with conservative government policy that effected a shift away from auteur control and into the more financially-concerned hands of producers, one might expect a workerist response by these filmmakers that would amplify their anarchist-apocalyptic sentiments.

An analysis from the perspective of the established methodological framework, however, reveals the tendency by TNW filmmakers, new and old, to navigate the tension that exists between their newfound privilege as established filmmakers and their otherwise progressive anarchist impulses – a very typically middle-of-the-road Canadian position. As Marijke De Valck explains in "Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the Economization of Culture," "With the near global embracing of capitalism as the only viable organizational system of the nineties, processes of commercialization in art and culture appear to have accelerated" (85). Part of this phenomenon in Canada may stem from the fact that auteur-directors like McKellar were positioned as de facto producers of their own works based on their cinematic hegemony within the arena of popular English-Canadian cinema production. Especially with only an ancillary agenda of philosophical praxis, it must have been too tempting to finally supersede

the frustration of limited distribution and exposure. The hegemony amongst Canadian filmmakers of these TNW auteurs in the new millennium demonstrates, on a smaller scale, the unlikelihood of any vanguard, intentional or not, to 'wither away' once their authority has been established because it is simply contradictory to pragmatic self-preservation. George Melnyk explains that

> the general impact of film festivals, Canadian film awards, the growing national distribution power of such prominent Canadian companies as Alliance Atlantis, and funding from Telefilm Canada meant that at home and abroad the new generation of film-makers were not denied a chance. By 2003 it could be gleaned with some evidence that to be a new Canadian film-maker could be rewarding for one's ego if not one's pocketbook (*One Hundred* 223).

And Brenda "Longfellow, writing in 2005 about the new *From Script to Screen* regime, notes that while 'prestige directors like Egoyan and McDonald' would likely continue to find funding for their work, it was less certain that 'the creative and social environment that nurtured these directors at the beginning of their careers will be in place to facilitate the next cycle of maverick new wavers'" (Tepperman "Bureaucrats" 65). It is cynical but true that no individual is likely to voluntarily relinquish the fruits of a long labour, or at least they are not likely to abandon their very livelihood in the name of a mere philosophical conviction.

As such, contra to the political mandate these directors established in the 1980s and 1990s, they emerge in the new millennium as an example of a social pragmatism that realizes the hegemony of hegemony and the recuperation loop of repressive tolerance. As these theories indicate, if the system works to make someone comfortable enough in their prison, they will simply stop trying to break out of it. Post-millennium fare from the now 'old guard' of the TNW is far less radical, and redolent of substantial capitulation to an increasingly commercialized system (ironically the wish all along). As global capitalism exercises its infinitely recuperative power, auteurism gives way to producer-driven cinema, and production collaboration raises the stakes. The turn of the millennium becomes an ontological cusp in Canadian cinema history around which the eras of nationalist-socialism and global apocalypticism find their limits. As such, the TNW represents the end of an old system driving towards commercial grandeur more than the beginning of a new radicalism in cinema narrative and reception, although it does have claim to the latter identity as well.

Indeed, the increasingly globalized production circumstances did not completely recuperate, homogenize, and evacuate the anarchist-apocalyptic impulses of the TNW

filmmakers, but rather gave rise to an explosion and diversification of them in protean forms that accommodate the production milieu in which they emerged. As George Melnyk indicates, the "Canadian cultural identity fostered by this new generation of auteurs reflected, first, the tricky interplay of global and local influences" (*One Hundred* 223). The question that remains for future research must inquire after the fate of these anarchist-apocalyptic cinematic propensities under the conditions of increasing international collaboration in which nationalist production distinctions are increasingly untenable. Will they be subsumed by a stultifying ideology from collaborative sources, or worse, be swept away by an apocalyptic nuclear strike or eco-catastrophe? Or will they preferably be mitigated by an anarchist-driven change in the social fabric prompted by cinematic revelation? A point of departure in exploring the answers to these questions is available in the films produced by TNW filmmakers Don McKellar, Bruce McDonald, Sara Polley, Bruce LaBruce, Vincenzo Natali, and Peter Mettler in the new millennium to date. Rather than producing spectacular narratives of mass destruction, Canadian apocalypse films took a different tack, and continued the tradition of focusing on microcosmic social situations against a larger apocalyptic backdrop.

Neo-McKellar

As might be expected by now, McKellar was, of course, at the centre of this continuing wave. Stepping outside of his insular Toronto prospectus, McKellar began the new millennium with a performance in Gary Burns's *waydowntown* (2000). Although "Gary Burns describes his work as not directly influenced by other filmmakers" (in the context of a discussion of Bruce McDonald and Don Mckellar), he readily admits that his films are at least "sanctioned by their successes" (Gruben 297). George Melnyk argues that "[t]here is a certain parallel to McDonald's trilogy [*Roadkill*, *Highway 61*, and *Hard Core Logo*] in the Burns trilogy [of *his* earliest films], with its youthful actors and a generational imagery, and his portrayal of absurdity and acerbic social commentary" (*One Hundred* 222). And yet, the similarity runs deeper still. *Waydowntown* is a film that at least touches on the pervasive nature of apocalyptic sensibilities. Similar to *Cube*, *waydowntown* is concerned with the stultifying effects of life working in the industrial labyrinth of corporate urban centres and the interconnected network of commercial malls, in this case of Calgary's infamous downtown Plus Fifteen Network. According to Fredric Jameson in "Future City," whose prognostications certainly apply to the world of *waydowntown*'s Plus Fifteen setting, "'[*i*]*n the end*, there will be little else for us to do but shop'. The world in which

we were trapped is in fact a shopping mall; the windless closure is the underground network of tunnels hollowed out for the display of images" (77, my emphasis). George Melnyk describes the world of *waydowntown* as a site of apocalyptic corporate flaneurism, "a world in which people walk rather than drive everywhere [and where urban sites designed to sustain human populations] are turned into dystopias that are socially dysfunctional, intolerant, alienating, polluted, and controlled…. This world is the world only for the living dead" (*Film* 226). In order to attempt some sort of illusory control over their economic incarceration within this environment, the corporate employee characters in the film participate in a running bet to see who can remain within it the longest.

McKellar agrees that the lead character in *waydowntown* (in which McKellar plays a comically repressed and suicidal office stooge) is certainly reminiscent of his Patrick in *Last Night*. "Absolutely. [The characters are] all trapped within the system, and trying to find their own place within it" (McKellar Personal interview). And just like the characters in Natali's *Cube*, "[t]hey're literally trapped in *waydowntown* [but they also] trapped themselves" (McKellar Personal interview). George Melnyk observes that "[i]n all three [of Burns's earliest] films there is a claustrophobic sense of being trapped — in a car, in the kitchen, or in an office — and wanting to get out into something different, but there isn't anything different out there (*One Hundred* 222). Thus, Burns's film stages Richard Day's own critique of exodus praxis, cited earlier, in which "those who leave must have somewhere to go; as Deleuze and Guattari are careful to point out, no line of flight can be continued forever" (Day 210). As Day concludes, "[t]he question, then, is: how it is possible [to] re-territorialize sustainable alternatives rather than return to the status quo or slide out into individual psychosis/community self-destruction?" (210). *Waydowntown* ends with the protagonist Tom imagining the apocalyptic destruction of the city by an invisible super-villain who lifts it asunder from the earth. "The basic fabric of civilization is about to break down. ... They'll think it's the end, the apocalypse, the last blast." Anticipating Žižek's five psychological stages in the process of apocalypse (*End Times* xi-xii), Tom concludes "I guess everyone will handle it in their own way; breakdowns, suicide, denial."[70] Thus relocating into the narrative the sentiments that seem to be the

[70] Such a sentiment reaches its apex in the same year with another TNW outsider. In a short clearly inspired by the works of Lipsett, Guy Maddin's *Heart of the World* (2000) fully realizes the critique of industrial capitalism, depicting an anthropomorphized earth on its apocalyptic deathbed that can only be saved with a heart transplant effected by a matriarchal heroine who rejects the myth of romance in favour of a practical financial marriage.

underlying thematic of *Last Night*, in which the message of social transformation is aimed at the audience before they experience their own apocalypse, Tom states, "Oh man, I should've gotten out sooner." However, in its aperture, the narrative of *waydowntown* remains ambiguous as to whether Tom's musings are applicable to the situation of urban alienation, the psychological apocalypse it engenders symbolized in the city's apocalyptic rise from the earth, or both.

Burns's other identifiably apocalyptic works include *A Problem with Fear* (2003) and *Radiant City* (2006). In the former, the footprint of progressive anarchist-apocalyptic sentiment from the TNW proper seems clear. Paranoid neurotic Laurie witnesses a series of increasingly worrisome local catastrophes which appear to foment within his imagination. "When accidents start to happen all around him, Laurie becomes convinced that he is the cause. An elevator plummets to the ground, an escalator chews up a woman, a man is hit while crossing the street – all before his eyes" (Gruben 307). The logical conclusion of the catastrophic escalation within the narrative would ultimately resolve into apocalypse. However, echoing anarchist sentiments of personal agency, and the power of philosophical praxis, Laurie simply overrides his emotional self-flagellation and refuses any further catastrophic anxiety. The narrative ends ambiguously with what might seem to be an ongoing apocalypse in the form of a continued acceleration of catastrophe, but one in which Laurie has embraced the situation and seeks actualization within it.

Radiant City is less optimistic. Its title refers to a late twentieth-century global gentrification: Fredric Jameson explains that "obviously Le Corbusier was both an architect and, with the Radiant Cities, Chandigarh and the plan for Algiers, an 'urban planner'" ("Future" 65). *Radiant City*'s mixed-documentary narrative articulates Jameson's contention that "the well-known decay-of-the-inner-city-rise-of-the suburb is palpable, if variable ... whose spread all over the world can serve as something of an epidemiological map of Americanization, or postmodernization, or globalization" ("Future" 69). The film opens with the same overhead shots of apocalyptic industrial blight as in Mettler's *Petropolis* (to which I will return below), followed shortly thereafter with a scathing indictment by a city expert of the spiritual stultification induced by contemporary urban sprawl. According to Patricia Gruben in "A Problem with Rules: Gary Burns" (2007), the remainder of the film "becomes something of a battleground between the experts, who are universally contemptuous of suburbia, and the residents, who become defensive and even angry about their choices" (309). Within the

diegesis, in a mixed language of *The Book of Revelation* and anarchist philosophy, Mark Kingswell states that

> [h]umans have always found meaning by living together with each other, and, in fact, if you go back millennia, many political theorists from Aristotle on think that community defines us as who we are, and without community, we're less than ourselves. We're either beasts or gods, he says. Well since most of us aren't gods, we'd probably end up being beasts if we don't have other people around.

Kingswell's words invite comparison with Natali's *Cube* in which excessive human proximity engenders alienation and fatal violence. It is no surprise then that the film also articulates sentiments that view the suburban city as a form of spatial organization that begets social intolerance and that its chain link aesthetic is really only suitable for prisons. Eventually, Kingwell states,

> What I love about suburbs, especially the newer ones, the more cinematic style suburbs, the ones that you feel like you're in a movie even if you're not. You know, you're walking down the sidewalk, there's nobody around or you're driving down one of those huge corporate owned streets with a name that you can't remember. There's nobody to be seen. There's something kind of bizarre and *post-apocalyptic* about those things, so it's no surprise when you see something like a zombie movie that starts in just that kind of suburb.[71]

These sentiments are countered with a solution that requires the *embrace* of apocalypse. Neo-anarchist James Howard Kuntsler asks

> What is the destiny of suburbia? The dirty secret of our economy for the last couple of decades is that it's really been about creating ever more of this fabric, and *we're now reaching the end of that cycle* because we're now entering an era of energy scarcity that is not going to permit us to live this way. ... The future is going to compel us to live differently whether people like it or not, ... and this way of living is coming off the menu.

Nevertheless, the song in the community theatre performance in which the ersatz suburban family father performs quite candidly claims that "[w]hen Armageddon comes on its merry way, everybody here will gladly stay, happy to be facing judgment day ... in summer." In the end, however, the film falls away from its own critical perspective. Enacting observations by both Žižek and Gordon of the ways in which ostensibly progressive organizations such as GMO's actually perpetuate the commoditization of the "green" movement as patriarchal culture desperately attempts to incorporate the impending apocalypse into its logic in a bid to "buy

[71] See George Melnyk's *Film and the City: The Urban Imaginary in Canadian Cinema* (Athabasca University Press, 2014), p. 220, 226.

time, prolonging the period of manageable crisis so as to allow hierarchical institutions to adapt away from capitalism" (U. Gordon 252), an urban planner gets the last word: "a certain type of growth ... is actually sustainable, and that's 'new urbanism/smart growth.'" The film closes with a photographic still of the ersatz family infinitely and indefinitely frozen in time in this uncannily harrowing image of suburbia.

Although McKellar did not collaborate on either of these last two of Burns's works, he was involved in another arguably apocalyptic work set in yet another city. TNW filmmaker Thom Fitzgerald's *The Event* (2003) allegorizes the tragic events of 9/11 in the context of an otherwise virile young gay man, Matt Shapiro (played by McKellar), facing the ravages of declining health due to AIDS. Much like the works of John Greyson, Fitzgerald's first film of celebrated significance was also concerned with the socially alienating effects of patriarchal culture on homosexual identities: *The Hanging Garden* (1997) was just as apocalyptic in its narrative ellipsis in which the main character slides forwards and backwards through time between two impossibly simultaneous developmental trajectories of trauma, much like the narrative presented by John of Patmos in the *Book of Revelation*. The narrative of *The Event* is divided into three parts, although the narrative is also elliptical. The first demonstrates Shapiro's gregarious homosexual lifestyle in an emancipated New York. The second follows his diagnosis and begins the process of representing his physical decline. The third follows his decision to commit assisted-suicide before the ravages of the illness rob him of social dignity through its extreme abjection. In a hauntingly unassuming scene at the moment between sections two and three, the screen frames a wide-angled shot of the New York cityscape, including the twin towers, and then they just fade away, followed by the caption "September 2001." This historicist point of reference works to foreground the pettiness of social custom in the narrative, especially in a scene in which Shapiro's uncle reacts with extreme homophobia to the news that his nephew is dying of AIDS. Following his tribulation, all of his closest family and friends undergo judgment for murder by legal professionals. However, they are *all* implicated in his assisted suicide, a ploy they contrived to ensure no single one of them could be accused of murder. The revelation of the horrors of plague seems to be the film's strongest theme, but no small part of its thematic is also concerned with a deeply maudlin harbinger that indicates just how troubling the embrace of apocalypse must be.

While this might be read as a rejection of the embrace of apocalypse, it might also be read as a form of anarchist pragmatism, similar to the philosophical considerations of Matthew

Wilson in *Rules Without Rulers* that in some ways celebrates the embrace of apocalypse while recognizing that such a change will not be without tribulation. More to the point, Fitzgerald's *The Event*, and particularly Greyson's earlier *Zero Patience* (1993), might both be read as forms of anarchist philosophical praxis. Robé states that

> AIDS activism, by default, had to be lifestyle activism since the disease and responses to it affected people's ability to live. But unlike the video guerrillas where lifestyle trumped overt political activism, politics was at the forefront of AIDS activism because people's lives were on the line. The negligence of hierarchical federal and state bureaucracy resulted in the deaths of untold numbers of people, leading AIDS activists and others to prioritize anarchist-inflected media activism that could force the government's hand to take action (120).

Moreover, if a progressive apocalypse is the ongoing dissolution/reconstruction of the entire socio-political structure that determines political relations, then, admittedly, to overcome the capitalist recuperation loop identified by Marcuse and Day, the first stage must of necessity be significantly cataclysmic. Representation in cinema of the embrace of such a situation can be seen as a form of praxis that lies at the intersection of "lifestyle anarchism" and bona fide activism, a difference clearly foregrounded by Robé, but in which he does not diminish the value of the former (as Murray Bookchin has been infamously wont to do).

Zombies!

AIDS-related apocalypse narratives have long been associated with the seemingly relentless rise of zombie narratives with which the epidemic coincided. For example, in *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture*, Kyle Bishop comments that "instead of just being a horror movie, *28 Days Later* [2002] crosses the genre into science fiction: it *could* happen. In fact, Boyle calls the movie 'a warning for us as well as an entertainment.' This viral plague is most easily a reference to AIDS" (28). AIDS or no, perhaps the most ambitious apocalyptic co-production in Canadian film history is the zombie-based *Resident Evil* series. Apocalyptic in the depiction of a zombie-plague, initiated by a corrupt corporation in the process of creating military-grade biological automatons, the second of these movies takes the term "Apocalypse" as its subtitle. The first film, released in 2002, was a massive joint-venture amongst The United Kingdom, Germany, France and Canada. With an estimated budget of USD$33,000,000, the film enjoyed a box office gross of USD$102,441,078, rendering it one of the most financially successful Canadian films of all time. Its next two

immediate sequels, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004) and *Resident Evil: Extinction* (2007) also met with commercial success.

As a Canadian co-production, along with such countries as France and Germany, but with no U.S. contribution, one cannot help but take note of the ironic humour embedded in the very name of the series. There is, ostensibly, an evil resident in Canada, a country that has characterized itself as infiltrated by American media interests and ideology with such movies as *Videodrome*, *Highway 61*, *Cube*, and *Last Night*; a country whose box office receipts are the only ones in the world considered part of the domestic gross by American distribution companies. "Chris Byford writes of this Canadian detour through the American other: '*Highway 61* makes it quite clear that our particular context always/already includes American popular culture'" (Gittings *Canadian* 154). In this extra-diegetic allegorical relationship to the narrative, the globalization of American media interests is coded as a wholly invasive apocalyptic force. However, the films' narrative contents are not particularly innovative. Taking a premise from a popular video game, and incorporating newer conventions of the zombie genre largely attributable to Peter Boyle's *28 Days Later*, the films trade on the types of large-scale spectacle that are more typical of contemporary American apocalypse blockbusters.

There is, however, one particularly disturbing scene in the first film of the series that might indicate at least intimations of a progressive-anarchist dissolution of a patriarchal military hero, and that makes (probably inadvertent) intertextual reference to Natali's *Cube*. The first victim of the carceral system in *Cube*, Alderson, survives his examination of the first three rooms but is diced by a mesh of metal wire in the fourth. Alderson's annihilation is visually depicted by the character's body splitting in half down the centre before completely collapsing (Image 32). The visual split of the Alderson character, centred and foregrounded in the frame, and slowly initiating the character's dissolution, hints at an identity fragmentation for its victim in an environment in which it is fatally rather than symbolically split into its two post-mirror-stage identities, although Alderson could hardly be understood as a patriarchal hero. In *Resident Evil* (2002), one of the soldiers attempting to escape the deadly labyrinth beneath Raccoon City is similarly "diced" by a lazer version of the wire trap in *Cube* (Image 33). The scene offers one of the film's few progressive criticisms underpinning the equally carceral environment of the narrative in which identities are systematically annihilated by the machinations of corporate greed.

A perhaps more innovative post-millennium collaborative narrative that participates with the zeitgeist of zombie narratives is *Blindness* (2008), the first Canadian film to open the Cannes Film Festival since 1980 (Marano). Once again, McKellar is at the centre of the production. Even under the auspices of Brazilian *City of God* director Fernando Mereilles, Portuguese author José Saramago would only permit the screenplay to be adapted specifically by McKellar who also plays the minor role of "the thief" in the film ("TIFF Interview"). In order to pay due respect to this singular honour, "Mckellar was consumed for much of the first decade of the 21st-century with the screenplay adaptation" (Pike *Canadian* 142). Also in the film are Canadian actresses Tracy Wright and Sandra Oh (both of whom appeared with McKellar in *Last Night*), Mexican actor Gael Garcia Bernal, Brazilian actress Alice Braga, and a host of American superstars comprised of Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, and Danny Glover.

In its disturbing narrative, an unknown urban centre, and presumably the world, is taken by a runaway plague that renders all humans blind, except the single protagonist identified only as "the doctor's wife." In "Genre, Culture and the Semiosphere: New Horror Cinema and Post-9/11," Angela Ndalianis explicitly identifies such a narrative as maintaining membership in the post-millennium zombie subgenre through its narrative of epidemic. "[S]ince 2001, the return of the living dead is not so much the result of exposure to high levels of radiation, but rather, exposure to a virus" (Ndalianis 13). Since most of the characters are untrained for the exigencies of life under the conditions of blindness, the motif of fecal abjection – a standard convention of the contemporary zombie narrative – emerges profoundly. In the source text "Saramago invites us into yet another city where it is impossible to move without bumping into other people's bodily wastes. He reproduces third world conditions by turning a European City in the overly developed world into an over urbanized favela or slum" (Yaeger 16). In addition, "No one has a job because without a system for the blind to communicate the banking system shuts down, as well as all sources of water, fuel, transportation, and food. Filled with trash and wrecked cars, thoroughfares disappear" (Yaeger 16). These third world conditions are mapped onto a vision of humanity as a population of zombies stumbling blindly through their own bodily abjection reminiscent of Romero's original 'Living Dead' zombie trilogy.

> The trilogy established a new subgenre of horror that engaged with social reality through allegorical means, particularly offering an apocalyptic view of the world that was critical of humanity and its failure to establish stable and effective social structures. The iconic image of the living dead ... in these films speaks to a humanity *en masse* that

> has become 'zombified' under the repressive influence of ideology, social and economic conditions, and political and military control (Ndalianis 14).

Thus, the film openly criticizes such sites of oppression that are the typical targets of anarchist praxis as political and military control, as well as presenting the horrors of capitulation to a patriarchal despot who unambiguously names himself the "King of Ward 3." "In Saramago, then, blindness leads to dictatorial rule, whether by the sighted over the blind or by the ruthless over the meek (within the ranks of the blind)" (Lisboa 97). Unfortunately, the only solution is open revolt and murder followed with a cleansing by fire.

Nevertheless, within its apocalyptic narrative, *Blindness* demonstrates progressive consideration of a number of identifiably anarchist philosophical concerns. Corralled into makeshift quarantines, social harmony quickly finds itself at the mercy of a dictatorial fascist who begins trading acquiescence to rape for limited food supplies. His despotism is closely associated with capitalism. His extortion of the other inmates' assets can only be an exercise in the exertion of blind authority. The items he collects have no use-value in this state of apocalypse. Thus, he demonstrates a sort of commodity fetishism in believing that possession of these items will endow him with genuine mastery over the others incarcerated with him. Eventually his demand that the women be used as sexual commodities further exposes the horrors of capitalist reification taken to its extreme. Moreover, in the role of "The Thief," and under the conditions of apocalypse, McKellar's character announces, "We're all equal here now ... I don't respond well to that voice of authority," even though the doctor's voice of authority is depicted as a benevolent foil to that of the "King." In collecting limited assets to trade for food, he asks that "each give according to what they have and all that." This collection of assets to trade stages Richard Day's critique of the politics of demand and the hegemony of hegemony as the inmates capitulate to the despot's rule by threat of violence. Even so, under the horrifying conditions of quarantine, the patriarchal authority embedded in the symbolic order loses all meaning. The doctor makes a speech about what is left of morality in the context of selling women for food, followed by one wife refusing to have her choices of morality dictated by her husband. Thus, both the doctor and the Asian husband are painfully 'cured' of their patriarchal-masculinist pride. And upon vanquishing the "King" and burning the prison down from within (i.e. embracing the apocalypse), the doctor's wife leads its inmates out of its confines and in a symbolically charged revelation announces, "We're free!" Most importantly, in the context of

philosophical praxis, one could hardly think of the film as entertainment. Its only purpose is to prompt philosophical reflection, a mission it certainly accomplishes.

Ultimately, however, *Blindness* demonstrates the flattening of social criticism under the collaborative conditions of globalization in which it was produced. For example, in the wife's inexplicable negligence to act against despotism, the entire moral and emotional weight of events within the diegesis falls upon the shoulders of the doctor, structurally capitulating to the naturalization of his patriarchal emotional and moral strength, a position which the narrative affords him unambiguously. And attached to its otherwise progressive critique of an alienating patriarchal empire, Patricia Yaeger sees a racial commentary in the peculiar manifestation of the disease. "In *Blindness* a city of bourgeois Europeans ... is struck by a highly contagious disease that blinds each resident instantly. … [T]his disease's colors mimic the shades of legislating empire; its subjects see nothing but whiteness" (Yaeger 15). In this context, the enlightening wash to whiteness at the moment of revelation in both *Cube* and *Last Night* is resignified to represent the white-washing of critical vision and the loss of sight as an imposed penance for remaining wilfully blind to the alienating social conditions of capitalism so vehemently criticized in *Cube*. The intended theme of the film is perhaps best summarized in the last sentences of the original novel's penultimate paragraph, in which the doctor opines, "I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see" (Saramago 326). While the very premise of the narrative seems to preclude any sort of mirror-stage prosopopoeiac identification with the apocalyptic reality, at least its cinematic realization seems to invite the viewer to identify with this philosophy of blindness as seeing.

McKellar cut these last lines of the novel from the screenplay, apparently to avoid being thematically heavy-handed, which was astute, but also having the effect of ending the narrative on a recuperative note rather than a philosophical one. Unlike films such as *Cube* or *Last Night* which refuse to depict the reactionary New Jerusalem described by Lisboa, *Blindness* concludes with the protagonists having survived the ordeal and beginning to recover their sight, now endowed with a morally rejuvenated *in*sight, "an opportune lesson well-learnt and a new ethic of non-repetition of past mistakes (including moral recklessness, social dissipation, ungodliness and the hubris of knowledge/power run-amok)" (Lisboa xxv). According to David Pike,

> If the hellish and Hobbesian world of the barracks in which the blind victims of a mysterious virus are relegated by the nameless authorities suggests, especially in Brazilian director Mereille's vision of the film, an image of unfettered global capitalism, in the select community of survivors invited into the house of the middle-aged couple at the end of the film represents a more utopian image of the way globalization can unite a like-minded collection of individuals approved by fire (*Canadian* 143).

To be certain, even the last line of the novel reminds us that "[t]he city was still there" (Saramago 326). That is to say that rather than embrace apocalypse, the narrative of *Blindness*, like so many of its reactionary Hollywood counterparts, resolves into mere survival of the apocalyptic event and the intimation of a return to normative patriarchal class divisions complete with a visual metaphor in which the protagonists return to the secure bourgeois comforts of the doctor's luxury apartment high above the abject rabble in the streets from which they are now safely separated, the same metaphor McKellar deployed in *Last Night*.

In this way, the film works very much as a reactionary foil to McKellar's more progressive *Last Night*. In *Last Night*, apocalypse is fully embraced but its cause is displaced from such patriarchal institutions as capitalism onto an unidentified heavenly source; in a complete structural inversion, *Blindness* places responsibility for the apocalypse squarely onto the shoulders "of unfettered global capitalism," but it is resolved and overcome in a reactionary fantasy of redemption and a return to 'normalcy.' As such, McKellar's participation with the film appears to indicate that he has allowed his anarchist-apocalyptic impulses to be superseded by the recuperative effects of globally capitalist collaboration ventures. However, hidden in the narrative is at least a trace of his former radicalism. "The thief" character (whom he plays himself) is absent from the final cohort of survivors having been killed off much earlier in the narrative to escape the agony of a gangrenous infection brought on by an injury sustained due to retaliation for sexual assault. That is to say that the patriarchally-inflected behaviours of misogyny and sexual assault are rewarded in the narrative with death for the character McKellar reserved for himself to perform – shades of the execution of the Cronenberg character in *Last Night* at the hands of McKellar's own adaptation.

Perhaps McKellar had become the very cinematic patriarch that he allegorically attempted to kill off in Cronenberg and simply handed his anarchist-apocalyptic cause off to Sarah Polley, a cause especially evident in her participation in Zack Snyder's 2004 remake of a more literal zombie narrative, Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. Polley can certainly be deemed a member of the TNW in her own right even if she is something of a latecomer to her directorial

accolades. Like so many of the TNW auteurs, Polley was born and raised in Toronto. Moreover, she maintains professional affiliations with many members of the group, boasting performances in such films as Egoyan's *Exotica* and *The Sweet Hereafter*, McKellar's *Last Night*, Natali's *Splice*, Thom Fitzgerald's *The Hanging Garden* and *The Event*, Cronenberg's *eXistenZ*, and Clement Virgo's *The Planet of Junior Brown*. With such a lengthy list of affiliations, one might well deem Polley the de facto 'glue' of the group that I have otherwise assigned to McKellar and Mettler. It is just as likely that her affiliations engendered mutual socio-political influences as well. In fact, "[i]n 2005, she and Don McKellar lobbied the federal government to change the way it supports Canadian films, recommending that theatres be forced to devote more screen time to Canadian films and their trailers" (McIntosh). The fact that no such action was taken rings of Richard Day's understandings of the "politics of demand" in which appeal to an entrenched political authority only works to shore up its power. Nevertheless, "In 2009, Polley withdrew her name from a two-minute short film she had directed for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada after learning that it was part of a marketing campaign for Becel Margarine. She stated that she had 'never actively promoted any corporate brand, and cannot do so now'" (McIntosh). More to the point, in response to his own question which inquires whether it is reasonable to "consider Sarah's star turn in *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) to have any relevance to Canadian popular cinema," David Pike answers that "it wouldn't be hard to see Polley's outspoken social consciousness and well-known left-wing views motivating her choice of roles (and filmmakers' choice of casting her) in a way that inflects her character" ("Across"). And if there was any question as to *Dawn*'s status as a Canadian film, a full six of the seven production patrons listed in the credits are Canadian, including the OFDC, the Toronto Film and Television Office, Toronto Film Studios, Panno Therapeutic Inc. (located in Toronto), and the community of Caledon East (a suburb of Toronto).

Dawn opens with the same sort of suburban blight criticized in Burns's *Radiant City* where Kingswell indicates we might well expect a zombie apocalypse to commence. These images create a retrospective cinematic continuity of an apocalyptic landscape (the type to fear rather than embrace) that stretches from Egoyan's *The Adjuster* through to Burns's *Radiant City* and Mettler's *Petropolis* (Images 34 through 41). From this point of departure, the narrative plays out very much as one might expect. A motley crew of random survivors take refuge in a shopping mall where their interpersonal interactions create tenuous bonds and inevitable tensions, some of which result in infection and the need to enforce summary confinement,

expulsion, or execution. Such a dynamic clearly preconceives the type of inevitable power relations that are portrayed in *Blindness*, but there is a more redemptive social aspect to the *Dawn* narrative that seems exclusionary at the conclusion of *Blindness* whereas it represents community in *Dawn*. Identities in this community are largely defined by capitalist vocation as they were with the confined characters in *Cube*. There is amongst them a cop, a thief, a nurse, a Best Buy salesman, an organ player, and a trio of comically inexperienced security guards. Just as in *Cube*, these capitalist vocational identities prove illusory in the face of their new social reality, and the cop and security guards prove to be the most malevolent and dangerous to the group. The former salesman emerges as the de facto group leader who otherwise laments his failings as a husband and father – an anti-patriarch much like Patrick in *Last Night*.

As the characters settle in and succumb to the material comforts made available within the confines of the shopping mall, the montage of scenes depicting as much is accompanied by a generically incompatible "lounge-crooner" version of Disturbed's "Down with the Sickness." The original song is cacophonic and aggressive which creates an ironic contrast to the languid version heard here, a musical metaphor of the behaviour of both the zombies and the survivors respectively, previously so frenetic, but now mutually desultory in social homeostasis. This musical interjection extra-diegetically encourages the characters/viewer to rest at ease with the new diseased social order, to be "down with the sickness," by marrying its leisurely cadence with lyrics that encourage apocalyptic embrace. By the end of *Dawn*, the group decides that any hopeful future requires that they not remain separated from the infected masses, but to effectively merge with its populace, even if it is a traumatic and violent merger.

This conclusion of *Dawn* fully realizes the visual conventions of a mirror-stage prosopopoeiac identification with apocalypse. The narrative refuses to realize the budding heterosexual pairbond between Polley's character and the charmingly benevolent salesman which they can only effect in an apocalyptic visual commune that otherwise sets them apart. In the final scenes of the film, he is fatally bitten and chooses to remain marooned on the shores of the city. As she sails away, they lock eyes in an oscillating series of melodramatic shot/reverse-shot cuts before he shoots himself to avoid succumbing to the zombie hordes. According to Deleuze, this model of viewing perspective is central to identification for the cinematic observer.

> Jean Mitry noted the importance of one of the functions of the 'shot-reverse shot' complementarity: when it intersects with that other complementarity, 'observer-observed'. First of all we are showing someone watching, then what he sees. But we

> cannot even say that the first image is objective and the second subjective. For what is seen, in the first image, is already subjective, observing. And, in the second image, the observed may be seen for itself, no less than for the observant character (Deleuze 72).

At the beginning of *Dawn*, Polley's character is framed from behind as she looks out in a horrified stupor upon the emerging apocalyptic landscape. Placing the viewer behind her creates cinematic layers of shared subjective perspectival overlap from the observer-viewer to the character-observer to the objectified landscape (to borrow Mitry's language) (Image 42). Framing the narrative at the other end, Polley's character appears face-on with the American flag displayed prominently beside her as she looks sympathetically back at the apocalyptic personage embodied in the new patriarchal hero who must be violently absorbed into this landscape (Image 43). By staring at him in a shot/reverse-shot subjective view, the viewer is placed in both her position as well as his, locating the point of view as one that either identifies with the apocalypse (her) or embodies it (him). He also faces the camera before the viewer is afforded his subjective perspective of her, proffering a fully realized mirror-stage identification with him while the zombie hordes close in from behind (Images 42-44). The emotive aspect of the narrative begs the viewer to stay there with him, to become part of the 'nightmare' from which the movie has created so much anxious desire to escape, thus appropriating the conventional melodramatic romance of the two star-crossed lovers into the cause of an apocalyptic embrace. The final image of her looking back at him as he shoots himself is reminiscent of both the cinematography and narrative closure at the end of *Videodrome* when Max, prompted by the video-mediated image of Nikki Brand, accepts the inevitable corporeal dissolution required to emerge into the "new flesh." When the image sequence cuts back to an objective view of Polley's character, who has now sympathetically identified with an embodiment of apocalypse, the American flag is noticeably cut from the shot by a re-framing that indicates her new subjectivity *sans* state or American patriarchy (Images 42-45). Cumulatively, although in a most cinematically traumatic way, these formal and narrative representations both suggest an embrace of apocalypse and a rejection of patriarchal normativity.

The closing credits of the film are shockingly interspersed with staccato image cuts that further create their own narrative coda. Older images from the character Steve's camera footage demonstrating his patriarchal debauchery are intermixed with cuts apparently filmed by the survivors over the original footage that chronicle their boat journey to an island they

hope is free from infection. It turns out to be overrun as well, but the survivors must dock since the boat is out of gas and they have long since exhausted their food and water supplies. Thus, using the now established horror convention of ostensibly found footage, the film cinematically intermingles the survivors on the boat with both the vanquished culture and then with the new zombie culture to which they must inevitably succumb – an apocalyptic cultural conflation via media images. Perhaps it is no surprise that Polley's character comes to this end upon the water. According to Deleuze, in reference to another film, "[i]t is the water which revealed the hideousness of bourgeois bodies beneath their clothes ... [W]hat the French school found in water was the promise or implication of another state of perception ... A more delicate and vaster perception, molecular perception, … peculiar to a 'cine-eye'" (80). From this perspective, the narrative closure might be read as a relief from the tension and anxiety wrapped up in any hope of avoiding the zombie culture, and as the cine-context in which the viewer's perception is emancipated from its bourgeois-ideological bonds.

Understood through the lens of the levels of anarchist-apocalypse analysis, *Dawn* is progressive in its representation of the apocalypse as actually occurring and as ongoing. This apocalypse is not displaced either; it is caused by capitalist excess (or at least it is implied that it is). Furthermore, it represents a fully realized prosopopoeiac identification, and it refuses a narrative return to 'normalcy'; when the survivors reach the island it is just as infested with zombies. This finale is the moment of absolute narrative closure beyond which the viewer is not provided any further visual data regarding the destiny of the survivors – an anarchist refusal to represent, or even imagine, a recuperated future. Unfortunately, as one might expect from the appropriation of a Romero narrative into blockbuster spectacle for the capitalist purposes of profit, there is just as much reactionary fare within the narrative. For example, the infant born of the miscegenating couple is depicted as a horrifically monstrous aberration, even more than the lumbering adult zombies surrounding the mall. And it is hard to overlook the fact that at the moment of prosopopoeia, rather than give himself over to the zombie hordes, the benevolent group patriarch shoots himself in the head in an absolute refusal to join the zombie ranks. Such an interpretation is thus the very opposite of Max's embrace of the new flesh at the closure of *Videodrome*, unless it is read as the eradication of a newly emerging patriarchal character against which a progressive anarchist-apocalypse must always guard. Ultimately the transition to an apocalyptic culture is both visually and narratively represented

as wholly horrific, but perhaps *Dawn* works rather like *Last Night* on the level of an extra-diegetic wake-up call to the audience to recognize their own social biases and repressions.

The post-TNW fascination with the zombie apocalypse maintains with McKellar's early-career collaborator Bruce McDonald and his *Pontypool* (2008) in a return to more specifically and identifiably Canadian production conditions, and even more specifically Canadian-inflected social concerns.

> *Pontypool* does not have [nationalist] identity problems. The writer, Tony Burgess (who adopted his own novel), and director are Canadians, as are lead actors Steven McHattie and Lisa Houle. The film was shot on location in Ontario, in Pontypool as well as Toronto. Most importantly, the money behind the film was Canadian. But beyond the birthplace of the wallet holders, Bruce McDonald's film is Canadian for other reasons too. The fact that the filmmaker is a well-known Canadian auteur brings to *Pontypool* a local perspective rooted in his deep connection to Canadian space (Subissati 36-7).

Perhaps the film was inevitable. According to Aaron Taylor, McDonald "began experimenting with Brownie 8mm cameras during his adolescence in the Toronto suburbs of Rexdale. An early love of horror inspired [a] no-budget zombie short that he filmed with his friends" (203). In *Pontypool*, a small Ontario town is overrun by its own zombified populace while local radio journalists find themselves bewildered and confused by the contradictory media feed of information that is their only tangible link to the world outside of their makeshift radio cubicle refuge. In yet another specifically Canadian-inflected narrative turn, the film locates the transmission of supernatural infection in particularly Canadian linguistic terms; the only recourse to avoiding randomly infected English words from "a virus that attacks the socio-cultural instead of the physical" is to speak French (Subissati 43). *Pontypool*'s explicit denial of American culture in the diegesis of the film, its vilification of British media, and its underscoring of French-English language relations, might be read as both the most Canadian horror film of all time, and a specific rejection of the American hegemony and British colonialism that both Northrop Frye and George Melnyk argued renders Canadian identity doubly-colonized (Melnyk *One Hundred* 7). At the end of the narrative proper, global military forces ascend on the rising epidemic and the film ends with a countdown to a clinical military strike – an effort to eradicate the plague that condemns the protagonists to death. According to Subissati, "the tragedy of the film is that [the protagonist's] creative solution [of rejecting the established authority of language embedded in the symbolic order] was quashed by the military before they could use it to save Pontypool" (Subissati 42). Thus, Subissati concludes

that "if Canadian culture is to survive, it must do so organically and on its own terms, free of governmental intervention," an interpretation that might by now be readily recognized as a particularly anarchist critique (42).

Aesthetically, *Pontypool* is unremarkable. For a premise that pivots on infectious language, the dialogue of the ersatz shock-talk radio announcer played by Canadian mainstay Stephen McHattie is decidedly banal.[72] However, in typically Canadian fashion, the thematic innovations and the innovations on established convention are substantial. At least the Canadian inflections are palpable. The opening scene occurs in a pre-morning-sunlight blizzard which introduces the motif of small-town isolation. Like *Last Night*, *Pontypool* ties the alienation theme directly to the need for apocalyptic change. "In an especially candid and honest moment, Grant tells Sydney how long Canadian winters make him feel isolated and confined: 'these late winters I feel like I'm in the basement of the world. It's so cold and so dark'" (Subissati 39). Also in the film, multi-culturalism is both foregrounded and parodied. The zombie-infection is carried and solved in a metaphor of displaced English-French linguistic cultural negotiation. Lastly, the three protagonists find themselves besieged by zombies within the claustrophobic confines of their makeshift broadcasting booth in the basement of a local church, a setting set in opposition to what Sean Fitzpatrick refers to as "the madness of the world outside their radio station" (61). In perhaps the paradigmatic cinematic representation of what Northrop Frye has coined a particularly Canadian 'garrison mentality,' the narrative subversively moves to challenge this paradigm. According to Subissati, "the main tension underpinning the film [is that] the barricades that protect are also the walls that isolate and entrap" (39). Beyond these stereotype markers of 'Canadianness,' the film provides three other phenomena significant to an anarchist-apocalyptic reading of it.

The first of these is a mid-narrative opportunity for prosopopoeiac mirror-stage identification with another embodiment of the apocalypse. Young production assistant Laurel-Ann Drummond is characterized as likable, innocent, and gregarious, a "homecoming hero" who "did a tour of duty in Afghanistan not too long ago." Sadly, she is the first of the three central protagonists to suffer from the infection. The other two, Grant and Sydney, barricade themselves inside the announcer's booth as poor Laurel-Ann succumbs to dementia and self-flagellation. During this process, there are several moments when she stares into the camera

[72] McHattie also appeared in the low-budget Canadian film *A Little Bit Zombie* (2012) – another Canadian actor with an apparent penchant for the zombie zeitgeist.

directly at the viewer in the subjective position of either Grant or Sydney. Bloodied and pathetic, she seems to have only one instinct remaining, which plays out as her violent and desperate efforts to visually connect with her co-workers. Grant and Sydney reject this communion and allow Laurel-Ann to perish. Unable to effect any sort of meaningful connection, Laurel-Ann's increasingly desolate eyes slowly dissipate from a direct gaze into a desultory resignation to death (Images 46 to 48), leaving both the viewer and Sydney to suffer remorseful sympathy for her. However, this rejection of her salvation carries another, perhaps more progressive, underpinning. She is the only one of the three 'vanquished' by the apocalyptic plague, and the only one identified as having participated in the patriarchal war-machine of the otherwise American campaigns in Afghanistan. Although symbolic of an innocent who has succumbed to patriarchal ideology, for this crime, she is narratively dispatched.

The otherwise reactionary rejection of the prosopopoeiac moment of identification also gives rise to the second significant phenomenon of the narrative. "Stricken with horror and guilt, Sidney gets stuck on the word 'kill,' repeating it miserably. Grant is able to confuse her by repeating the word 'kill is kiss!'" (Subissati 38). According to Subissati, "our cultural emptiness is incarnated by zombified language. But *Pontypool* also provides a bold antidote to our protectionist tendencies in the form of a daringly alternative (linguistic) culture" (31). The only successful reversion from apocalyptic annihilation requires turning the word "kill" into "kiss" – an editorial on the patriarchal violence that imbues language which in turn requires compassion to cure and a post-structuralist capitulation to the meaninglessness of language. A propos a narrative in which the apocalyptic plague is embedded in language, the apocalyptic metaphor of kissing this world goodbye (insofar as the embrace of apocalypse usually also requires the embrace of death) is both visually and linguistically actualized. Kiss becomes kill and vice versa. This revelation effects their salvation and potential eschatology resolves into soteriology by meliorism, which, of course, further results in the requisite representation of the two succumbing to such passion and kissing at the moment of apocalyptic embrace (just as in *Shivers* and *Last Night*) (Image 49). If "linguistic comprehension can be interpreted as a metaphor for culture" (Subissati 38), the characters evacuate the patriarchal authority embedded in language that Lacan claims symbolizes the social 'Law of the Father' in this same act (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 48, Sheridan in Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 282). Subissati concludes with a language that further invokes the notion of apocalyptic embrace. "Sydney and

Grant embrace as the transmission countdown from 10 in the screen goes dark" (Subissati 38). The darkness of the screen contrasts against the brightness at the end of *Cube* and *Last Night* signifying the tragedy of an apocalypse in which the protagonists are destroyed by patriarchal authority rather than signifying enlightenment as in the other two films.

What follows is the third significant phenomenon of the film. In an arcane avant-garde narrative coda, a bit of postmodern cinematic reflexivity, the two protagonists re-appear as Bonnie-and-Clyde type characters in a *noir*-inflected black-and-white scene set in what appears to be a wintry Japan, where they seem extra-diegetically aware that they have moved into the New Jerusalem of a post-narrative world in which they are now free to take on the personae of other fictional characters. Subissati foregrounds Grant's rebellious lines in this scene which specifically indicate the rejection of the world they have left behind. "We're breaking the limits, stealing cars, leaving the world behind to figure out what's black and white" (Subissati 42). It is true that this otherwise nonsensical coda represents an entirely new world, part of McDonald's refusal to imagine any sort of structured future. "As such, the film ends on a decidedly radical and optimistic note, where Frye's garrison is conquered and Atwood's victims become victors, now free to be creative" (Subissati 42). The "optimistic note" is the element that invites apocalyptic embrace, and the freedom "to be creative," realized in the narrative coda, rings of Bakunin's "creative urge."

Whereas the zombified Laurel-Ann in *Pontypool* is of a secondary subjective concern to its narrative, the subjectivity of the zombie is central to the most progressive of all the zombie narratives of the post-TNW wave, Bruce LaBruce's *L.A. Zombie* (2010). *L.A. Zombie* conflates zombie aesthetics with the politics of gay pride in a narrative that acts as a harbinger regarding the consequences of the long-term abjection of marginalized social identities. LaBruce admits, "My most apocalyptic film is L.A. Zombie, which is about a homeless schizophrenic who perceives himself as an alien zombie who can fuck dead people back to life. The film presents Los Angeles as a kind of post-apocalyptic landscape, full of violence, social inequity, and death" (LaBruce). To this apocalyptic propensity, LaBruce brings a non-coercive anarchist identity. "I lean toward socialism and anarcho-syndicalism. But I'm not really a political activist. It's just a system of belief that underlies my art and filmmaking" (LaBruce). Even in his rejection of identification with the Toronto New Wave, however, he invites anarchist-inflected identifications. **"**I don't think I'm a part of [the Toronto New Wave]. ... I've always maintained a certain distance from the 'industry' per se, so I'm used to being ignored, and even rather

welcome it" (LaBruce). However, his history and practices admit his membership to the TNW by his own word, even if it is unwilling. "I just made my films where I lived, in downtown Toronto. ... I moved to Toronto to go to university, enrolling at York U. in the film department. ... There was a very strong video art scene in Toronto in the eighties, and a really political and radical punk and alternative music scene, so I became involved creatively with bands and other artists working experimentally and politically" (LaBruce). LaBruce further brings together his influence from Cronenberg with thematic elements familiar from *The Event* and *Blindness*. "Cronenberg was, of course, an influence on me as a Canadian filmmaker ... I thought he was tapping into the seventies post-sexual revolution ambivalence and anxiety about sex and STDs, which turned out to be very prophetic in terms of AIDS and other viral diseases" (LaBruce). Most importantly, LaBruce maintains a perspective that is both progressive and anarchist in its embrace of the need for an apocalyptic sweep.

> The world is flirting with the dark side, and seriously disrespecting Mother Earth. There will be consequences. What is probably needed is not "corrections," but an Enlightenment emerging from cataclysmic change, or the emergence of an enlightened prophet to lead us out of the darkness. In the meantime, the downfall of unregulated, free market capitalism and the end of the concentration of the world's wealth into the hands of a tiny elite will do in a pinch (LaBruce).

By these circumstances, LaBruce emerges as perhaps the most significant filmmaker in this survey, a fact evidenced most clearly in *L.A. Zombie*.

The zombie in LaBruce's movie subverts Robin Wood's explanation of the manifestation of the monstrous in a number of ways. From the zombie's first appearance on the screen in *L.A. Zombie*, it is clear that the character is intended to embody a mythological origin rather than a capitalist-industrial one. Emerging from the sea like some sort of idealized Greek deity, there are no hordes of mindless consumers to accompany him and overrun the city in either an orgy of false consciousness or unfettered desire from the id. Moreover, as an anti-scientific remnant of animistic superstition, a homosexual, and a lone schizophrenic homeless derelict, the character represents a substantial conflation of Wood's horrific identities. In the extra materials included on the *L.A. Zombie*/*Otto* box set DVD, LaBruce laments that we live in a horrifyingly consumerist and conformist society under capitalism, and so he was openly attempting to create zombies that are non-conformist, abject, homeless, non-consumerist. Such an identity is significant to LaBruce as a progressive symbol. "The idea of revolution is embedded in many of my films, whether it is expressed through political radicalism, or

manifested as madness, a kind of one-man or one-woman revolution against consensual reality" (LaBruce). "Against consensual reality," *L.A. Zombie* is an impressionist piece with a single metaphorical/mythical homosexual zombie-beast, abject in his beastliness and his ambiguous identity as a schizophrenic homeless man, single-handedly effecting a homosexual zombie apocalypse.

Most important, however, LaBruce locates the zombie character in the position of protagonist, or at least as close to that position as his experimental narrative permits. As protagonist, LaBruce's zombie takes the 'kiss-this-world-goodbye-apocalyptic-embrace' metaphor to its erotic extreme. In an unabashedly prurient celebration of the double-taboo of homosexuality and necrophilia, the zombie re-animates fatally wounded young men by penetrating their wounds with his penis and ejaculating some sort of mystical blood-semen. In the zombie's first encounter, he graphically inserts his penis into the fatal wound of a car accident victim and literally fucks him back to life.[73] The zombie's unsolicited penetrations invert what R. W. Connell identifies as the patriarchally-driven "ferocity of homophobic attacks" (qtd. in Gittings 281). In *Canadian National Cinema*, Christopher Gittings further cites Connell's understanding of the structural role played by homosexuality within the symbolic order. "Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity, the items ranging from fastidious taste in home decoration to receptive anal pleasure" (Connell qtd. in Gittings 281). Perhaps the ultimate repressed 'masculinity' in patriarchal culture is homosexuality – unabashedly exposed in *LA Zombie* – a film with the double helix of celebrating white masculinity (in the erotic physicality of the zombie character) while deconstructing its repressed homophobic centre. The zombie's re-emergence as a mythical beast is just what patriarchal religious fundamentalists might most fear: a 'gaypocalypse.' LaBruce explains, however, that his intention is to invite empathy with such acts of revolt. "My films are almost always about a certain kind of fetish, especially one that is never treated with the romance or empathy that I try to bring to it" (LaBruce). Upon revival, the first 'victim' embraces the homosexual eroticism of his saviour. Later in the film, the zombie enacts the same sexualized salvation to a full posse of young gangsters following their violent slaughter after an ill-conceived drug deal (Images 50 and 51). The symbolism is clear. Once these characters are dead to the patriarchal reality in which their identities are

[73] In many ways, the images are highly reminiscent of scenes from Cronenberg's *Shivers*. As Kyle Bishop argues in his opus analysis of zombie narratives, the "*Zombie Holocaust* primarily emphasizes *unnatural* penetration" (165).

dispatched, they can be reborn (like the biblical lamb of the apocalypse in the narrative of John of Patmos) into a new anti-patriarchal gay-liberated sense of reality.

However, these diegetic moments only occur in the service of the larger apocalyptic embrace with which the film is concerned. LaBruce accomplishes this objective with extended mirror-stage representation in which the zombie stares directly into the camera at the viewer as in so many of the films examined thus far (Image 52). The zombie's gaze into the camera maintains significant formal similarity to the scenes of Laurel-Ann in *Pontypool* (Image 54). However, LaBruce subverts the narrative trajectory taken in that film. Whereas Sydney and Grant miss the opportunity to identify with Laurel-Ann and embrace the apocalypse, and are only able to resolve this oversight in their rebirth into an experimental narrative coda, *L.A. Zombie* is a wholly experimental narrative in which the mirror-stage embrace of the monster comprises the entire premise of the film. These extended mirror-stage sequences have the effect of evacuating horror towards the zombie's abject and monstrous homeless homosexuality and resolving into palpable boredom. In this perceptual shift, LaBruce affords the viewer an entirely non-coercive opportunity to embrace the apocalypse embodied in the zombie and overcome the initial disgust towards what Kaja Silverman defines as an unideal-I.

By punctuating these mirror-stage images with scenes of graphically abject homosexual pornography, the film actually accelerates its work as a form of non-coercive apocalypse of ideological conversion. While Nathan Jun explains that "'mainstream' and 'avant garde' are culturally relative categories," and to mutually exclude them "drastically oversimplifies the complexities of modern cinema," he still contends that "'[a]vant garde' or 'underground cinema,' … is marked by its self-conscious attempt to undermine the structures and conventions which have been imposed on cinema by the culture industry … by presenting shocking images, employing unusual narrative structures, or presenting unorthodox political … and philosophical viewpoints" ("Toward" 153). In the intentionally philosophical motives of *Stereo*, as I explain in Chapter 3 for example, the hyper-intellectualized voice-over audio never aligns diegetically with the images it accompanies; the viewer must work to create their own meanings that can only emerge from an *intellectual* labour. By introducing a mythological element into its perceptual matrix, *L.A. Zombie* goes the other way, prompting an *affective* response that aligns with Deleuze's description of Pasolini's films.

> [W]hat characterizes Pasolini's cinema is a poetic consciousness, which is not strictly aestheticist or technicist, but rather mystical or 'sacred'. This allows Pasolini to bring the perception-image, or the neurosis of his characters, on to a level of vulgarity and

> bestiality in the lowest subject-matter, while reflecting them in a pure poetic consciousness, animated by the mythical or sacralising element. It is this permutation of the trivial and the noble, this communication between the excremental and the beautiful, this projection into myth, which Pasolini had already diagnosed in free indirect discourse as the essential form of literature. And he succeeds in making it into a cinematographic form, capable of grace as well as horror (Deleuze 75).

The reaction of the typical repressed homophobe to the graphic scenes of explicit and bloodied taboo sexuality would likely be horror and disgust. Indeed, for even the most progressively-minded viewer, the scenes can be difficult to watch. Thus, the scenes in which the viewer is invited to identify with the zombie are simultaneously repulsive and inviting, and use the otherwise graphic content of the narrative as a form of perceptual erethism that immediately stimulates ideological receptivity through its heightened affect; rather than the use of intellectualized rhetoric. In this state of heightened receptivity, the otherwise boring long takes of a mirror-stage gaze with the zombie transact a sort of relief on the viewer and accelerate the embrace of perceptual identification. LaBruce confirms this identification-affect of the narrative aspect of the film. "The central core concept of both Otto and LA Zombie is pretty similar. They both ... end up zombies at the end of the film [narrative], *continuing some sort of quest*. The viewer is also strongly identified with the subjectivity of the character" (LaBruce, my emphasis). Thus the identification with the zombie-embodiment of apocalypse is not only heightened by affect, it is also part of an implied narrative *continuity*, that is to say, ongoing and progressive.

Progressive Dialogics

It would be a disservice to completeness to conclude this post-millennium survey without considering the works of Vincenzo Natali and Peter Mettler, both of whom provide examples of cinematic entries that work in philosophical dialogic pairs. The notion of dialogic was sanctified by Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* as a re-orientation of the limitations of monologic literary criticism. According to John Docker it also works as a corrective to the notions of dialectical transcendence to which Marx so religiously subscribed. In *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, Docker explains that

> The dialectic, enshrining a notion of history, theory, culture as moving forward through the resolution of conflicts and contradictions, had now to compete with the notion of the dialogic, of language and culture as ceaseless unpredictable heterogeneity, history as reversible. Where the dialectic assumes history as meta-narrative, as governed by

> logic and laws, the dialogic refers to forces in meanings which *endlessly* shift and slip. (xx – xxi, my emphasis).

Rather than privileging a linear dialectic that moves in a single direction through time-space, a dialogic understanding allows new artistic entries to change the contributions of previous ones and vice versa in a more democratic process of negotiating meaning, "permitting competing contradictory voices, discourses, writings, moods, to speak to each other" (Docker 50). Allan Antliff also sees the concept as having hermeneutic value. He points to "Patricia Leighton's [figuration] of Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the 'dialogical'" as "another instance of anarchist art history at work in the theoretical sphere; we might look forward to many more" ("Insurrection" 78). Thomas Elsaesser makes use of a dialogic methodology in terms that further resonate with notions of an anarchist-apocalyptic revelation. He explains that

> when dealing with the question of spectators' involvement in the processes of filmic narration, such as focalization, identification, engagement and immersions[, t]his field of research comprises formalist theories, as well as (post-)structuralist positions, but also models, which interpret the relationship between spectator and film in dialogic terms, such as those drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin. Underlying this interpretation is the idea of the spectator as a being who enters an unfamiliar/familiar world and thereby is "alienated" from his/her own world …, in order to better, or wiser, return to it (8-9).

The paired works of Natali and Mettler demonstrate the value in applying this methodology to a structural analysis rather than a narrative one, however. As I explain further below, Natali's *Nothing* (2003) and *Splice* (2009) create an anarchist-apocalyptic dialogic between narrative structures of *levity* and *anxiety*, whereas Mettler's *Petropolis* (2009) and *End of Time* (2012) do so in a dialogic between the cinematic topology of *lament* and *embrace*.

Natali's *Nothing* follows the darkly comic misadventures of two urban slackers played by David Hewlett and Andrew Miller, both of whom performed central characters in Natali's *Cube* – his own cadre of collaborative performers. In *Nothing*, their characters discover that they are able to escape the exigencies of urban life simply by wishing its unsavory realities away. Unfortunately, what takes the place of these is merely a void, and each erasure is invariably unidirectional. Gravestock identifies a vague echo of what I have called "The Cronenberg Effect" in this narrative in terms that certainly invoke apocalypse.

> Vincenzo Natali's absurdist comedy *Nothing* (2003) centres on two geeky losers living between bypasses on the Queen Elizabeth Way (not far from where the collision fetishists of David Cronenberg's 1996 film *Crash* hung out) who discover they have the power to control their environment – or at least to make things they don't like vanish.

> The city beyond their house is the very first thing that disappears; by the end of the film, they've destroyed everything around them (Gravestock 154).

Eventually, the two end up in a sort of social hell, trapped with only each other in an increasingly barren prison of emptiness. When social harmony dissolves under these bizarre carceral conditions (just as in *Cube*), they end up turning against each other and wishing away each of the other's bodies until nothing remains of them but two bickering heads in a sea of white nothingness.

As with *Cube*, Natali vilifies a capitalist lifestyle and the social alienation it engenders. However, in *Nothing*, Natali inverts a number of *Cube*'s syntactic elements. Whereas in *Cube*, the subjects are wished away by a prosopopoeiac industrial-capitalist malefactor in a narrative replete with horror and anxiety, in *Nothing* it is the protagonists that wish away the urban setting and social situations (generated by its industrial-capitalist environment) in a narrative replete with parody and satire. Also unlike *Cube*, the sea of white nothingness into which the narrative resolves is not an unrepresented utopia but rather a dystopic blindness (the same whiteness suffered by victims of the epidemic in *Blindness*, in fact) from which the protagonists cannot escape and in which their disembodied heads seem condemned to suffer in eternal limbo. While the narrative realizes the apocalypse in its erasure of the urban reality, it does not do so in a narrative of embrace. The agency of the protagonists is evacuated of its radical potential and reduced to a satire of dystopia brought on by their selfish petulance.

The empty white nothingness, thus, stages the worst case scenario implied by Richard Day's concerns regarding the destination of subjects who exercise the praxis of exodus in a depiction in which there is no outside (literally, nothing) to capitalism. The narrative also stages Žižek's assertion (paraphrasing Fredric Jameson) that "it is easier to imagine a total catastrophe ... than it is to imagine a real change in capitalist relations" (*End Times* 334) and literalizes his metaphor that describes ideology as a "a reduction to the simplified 'essence' that conveniently forgets the 'background noise' which provides the density of its actual meaning. Such an erasure of the 'background noise' is the very core of utopian dreaming" (*End Times* 5-6). According to Žižek, anything legitimized by hegemonic authority can fill this absence. Comically lacking any radical foresight, the only thing with which the protagonists can fill the ideological space evacuated of capitalist social relations is a different form of alienation in which they maroon themselves eternally. Although the modality of the narrative is comic, similar to McKellar's *Last Night*, it carries a scathing satire with disturbing implications. "Isn't

this exactly what Heidegger meant by a culture of profound boredom — a split culture where the passing of time is repressed in favour of the will to (spatial) nothingness?" (Kroker 81). In this gulag of absence, the protagonists remain exiled in self-inflicted alienation.

Nevertheless, the narrative is quite avant-garde in the way it transcends a number of theoretical contentions concerned with apocalyptic 'nothingness,' and actually depicts what Deleuze describes as a cinematic impossibility. "When Claude Ollier defines Antonioni's geometric frame, he not only says that the awaited character is not yet visible (the first function of the out-of-field) but also that he is momentarily in a zone of emptiness, 'white on white which is impossible to film', and truly invisible (the second function)" (Deleuze 18). Žižek uses similar metaphors of white and black nothingness to explain the ideology implied in the painterly works of Mark Rothko and Kasimir Malevich.

> The 'reality' (white background surface, the 'liberated nothingness,' the open space in which objects can appear) obtains its consistency only by means of the 'black hole' in its center (the Lacanian *das Ding*, the Thing that gives body to the substance of enjoyment), i.e., by the exclusion of the real, by the change of the status of the real into that of a central lack" (Žižek "Reality" 345).

Natali's *Nothing* overcomes the "impossible to film" "central lack" with a series of narrative and auditory relations realized in the cinematic time-space.

By doing so, Natali also overcomes Lisboa's insistence that we cannot actually imagine the nothingness that follows apocalypse. Lisboa states that "[w]hen we imagine apocalypse — the end of the world as we know it — what is imagined is never nothing" (63). "[O]nly rarely do such scripts end with the equivalent of a blank page or screen" (Lisboa 65). Lisboa argues that "the concept of an absolute ending ... would by definition involve constructing the hypothesis of something which is nothing ... which we could not witness because we would not be there [– a pure gaze]. Although we imagine the fear of it (*horror vacui*) we are not really afraid of it because, as a matter of fact, we cannot imagine it. Therefore, we do not" (16). However, through the mechanism of a pure cinematic gaze, Natali actually *does* imagine an absolute nothingness, and even manages to leave it empty of the recuperative patriarchal-consumer ideology that Žižek insists is all that exists in the global culture of late capitalism, while it remains eternally full of radical experimental potential. Thus, a less cynical interpretation of the narrative closure, rendered even more strongly by the conventions of comedy to which it adheres and that work to invite desire for 'happy endings,' is that the two non-patriarchal dupes, given enough time in their eternal (ongoing) apocalypse, will eventually discover a new

social model and begin to rebuild their reality as a utopian New Jerusalem, filling the empty "trash can" of ideology with their own brand of anti-patriarchal folly (Žižek *Pervert's*).

It is this aspect of comedic folly that sets the narrative in a dialogic relationship with the high anxiety of both *Cube* (in hindsight) via the relational similarities and differences outlined above, but also (looking forward) to Natali's *Splice* (2009), which is just as riddled with horror and anxiety as *Cube*. In the narrative of *Splice*, two genetic biologists (one of whom is played by Sarah Polley whom Natali thus adds to his cadre of performers – David Hewlett also has a role in the film) break with deontological protocol and, with the use of ambiguous incubation technology, secretly raise to maturity a super human-animal hybrid. Such a depiction seems to narrativize one of Žižek's interpretations of apocalypse in which "[t]he apocalyptic process will reach its zero point when prostheses will no longer merely supplement the human body and brain, but they will in a way supplant it, leaving behind the notion of a human being" (Žižek "Digital"). The odd leonine beauty of the genetically-spliced creature is disconcertingly uncanny within the repressed concupiscence of the narrative. This factor comes to explicit fruition when the female creature seduces and has relations with the male scientist, converts into animalistic rage and murders him, spontaneously changes gender, and violently rapes the other scientist. The splice-alien's spontaneous post-mortem resurrection and transformation into a male is just as salacious but rather than extra-diegetically disturbing in its uncanny appeal, it becomes an explicit symbol of masculinist-aggression. Whereas in its female guise, the alien was carefully protected by the scientists, in its male form it is unambiguously dispatched – a typical TNW refusal of patriarchal characters.

Cumulatively, *Cube*, *Nothing*, and *Splice* create a dialogic triad that share a thematic which indicates that the embrace of apocalypse is replete with radical potential, for better or for worse, to destroy patriarchal-capitalist social relations. While any single example of these cinematic entries might be deemed largely reactionary, they at least betray progressive levels of anarchist-apocalyptic embrace as a group. At the narrative closure of *Splice*, Polley's character embraces the apocalyptic implications of the new species and chooses to carry to term the hybrid child with which she is now pregnant. Thus, in *Splice*, technology holds the structural position of (moral) aberration whereas biology/evolution represents apocalyptic embrace (even if is a traumatic one). In the narrative conclusion, the future is left unresolved, prompting a viewer to imagine a number of contingent possibilities, all of which are imbued with a certain nihilistic anxiety. The anxiety inherent to this apocalyptic embrace, however, is

mediated in hindsight by its dialogic relationship with the levity of *Nothing* which, in contrast, encourages more hopeful prognostications at its narrative closure. In concert, the anxiety of one invites the embrace of the levity of the other, and the levity of the black comedy of *Nothing* implies the anxiety that such an embrace would induce. In all three narratives, the embrace remains ongoing in the mind of the viewer who is left only with narrative possibilities rather than tidy narrative closure.

Similarly, two of Peter Mettler's post-millennium films also betray a dialogic that is loosely concerned with apocalypse: *Petropolis* (2009) and *The End of Time* (2012). According to Mettler, the aerial footage for the former came about when he "was researching for *The End of Time* which had a lot to do with clouds. I was interested in what was going up into the atmosphere for all time" (Mettler). Mettler explains that he was approached by members of GreenPeace to see if he might suggest a cinematographer for their exposé of the Tar Sands, an opportunity he took upon himself (Mettler). He further explains that they "soon realized that there was no terrestrial way to access these sites. Security was in place. The only way to see them was in a helicopter" (Mettler). According to Mettler, doing so resulted in "*revelation* to see the size of what was going on" and so in the film he wished "to show the magnitude" of the decimation of nature, but not with an explicit or coercive proselytizing agenda as in a "normal documentary" (Mettler, my emphasis). In an anarchist-inflected methodology of non-coercive cinematic invitation, "I wanted to take a gentle approach rather than a propagandistic one in which people could decide for themselves" what the images and facts depicted in the film meant to them (Mettler). Moreover, the film seems to intentionally place itself in conversation with other films of the TNW already discussed with which Mettler would certainly have been familiar. The cold open of *Petropolis* holds a haunting test pattern for a full minute and twenty seconds before presenting opening textual intertitles on a black screen that slowly washes to white with the presentation of the film's title – shades of *Last Night*, *Cube*, *Pontypool*, *Blindness*, and *Nothing*.

However, the subject matter of *Petropolis* is closer kin to the type of undesirable capitalist-driven eco-catastrophic apocalypse foregrounded by Uri Gordon and by Žižek in *End Times*. The titular portmanteau is clearly intended to conflate industrial urban eco-destruction with the massive oil sands. The film's early intertitles reveal startling statistics with obvious apocalyptic overtures. The images that accompany these intertitles are of an apparently undisturbed primaeval nature which create a confusing mismatch of subject matter and cause

the introduction of the images of catastrophic eco-damage to be received by the viewer as all the more jarring. At just over twenty minutes into the film, the earlier images of lush forest foliage dissipate into an industrial chiaroscuro depicted in a single synchronic visual composition separated from top to bottom.

Mettler's images seem straightforwardly observational but there is an obviously tendential subversion – the horrors upon which he editorializes are accomplished through the affect of his soundtrack and image constructions rather than through the more pretentious grammatological convention of an authoritative patriarchal voice-over narration. The soundtrack comprises an ascending cacophony of white noise, an increasing audio tension which works as a sort of barometer rising on the level of musical affect. The axis of orientation with which Mettler frames many of the images of *Petropolis* is typical of his films. Frequently framed from above in off-kilter canted angles, the images are not isometric, and create a visual sense of a skewed world out of balance. While Mettler provides the viewer with more interpretive agency, his thematic is still clearly biased.

At twenty-five minutes into the film, Mettler proffers images of natural green landscapes criss-crossed with the industrial blight of makeshift roads that lead to vast open mining pits devoid of life and awash with oil pollutants – a visual metaphor that might readily be read as Deleuze's rhizomatic social fabric of power polluted by industrial rape. Minutes later, the cinematography pans backwards to reveal an ever-growing army of idle dump trucks that are strangely reminiscent of the army of terminators depicted in the series of movies spawned by James Cameron in 1984. As with those eponymous robots, the fronts of the dump trucks maintain strangely uncanny technological 'faces' which create an anxiety-ridden affect, and that work in the same way that Deleuze described of the face of a clock in *Cinema 1*. Shortly thereafter, the scene transforms into a montage of burning smokestacks – a world on fire viewed through a camera lens that actually appears to be slightly compromised by a film of oil.

Nevertheless, the general aerial views in the film reflect a reversal of Mettler's depictions of the industrial machines in the sky that arbitrarily punctuate both *The Top of his Head* and *The End of Time*, and that endow the viewer with the agency of a god's eye view of industrial machinery turned against itself, Mettler's way of ironizing the patriarchal economic authority of corporate industrial oil interests. Towards the end of the film, he narrates an equally ironic admission that he is currently *in* a machine fueled by the combustion of petroleum, but only, he argues, in the service of providing the "perspective of a landscape we

cannot comprehend from the ground." Mettler's first voice-over narrations enter very late, at some 37 minutes into a film that is less than 45 minutes in duration. This unobtrusive late entrance of conventional voice-over narration further diminishes its traditional patriarchal authority through a sort of cinematic modesty. And within it, Mettler indicates a refusal of radical blueprints that would merely exchange the apocalyptic use of oil for an equally untenable utopian solution; he rather asks questions: "We've made ... use of petroleum for 80 [years]. What will we do next?" Perhaps most significantly, Mettler closes the film with an apocalyptic anti-patriarchal intertitle quoting Indian author and political environmentalist Arundhati Roy. "Not only is another world possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing" – a hopeful apocalyptic prognostication at least.

In fact, the apparently fatalistic apocalyptic musings of *Petropolis* are further mitigated in a dialogic relationship with *The End of Time*. Rather than an apocalyptic lament, *The End of Time* is an identifiably anarchist celebration of the potential of apocalypse in the same poetic documentary mode as *Petropolis*. The entire film is replete with the same gentle cadence of Mettler's voice-over narration introduced at the end of *Petropolis*, as though they were intended to be considered in continuity. However, *End of Time* is significantly more philosophical in its wider efforts to understand subjectivity and its immanence with social reality. Mettler suggests that humanity is effectively a sublime evolutionary branch of the same nature he introduced in *Petropolis* in which one part of nature (humanity) has been afforded the gift of sentience allowing it to begin to self-reflexively explore and understand itself. And *The End of Time* certainly begins with the sublime and haunting, typically Canadian reverence for nature, followed by the more scientific questions concerned with the beginning of time and what it is. At just over twenty minutes in (Mettler's conventional moment of revelation) the mediated layers of cinematic framing depict an apocalyptic fire that consumes all mediated layers of the frame into itself and succumbs to atavistic images of indigenous peoples surrounding a fire. Their social gathering indicates an acceptance of the fire and an integration of it into their social fabric via the self-consciously mediated representations generated by Mettler's camera.

What Mettler intimates that he is embracing remains identifiably apocalyptic, even if it is no longer necessarily inflected with the standby TNW theme of urban alienation. The *mise-en-scene* is riddled with apocalyptic images informed rather by geological concerns such as erupting volcanoes. The "[w]orld is a very old place and things come through and shake it up

every once in a while." Therefore Mettler's work is not preoccupied with urban alienation but is still recognizably a part of the TNW category based on its concern with apocalypse and its intentionally philosophical musings: "I'm never sure if nature is a conscious thing or just a set of circumstances." These musings resolve into particularly apocalyptic ones. At 36 minutes, Mettler considers how terrestrial species that have evolved together for tens of thousands of years previously enjoyed significantly better stability; now the situation is one in which new/invasive species are regularly introduced. Mettler punctuates these considerations with the image of an old rusted car, abandoned and derelict amid the foliage, similar to scenes in *The Top of His Head*, suggesting that such an example of industrial technology as the automobile is just another invasive 'species.' Mettler explains that "[t]hey disrupt the function of the native eco-system" but supersedes this contention with images of ferns and foliage consuming and overwhelming the derelict cars. In Mettler's depiction, the native eco-system is 'winning' the Darwinian struggle while auto-culture is 'losing,' an apocalyptic situation his visual narrative suggests is worthy of embrace.

Within this apocalyptic landscape, Mettler situates subjective examples of 'radical alternative' lifestyles and anarchist exodus. One charismatic hermit, living alone in a pastoral home now gradually succumbing to a slow-migrating but encroaching volcanic lava, states "I didn't wanna live like everybody else, like the multitudes. ... It's amazing how much you can do without, ... all the trappings of the civilized world ... 'Cause it all costs something." However, in what might be interpreted as yet another interrogation of Richard Day's exodus praxis, his bohemian exodus has landed him in a geological apocalypse. Again, it is Mettler's audio choices that establish the tenor of affect. The non-diegetic 'musical' white noise with which Mettler accompanies this interview is deeply unsettling in its haunting apocalyptic aesthetic. Also omnipresent is the multivalent metaphorical image of a lava flow – indicative of both the brimstone of hell in the narrative of John of Patmos in the *Book of Revelation*, as well as of the fires of industry depicted in *Petropolis* consuming the only organic life in sight, a lonely green stock of leaves that sizzles and burns as it is overwhelmed by the lava flow. The hermit continues his lament that there "[u]sed to be nothin' but ... pristine forest for as far as you could see in any direction, and now it's all just this big 'engine' called earth" (referring to the lava flows). This interviewee is the last tenacious resident in the area, which signals his lone willingness to suffer the slow-burning apocalypse brought on by the languid lava flows that have gradually devoured the region over decades. At last, Mettler attaches this metaphor to the

alienation of industrial capitalism; his interviewee explains, "I had hoped things would get better in my lifetime as far as the world situation [goes], but ... I don't know. It just seems to be ... spinning out of control. I just wasn't interested in being a 'wage-slave' all my life. You only get to go through once." (Or does he say "wait-slave" contra the Marxist inflected 'wait' for a revolution?). Abruptly, the framing turns to another image of a strangely out-of-place helicopter hanging high above the tree-line, perhaps the very one Mettler occupied while filming *Petropolis*, concluding the sequence with the contrast of a natural apocalypse against the 'invasive species' of industrial technology.

In the oscillating dialogic of the narrative content, Mettler sets another apocalyptic perspective in stark contrast to some of its urban techno-optimism with which he mitigated the lava apocalypse described above. One of a set of characters in Detroit states, "We still build technologies with the hope that in the future they will save us time. But they don't save time. They spend it ..." Mettler's scenes of people working a community garden within the city concisely summarize the overall poetic message of the movie that pits the survival of a naturalist lifestyle against the destructive forces of industrial urbanism, another dialogic echo of concerns raised in Burns's *Radiant City*. Mettler depicts a commune of bohemians reclaiming abandoned/derelict homes accompanied by commentary that indicates more eternal recurrence in which old ends give rise to new beginnings, an undercurrent of apocalypse that informs/motivates all of them. However, in more nihilistic apocalyptic terms, another of these characters states, "The earth will heal itself. Humans will be gone. ... It will not be humans who watch the sun's/earth's death six billion years from now. Any creatures that exist then will be as different from us as we are from bacteria today." Such prognostications are ambiguous. Will humans be exterminated from this end-world, or will they simply have *evolved* into unrecognizable forms?

Against this, in a final cinematic coda, Mettler offers one last narrative voice-over that works as a highly personal intimation inviting the viewer to identify with him and his point of view. At an hour and forty-four minutes, a lone man in the darkness reaches towards the camera and wipes away a film from its lens, a distinct intertextual and dialogic reference to *Petropolis*, wiping the petroleum residue from the lens towards philosophical clarity. Immediately following is a series of time-lapse images of nature variously and abruptly intercut with moments of apocalyptic black emptiness, underscored with Mettler's signature apocalyptic audio of a lingering dissonant tone. As the viewer is now completely absorbed in

cinematic affective receptivity, with his gentle disembodied narrative cadence, Mettler states, "In the house where I grew up there was a book by the Russian author Dostoevsky. It read, 'In the apocalypse the angel swears that there will be no more time.' It said very clearly and exactly, 'When the whole of man has achieved happiness there won't be any time because it won't be needed.'" Evacuated of time, this apocalypse would be necessarily ongoing. The final ending sequence, much like the closure of *The Top of His Head*, depicts a brief image of the earth's globe reeling out of its orbit on all axes, chaotic in space-time, a metaphor for the undesirable anarchy of accelerated globalization. What follows is comprised of an eclectic array of images and rapid cuts – similar to Cronenberg's introduction to *eXistenZ* – a final moment in which the viewer is prompted to identify with the visual metaphor of the ongoing psychological apocalypse it suggests.

It seems then, that following the turn of the millennium, rather than emptying the anarchist-apocalyptic propensities of the TNW filmmakers, the new economic circumstances simply prompted them to discover different forms of expression that accommodated the rise of international collaboration, or rejected it. It also seems that the films of the TNW filmmakers became progressively *more* progressive in the new millennium following an abruption of reactionary impulses at its beginning in narratives that reflected globalization anxiety with heightened dramatic tension (*Blindness*, *Dawn of the Dead*) when compared against the films of the TNW proper which were so imbued with levity. There is no levity in *Blindness*, and only moments of comic relief in *Dawn*. Less drawn towards commercial recuperation, however, are such filmmakers as LaBruce and Mettler who seem to have inherited the anarchist-apocalyptic concerns of Cronenberg and the TNW proper and applied them in some of the most progressive apocalyptic cinema productions to date. Where this anarchist-apocalyptic propensity goes from here remains an open question.

Conclusion

Overall, the cumulative analyses in the dissertation point in the direction of three specific "revelations." The first of these is indicated at the end of the preceding chapter. Several scholars claim that the era of the TNW ended with the end of the millennium, when the new Conservative federal government in Canada introduced its "Script to Screen" policy, and international co-production became the industry norm. But these TNW filmmakers continued to make films, and although there was an initial dampening effect on their more progressive work from the 80s and 90s, the anarchist-apocalyptic footprint remained strong, and found perhaps its most progressive expressions in the works of LaBruce, McDonald, Mettler, and Sarah Polley in the late years of the first decade of the 2000s. Secondly, there is a need for both quantitative and qualitative reception analyses of these films that align with the unique characteristics of Canadian production inputs and distribution economies, to discover if they have had any revelatory efficacy as I describe in the dissertation. And finally, the theory upon which I base my analyses calls for a deeper engagement with the long discursive history surrounding the notion of apocalypse in order to align with and better inform the depth of post-anarchist philosophy traversed herein. By doing so, it might be feasible to apply the methodology I have developed to a wider swathe of apocalypse films from around the world. Both Australia and South Korea, for example, have rising apocalypse cinema traditions, and it would be interesting to discover what ideological revelations my methodology of analysis reveals from these distinct cultures.

More locally, it is clear that the apocalyptic considerations of the films of the TNW are a direct reflection of the sentiments of the particularly auteuristic filmmakers who composed them.

> As Robin Wood observes in "Ideology, Genre, Auteur," "It is only through the medium of the individual that ideological tensions come into particular focus, hence become of aesthetic as well as sociological intent. It can perhaps be argued that works are of especial interest when the defined particularities of an auteur interact with specific ideological tensions and when film is fed from more than one generic source." (Robé 352).

And as I have indicated, the films that comprise this investigation have definitely been "fed from more than one generic source." As such, it would be unreasonable, and even irresponsible, to assert that the framework of analysis that herein informed the exploration of these films is

the only valid way to interpret them. It is just as valid, for example, as George Melnyk does in a discussion of the work of Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin, to observe that "the city's demise also matches the demise of a former dominant artform" (*Film* 176). As a group of films produced predominantly by relatively privileged, white, anglophone, Canadian males, the very agency of the auteurs is questionably progressive; this group of directors became preoccupied with apocalypse at the very postmodern stage of history in which the post-structuralists observe the 'death of the subject,' quite astutely read by feminist critics, I think, as merely the interrogation and rejection of the patriarchal authority of the white male subject. Perhaps the apocalypse in these films merely matches the perceived demise of the white, anglo, male filmmaker under the conditions of globalization and postmodernism.

Nevertheless, all of the films covered by this survey demonstrate an attempt by these filmmakers not only to master their own anxieties regarding particluary nuclear apocalypse, but to put that mastery to good socio-political work. Much of this work was experimental, vehemently anti-formulaic, and replete with both ironic and self-reflexive criticisms. Richard Porton argues that

> it is not likely that necessary and sufficient conditions for the production of 'anarchist art' will ever be formulated. A monolithic anarchist aesthetic must be dismissed as elusive and dubiously essentialist: unlike the Marxist aesthetic, the anarchist conception of art is not 'normative,' but 'is presented in the form of a *project* which leaves the door wide open to the future' (231).

In this regard, the apocalyptic films of the TNW are much closer kin to films such as Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) than any more conventional Hollywood apocalypse film. In his reference to *Melancholia*, Frederick Wasser recalls

> Slavoj Žižek's statement [borrowed from Jameson], "So the paradox is, that it's much easier to imagine the end of all life on earth than a much more modest radical change in capitalism" ... since an alternate way of organizing society cannot be imagined. ... Even the low-budget disaster movies that play to art house audiences provide an ending. The marketplace cannot contemplate its own demise. But Lars von Trier can. *Melancholia* does not even attempt representations of heroism or redemption (127-9).

The apocalypse films of the TNW radically reconcile the categories of "antispectacular" (McKellar Personal interview, Ljujić 148), "low-budget," and "art house" fare with narratives that also do "not even attempt representations of heroism or redemption," a specifically progressive characteristic that Wasser sets apart, rendering them significant to art history and worthy of deeper consideration than that to which they heretofore have been subjected.

More broadly, while the cinema of the TNW provides only one example of a 'national' cinema preoccupied with apocalypse, it is a particularly significant one. With its uniquely close economic and cultural relationship to the U.S., a nation arguably at the imperial heart of global capitalism, Canada's critique of globalization comes from a liminal position, simultaneously within and outside a dominant cultural normativity. As such, it is capable of affording profoundly intimate insights while at least marginally evading ideological co-optation and recuperation. However, as Gasher, Skinner, and Lorimer point out in their survey of *Mass Communications in Canada*, "[t]he impact of media messages on individuals was weak and, if anything, acted to reinforce existing ideas and beliefs rather than to alter opinions" (125). But they are careful to set this lament in contradistinction to "[c]ultivation analysis, wherein content is studied for its ability to encourage or cultivate particular attitudes in viewers toward particular people or perspectives" (126). Can the ideological implications of the progressive TNW have a metastasizing impact within the rhizomatic social fabric or will the conditions of Canadian cinematic distribution and reception continue to mire them in an ongoing gulag of obscurity? Such questions indicate that the contents of this dissertation underscore the need to explore the empirical data surrounding the reception of these films and to qualitatively inquire as to whether their underlying political implications have had any efficacy towards modulating ideology into a desire to realize a more tenable anti-authoritarian social fabric.

In fact, a new type of reception report would be particularly valuable in a Canadian context. While American mainstream cinema can measure its popularity by direct box office comparisons, there is no equivalent vehicle of measurement for Canadian films operating under a different economy of distribution than that of direct market commodity. As Gasher, Skinner, and Lorimer indicate, "Canadian feature films and dramatic television are good examples of industries that continue to struggle to find markets in the context of Hollywood's long-standing dominance of this country's commercial theater and television screens" (246). Whereas with American cinema, "box-office receipts [might be used] to measure their connection to audiences and users, and who exactly they are connecting with" (Gasher et al 253), with Canadian cinema, "[n]ot all returns are financial. Not all returns are immediate. For that matter, not all costs are financial. This point is important because it goes to the heart of how we perceive cultural production and what role we assign the mass media in society" (Gasher et al 246). Especially in Canada, "[f]ilm festivals, for example, provide an opportunity for movie-makers to create buzz around the film; journalists play along by reviewing the films

and interviewing and photographing the stars" (Gasher et al 253). Nevertheless, outside of Festival Award accolades there is no ready measure of audience numbers for many of these films, and certainly no statistical data that aligns festival success with popular reception.

For these reasons, I am compelled to endorse the addition of a materialist Political Economy approach to explore the distribution, exhibition, and reception of these films in addition to their conditions of production, their ideological content, and their political agendas explored herein. In the section of his *The Political Economy of Communication* entitled "What is Political Economy?," Vincent Mosco indicates that the "*political economy* [of communication] *is the study of* … how communications products move through a chain of producers, such as a Hollywood film studio, to distributors, and, finally, to consumers in theaters or in their living rooms" (2, italics in original). More salient to the content of this research, Mosco adds that "[p]olitical economy has consistently placed in the foreground the goal of understanding social change and historical transformation" (3). In words that might have been plucked from an anarchist manifesto, political economist Lee McGuigan cites Smythe and Van Dihn in arguing that

> At all levels of analysis […] the objective of research/action should be the demystification of technology and science; the necessary relationship between theory and practice; the decentralization of control of communication; the democratization of communications institutions and practices; mass mobilization for organization and action; and the paramount significance of communications for peace (Smythe and Van Dihn 1983, 127) (19).

Indeed, "Anarchist Cultural Studies" (ACS) rides the cusp between PE and Cultural Studies.[74] In "What is Anarchist Cultural Studies," Jesse Cohn cites Juliana Spahr who explains that on "the one hand, much of the criticism called 'cultural studies' fetishizes resistance by locating it in all sorts of acts, from wearing nose rings to participating in the black power movement; on the other, those who deny the efficacy of resistance point to large structures of power that co-opt through reification any move towards freedom" (403). Cultural Studies (with its general concern for analyses of the ideological content of cultural artefacts and their reception and use), and Political Economy (with its particular concern for the relations of power that frame and control production, distribution, and exhibition) represent two analytical poles with which

[74] One might glean as much from arguments made by John Storey in the concluding chapter of his useful *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* as much as from the concluding chapter of Vincent Mosco's *The Political Economy of Communication*, both of which offer a dialogic pair of arguments from each camp against the other.

ACS is mutually concerned.[75] Even more relevant to ACS is the Political Economy concern with resistance to power in the form of radical direct action (Mosco 8, 30-1, 57, 72, 95, 104, 112-113, 115, 118, 134, etc.), which might well provide a useful anarchistic complement to any Cultural Studies analysis of ideological content or underpinnings. In fact, the unspoken conclusion of Richard Day's introductory chapter, in which he delineates what he deems useful acts of resistance that operate "non-hegemonically," is that he seems to consider media activism amongst the most useful and least contradictory forms of anarchist direct action (8-9, 21-24, 39).

Indeed, in addition to new quantitative statistics and reception data that a Political Economy inquiry might afford, such an approach might also add valuable qualitative "audience reception analyses" of these films (Baran & Davis 144-5, 218) in their mixed economy of film festival and commercial availability to discover their political efficacy (if any), or to discover if they too have been merely lost in an ocean of American media products and ignored, or recuperated into the commodity market they often seem so eager to reject. Thus, the production and content-ideology of the TNW films considered herein under the aegis of "Anarchist Cultural Studies" [ACS] [Cohn]) could be measured against what Lorimer, Gasher, and Skinner (in their highly PE-oriented *Mass Communications in Canada*) list as "market externalities" in Canada, "the costs and benefits of economic activity that are not accounted for by — that are external to — the immediate economic transaction between buyer and seller" that might otherwise speak to the "cultural needs of a society" (Gasher et al 246). In terms of the apocalyptic films of the TNW, one such measure might consider the efficacy of these films in their bid to effect anarchist-ideological revelation. Following Juan-José Igartua and Isabel Barrios' desire "to expand narrative persuasion theory ... to explanations of attitude change when narratives deal with controversial or polemical topics," I agree that the "persuasive power of narratives ... should be studied across a wider range of media, issues, and contexts" (Baran & Davis 250) such as those engendered in the apocalyptic films of the TNW. If we have learned anything from the reception analyses of feminist theorists such as Janice Radway and Ien Ang, it is certainly that it is productive to combine such readings as the ones contained within this dissertation with a reading of the responses of audiences to the subject matter

(Baran & Davis 223, Storey 161-5). Such an approach might be considered an anarchist extension of agency to the viewer towards understanding if the ostensibly progressive messages of these TNW films prompted any sort of heuristic revelation in any significant way or if they merely reinforced such ideology where it was already present. And one way of understanding the "cultural needs of a society" resides, I think, in Robin Wood's still useful, if not materially practical, categories of progressive and reactionary, even if these must be redefined for every new social context to which they are applied.

This perspective is supported by Barbara Klinger in "'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' Revisited: The Progressive Text" (1984) which leads up to a nuanced reading of the otherwise reductive binary of the categories of progressive and reactionary ideology and locates their distinction within a larger diachronic political economy. "The question of the nature and process of both systemic-historic evolution and classical narrativity do not efface the cogent results of textually-oriented ideological analyses, but rather qualify contentions about the ideological effectivity of texts which are presumed 'rupturous'" (Klinger 43). An analysis seeded with this insight might indicate that the films explored in this dissertation actually reveal a tension between the efficacy of a pre-figurative non-violent direct action (of philosophy) and the need for more aggressive, even actively apocalyptic, practises to effect any tangible widespread social or cultural change – perhaps another example of what Allan Antliff refers to as an anarchist "aesthetic of tension" ("Aesthetics" 229). In words that similarly resonate with anarchist direct action, Klinger explains that "[w]hile extrinsic representational factors are apt to be expunged from serious textual analysis as vulgar or as environmental noise which interferes with the veracity of the text itself, they play a significant role in directing/constructing the reading and consumption of textual objects" (44). Thus, this dissertation *calls* for a political economic measure of any film's subversive authorial content against its representationally indeterminate field of reception, if there was any reception at all; in an environment of invasive American media populism and a new slide into the homogenizing effects of international co-production, there may be only the most limited hope for anarchist progressives like LaBruce to have any impact whatsoever.

On a more philosophical level, in terms that resonate with an anarchist-apocalyptic philosophy, (and its oft-noted relationship to the philosophy of Nietzsche) Canadian social philosopher Arthur Kroker states,

> We, who live in the future forecast by Nietzsche, do not know how long this transition period will last or what the final outcome of the transition will be: the appearance of the recombinant life-forms programmed with software intelligence, the slow decline of the human species into prosthetically enabled post-humans, or episodic, violent bouts of fantastic explosions of creative energy and fatal implosions of political and social aggression? Living within the *embrace* of his philosophy, we can only know this for certain. The future of any historical *eschatology* is always a playing-out of its axiomatic (78-9, my emphases).

Similarly, in his focus on Mettler's work, Jerry White states that in "a philosophical discussion with the scientist Christopher Richter [Mettler concludes that] we are all ... essentially the same organism; thus we are all basically immortal, inasmuch as we are all a part of a human race whose existence stretches into an unknown future" (44). Indeed, the analyses contained within this dissertation seem to indicate that the central question of TNW cinema is an apocalyptic one that interrogates the future. Will ostensibly progressive co-productions like *Blindness* continue to flatten the progressive critique available to apocalypse narratives which otherwise hold "out the possibility of social criticism that might lead to a reorientation in the midst of a bewildering historical moment" (Rosen xiii), or will more progressive apocalyptic productions such as Bruce LaBruce's *Weekend in Alphaville* (2010) (in one last reference to the influence of Godard and the F*NV*) work rather to reorient our construction of the social fabric (currently under the increasingly untenable authoritarian-patriarchal conditions of global capitalism) and allow us to weather the apocalypse in the hope of realizing a genuinely progressive New Jerusalem?[76] In any case, it is at least clear that an anarchist tension between the simultaneous social privilege and cultural marginalization of the TNW filmmakers, and an apocalyptic desire to sweep away the very social fabric that engenders such circumstances, is the very tension that unites and defines the TNW films as wave, cycle, or praxis.

[76] I would be remiss if I did not mention here at least three examples of this ongoing and progressive project beyond the TNW: Mathieu Roy and Harold Crooks' NFB-supported *Surviving Progress* (2011) (which carries the distinct footprint of Peter Mettler's influence), Matthieu Halle's experimental *Margraue* (2011) (in which I was fortunate enough to perform), and Claire Carré's *Embers* (2015) (generously sent to me to review by producer Charles Spano as part of my research). Both of these latter two films exist almost exclusively as Canadian-esque art-house cultural capital. *Margraue* is set in a post-apocalyptic dystopia and vehemently denies any sort of authoritative interpretation. *Embers*, which won "Best Feature" at the New Orleans Film Festival in 2015, also features a post-apocalyptic setting and a narrative left in aperture when a young woman escapes the quarantine of an underground bunker against the wishes of her patriarchal father to embrace the social conditions of apocalypse in the outside world.

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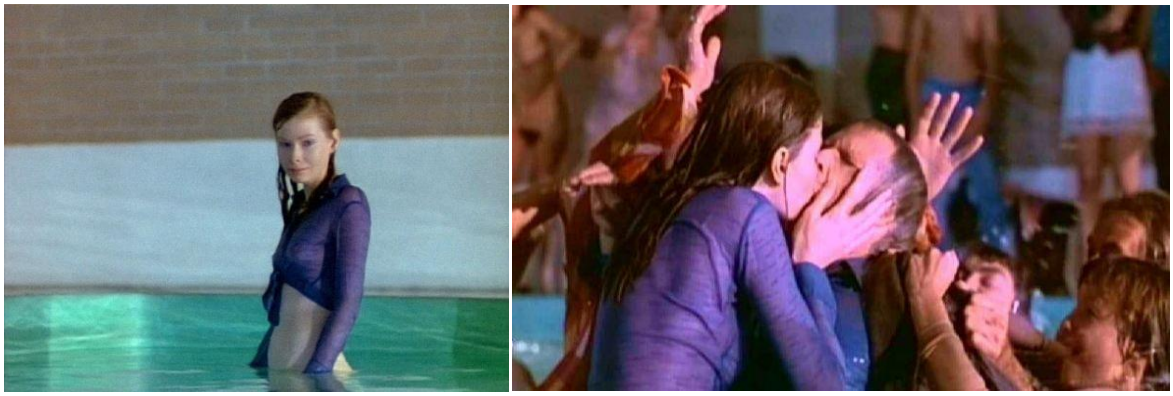

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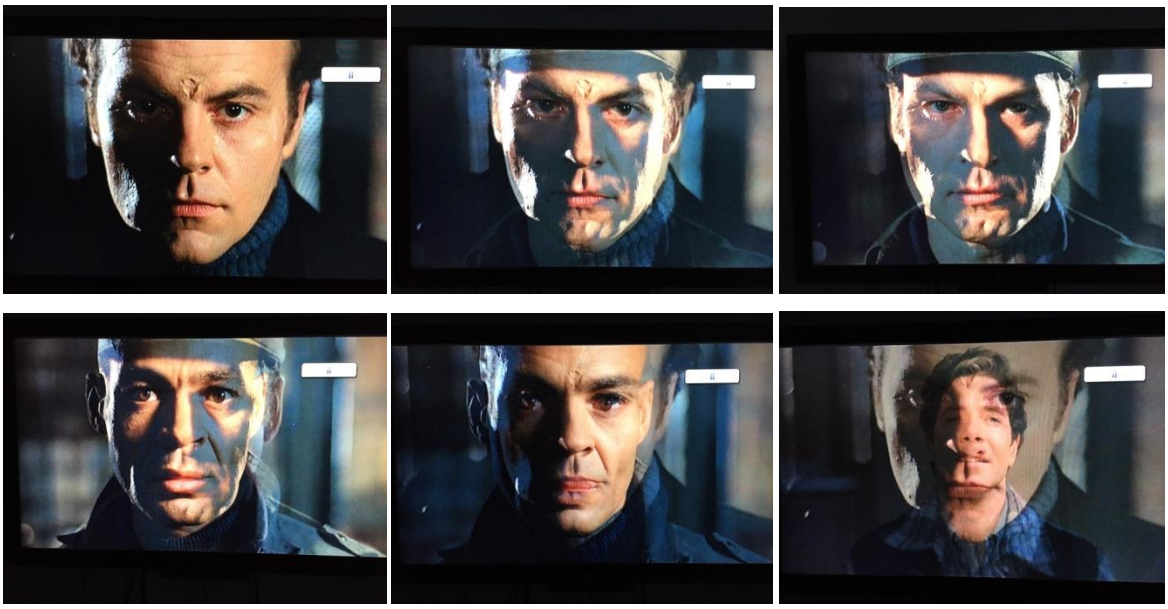

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Image 22: still from Don McKellar's *Last Night* (1998).

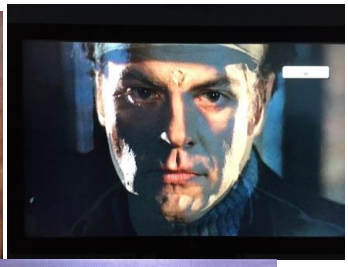

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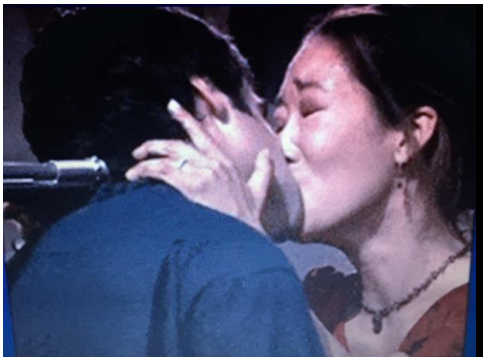
Image 27: still from Bruce McDonald's "Elimination Dance"



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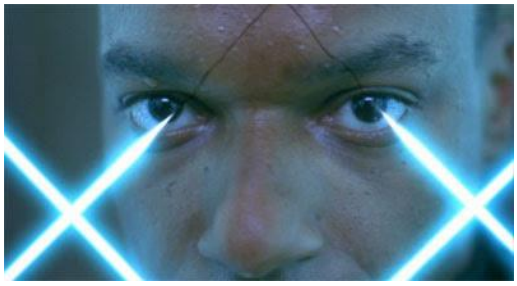

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Image 44: still from amongst the closing scenes of Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004).

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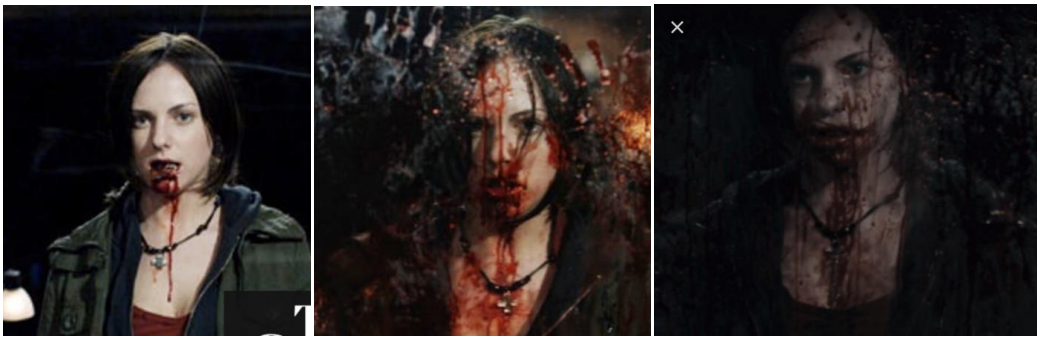

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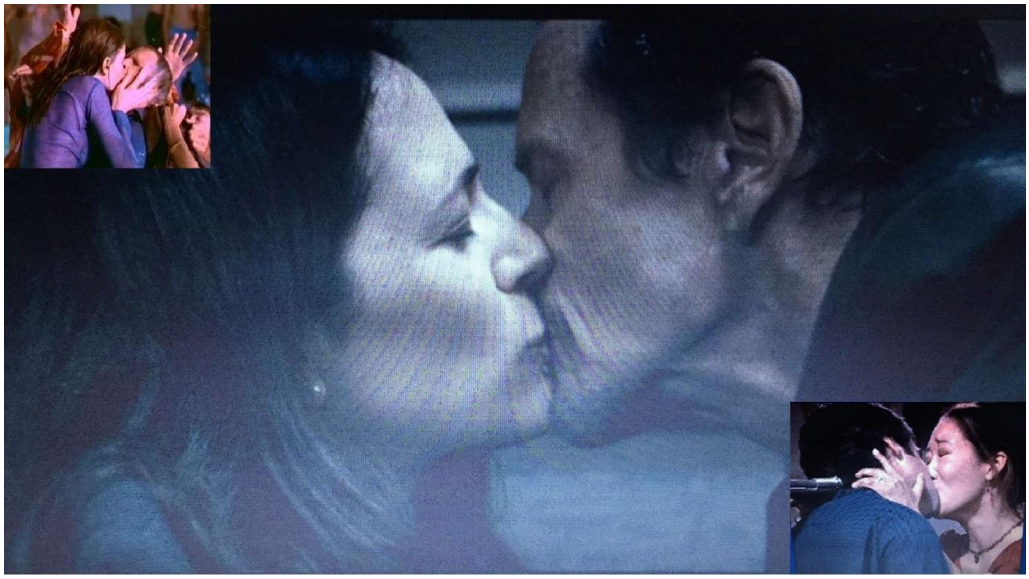

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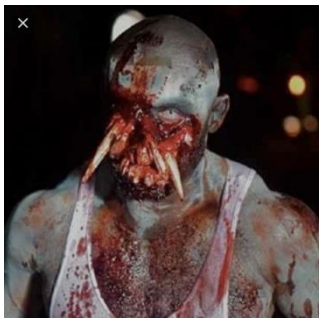

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