<a href=<http://web3.unt.edu/dschwarz/index.php?link=phenomenologyandmusic>>Lamonte Young's Drift Study</a>

<a href=<http://www.onelonelypixel.org/2011/a-spatial-asyndeton/>> Cluett [play 30 seconds]

<a href=" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eP8LwKtvVo>"> Hippy Dialectics by Nathaniel Mellors</a> [listen to 1:12]

<a href=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGWvJRWFYC4>>*Model* 5 by Kurt Hentschläger and Ulf Langheinrich</a> [listen to one minute]

<a href=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LPHlVrT-Nw>>*Deaf-Mute Chorus* by Oksana Chepelyk</a> [listen to 2:15 to 3:03]

<a href="<http://resoundings.org/Movies/venice.mov>">Fontana</a>[play 2 minutes]

In this talk I will explore something I have never understood—the body and its relationship to subjectivity in the early twenty-first century. I continue to be haunted by such common and often-asked questions as: What kind of boundary separates or connects the body with the non-body? How can the term body refer at once to living flesh and to flesh that once lived and is now dead? To what extent is my body or your body really mine or yours, and what would or does it mean to realize that I am not sole owner of my body? How and where does the body find itself among the Lacanian Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real? Are we born with bodies that are gendered, or are our bodies marked, territorialized, socialized into either clear or complex modes of gender identification? What happens to the body when its parts are either missing, replaced, or enhanced by mechanical or computational devices? Does it then become less, stay the same, or oddly become more corporeal? If we are living in a posthistorical culture, what is the body of the laborer in social space, the body of the employee, the employer, those who bear and execute power? And finally how does the body sound, how does it process sound, how does it relate to cognitive functions of mind and subjectivity, particularly in the early twenty-first century?

How can one intervene in the myriad discursive responses to such questions? I would like to begin with a concept I found electrifying some years ago when I first read of it in the writings of Giorgio Agamben--*bare life*. *Bare life* will lie just beneath the surface of the remarks that follow in today's talk. These remarks will not be organized as eighteenth-century, terraced, thesis-driven rhetoric; rather, I will move along the edges of the following theoretical and aesthetic spaces: from Agamben's *bare life*, to misrecognition in the acoustic and (visual) mirror stages to recent usages of the sounding body, particularly as it is represented and embodied in works of New Media Art.

Agamben and *Bare Life*

In his book *The Open: Man and Animal* from 2004, Giorgio Agamben discusses the early twenty first century in terms of a troubled relationship between man and animal: “We must try to grasp what is at stake…. Perhaps not only theology and philosophy but also politics, ethics, and jurisprudence are drawn and suspended in the difference between man and animal. The cognitive experiment at issue in this difference ultimately concerns the nature of man—or, more precisely, the production and definition of this nature; it is an experiment *de hominis natura*. When this difference vanishes and the two terms collapse upon each other—as seems to be happening today—the difference between being and nothing, licit and illicit, divine and demonic also fades away, and in its place something appears for which we seem to lack even a name." Agamben finds that name at the end of the following passage: “Like every space of exception, this zone is, in truth, perfectly empty, and the truly human being who should occur there is only the place of a ceaselessly updated decision in which the caesurae and their rearticulation are always dislocated and displaced anew. What would thus be obtained, however, is neither an animal life nor a human life, but only a life that is separated and excluded from itself—only a *bare life*." Agamben's language seems to me to describe quite beautifully a certain inflection of the body in early twenty-first century life—not an ontological thing, but a contingent and discursive place where flesh is pushed and articulated at thresholds of troubled Imaginary and Symbolic agencies. So it is less a question of what the body as *bare life* is and isn't than how we can know what it does, what it signifies, how it feels, how it seems to feel or not feel in others (with a lower case "o") or the Other (with an upper case "O"). There are many discursive paths through representations and embodiments of *bare life* in aesthetic and social spaces; for now, for the rest of this talk, I will address sounds of *bare life* as flesh is touched whose relationship with Imaginary and Symbolic supports are troubled, under strain, raw, torn.

In the remarks that follow, I will pull back from a discussion of bare life directly; rather, I will describe how the body and sound articulate one another in these works, drawing upon citations from Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, and Didier Anzieu. My sense of bare life will run just beneath the discursive surface of the following remarks.

I will discuss seven works: *Drift Study* by Lamonte Young*, a spatial asyndeton* by Seth Cluett, *Hippy Dialectics* by Nathaniel Mellors, *Model* 5 by Kurt Hentschläger and Ulf Langheinrich, *Deaf-Mute Chorus* by Oksana Chepelyk, and *Acoustical Visions of Venice* by Bill Fontana.

I would like to begin with Lamonte Young's *Drift Study*:

<a href=<http://web3.unt.edu/dschwarz/index.php?link=phenomenologyandmusic>>

If you listen to this piece for a few seconds and / or if you remain absolutely still during the experience, you hear sine waves produced electronically drift; if you listen to the piece for more than a few seconds and / or if you let your head change position; if you move around in the space you occupy, you notice not only electronically-produced sine waves drift, you hear certain sounds fade in and certain sounds fade out of earshot. At first, or on one hearing, or even on several hearings you might not make a causal connection between the movements of your body and the sounds you are hearing. Why would you ever suspect that the position of your body influenced the sounds you are hearing? If you heard the piece in the company of someone and talked to them during the experience, you might find out that a certain fade in and fade out of sounds was experienced by just one of you (the one, say, that lay down on the floor and turned their head from side to side); you might realize after awhile that every time you moved your head, your body, your position in the room, the sounds changed accordingly, or as some kind of acoustic reflection of your actions. But such considerations do not point to a reason one would ever make a connection between bodily motion and changes in the sounds heard.

Misrecognition in the Acoustic and (Visual) Mirror Stages

I believe that the reason we can make that connection has to do with the (visual) mirror stage as described by Lacan, and the "earlier" acoustic mirror stage described by Didier Anzieu and other mostly French psychologists and psychoanalysts working mainly in the mid twentieth century. Here is how I think this connection works. In his address, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function," Lacan points out that the jubilation infants feel and show between the ages of six months and a year and a half when they see their ideal selves reflected in the mirror and / or face of the (m)other fades as the mirror stage progresses. Our motor incapacity as six month old children underwrites both our jubilant assumption of the image of the other as ideal self and locks us into a permanent sense of eventual misrecogntion as we gain motor mastery of our bodies at around a year of age, and shift our relation to ourselves and the world into the realm of the Lacanian Symbolic, or language acquisition. This lock into a structure of later misrecognition that is at the heart of the (visual) mirror stage, in my opinion, piggybacks on what must be an earlier and qualitatively similar lock into a structure of acoustic misrecognition. In his book *The Skin Ego*, Anzieu discusses research that shows that children very shortly after birth feel at one (in their extraordinarily fragmented bodies) with the sound of the mother's voice, her smell, and the touch of her / their body. The innate cries of the newly-born (anger, frustration, and discomfort all deriving from the one original cry of hunger) are one with the voice of the mother, the sounds of her body, the sounds of the newly-born baby's body. With the cry for attention, we have begun to know the other, and we call out to her in near complete motor incapacity, not yet able to flip ourselves over, perhaps only recently having discovered our own thumbs. I believe it is this acoustic misrecognition upon which the (visual) mirror stage misrecognition pigglybacks. And I believe this is why we tend not to believe our ears or our eyes, as the expression goes.

We don't need Lamonte Young's *Drift Study* to know just how contingent our acoustic apprehension of the world is, and yet the experience of hearing sounds fade in and out of earshot as we move points with unusual clarity to precisely such a contingency. Like the shimmer Goethe saw when he rubbed his closed eyes, sensation is no longer ontologically given, but dependent on the organ of apprehension and the space in which that organ functions. The slow speed with which sounds reach the ears is of course another example of acoustic misrecognition that most of us have experienced; you *see* a string section in a symphony orchestra play a chord and you *hear* the sound a split second later. In the silence between those moments lies the acoustic misrecognitions of both the acoustic and visual mirror stages.

There is certainly quite a bit of music being written, performed, and consumed around the world, unaccompanied by other arts, by other stimuli either visual, linguistic, theatrical, or spatial. But I would like to spend the rest of this talk exploring music and sound art in multimedia environments, in installations, in audio-visual screen-based applications. I do this because I believe that such art which we often refer to as New Media, Interactive Electronic Arts, Experimental Media, implicitly and at times explicitly explores, represents, embodies *bare life*.

Seth Cluett did a work entitled *a spatial asyndeton*. The work involves a roped-off area of a circle in an installation space around which subjects walk; four sine waves are projected at equal, unchanging volume throughout. As the subject’s position changes, so, too, does the sound.

<a href=<http://www.onelonelypixel.org/2011/a-spatial-asyndeton/>> Cluett [play 30 seconds]

In the online documentation of this work, I hear various G-naturals and C-naturals sounding. And in the installation space itself, the work invites its subjects to experience the fact that their bodies determine the precise configurations of sounds they hear. In the online documentation, depending on the viewers’ / listeners’ positions, various combinations of G-naturals and C-naturals emerge and recede into and out of acoustic view.

Imagine if the colors of objects changed as we turned our heads slightly; imagine if some objects became less visible and others more visible as we shifted the positions of our bodies in space. This is precisely what does happen to sound as we perceive it. The Doppler Effect is just one of many ways in which we hear the world as through a speaker darkly (to paraphrase the well-known saying that we see as though a glass darkly). What is happening as you experience Cluett’s installation, the Doppler Effect, Lamonte Young’s *Drift Study*, or other similar transformations of the auditory field made apparent to a subject, can be understood either as bringing out some sounds and pushing back others. Or, in these kinds of experiences and representations that make them apparent, the body can make sounds sound and then turn those sounds silent. At a steady stream of sound, the body marks some sounds and draws them out and marks others, making them silent. We may not be conscious of this activity, but that is absolutely what is happening as the body changes the sounds it hears in such experiences.

But how can this happen? One of the explanations is phase cancellation. If you play sine waves perfectly against one another, each sine wave cancels the other out. This is precisely the technology behind sound cancellation hard and software. How does this relate to our knowledge of the body?

In his *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I*, Lacan suggests that “[m]an knows himself as a body, whereas there is, after all, no reason why he should know himself, since he is inside it. The animal is also inside it, but we have no reason for thinking that he represents it to himself. It is within the see-saw movement, the movement of exchange with the other, that man becomes aware of himself as body...." For Lacan, the exchange of identifications and misidentifications that occur in the Imaginary in general and the mirror stage specifically lay the groundwork for our sense that we live in a body, in our body. In his book *The Skin Ego*, Anzieu goes into much greater detail, arguing that the notion of the boundaries between inside and outside the self lay the groundwork not only for the ego, but for the ego as inhabitant of its body through a series of identifications based on envelopes of acoustic, visual, olfactory, and tactile sensations. In an Imaginary relation with the other (with a lower case "o"), that other is also recognizing and misrecognizing just as the subject is; a series of (mis)recognitions opens in an always-already structure of infinite regress. This is Lacan’s “see-saw motion.”

If we accept the fact that in the Cluett installation, the sounds of G-naturals and C-naturals are constant and objectively unchanging, we have the potential to intervene in such a structure of infinite regress. The body doesn’t just hear; the body at once shapes as it hears what it hears. And it knows that it does so as it moves.

Nathaniel Mellors did a work entitled Hippy Dialectics (2010).

<a href=" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eP8LwKtvVo">Hippy](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eP8LwKtvVo\%22%3eHippy) Dialectics by Nathaniel Mellors</a> [listen to 1:12]

The work combines an uncanny verisimilitude of facial features with an explicitly robotic support for each head; the heads are linked by scalpal and facial hair that suggests a surreal, conjoined-twin fantasy of abject connectedness. Despite, or more suggestively, precisely because of explicit robotic support, the figures seem quite anthropomorphic. This suggests a moebius strip in which the terms “human” and “machine” become one another across an inscrutable threshold. In *Tarrying with the Negative*, Slavoj Žižek explored a fluid representation of slippage along this binary axis in the Director’s Cut of *Blade Runner*.

During the installation as shown on the video documentation, the faces speak with different voices, suggesting independent agencies with a minimalism evocative of Samuel Beckett. The face on our right reiterates the word “yes” after which the face on our left reiterates the word “no”; these twin streams last for several seconds. The two faces do not look at each other, and their lips move as if crudely lip-syncing to voices coming from somewhere else.

The face that reiterates “yes” to our right is the one whose color is the most anthropomorphic—a yellowish white; the face that reiterates “no” to our left is more artificial—a pale bluish grey. The yes / no binary suggests not only an antagonism of affirmation and denial, but it suggests a Freudian antagonism and asymmetry that is fundamental to the psychic apparatus—the unconscious that only affirms, and other agencies of the ego and super-ego that introduce negation to the subject. Beyond this rather simple antagonism, the crude lip-synching opens the space between the lips, the mouth, and the voice whose words come from somewhere else—the place of the Other (with an upper case "O").

The Other (with an upper case "O") forms a major theoretical element of Lacanian theory. I would like to begin with the idea that the other with a lower case “o” is Imaginary; the Other with an upper case “O” is Symbolic. The Other (with an upper case "O") is thus never captured, never apprehended except partially through the signifier, and this is precisely the thing that connects the Other (with an upper case "O") to Mellors’ work. The gap between the movement of the figures’ lips and the voices that emanate impossibly from disembodied heads is an analogue for the gap between the other (with a lower case "o") whose presence we grasp in the Imaginary, and the Other (with an upper case "O") of the Symbolic in whose interest we speak.

On the one hand, it sounds as if the Other (with an upper case "O") is displaced inside the mechanical head of each figure, but this apparently interior displacement masks an exterior displacement in which we address the Symbolic Other beyond the Imaginary other. Speaking of the other with a lower case “o” and the Other with an upper case “o”, Lacan says in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III* “[t]he former, the other with a small o, is the imaginary other, the otherness in a mirror image, which makes us dependent upon the form of our counterpart. The latter, the Other (with an upper case "O"), is the one we address ourselves to beyond this counterpart, the one we are forced to admit beyond the relation of mirage, the one who accepts or is refused opposite us, the one who will on occasion deceive us, the one of whom we will never know whether he is deceiving us, the one to whom we always address ourselves." In other words it is not that these figures do not look at each other in Imaginary space; they look into the impossible face of the Other (with an upper case "O") that they can never see but who always sees them and crucially us.

Kurt Hentschläger and Ulf Langheinrich of GranularSynthesis performed a work entitled *Model* 5.

<a href=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGWvJRWFYC4>>*Model* 5 by Kurt Hentschläger and Ulf Langheinrich</a> [listen to one minute]

 The work involves four screens projecting images the Japanese performance artist Takeya; her eyes are closed throughout most of the work. There are video shots that have been slowed down and ones that have been sped up. There are various performances of the work online; what all share is an asymmetrical binary structure in which the first part involves primarily horizontal facial motions (side-to-side); the second part suddenly involves primarily vertical facial motions (up-and-down). This horizontal / vertical binary is an implicit comment on horizontal head-shaking as signifying negation and vertical head-shaking signifying affirmation.

There are clips in what I call part one of the work in which the woman’s eyes are closed, her mouth is open, and she seems to be singing a note rich with noise, with pitch center on f-sharp2 (a note comfortably within a soprano’s range—at the top line of the treble staff). For me there is something gendered about this note as sung from the body of a woman—a scream or cry. But what kind of cry, precisely?

According to Didier Anzieu we are born with four cries as described in *The Skin Ego*: “crying is, from birth, the most characteristic sound emitted by the neonate. A physical analysis of acoustic parameters has enabled the English researcher P. Wolff…to distinguish in infants of less than three weeks four structurally and functionally distinct sorts of crying: from hunger; from anger…from pain…and in response to frustration…. The cry of hunger…seems to be fundamental: it always follows the other three, which in fact appear to be variants of it. All these forms of crying are pure physiological reflexes." The primal, archaic appeal of the cry must reside in the history we all bear in our bodies of these early stages of development.

Anzieu points out that the call for attention is the first intentional act of communication that we exert to the world: “from the third week onward, at least in a normal family environment, the pseudo-cry of distress geared to getting attention…is heard." In his *Écrits*, Lacan understands this development of the cry in terms of a transformation of cry to call: “…how can the earliest subject refind this place in the elision that constitutes it as absence? How can he recognize this void as the Thing that is closest to him, even if he were to deepen it again in the Other’s bosom by making *his* cry [emphasis Lacan’s] resound there? He will prefer, rather, to refind there the marks of response that had the power to turn his cry into a call. These marks, in which the all-powerfulness of the response are inscribed, are thus circled in reality with the signifier’s line."

There are explicit cries in many musical styles, including the blues and cries / screams in opera, film, and television. In *La voix au cinema*, Michel Chion has shown that the cry in classic Hollywood cinema is clearly gendered, with the male cry as a marking off of a territory (think of Tarzan’s cry in the jungle) and the female cry a signifier of horror at a limit. The clarity of this binary has become blurred in more recent cinema; think of the scene that Žižek discusses in *Enjoy Your Symptom!* from *The Godfather, Part III* in which Michael Corleone’s scream at his daughter’s killing is articulated by several seconds of silence. Some mediated cries in art works border on the scream; there are also cries that border on sung pitches.

In the second part of *Model 5*, the heads of the female figures suddenly move mostly vertically in a very rapid motion evocative of shaking paint cans or a smear of facial features like an animated painting by Francis Bacon. For me, these clips embody a biological, spasmodic reflexes—the flesh’s twin of the cry. If one is tempted to think of this as drive, recall that Lacan says in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*: “[i]n the drive, there is no question of kinetic energy; it is not a question of something that will be regulated with movement. The discharge in question is of a quite different nature, and is on a quite different plane. The constancy of the thrust forbids any assimilation of the drive to a biological function, which always has a rhythm." In Mladen Dolar’s terms, from *A Voice and Nothing More*, the cry belongs to the pre-linguistic register of the scream as opposed to the post-linguistic register of laughter.

The sounds / music vary somewhat from performance to performance; part one tends to be supported by what sounds to me like an out-of-tune low E-natural, perhaps European since a bit sharp. Above it, there are F-sharps and C-sharps in various registers. These pitches are extremely noisy, and their clarity is not always audible. But these pitches sound to me like a very dirty dominant chord pointing to A (probably major). That is, the C-sharp forms a 6th with the bass; it wants to resolve down through B-natural to an A-natural tonic. With the second part of the work, we do in fact get an extraordinary but still quite audible A- natural as the female heads move vertically (words fail to describe the brutality of this motion).

This extraordinarily noisy “function” is of course, the dominant–tonic motion that pervades centuries of tonal music. It would be heard here unconsciously and would simply point from the first part of the work to the second part of the work, making the latter sound like a hideous, but necessary resolution of the former.

Oksana Chepelyk did a work called *Deaf-Mute Chorus* (1998-2004). The work is an audio collage of the sounds of a deaf-mute chorus and various clips of noises, sounds, and musics—some very familiar to western ears, some less familiar. I am particularly interested in the sounds made by the deaf-mute performers.

<a href=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LPHlVrT-Nw>>*Deaf-Mute Chorus* by Oksana Chepelyk</a> [listen to 2:15 to 3:03]

The performers of this Deaf-Mute Choir from Kiev cannot hear themselves as speakers can hear their own words both within acoustic mirror fantasies and in symbolic exchanges. The performers use sign language throughout; the vocal utterances emerge at the margins of Imaginary and Symbolic space—spoken but neither heard by the self nor each other, and heard only by audience members.

What kind of voices are these? In *A Voice and Nothing More*, Mladen Dolar describes the presignifying voice as follows: “[p]resignifying voices comprise the physiological manifestations such as coughing and hiccups, which appear to tie the human voice to an animal nature." For Dolar, sounds of the body such as these underwrite the meanings of the Symbolic: “the non-articulate itself becomes a mode of the articulate; the presymbolic acquires its value only through opposition to the symbolic, and is thus itself laden with signification precisely by virtue of being non-signifying." In reference to the inscrutability of Aristophanes’ hiccups, and the sounds of the body, Dolar uses the phrase “it means that it means."

But the voices in this work are not purely presymbolic. There is something silent about them that Lacan captures in the following passage from *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII*: “[t]he German *das Wort*, word, is both *le mot* and *parole* in French. The word *le mot* has a particular weight and meaning. ‘Mot’ refers essentially to ‘no response.’ ‘Mot’…is what remains silent; it is precisely that in response to which no word is spoken."

This work embodies voice at at least three thresholds—1) between what the performers cannot hear but we can, 2) between what we can feel and we can hear, and 3) inscrutable *bare life* of the performers’ and our own flesh.

Bill Fontana did a work entitled *Acoustical Visions of Venice* (1999).

<a href="<http://resoundings.org/Movies/venice.mov>">Fontana</a>[play 2 minutes]

In this work, sounds from twelve sources across Venice are sent electronically to a single spot on the Punta della Dogana at which they all sound at once, together. The work represents / embodies the discrepancy between the slowness of sound and the speed of electronic transmissions. For those unfamiliar with thinking about the slowness of sound, recall seeing someone hammer on a roof and remember the delay between the sight of the person hammering and the sound that strikes the ear.

I have spoken of the acoustic mirror above. Recall Lacan’s statement about the obvious universality of children’s fascination with the visual mirror; for me, children are also just as obviously fascinated by the sounds they make in reverberant space—a jubilation of sounds made by the body in the acoustic mirror. And of course, the acoustic mirror embodies the content of the myth of Echo and Narcissus as many have suggested.

The crucial point here is that the slowness of sound makes the acoustic mirror possible; echoes involve not just a replication of a sound with a decrease in audibility at each iteration. Echoes obey the laws of physics as they travel back and forth in a point-to-point Imaginary space at the speed of sound—768 miles per hour. Just as the prematurity of human birth makes the crucial misrecognition of the mirror stage possible, so, too, I argue, the slowness of sound makes the acoustic mirror possible. And just as the misrecognition of the visual mirror stage becomes apparent retrospectively, so, too, the misrecognition of the acoustic mirror stage becomes apparent retrospectively. As Anzieu has shown, children emerge from birth in a sonorous bath of sounds, in which they feel at one with the touch, the smell, and the sounds of the (m)other. Gradually, the child registers a difference between the sounds that it produces and the sounds of the (m)other; this recognition of acoustic differentiation underwrites the crucial fifth cry for attention that implicitly embodies the difference between the self and the (m)other.

Fontana’s work puts side-by-side, the slowness of sound and the speed not only of light, but of the electronic transmission of sound. Electronic transmission makes sound light-like in its apparent simultaneity. And the experience of the difference between the two (actual sounds striking the ear and electronic transmission sounding near simultaneously) depends on three conditions: 1) the ability of the subject to see the difference between the fact of sounds being articulated at a remove and their perception, 2) the speed at which the electronic transmission strikes the ear, and 3) the slowness at which the actual sounds strike the ear. To recall the example of the construction worker on a roof, in order to see and hear what Fontana shows us in this work, we would have to 1) see the worker strike his / her hammer on the roof, 2) hear a nearly simultaneous electronic transmission of the sound produced, and 3) then hear the actual sound arrive later. The echo would come to our ears *before* the sound itself in a perverse inversion of the temporality in which we usually hear sounds and their echoes.

This is precisely what happens in Fontana’s work with the sounds of bells across Venice. From the bridge, the subject sees churches and ringing bells in the distance; he / she hears bells as they are electronically transmitted to the bridge nearly instantaneously, and then, lastly, hears the delayed sounds of the actual bells. In *Acoustic Visions of Venice*, Fontana has turned the structure of the echo inside out. The subject hears first the “echo” of the bells—their representation and transmission through electronic media and software applications; then he / she hears the actual sounds of the bells, as if a resonance of their own initial sounding.

I suggested above that Fontana shows us how electronic transmission makes sound (slow), light-like (fast); there are also moments in electronic art in which light (fast) becomes sound-like (slow). Think of images loading slowly in a computer software environment, or of images disintegrating in moments of glitch.

In this talk I have explored a handful of New Media works whose acoustic residues suggest to me large-scale manifestations of a kind of bare life in late early twenty-first-century life in the west. For me this kind of flesh (and associated sensations such as sound, touch, sight, smell and taste) is one of a number of byproducts of the posthistorical world in which find ourselves, others (with a lower case "o") and the Other (with an upper case "O") in the late twentieth century to the present.

In conclusion, I’d like to make a distinction between bare life and the Lacanian Real. The Lacanian Real is that pulp thingness that is always in its one place; it is that to which we have no direct access; it is that which supports and paradoxically evades the Imaginary and Symbolic representations in which and through which we live.

Bare life is flesh stripped clean partially or completely of its Imaginary and Symbolic skin; it is the body at thresholds of the Imaginary and Symbolic under a strain whose generating force resides within the resonances of our posthistorical cultural moment.

For me bare life and other features of the Cartesian subject under a unique and historically-specific pressure have powerful implications for Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis upon which Lacan rests.

I’d like to suggest a corporeal metaphor to address the following question: does bare life and other manifestations of posthistorical culture require a re-organization, a psychoanalytic re-writing of the Cartesian subject?

Can we make room within Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis for bare life and other manifestations of posthistorical culture as the body makes space both when internal organs are removed (the other ones that remain simply fill the void or squeeze together to make room for the new organ), or does bare life and other manifestations of posthistorical culture require a breach of the body, will the body accept a new kind of prosthesis and perhaps become a prosthesis itself of the new organs as they take over functions that had been performed by missing organs, or perhaps perform new functions, both for oneself, the other with a lowercase “o” and the Other with an uppercase “O”?

I have not been able to address these questions in today's talk but I hope to have taken a step in their direction and I thank you for your attention.