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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Editor's Comments

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MAX RAYNEARD

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ANNA WALLER

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Nomad Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship: **Winner**

Mentor: Max Rayneard

DANCING THE UNDEAD

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF *GISELLE*'S WILIS

Act 2 of the 1841 ballet, *Giselle*, exhibits as frightening a band of women as ever graced the stage of the Paris Opera. Clad in long, diaphanous white tutus that recall the remnants of wedding clothes, these women are wilis, feminine spirits insatiably vengeful – and irrevocably undead. Wilis are

brides who died before being married. The poor young creatures cannot lie calmly in their graves; in their dead hearts and feet the passion for dancing, which they could not gratify in their lives, still burns. So at midnight they rise, assemble in troops on the highways, and woe betide the young man who meets them! He must dance with them, they surround him in unbridled madness, and he must dance with them without rest or repose till he falls dead. (Heine 139)

The wilis are terrifying on stage because of the violence of their actions and the insatiable lust they display for dancing and for men's lives. Despite their menace, though, the wilis are aesthetic objects of erotic desire. The wilis reflect and perpetuate the mid-nineteenth century's double standard for women both to be passive participants in marriage – the essential task the wilis have failed to complete – and to embody a desirable image of femininity. Trapped between life and death, wilis can fully do neither. But this is not the most troubling aspect of their existence: the most horrifying consequence of the wilis' presence on stage is the extent to which their trapped fate resembles the fate of the dancers who embody them. The ballerinas, under the gaze of a desiring, male audience, are simultaneously objects of idealized, aestheticized femininity and repellent objects signifying their non-procreative social bodies.

On either side of the dance lie opposite worlds. On one side is the real world, material and social – the audience, the dancers and their bodies, the cultural values that place the dancer on the margin of society. On the other side, a fictional world inhabited by wilis – weightless specters whose femininity seems independent from patriarchal control but is ultimately subject to

it within the narrative structures that surround these feminine creatures. However, the performance of *Giselle* brings the reality and the imagination together in the body of the ballerina. The dancer on stage in the midst of performance becomes socially acceptable as long as she embodies the desires of the audience: the erotic desire for the female body as well as the social desire to regulate the female body and attain bourgeois refinement.

The plot of *Giselle* is the first indicator of the ballet's entrenchment in the social milieu of the Bourgeoisie and the Romantic ballet of the 1830s and 1840s. Théophile Gautier, an author and avid dance critic, conceived of the idea for the ballet after reading the description of the wilis in Heinrich Heine's *De L'Allemagne*. Gautier collaborated with career librettist, Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, to create a story around the legend of the wilis. What they wrote became the framework for the ballet. *Giselle's* narrative reads like a cautionary tale for the bourgeois class and its prevailing values: in addition to the threat of the wilis, the ballet addresses the dangers of marrying outside of one's class. In the first act, Giselle, a peasant girl fond of dancing, falls in love with Albrecht, a nobleman disguised as a peasant but already betrothed to a noblewoman. When Albrecht's identity is revealed, Giselle goes mad and dies. In the second act, Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, calls forth her band of wilis to initiate Giselle as the newest member of their sisterhood. Albrecht comes to mourn Giselle, but he nearly dies as he is forced to dance with the wilis, even as Giselle attempts to save him. Dawn finally comes as a reprieve, the wilis vanish, and Giselle's final gesture as she disappears into her grave blesses Albrecht's marriage to the noblewoman.

The written narrative of Gautier and Saint-Georges is sufficient to understand *Giselle*'s plot. However, the assumption that narrative alone incorporates the total meaning of a ballet is misleading. Performance includes the body in addition to – and sometimes instead of – language. Any analysis of a ballet, a work of performance art, needs a means of understanding the ballet that is not dependent on language alone. The “scenario,” as Diana Taylor defines the term, is a useful paradigm for analysis: “The scenario includes features well theorized in literary analysis such as narrative and plot, but demands that we also pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language” (Taylor 28). As dance, *Giselle* tells its story through movements of ballet technique and pantomime, gestures difficult to translate into words. Certain characteristics of the scenario become especially pertinent in this discussion of *Giselle*: first, the audience's relationship to the scenario (32), or how *Giselle*'s spectators are as integral to the ballet as the dancers; second, the “embodiment of the social actors” (29), or how the dancers embody their roles as wilis. Later, the idea that the outcome of the scenario may shift (31) will also become important. First, however, it is necessary to examine the social context of *Giselle*, again in terms of both audience and dancers.

The social make-up of the audience during France's July Monarchy (1830-1848) and ballet's Romantic era contributed significantly to the subjects and imagery put on stage. The Paris Opera became a symbolic “‘Versailles’ of the Bourgeoisie”

(Johnson 245). In order to appeal to the audience, the productions on stage most often reflected the values, anxieties, and desires of the middle class. At the same time, ticket prices were lowered, making the opera and the ballet more accessible to the working classes. Since everyone who attended the ballet encountered a production meant to flatter the values of the bourgeois patrons, the entire audience adopted the values as their own, whether or not they belonged, economically, to the Bourgeoisie.

What made the art of ballet particularly effective in transmitting cultural values was “the overtness with which it propagate[d] socially charged imagery as a form of the beautiful” (Alderson 291). Théophile Gautier, though, wrote about the beautiful, even the desirable, while leaving the more explicit social issues and eroticism of the dance an unwritten subtext. Simultaneously an audience member, a reviewer, and a creator, for *Giselle* and other ballets, Gautier reveled in the beauty expressed by the ballet, and most especially by the women of the ballet. Commenting on Carlotta Grisi, the original Giselle, in her performance at the ballet’s premiere, Gautier delighted in her exhibition of “a perfection, a lightness, a boldness, and a chaste and delicate sensuality” (Guest 101). Here and throughout his dance criticism, Gautier focuses on the otherworldly aspects of the ballerina’s feminine beauty. He simultaneously acknowledges the ballerina’s sensual presence and disavows the eroticism of it. The dancer embodies the perfection and the lightness that the audience prized; while she and her dance are sensual, they are not threatening like the uncontained sexuality of the wilis.

A strong preoccupation with the feminine defined the Romantic ballet, and the era witnessed a restructuring of the ballet's gender roles. The ideal Romantic ballerina was a figure "slender, chaste, graceful, and worthy of Diana of old" (Gautier 99), and the dominant aesthetic favored light, ethereal, often supernatural female characters at the center of the ballet. The increasing frequency of pointe work in choreography for women gave the illusion of weightlessness to weighted, mortal bodies and allowed the dancer to conform more completely to the aesthetic (Guest 18). Male dancers, however, became peripheral to the ballerinas and were even "excluded from the *corps de ballet* [the lowest rank in a ballet company] whenever an excuse offered" (21). The stage had become an "effeminating place" (McCarren 87) where the male dancer could not "impersonate the poetic idealism of ballet without...becoming a woman in drag" (Garafola 37). The fact that even the ballerina's *pas de deux* partner was at times replaced by another female dancer *en travesti* (35) only strengthened the stage's association with femininity.

Cast from the stage, the new role for the male in ballet was as the audience (McCarren 87). Here, "the scenario places the spectators within its frame, implicating [them] in its ethics and politics" (Taylor 33). The role for the men of the audience was to gaze upon the ballerina. The role of the dancer on stage was to please to the male audience with her body. In *Giselle*, the wilis' aesthetic image allows them to gratify the fancies of the audience while still expressing the anxieties of the audience, and the men of the audience fulfill their role in the performance simply in the

act of watching. The visual gratification of the audience's desire became key because "seeing the dancer [meant] having her" (McCarren 79). This voyeuristic idea continued even outside the theater, as the men were able to own images of the ballerinas in lithograph form – the pinups of the day (Chazin-Bennahum 129).

Felicia McCarren notes two instances where the era's critics intensify the strict ballerina-audience relationship. Gautier describes the audience as the ballerina's "true husband" (qtd. in McCarren 88);¹ critic Jules Janin posits that "the performing artist, as an artist, has no family" (qtd. in McCarren 88).² Their language constitutes the ballerina as married both to her art and her audience, and reaffirms the importance of marriage in bourgeois Parisian culture. Deeply involved in the production of the ballet, the dancer does not have the chance to fulfill the traditional marriage roles. This lack in the dancers' lives became an issue during this period, which experienced a "growing anxiety...toward marriage as it [was] peculiarly associated with women's destiny" (Banes 5). Marriage was, moreover, a way to channel women's sexuality productively through children. Ballerinas failed to participate in traditional marriage, and their sexual liaisons more often meant common-law marriages or none at all. Wed to an art that offered no socially-condoned channel for their sexuality, they met with reputations of scandal and promiscuity.

¹ Gautier, "La Volière," *L'Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis 25 ans*. Leipzig: Hetzel, 1899.

² Janin, Jules. *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 24 Aug. 1832: 3

The sexual reputation of the ballerina was in many ways institutionalized in the ballet company itself. According to dance historian Ivor Guest, “If only I knew who was responsible for this!” became a common saying among *corps de ballet* members who found themselves pregnant (Guest 186-7). Even more telling is the existence of the *Foyer de la Danse*, a “private seraglio” of sorts for affluent young men (28). The *Foyer de la Danse* was a studio behind the stage at the Paris Opera that director Louis Véron organized as a pre-performance social venue. In this space, society gentlemen, mostly members of the Jockey Club, watched closely as the “lightly clad ballerinas stretched out their muscles in preparation for performance” (Smith 69-70). Véron also used the space to facilitate affairs between the dancers and their admirers. This offered the often desperately poor members of the *corps de ballet* a means to supplement their meager salaries (70).

That ballerinas “came, almost without exception, from the poorest families” (Guest 27) only exacerbated their status on the periphery of society. Employment with a ballet company, even as a member of the *corps de ballet*, was barely a level above the other options available to working-class women, which included “back-breaking factory work, domestic service, work convents, and prostitution” (Banes 33). Even so, the supplemental prostitution available through the *Foyer de la Danse* held considerable temptation for dancers who were so poor they “suffered from malnutrition” (Smith 70). Ironically, a malnourished body is the literal incarnation of the weightless Romantic aesthetic. The dancer’s slight form would, moreover,

help her attain the ethereal ideal, the embodiment of which offered her a chance to transcend her penniless origins as she elicited the audience's desire.

Dancers formed a group of women whose highly visible bodies made their living on and, at times, off the stage. Even at her most sublime, her most desirable, it seems the dancer could not fully transcend the repulsiveness of her feminine body. Comparisons between dancers and horses were not uncommon while critics engaged in “describ[ing] and compar[ing] female dancers’ body parts in excruciating and leering detail” (Foster, “Pointe” 7). The first conversation between Gautier and the poet Charles Baudelaire included their remarks on “the resemblance between dancers and racehorses” (McCarren 54). Foster notes that “dancers were referred to as fillies who could be mounted, re-mounted, or exchanged for a new mount” (Foster, “Pointe” 9), presumably at the *Foyer de la Danse*. Sometimes horses were bluntly favored in the comparison: according to one critic, horses still looked good after battle, while ballet dancers were a mess of sweat and smeared make-up on the verge of an exhausted collapse (qtd. in Foster, “Pointe” 21).³ The dancers retain their corporeality in these observations, despite their attempts to transcend it in the ethereal roles that dominated Romantic ballet.

The dancer is caught between trying to transcend her own body and being viewed as nothing but her own body, between embodying an impossible ideal and being reduced to her female body’s sexuality. Embroiled in these insurmountable tensions,

³ Boigne, Charles de. *Petits mémoires de l'opéra*. Paris, 1857.

the dancer inhabits an in-between space eerily similar to the trapped, undead state of the wilis. *Giselle*'s scenario "allows us to keep both the social actor and the role in view simultaneously," and "recognize areas of resistance and tension" (Taylor 28). When the dancer – the social actor – embodies the role of the wili, she embodies her own existence. The wili herself is the fictional representation of a failed social actor. The lack of resistance between dancer and role is disquieting: the simultaneous view of the ballerina and the wili only strengthens the damning social message that women outside the limits of acceptable behavior are condemned to an undead existence. The wilis cannot die, the dancers cannot live – and both because of precisely the same failure to take part in the institution of marriage. Their shared failure spawns their shared fate to dance each night and be eternally reduced to stereotypes of female sexuality: the wilis as merciless women of insatiable libido, the ballerinas as promiscuous women little better than prostitutes.

On and off the stage, dancing is conflated with sex, and, most often, illicit sex. The dancers experience this in the form of public scandal and reputation, but no less potent is the extent to which the same conflation appears embedded in the narrative structure of the ballets the dancers perform. The wilis are the embodiment of dangerous female sexuality uncontaminated within a marriage, and the predilection for dancing defines their identity and their drive for revenge. Each night, they release the sexual frustration of an unconsummated marriage as their now limitless libidos compel them to wreak vengeful havoc arbitrarily on any

male they encounter. This restless existence is the fate of any woman who fails to marry and channel her sexuality constructively, regardless of who is responsible for the failure. In *Giselle*, the fact that Giselle dies because her lover broke her heart does not save her from becoming a wili; Giselle, as a failed woman, is still culpable for her inadvertent transgressions.

The dancers of the Paris Opera may or may not have been sexually frustrated like the wilis, but they did not escape the dichotomy that categorized women's sexuality as either almost non-existent or insatiable. Women are either passive wives and mothers or dangerous sirens – no middle ground. Dancers, who make a living by exhibiting their bodies on stage, do not fulfill the proper wife-and-mother role, so they are de facto threats to social order. The attractively seductive, sometimes overtly dangerous feminine guises they inhabit on stage only contribute to the identification of the women themselves with the roles they perform. Using Fraleigh's argument that "the body and the dance are inseparable" (31), the conflation of dancer with dance is not inappropriate. However, the conclusion drawn from it is not so simple. Instead of sharing the dangerous, promiscuous identity of the wilis, the dancers share the disenfranchised, abject position of audience's fear of the wilis with the aesthetic pleasure of watching the ballerinas on stage. Gautier calls the images conjured up by the wilis "voluptuously sinister" (Gautier 94), suggesting that the wilis appear more desirable than dangerous. Still, the question persists as to why Romantic ballet's aesthetic can remain so appealing once the desired objects become lethal. For the

original scenario, a single moment at the end of the ballet reconciles the tension between desire and horror. After the wilis' veritable seduction of the audience, Giselle – a wili, but perhaps less of one in her undying love for Albrecht – puts to rest any anxieties caused by the allure of the wilis. As dawn comes and the ballet draws to a close, Giselle accepts the social order that she had unwittingly jeopardized by loving Albrecht, and she condones the nobleman's marriage to the noblewoman. This reestablishment of social order enables the audience to fully take pleasure in the more aberrant elements of the ballet without feeling complicit in any threat to their society.

But what if the scenario's outcome changes? Taylor suggests that scenarios "adapt constantly to the reigning conditions" (31), and *Giselle*'s ending has changed multiple times since the ballet's premiere. In 1944, Cyril Beaumont wrote that the original ending with the noblewoman had "long since been changed" and that "in contemporary productions Giselle disappears into the shadow of the cross, when Albrecht staggers and falls heavily to the ground – presumably dead" (Beaumont 124).⁴ More common since that time is an ending that leaves Albrecht alone on stage to mourn the final loss of Giselle (Smith 199, Verdi 77). This is in direct contrast to the direction in Gautier's narrative that Albrecht be joined on stage by his fiancée to symbolize their impending marriage. Leaving out the final detail

⁴ That Giselle disappears under a cross suggests her salvation, and, I would argue, whether she must continue her existence as a wili. Giselle is never vengeful like a wili; to the contrary, she saves Albrecht's life. Her forgiving character is antithetical to the wilis' purpose.

changes the outcome of the ballet from fixed to ambiguous: the social order of Giselle's original, bourgeois audience is no longer definitively restored, and marriage does not triumph. This choice shifts the focus of the ballet away from the power of social laws and toward the power of the immortal love between Giselle and Albrecht (Smith 199). This "triumph" attempts to soften the original *Giselle*'s misogynistic denial of female agency in the realm of acceptable society, living or dead. This shifted ending also signifies that the anxieties of the audience have changed since the mid-nineteenth century. The social significance of the wilis changes when the ballet focuses on the redeeming quality of Giselle's love: instead of embodying the anxieties toward impure women, the wilis suggest a hatred toward men who act duplicitously, as Albrecht does when he carries on a relationship with Giselle despite his engagement.

Although a change in the scenario may appear to mitigate the original's misogyny, the presence of the wilis continues to be problematic. Even if the social implications of the wilis do not resonate with modern audiences, the aesthetics of the wilis certainly do. The image of the wili – white, light, and ethereal – sustains an impossible standard of beauty that ballerinas still struggle to attain. This aesthetic, Romantic ballet's aesthetic, has persisted into the twenty-first century despite the evolution of other aspects of the art form. Female dancers, as a rule, are no longer emaciated because of poverty, but the pressure to manipulate their bodies to conform to that same weightless aesthetic is considerable (Alderson 300). The wilis, eternally

suspended between life and death in a delicate wisp of a bodily form, perpetuate the internalization of this aesthetic as long as they remain on stage. The modern horror of the wilis lies not in their symbolic threat to social order, but in their continuing power over the bodies of dancers, earthbound bodies incapable of truly attaining the impossible lightness of the ideal.

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Nomad Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship: **Honorable Mention**

Mentor: Emily McGinn

"THE REMAINS OF HIS SICKNESS"

ABJECTION AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN *I'M NOT THERE*

Since Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), few films have matched the unsettling complexity of *Persona*'s opening sequence like Todd Haynes' *I'm Not There* (2007). Like Bergman, Haynes crafts a cinematic prologue that exposes verisimilitude as a construction, posits an alternative approach to subjectivity, and enables Haynes to unlock the multiple subjectivities of Bob Dylan in *I'm Not There*. While the rest of

the film follows a chronological narrative arc, albeit an arc of seven different Dylans at seven distinct points in time, the opening sequence functions as a statement of purpose that blurs. Rather than promising to provide answers, it asserts that it will propose questions. Haynes directs these questions at genre and technique, the history of cinematic avant-garde, and ultimately the nature of being itself. To formalize these questions, Haynes simultaneously threatens and pluralizes not just Dylan's subjectivity but also the subjectivity of the audience.

In the film's opening moments, the optical point-of-view shot, reminiscent of the *cinéma vérité* style of D. A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* (1967), thrusts the audience inside of Dylan's head, and we see the world as he might have seen it walking toward the stage in 1966. This suggestion of truth (*vérité*) is quickly rejected, however, when Haynes breaks with history and imagines Dylan's death. As Dylan, the audience thus moves from interiority to an out-of-body experience of its own death. In addition to creating these effects, the treatment of Dylan's corpse alludes to an idealistic fantasy of purity and cleansing in Federico Fellini's *8 ½* (1963). Haynes critiques Fellini's thematic approach in order to amplify the ambiguous experience of the abject that shatters subjectivity in *I'm Not There*. The imagined death and cutting of Dylan's young, feminine corpse, the manipulation of language and technique in the opening narration, as well as Haynes' intertextual discourse with Fellini force the audience to the edge of life and death, to imagine its subjective non-existence, to seep into the result of impossible attempts to constrain—the abject.

Within the first two minutes of the film, the audience lives out a Rimbaud quotation that reflects this abject position and will become prominent throughout the film: “Je est un autre” or “I is someone else” (Rimbaud 370).¹ The audience first occupies Dylan’s subjectivity as “I” and then observes this “I” as “someone else” in Dylan’s corpse. To create this “I” identification, Haynes begins the film with a point-of-view shot in which the audience *is* Dylan. The grainy black-and-white aesthetic and the unsteadiness of the hand-held camera create an instant identification with the “I,” allowing Haynes both to critique the truth (*vérité*) of representing someone’s subjectivity and to literalize the occupation of “someone else.” The only way to know the truth about Dylan is *to be* Dylan.

But being Dylan proves to push subjectivity to its limits. In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines abjection, which poses a constant threat to subjectivity, based on its physical sources: filth, waste, sickness, retching, the corpse (2-3). She argues that abjection’s threat to subjectivity undergoes a fundamental theological shift from Judaism to Christianity:

It is through abolishment of dietary taboos, partaking of food with pagans, verbal and gestural contact with lepers, as well as through its power over impure spirits that the message of Christ is characterized. [...] An essential trait of those evangelical attitudes or narratives is that abjection is no longer exterior. It is permanent and comes from within. (113)

Judaism’s emphasis on separateness through cleanliness and purity places the abject outside of religious devotion. But the

¹ For Dylan’s discussion of his encounter with this particular Rimbaud letter through Suze Rotolo, see *Chronicles* (Vol. 1), pgs. 287-8.

New Testament alters the dichotomy between the pure devoted and the impure downcast by arguing that purity and impurity reside within the individual (114). The filth and wretchedness that were once external become inherent. Haynes draws on all of the physical manifestations of abjection and even calls on the New Testament to emphasize their theological treatment in *I'm Not There*. For example, after Jude Quinn (a version of Dylan based on his persona in the unreleased 1966 documentary *Eat the Document*) berates his friend, a woman in Quinn's entourage asserts, "You know, people said you could be a real cocksucker." Quinn retorts by paraphrasing Christ: "Well, it's not what goes into a man's mouth, babe, that defiles him." The woman finishes the verse: "No, it's what comes out." Quinn then vomits in his friend's lap, physicalizing Christ's metaphorical assertion that devotion is less about purity laws than it is about internal allegiance to God: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).² Contacting abjection in the form of sickness, fecal matter, or the corpse after this theological shift unleashes a subjective crisis in which external abjection reflects the ambiguity of selfhood, meaning, and order (2-4).³

² It is notable that, after Quinn is helped into a vehicle and driven away from the venue where he pukes on his friend, Haynes cuts to the image of a statue of Christ's crucifixion, which Quinn and Alan Ginsberg taunt by cracking jokes like, "Why don't you do some of your early stuff?"

³ Kristeva also cites Matthew 15:11 to support her claims regarding theology and abjection. She argues that the verse illustrates "a new logic" that facilitates "the interiorization of impurity" (114-15).

The opening shot of the film formalizes the threat to selfhood and meaning that Kristeva identifies with abjection. After proceeding down the hall and up the stairs of the concert venue, the camera arrives at a doorway opening onto a stage with a giant American flag, musicians warming up, a roaring crowd, and blinding light coming from all directions.⁴ As the shot moves from the dark doorway into the blinding light of the stage, it is as if we, Dylan and we the audience, are being born. The act of being born is, to Dylan, the perpetual act of the artist, as revealed by lines like “Get born, keep warm” and “He not busy being born is busy dying” (“Subterranean Homesick Blues,” “It’s Alright, Ma”). Haynes thus allows us to be born into Dylan’s subjectivity just as he makes us aware of the impossibility of such a perspective. At the same time, however, going upward toward the light evokes the experience of death. The first cut of the film to the 1966 motorcycle crash that nearly ends Dylan’s life punctuates the resonant possibility of death. The most fragile stages of the body, birth and death, are already inextricably entwined.

A bellowing motorcycle engine and extreme close-ups of a foot slamming down on a starter and a hand releasing a clutch thrust the audience away from the “I” position of the optical point-of-view shot and into its new role as outside observer. Haynes quickly shifts from extreme close-ups to an extreme long shot of a motorcycle horizontally traversing the screen. The rider is barely

⁴ Historically, this is a May 24, 1966 concert at the Olympia in Paris. Original footage of the Paris concert, an example of Dylan’s electric period, is available at the following web address: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zg1Q5pPkwGE>>.

visible, but the shot unmistakably depicts the 1966 crash. After establishing Dylan's susceptibility to death, Haynes asserts that we are observing a fragile body. The language of the film's title indicates the body's vulnerability to culturally determined meanings of celebrity, gender, and subjectivity. Pronouns that contribute to forming the title blip off of and onto the screen above the motorcycle rider as follows:

I
I he
 he
I'm he
I'm
I'm her
not her
not
not here.
I'm not there.

The ambiguity of subject, object, and gender through the mixing and negation of the pronouns "I," "he," and "her" reflects Haynes' career-long concerns regarding identity and subject formation and sets up the problem of being between these identifications.⁵ The title sequence emphasizes the link between corporeality and the symbolic order, the problematic separation of subject and object, and the ambiguous space between self and other. The title *I'm Not There* is itself abject in several ways. It suggests the ambiguous subjectivity mentioned above in which a

⁵ Such concerns arise in films from as early in Haynes' career as *Dottie Gets Spanked*, a short film depicting a young boy who is punished for his effeminate tendencies. The film explores Freud's arguments about physical discipline in "A Child is Being Beaten" and relates this psychoanalytic argument to gender identity.

person is never fully realized. Moreover, the song from which the film takes its title is an obscure bootleg track from outside of the conventional Dylan canon. Because that song is improvised, sometimes in incomprehensible mumbles, it represents a disturbance of order and boundaries of signification characteristic of abjection.

The most significant form of abjection comes, however, in the form of a corpse. For the audience, the cut to the morgue marks the complete shift from *cinéma-vérité* subjectivity to the morgue's abjection, from being "I" to seeing "I" as "someone else" (Rimbaud 370). The Dylan we have just occupied, our subjectivity as audience, lies dead before us under the coroner's scalpel. Kristeva describes the crushing significance of a corpse, "the utmost of abjection":

The corpse [...] upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. [...] As in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. [...] There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. [...] The corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, "I" is expelled. (4-5)

The corpse, as a former "I," is what we "thrust aside in order to live"; it is "something rejected from which one does not part" (Kristeva 5). Haynes steeps the experience in ambiguity by revealing not just any corpse, but the corpse of Dylan after the July 1966 motorcycle crash. This feminine corpse of a man who did not die is an imposter, a disturbance of the "identity, system, order" of history.

The imposter, Jude Quinn, is played by Australian actress Cate Blanchett and first appears in an extreme close-up of the top half of his (her) face. The quick cuts that follow are spatially and temporally disorienting. Haynes cuts from the extreme close-up angled straight down at Quinn to a shot of rotating gurney wheels to an upward-angled close-up of the flickering ceiling light. Although not an optical point-of-view shot, the shot of the ceiling light must occur from the position of the corpse, bringing the viewer closer to “the border of [his or her] condition as a living being.”⁶ As a scalpel opens Quinn’s flesh, the cut evokes Lacan’s notion of “the *rim*, which is the space between two corporeal surfaces, an interface between the inside and the outside of the body” (Gross 88). This gap between subject and object makes the abject an imminent threat since “a hole [...] imperils the subject’s identity, for it threatens to draw the subject rather than objects into it.” The audience not only experiences a perspectival shift between subject and object, but observes the abjection of both the imagined corpse and the cutting of the body.

The language of the scene furthers the sense of abjection as the narrator describes the amorphous Dylan lying before us: “There he lies. God rest his soul and his rudeness. A devouring public can now share the remains of his sickness and his phone

⁶ The shot of the ceiling light also alludes to Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*. The scene with the ceiling light in *Citizen Kane* is dynamic; it occurs when Kane opens the opera house for his wife and the shot of the light involves one of the most disorienting camera moves of the entire film as it pans rapidly upward before a quick cut. Haynes sterilizes the image’s dynamism through a motionless shot and perhaps foreshadows through this image the critique of Fellini that will soon follow.

numbers. There he lay: poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity. [...] Even the ghost was more than one person.”⁷ The sentence brims with ambiguity. The pronoun “he” cannot adequately describe the identity of the woman-Dylan in the shot. The word “lies” suggests the untruth of both this figure’s identity—it is not “he”; it is not Dylan—and the figure’s condition as dead in 1966. The intransitive verb “lie” denotes “the posture of a dead body,” “a specified position of subjection, helplessness, misery, degradation, or captivity,” and “a state of inactivity or concealment,” among other definitions.⁸ The word “lies” thus simultaneously lies and tells the truth. Dylan is not literally dead in 1966, but his position of “helplessness, misery, degradation, [and] captivity” on tour does force him after the motorcycle crash into “a state of [public] inactivity [and] concealment.” His encounter with death, his own abjection and consequent flight from the public eye, becomes the audience’s abjection in the corpse, “the remains of his sickness.” Haynes posits an alternative, however, to devouring the corpse and continuing the cycle of cannibalizing the artist. The alternative to this abjection lies in unlocking the “poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity” and observing Dylan as a compilation of artistically and historically diverse subjectivities.

Haynes’ intertextual engagement with Fellini’s *8 ½* punctuates the abjection in *I’m Not There*. A visual reference to

⁷ The gunshot sounds that accompany the quick cuts between Dylan as “poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity” add to the sense that the viewer is being confronted by potential death. Each actor playing Dylan stares directly into the camera, creating the sense that the fourth wall is becoming increasingly fragile.

⁸ These definitions are provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

the film critiques the roles ascribed to women in Fellini's film and in 1960s avant-garde cinema as a whole.⁹ The allusion in *I'm Not There* occurs in an extreme close-up of the coroner's hand gently placing Quinn's hand on his (her) waist. The scene inverts in several ways Fellini's original fantasy image of Claudia placing Guido's hand on his waist after laying him down to rest. Kristeva's use of abjection as it relates to Biblical purity is central to Haynes' interrogation of this scene. The protagonist of *8 ½*, troubled director Guido Anselmi, imagines purity and cleansing (diametrically opposed to abjection) as externally lodged in the ideal feminine. Purity is to be harnessed through associations with women, if only they would cooperate. Yet Haynes maintains abjection as an internal quality of his protagonist(s) and questions Fellini's faith in the association between purity and artistic inspiration. In the scene of reference in *8 ½*, "Claudia in White," a downtrodden Guido fantasizes that Claudia has come to rescue him from his artistic angst. She nearly floats into the room as a combination of top- and side-lighting makes her a glowing white figure amid the surrounding darkness. Guido posits that she is the ideal feminine as he imagines her role in his film: "Let's say you are purity itself. [...] Yes, this could be it. There's a museum in the town and you, the guard's daughter, grew up surrounded

⁹ Actress Tanya Zaicon discusses this phenomenon in the audio commentary accompanying the Criterion Collection's edition of *8½* (refer to scene ten, "Asa Nisi Masa"). Fellini's tendency to imagine women's roles in terms of the man — as "mother, angel, and whore" — is a problem in Fellini's work that is almost universally symptomatic of avant-garde movements such as Italian Futurism and Black Nationalism, which drive forward politically and aesthetically but lurch backward in terms of traditional gender roles.

by images of ancient beauty..." Claudia sits down at his desk and giggles as Guido falls into a sea of headshots laid out on his bed. In Guido's imagination, signifiers of purity freely inhere in his idealized women, and the women playfully participate in the proceedings.¹⁰

Time becomes ambiguous in Guido's fantasy as Claudia prepares to identify herself with the qualities that Guido provides her. The first temporal shift occurs as Claudia approaches Guido's now sleeping form, kisses his hand, carefully places it on his waist, and kisses his head.¹¹ Another temporal shift occurs, and Fellini provides another extreme close-up, this time of Claudia's face, as she now lies covered to the neck and surrounded by the white sheets of Guido's bed, suggesting that they have made love during the time that has elapsed. Claudia now responds to Guido's earlier question about what she wants: "I've come to stay forever. I want to create order, I want to cleanse... I want to create order, I want to cleanse..." Haynes rejects this phantasmagoric ideal feminine by complicating the erotics of Fellini's scene with the imminence of death in his corpse scene. The gender roles of the laying of the hand are reversed as the coroner lays the woman-Dylan's dead hand on his (her) waist, and Haynes exchanges Claudia's impulse "to create order" and "to cleanse" with the

¹⁰ See also the scenes "Guido's Harem" and "Jacqueline Bonbon" for Guido's aggrandized vision of feminine purity. In these scenes, the women must maintain their youth and utility for Guido to keep them in his imaginary harem.

¹¹ This extreme close-up of Claudia's hands on Guido's hand is the image Haynes duplicates.

abject “remains of his sickness” and the disorder it incites.¹² Through the prospect of “devouring” of the feminine corpse, Haynes implicates Fellini’s cannibalism of traditional femininity as Fellini pushes toward a new cinematic aesthetic. In effect, Haynes forges an avant-garde exploration of subjectivity in *I'm Not There* that attempts to avoid the gender subjugation of 1960s avant-garde efforts like Fellini’s *8 ½*.

By placing the audience between subject and object, by confronting us with the “utmost of abjection,” and by inverting Dylan’s gender in the opening sequence of the film, Haynes effectively forces us into the abject position of recognizing “I” as “someone else” (Rimbaud 370). He prepares us not simply to think of Dylan’s multiple subjectivities as the key to understanding Dylan, but as an assertion regarding the instability of postmodern subjectivity as a whole. Through this new recognition of subjective truth (*vérité*) as an ambiguous “in-between,” Haynes critiques the assumptions regarding identity taken up by the cinematic avant-garde in 1960s films like Fellini’s *8 ½* and Godard’s *Masculin, féminin* and pushes against the normative assumptions of avant-garde movements throughout the twentieth century. Unlike Fellini, who situates purity and abjection outside of his protagonist, Haynes draws on Kristeva’s notion of internalized abjection, making these qualities fundamental aspects of selfhood. This kind of selfhood, which Haynes forces the

¹² This gender-reversal of 1960s films is a strategy that will continue throughout *I'm Not There* in reference to other films such as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Masculin, féminin* (1966).

audience to experience, is constantly at risk when faced with physical manifestations of abjection like the corpse. In other words, the corpse (just like purity) is not a symbol of separateness but something deeply tied to selfhood and the potential loss of subjectivity through death. The opening sequence of *I'm Not There*, like that of Bergman's *Persona* before it, stages an intertextual and abject exploration of selfhood that exposes the fiction of verisimilitude.¹³ By unlocking a multiplicity of Dylans through abjection in the opening sequence of the film, Haynes invites us to ask theoretical questions about a figure steeped in myth, to think in new ways about how the cinematic avant-garde can address subjectivity, and to become more comfortable with the possibility that "I is someone else."

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¹³ Even Bergman's opening sequence is intertextual. The close-up of the lamb's eye evokes the opening image of the first cinematic collaboration between Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

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WHEN WE ALL RISE UP TOGETHER

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE IN *THE WALKING DEAD*

On the first page of the first issue of the ongoing comic book, *The Walking Dead*, written by Robert Kirkman, a police officer is shot. On the second page he awakens with a gasp, alone in a hospital bed, an undisclosed amount of time later. Throughout the following pages this officer and the reader of *The Walking Dead* discover several things together: the world has changed, the walking dead are everywhere, and

the survivors of this apocalyptic scenario have been abandoned to fend for themselves. In *The Walking Dead* the question of what a remnant of humanity would do to survive in a “zombie apocalypse” is asked over the course of, to this date, some sixty issues. For Rick Grimes, the protagonist of *The Walking Dead*, the question has not yet been answered. For the reader, one answer that slowly emerges is that there is no survival for humanity regardless of the ability of individual humans to continue to evade infection or ingestion by the zombie majority. For purposes of this discussion humanity comprises the collection of social and gender roles, morals and rules in which other human life is described as valuable, the language through which these roles and rules are understood, as well as the physical and material spaces associated with them. All of these serve as components for a human identity. As these components are stripped away the survivors become less human, and I will argue that this loss of humanity in the protagonists in *The Walking Dead* reveals an anxiety about the nature of the human subject, and the desire to define through this type of narrative to what extent the modern, Western subject is merely performing her humanity. In *The Walking Dead*, once the material context for this performance is lost there is an inversion of the relationship between human and monster. By examining the ways in which the human survivors come to be figured as monstrous, the zombie can ultimately be read as the legitimate owners of that which signifies humanity: material possessions, urban and suburban landscapes, even language.

This inversion is the foundation on which this reading will show the anxiety about the performance of humanity. Throughout this argument I will examine the ways the formal elements of the graphic presentation of the comic book format, as well as the narrative and thematic concerns that arise in the text, express this inversion and the resulting apparent anxiety. Beginning with the ways in which *The Walking Dead* represents an evolution in the zombie genre, next considering certain comic book conventions that have bearing in the argument, and moving to a close examination of a series of specific episodes within the narrative, this discussion will highlight the problems of human subjectivity posited in a world that is no longer materially stable: the world following a zombie apocalypse.

The development of the contemporary zombie narrative, from localized outbreak to full-scale apocalypse can be traced to George Romero, beginning with his 1968 film, *Night of the Living Dead*. As Steven Shaviro explains in his essay “Contagious Allegories: George Romero” in this film Romero “has called to life the first postmodern zombies” (p 85). This differentiates the cinematic, post-modern zombie from the traditional zombie of Caribbean folklore, which generally consisted of a practitioner of some sort of magic exerting control over a reanimated corpse. In the post-modern zombie there is no controlling intelligence, no obvious explanation of the drive to reanimate. Instead of the zombie laboring under the control of a living person, they seek to devour the living. Shaviro explains how Romero’s zombies are invested with the traits that will afterward be associated with the

“living” dead: “They move slowly and affectlessly, as if in a trance... they kill and consume. They are slower, weaker, and stupider than living humans; their menace lies in numbers, and in the fact that they never give up” (p 85). In the film *Night of the Living Dead* the formula of a post-modern zombie outbreak or attack is fully articulated. There is a small handful of survivors who are vastly outnumbered by the undead outside, who must somehow take possession of and secure a physical space against the predations of the infected masses. In *Night of the Living Dead* the survivors who attempt to wait out the outbreak of zombies have the benefit of hearing news reports on the radio, the reassurance that they are not the last people left alive in the world, and by morning the authorities have controlled the outbreak, though there is only one of the on-camera survivors left alive. *Night of the Living Dead* presents the plight of the survivors against a backdrop of the reinforcing normative society. Their roles, though imperiled, are ultimately reestablished when society is able to exterminate the threat, even if the individuals do not survive. This reassurance that the zombie threat can be suppressed or contained eventually disappears.

This original zombie outbreak scenario, over time, develops into a large scale apocalypse scenario. In George Romero’s third zombie film, 1985’s *Day of the Dead*, the survivors exist isolated and underground. As Shaviro writes, “all that remains of postmodern society is the military-scientific complex, its chief mechanism for producing power and knowledge” (p 94). The vast majority of humanity is wiped out, and this remnant of

the military-scientific complex cannot save itself, in fact accelerates its own death. Where the human survivors should function as a collective protagonist against the zombie threat they have shifted to become their own antagonists. This slippage of identification as hero or villain is most plausible within a post-modern landscape, and it is this slippage that allows the eventual inversion of humanity's position in *The Walking Dead*. As the zombie genre has developed and the scale of the scenario has grown larger, the space in which this slippage of identity and meaning is possible grows from a regional crisis, handled by local law enforcement as in *Night of the Living Dead*, to the global scale infection as depicted in Max Brooks' novel, *World War Z*, or the 2004 film *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*. In the most extreme zombie apocalypse scenario, such as the one in *The Walking Dead*, the outbreak of zombie infection is so widespread that all forms of economic and administrative social structures fail on a national, and possibly international, level. The reassurance that society's power structures will be able to exert the authority necessary to exterminate the zombies and reestablish the roles, values and material contexts that are identifiable as human has been removed from the formula. The human survivors are confronted with the realization that no one is coming to save them.

It is at this level of societal collapse that Rick Grimes, the primary protagonist of *The Walking Dead*, finds himself in the first volume of the series, *The Walking Dead: Days Gone Bye*¹. It

¹ Because of the limitations of the format of comic books collected into trade paper backs the issue numbers are not clearly provided, and the pages are unnumbered. Any following paginations are my own.

is useful, at this point, to emphasize certain specific uses of formal elements common to comic books alongside the narrative elements they represent. The hospital where Rick awakens is apparently abandoned, and when he makes his way to the cafeteria of the complex he is confronted with his first exposure to the milling crowds of the walking dead. In this single panel page, or splash page, the cafeteria is seen through Rick's eyes, an open room with tables, chairs, and zombies. The zombies are lying on floors, slumped in chairs, or milling about, some are dressed in street clothes and others wear surgical scrubs, while IV stands and heart monitors punctuate the scene. Because the art of *The Walking Dead* is uncolored, the zombies standing near the back of the room could be mistaken for human at first glance. It is only through the context of this scene that they are identified as zombies. The eyes of all the zombies are turned toward Rick when he opens the door, and in that unified gesture, it is possible to see that this space belongs to them. Rick, the human survivor, is the intruder. The image of the human survivor intruding on a formerly normal social or domestic space is one that will recur frequently throughout the run of the series (p 6).

The other significant recurring formal element that occurs on this splash page is a speech balloon attached to a zombie. In the comic book genre the speech balloon is specifically used to allow language to be attached to a speaker. It signifies, for lack of a better term, a diegetic utterance. It is not a background noise but a foregrounded one, and it is also differentiated from the way in which a noise that is not a vocalization is represented. When Rick and a zombie struggle and fall down the stairs the noise of

the zombie's bones breaking is represented as "SNAP!" in text superimposed on the panel showing the action, with no enclosing balloon (p 7). This is not a vocalization and therefore is not connected or attached to a character. To represent a sound that comes from a specific character that is not language, such as a gasp or a sigh, the convention used in *The Walking Dead* is to enclose that utterance in a speech balloon, but the word will be bracketed by hash-marks to indicate that the character is not literally saying the word, "gasp." The character is making the noise that "gasp" represents (p 2). Zombie vocalizations in *The Walking Dead* are presented in speech balloons in the same way as human language. They do not contain the word "moan" marked with hash-marks. They are given the same language conventions as human language, including punctuation. If zombies speak, are they social? If they are social and speak are they subjects? If language is a necessary component of subjectivity, is it possible to consider the "speech" of zombies as language? There is a lack of clear indication within *The Walking Dead* whether zombies speak to each other, since there are no zombies represented as vocalizing in the absence of a survivor present to perceive them. However, this presence of the human survivor could serve as some sort of mirror in which the zombie can mis-recognize itself as what it once was, in a corruption of the Lacanian mirror stage of language formation. An interesting facet of this consideration can be found in an explanation of Jacques Lacan, in *Literary Theory*, by Terry Eagleton, "All desire springs from a lack, which it strives continually to fill. Human language works by such a

lack... To enter language, then, is to become a prey to desire” (p 145). Zombies are largely a corporealization of desire, of hunger. Shaviro describes zombies’ vocalization as “an obsessive leitmotif of suspended and ungratified desire” (p 85). *The Walking Dead* depicts the first zombie Rick comes in contact with as responding to his presence with, “Uungh.” (p 6). Rick responds, “Uh. Uh. Uh.” (p 7). All of the zombie-speech utilizes punctuation conventions, further differentiating the zombie utterances from inarticulate sounds like a gasp or a wheeze. The second zombie that Rick comes into close contact with, one so decayed that it is barely more than a skeleton with a scanty covering of skin, says, “Guk. Glakk. Guk. Guh. Gar.” (p 10) in several sequential panels, implying something like a vocabulary. Later a zombie, seeing Rick passing says, “Ruh?” (p 33). The use of a question mark to punctuate the vocalization is worthy of particular notice, as it indicates an intention of meaning, a query that is not simply Shaviro’s “obsessive leitmotif of suspended and ungratified desire.” A zombie that can articulate a question in its utterance is attempting something more than the unconscious moans of hunger present in Romero’s zombies. Because of this intersection of desire and the conscious articulation of that desire, in *The Walking Dead* represented by these speech balloons, it seems that zombies can be read as some sort of subject, even if it is a different sort of subjectivity than is normally attached to humans. This becomes important as the text continues because the zombies occupy the physical spaces that were formerly associated with human society, and this occupation denies the human survivors access to the

physical contexts that they find necessary to continue to consider themselves human.

If a zombie can approximate a subject with something approaching language and social behavior, then where does that leave the human survivors in a world that is populated almost entirely by the undead? As the comic book unfolds, the aggregate of the narrative episodes suggests various ways to cope with this question, but never fully answers it. The survivors in *The Walking Dead* attempt to maintain their semblance of “humanity” through an obsession with material objects and manufactured goods, components of their definition of human. Rick finds his way to a small camp of survivors that is hiding in the woods near Atlanta, Georgia. He has been told that Atlanta is where the government evacuated people in the region to, in order to be easier to protect, and goes in search of his family. When he gets to Atlanta he finds it completely overrun with zombies and is rescued by a young man who regularly scavenges in the outlying areas of the city. When they return to the camp that Glenn was scavenging for, which improbably includes Rick’s wife and young son, the reader learns that Glenn’s foraging included, “some candy bars... some soap, detergent...[and] a couple rolls of toilet paper” (p 48). As Rick points out somewhat later, “what’s up with that guy? Risking his life every day to get toilet paper and candy bars?” (p 59). These are the smallest artifacts of a consumer culture, but they are so important as a symbol of what it means to be human that Glenn is willing to risk his life to get them, and the other survivors are grateful he takes these risks. Months after the zombie outbreak

began, the survivors live within walking distance of millions of the undead, rather than move a safer distance away. The survivors find it necessary to have showers, clean smelling laundry, and toilet paper in order to maintain a semblance of normalcy, to behave as human.

When the survivors do eventually decide it would be better to move away from the city and find someplace safer to live they happen across a suburban gated community. Rick and the rest of the survivors decide that this community, built to keep those elements that are undesirable to an upper-middle-class society out, is exactly what they need. In the second volume of the series, *The Walking Dead: Miles Behind Us*, they find a house in the gated community that looks promising, enter, and kill the zombies that are currently in the house. They find these zombies in the basement where two of them, both male at one time, attack Rick and his companion upon opening the door. They find a third zombie, identifiable as previously female by clothing and what remains of its features, apparently hiding in the basement (p 37-38). It is analogous to the gendered roles that one might expect in a zombie narrative if these were human survivors defending their home: the men go up to fight off intruders, in apparent defense of their possessions and a woman. This preservation of gendered roles reinforces the ability to read these zombies as engaging in something like social relationships, a community. In subsequent pages the gated community is revealed to be completely full of the walking dead when melting snow exposes a warning on the exterior wall that reads, “All dead, do not enter” (p 43). The

morning after the human survivors' first night there, the community of zombies rises up to chase the survivors out, and back onto the road. In this reading the zombies become the owners, the inhabitants of the houses within the community, and they drive out the monstrous interlopers who have killed three of the community members in order to steal their home. It may seem a stretch to claim that zombies can have a right to the buildings and land they occupy, but it is formulation that arises repeatedly in *The Walking Dead*. All the places where humanity "should" belong are now inhospitable to humans. The only way to belong there is to become a zombie, and because of this the undead's occupation has rendered the minority population of the living as indigent and wandering. In this destabilized, wandering existence, identifying and preserving the micro-social structures that serve as components to the survivors' human identity, such as nuclear family, becomes increasingly difficult.

Rick's band of survivors, upon escaping from the zombie-mob in the gated community, is introduced to a family of survivors on a farm. This contact is initiated when Rick's son, Carl, is shot by a member of this family by mistake while hunting. The family is headed by a veterinarian named Hershel Greene, who saves Carl's life. The Greene clan is well-off in comparison with Rick's group of survivors: they have plenty to eat, and their land seems secure from the zombies that roam aimlessly around the countryside. However, when Rick suggests that his group might stay inside Hershel's barn, Hershel reveals that he has been keeping the zombies who do wander onto his property there,

“that’s where we keep all our dead ones... we’re keeping them in the barn until we can figure a way to help them” (p 88-89). When confronted with the information that Rick’s group kills the zombies they come across, Hershel reveals that one of his sons is a zombie, and inside the barn. He explains, “For all we know these things could wake up tomorrow, heal up, and be completely normal again! We just don’t know! You could have been murdering all those people you ‘put out of their misery’” (p 92). Hershel’s desire to protect his family extends to those who have been infected and when his infected son attacks his other son, he pleads, “Shawn no! Please son! He’s your brother! You’ve got to remember!” (p 106). It is only because his other children are attacked that Hershel finally shoots the zombies he has been sheltering. Hershel is able to look at his infected children as members of his family, revealing a confusion in identification with humanity.

Nearly forty issues later in the series’ run the image of the zombie child is revisited. Rick returns to his home town to check on a father and son who had been living in a neighboring house when he first woke from his coma to find the world changed. In his initial encounter with these survivors he was hit in the head with a shovel by the young son who mistakes Rick for a zombie. When he returns he is again hit in the head with a shovel, this time by the father; in the intervening months the son has become a zombie. The father, a man named Morgan, shows his son to Rick. He has been keeping the zombie-child chained in a room of his house and feeding looters and wandering survivors to the

child because he “didn’t know what else to do” (issue 58, p 18)². He explains, “he’d look at me differently after – like he did before – like he knew me” (p 19). Throughout this explanation the zombie child is leaning against the chain around his waist, arms outstretched, reminiscent of a child requesting to be picked up. When Rick gives Morgan a gun and tells him, “let him go... let him rest” (p 20) instead of shooting the zombie, Morgan shoots the chain to free him after Rick has left the room. He leaves with Rick but he was unable to see the zombie-child as anything other than his son. He still identifies as strongly, perhaps more so, with his zombie-son than he does with other people. Once his child had become a zombie he was no longer able to perform the normal social and familial acts that would remind him of what it is to be human; or read another way he gives some measure of humanity or personhood to his son despite the boy becoming a zombie.

In the character of Rick the reader is shown another trajectory for the degradation of what humanity signifies, while he continues to occupy (to the extent that he is able) his former subject positions, and perform the social roles expected of him. As a police officer in a rural community before the zombie apocalypse, he assumes the role of shepherd and leader of the group of survivors. His role as husband and father is essential to his maintenance of his equilibrium, and after his wife dies, his son becomes his only true connection to a “normal” relationship. However, over the course of the series, Rick slowly becomes more “monstrous.” When his son’s safety is threatened by a band of post-apocalyptic highwaymen he literally tears one of the

assailants' throat out with his teeth (issue 57, p 18). The highwaymen have come upon Rick and his son in the night, and when Rick initially resists their attempts to rob them of their weapons and vehicle the men attempt to rape Carl, Rick's son, as retribution. The act of biting the man's throat out is shown in detail over the course of five panels, highlighting both the violence of the act and the visual similarity of Rick to a zombie. Rick then turns on one of the other highwaymen and stabs him to death. The reader is left to imagine that violence, the art showing his son cowering in the arms of another of their band of survivors, with the words "Shukk! Shukk!" (p 20) at the bottom of each of the three panels rendering the sound of the stabbing. Covered in human blood, killing men with his teeth, Rick has become something so close to a zombie that there is, momentarily, little immediate difference. His need to ensure his own survival, along with that of his son, and their traveling companions, has effaced his resemblance to what would normally be called human. The other survivor present, a man named Abraham, comments on the transformation the following day, saying, "You don't rip a man apart – hold his insides in your hand – you can't go back to being dear old dad after that. You're never the same" (p 21). Rick responds to this with, "You can fake it. Feel like I already have been. Fact is, I've done things – this isn't the first thing to chip away at my soul until I wonder if I'm still human" (p 21). At this point Rick consciously questions his own humanity, articulating the anxiety about how human a person can be when they act like a monster.

This degradation of humanity in the human survivors in *The Walking Dead* allows the reader to explore the question of what actually constitutes human subjectivity, the complex network of social roles and material contexts that are necessary to define humanity in a modern Western context. Throughout the series *The Walking Dead*, the “human” survivors wander further away from an existence that a modern Western subject would call “living.” They attempt to represent humans, as individuals continue to perform within their social roles, long after the signified meanings have been lost. Parents are so desperate to preserve their roles that they continue to parent zombie children, or become virtual zombies themselves when confronted with the extremity of their situation. This, combined with the suggestion that the zombies have an emerging consciousness, language, or subjectivity, allows the construction of the argument that in *The Walking Dead* the humans become the monsters. They wander, killing members of the normative, majority population, taking what they need from them, and dumping their bodies in the street. When Hershel posits that Rick has been murdering the zombies that he has killed, he is revealing the anxiety and confusion about the loss of a demonstrable difference between humans and zombies. This confusion is reinforced when Rick questions his own humanity, and this question permeates the contemporary zombie narrative and Robert Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead* in particular. By pointing to a threshold where the zombies are the “people” who possess cities, houses, and community, and beyond which a zombie-slayer is

actually a murderer, Kirkman is revealing the need for sets, props, and costumes in the performance of the human subject. Without them we see ourselves as monsters.

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RICHARD BUHR

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ROAMING THE BORDERLANDS OF IDENTITY

RON ARIAS' *THE ROAD TO TAMAZUNCHALE* AND THE
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT AS AN UNDEAD FIGURE

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead: in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'

-Gloria Anzaldúa

How do we get these people out of the shadows?" Who cares if they're in the shadows; they're illegal. -Ann Coulter

For centuries, anti-immigration discourse in the U.S. has been characterized by explicitly demonized and monstrous representations: the immigrant as parasitic, the immigrant as social deviant, the immigrant as “alien” to the “national essence” of the United States of America. It is no surprise that in the contemporary debate concerning undocumented immigration, primarily from Mexico and Central America, these representations have developed an increasingly dehumanizing nature. Consequently, the correlation between anti-immigration discourse and references to the undead is by no means arbitrary. Theoretically speaking, both the undocumented immigrant and the undead being are borderland figures, individuals who cannot be distinctly classified within their respective binary constructions of identity and, therefore, “roam the borderlands” between self and other. According to this dualistic ideology, the ambiguous nature of the borderland figure is deemed unnatural and invokes fear and disgust by those whose presence within those spheres is considered “normal” (the citizen in his nation, for example). For Chicana activist and queer theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, the rhetoric of the borderland figure as “unnatural” has led to the systematic dehumanization of undocumented immigrants within the national psyche. To counter this phenomenon of social injustice, Anzaldúa advocates for the creation of a “mestiza consciousness”, a collective digression from the rigid self-other dichotomy to a more tolerant acceptance of ambiguity. Utilizing representations of the undocumented immigrant as an undead figure, Ron Arias’ *The*

Road to Tamazunchale critiques the marginalization of borderland figures under dualistic modes of thought and gives rise to a “re-humanization” of the undocumented immigrant facilitated by a “mestiza consciousness”.

In order to examine the idea of the undocumented immigrant as an undead figure, let us first consider the theoretical implications of the geographical border. In her essay, “Alien-Nation: Immigration, National Identity and Transnationalism”, Stacy Takacs states that, “Geographic borders establish the nation as a real, self-contained and bounded space only in relation to other nations and other peoples, who must be excluded” (594). The implication of “other nations and other peoples” suggests the presence of a certain binary construction of self/other that is at play within the very core idea of “the nation”. As a national citizen, one is defined and, in fact, constantly reminded of who they are by means of designating who they are not. This mentality of “the self” in constant relation to “the other” is defined as dualistic ideology. In order to ascertain one’s national identity, borders must be established so that “we” (self, the citizen) may separate and protect ourselves from “them” (other, the foreign citizen). In order to solidify this sense of the “national self”, various rituals are collectively enacted, such as the singing of a national anthem or the celebration of a national holiday. Consequently, the binary opposition of the living and the dead follows similar patterns. When a human being passes away, that individual’s transition from life to death is commonly demarcated by a ritual act (such as a funeral). Once this boundary has been established,

the dead must respectively “rest in peace”. However, the undead figure refuses to do so and causes the binary opposition between living and dead to become problematic. Therefore, the undocumented immigrant becomes analogous to the undead being in the sense that both individuals are borderland figures; the former being neither U.S. citizen nor foreign citizen and the latter being neither alive nor dead.

From a binaristic perspective, the presence of such border-transcending individuals invokes fear and disgust primarily because they seemingly threaten to delegitimize the identity of the self. In other words, if the border becomes permeable, those on either side can no longer assume the authenticity of their individual claim to identity. For example, if a human being has an encounter with a supernatural being, the individual is not only threatened by the potential of harm but by the very distortion of that which is “natural”. Once the boundary between the living and the dead is put into question, the human being can no longer believe in “the natural order of things”. Therefore, in the same way in which the living fear the dead “coming to life”, the U.S. citizen fears the undocumented immigrant “invading America”. In *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, late political scientist and Harvard University professor, Samuel P. Huntington, affirms that, “There is no Americano dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society” (256). Huntington explicitly denounces the supposed “hispanization” of society on the basis that it directly threatens America’s national essence (which he claims is indisputably

Anglo-Protestant). According to this black-and-white mentality, the “Americano dream” becomes nothing more than a bastardization of the American dream in its “pure” and “natural” state. One of the many ways in which nationalistic discourse seeks to counter this threat of cultural subordination is to dehumanize the illegal immigrant as a means of securing the identity of the citizen. If the illegal immigrant is seen as a parasite or as a demon rather than a human breaking the law, the marginalization of such individuals becomes justified and society can remain, once again, “pure”. The idealized sense of purity for the national citizen, however, comes at the price of the systematic dehumanization of an entire race of people (regardless of documentation) and the proliferation of inhumane border patrol policies.

In contrast to the rigid structures of dualistic ideology, Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of “mestiza consciousness” offers a new method of understanding ourselves and those around us. In her influential collection of essays and poetry, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa discusses the manner in which borders (both geographical and ideological) deny the legitimacy of borderland figures and ultimately lead to systematic oppression and marginalization. By articulating the process of a tolerance for ambiguity, Anzaldúa seeks to invoke “a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness” (102). The term “mestiza”, traditionally used in Latin America during the Spanish Empire to describe individuals of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry, comes to represent the collaboration of cultures and identities that occurs when

individuals come into contact, regardless of the alteration of borders. Embodied by her own identity as a Chicana, Anzaldúa rejects universalist claims to “pure national identity” and shows them to be uncorrelated to the reality of social interaction. Therefore, from the perspective of mestiza consciousness, the representation of the undocumented immigrant as an undead figure invokes an element of resistance by its the ability to identify and deconstruct the repressive self-other dichotomies often at play within anti-immigration discourse.

In Ron Arias’ *The Road to Tamazunchale*, representations of the undocumented immigrant as an undead figure present a precise contrast and critique of both ideological perspectives (dualistic ideology and mestiza consciousness). Published in the mid-seventies, the novel tells the story of Don Fausto, an elderly man lying on his deathbed in the barrio of Los Angeles. Rather than submitting to the inevitability of death, Fausto embarks on a series of journeys (both mental and physical) and proceeds to perform various heroic deeds for his friends and community. The reader’s initial attempts to differentiate between Fausto’s “real” travels (through the streets of Los Angeles) and his “imaginary” travels (through the Andean foothills, for example) become futile as they begin to interrupt and eventually blend into one another. In this manner, Arias’ novel not only deals with questions of border crossing but rather seeks to blur borders almost entirely. In the novel’s final transnational journey, Fausto envisions himself just below the U.S.-Mexico border preparing to lead a group of undocumented immigrants into America. Upon arriving at the

border, Fausto announces that, “[w]hen we get to where we’re going, all of you must pretend you’re dead” (87). The “undead” representation of the undocumented immigrants constructs within the novel an allegorical representation of the borderland figure’s inability to adhere to the self-other dichotomy of national citizenship. Fausto determines that the only way to successfully enter into a sphere so engrained with the binary conceptions of identity (the nation) is to adhere to its rigid categories of self-identity. Realizing that undocumented immigrants will not be humanized (living) in the present social climate of the United States, the novel’s protagonist suggests a strategic transition to the status of “dead” in order to enter into the nation unnoticed. Therefore, the absurd premise of Fausto’s declaration critiques the seemingly naturalized logistics of dualistic ideology, in which ambiguity is seen as far more dangerous than systematic dehumanization. The notion that the undocumented immigrants in the novel can become dead simply by “playing dead” brings to light the borderland figure’s ever-changing sense of self-identity in the face of repressive binary constructions.

Nonetheless, despite Fausto’s optimism, the group of undocumented immigrants find little solace while “playing dead” on the other side of the border. Hiding in a river in order to escape the authorities, Fausto is informed that the illegal immigrants are “dying of hunger and cold. Some of them don’t even have clothes. There’s one man who started shaking so much he said he’d rather be alive than dead” (97). The image of the undocumented immigrants freezing in the river embodies the suffering that they

must endure after adhering to such marginalized states of being (“playing dead”). Therefore, dualistic ideology not only facilitates the dehumanization of borderland figures but forces such figures to impose these characteristics upon themselves and suffer the consequences. Additionally, the novel’s satirical inversion of the phrase “I’d rather be dead than...” invokes a sense of absurdity within the novel, suggesting an unnatural quality to the process of self-imposed marginalization. As exemplified in the novel, finding solutions to the “immigration problem” within the framework of dualistic ideology becomes ineffective because the very presence of borderland figures in such solidified constructions of self-other ultimately results in dehumanization and discrimination. The valiant protagonist soon realizes his mistake of adhering to such logistics and suggests a new approach.

Subsequently, Fausto advises the undocumented immigrants to assemble in the closed-down Los Feliz theater, where he proposes that the members of the Chicano community put on a play entitled “The Road To Tamazunchale”. The undocumented immigrants comprise the majority of the audience and it is through the play that Fausto invokes a new perspective on the borderland figure, the perspective of mestiza consciousness. In short, the play envisions various members of the Chicano community sitting on a bus heading towards Tamazunchale, a small village in Central Mexico. Along the journey, a young girl asks her grandfather if anyone dies in Tamazunchale, to which he replies that they do, but they are only pretending. He later adds that after pretending to be dead, “[t]hey usually see how

stupid it is to die, so they come out of the earth and do something else” (108). The novel once again invokes the image of an undead figure. However, while the undocumented immigrants suffer the repressive consequences of “playing dead”, the undead inhabitants of Tamazunchale rise up and join the living instead. In this sense, the borderland figure becomes a symbol of conscious resistance rather than of self-imposed marginalization. In other words, by becoming conscious of the unjust treatment of dualistic dichotomies towards borderland figures (realizing “how stupid it is to die”), the inhabitants reject such systematic repression and “rise up out of the ground”. With respect to the audience, the play suggests that perhaps the undocumented immigrant does not have to “play dead” in the shadows of the United States, that, even though they are not legal citizens, they too may be human. Therefore, the borderland figure’s resistant act of rising up against dehumanization becomes the first step in hindering the process of self-imposed marginalization.

As the play continues, more borders are compromised as the actors begin interacting with the members of the audience. “‘Wait,’ the old man said, pivoting around his staff and gesturing to the audience. ‘Excuse me, but maybe you would like to come with us...?’” (108). As a result, the undocumented immigrants begin to rise to their feet and climb onto the stage, until no one but Fausto is left in their seat. In this way, the play consciously dismantles the binary dichotomy of (traditional Western notions of) performance, in which the performer and the spectator are constantly dependent on one another but never make direct

contact. Through the act of “breaking the fourth wall” and inviting the audience onto the stage, the novel challenges the indisputable separation between performer and spectator by suggesting a more interactive and tolerant mode of performance. The fact that the border crossing (the “invasion” of the stage) was facilitated by both the encouragement of the actor and the conscious actions of the audience represents the communal nature of mestiza consciousness. In other words, resistance from marginalized figures alone does not break down oppressive self-other dichotomies; the path towards tolerance must be mutual. The image of the undocumented immigrants on stage with the actors represents an image of community and humanity. In correlation to the assumption that Arias’ “play-within-the-novel” is a mode of mirroring the novel itself, we can assume that the grandfather’s offer to join his journey applies to the reader as well. In essence, the novel indirectly invites the reader to reflect on the marginalizing nature of self-other dichotomies and perhaps adopt a more humane conception of national belonging.

As the immigration debate continues to intensify, the representation of undocumented immigrants in the media and in the arts will remain pertinent in our conceptions of the issue. As demonstrated in Ron Arias’ *The Road To Tamazunchale*, the dependency on binary constrictions of identity often times perpetuates the marginalization and dehumanization of borderland figures. However, the end of the novel envisions the transcendence of such repressive dualistic mentality by advocating for Gloria Anzaldúa concept of “mestiza

consciousness”, producing greater tolerance for borderland figures within the national psyche. While questions of legality certainly cannot be argued out of existence, we can refuse to accept the demonization of an entire group of people at the cost of preserving our own national identity.

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KAILA FROMDAHL

A native Oregonian, Kaila Rose Fromdahl grew up in a world of love, artistic expression, and natural foods. Miss Fromdahl is a senior in the U of O English Department and will continue her studies until she receives her PhD in English. Miss Fromdahl will one day become a college English literature professor and, as a lover of Lord Byron, would like to dedicate her life to the teaching of his greatness.

Mentor:Virginia Piper

"THE HIDEOUS DROPPING OFF OF THE VEIL"

THE UNCANNY IN POE'S *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*

In 1839 Edgar Allen Poe published a novella that would excite, stimulate, and terrify his audience. Poe's narrative illustrates a world of gloom, decay and thrilling wonder that continues to haunt nearly two centuries after its first publication. This unique text not only scares and delights but also challenges our conceptions of both place and form making the natural world and the Gothic genre uncanny, a term that

will be defined later. *The Fall of the House of Usher*, often viewed as a traditional Gothic narrative, possesses many of the genre's stylistic qualities but lacks conventional narrative closure. The element of the supernatural, in Gothic texts, creates an eerie world that must be subdued and contained by the end of the narrative, allowing for the mind of the reader to return to a state of security. Many popular Gothic texts, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, serve as classic examples of this containment and closure; the creature of Shelley's *Frankenstein* drowns in the icy seas of the Northern Atlantic at the end of the novel and Count Dracula, after being killed by the pseudo heroes of the text, can no longer haunt the supernatural world he inhabited. Both Shelley's creature and Stoker's Dracula horrify, entertain, and allow the reader to experience a land from which he is excluded. However, *The Fall of the House of Usher* poses a different threat than one of supernatural monsters and vampires. *Usher* addresses the world of the familiar, not being set in a far off land of mystery or oriental wonder, and uses the natural landscape of nineteenth-century New England to tell a haunting tale of the biological uncanny. *The Fall of the House of Usher* becomes terrifying because it forces the reader to accept the perverse nature of the familiar and natural world: tarns, incest, disease, foul weather, and all.

The Fall of the House of Usher is a first-person narrative relayed by an old friend of the Usher family. Summoned by his childhood "boon companion," who is suffering from "a mental disorder which oppressed him," the narrator returns to the House

of Usher and begins the haunting tale (Poe 139). *Usher* tells of the disintegration of a unique family line. The Usher line has continued by means of the incestuous relationships of its offspring: “the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch: in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent” (Poe 139-140). The incestuous reproductive practices of the family attempted to preserve the racial purity and the ownership of the family estate. Roderick and Madeline Usher, identical twins and the only living descendants of the Usher race, face the dilemma of preserving the family line. The narrator refers repeatedly to the line of the Ushers as possessing some sort of “deficiency,” the family’s reliance upon incest, the results of which are visible in both of the twins: Roderick has “an excessive nervous agitation” (Poe 143), and has become physically altered to the extent that the narrator “could not admit the identity of the wan being before [him] with the companion of [his] early boyhood” (Poe 142). Madeline is afflicted with a disease that has “long baffled the skill of her physicians” and concluded to be the “gradual wasting away of the person” (Poe 145). The deficiency of the family line and its results displayed in the twins threaten the existence of the House of Usher. However, as the narrator’s tale unfolds, the deficiencies of the Usher family extend beyond the physical twins and become visible in the House itself:

I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression

of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium – the bitter lapse into everyday life. (Poe 138)

The House of Usher is the physical location of the narrative, however the term “house” is also the signifier for the family line. Because of the family’s long-reigning status, the “House” of Usher became known for both the family line and the estate:

the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the ‘House of Usher’ – an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion. (Poe 140)

The descriptions of the “House of Usher” discuss both the estate and the family simultaneously, sharing the same name and the same effects of decay. Dramatized in the decomposition of the building is the putrefaction of the ancient line: “there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air” (Poe 141). The union between the Houses, acknowledged by Roderick Usher himself, is visually duplicated within the waters of the tarn: “The result was discoverable, he added, in the silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had molded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I saw now” (Poe 149). Although the narrator and Roderick refer to the image of the physical House, this discourse continues the connection between the visible effects upon the House and the living Ushers: “The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined,

fulfilled . . . above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn” (Poe 149). The reduplication of the House within the tarn foreshadows the ultimate marriage of the double image. When the House ultimately falls at the end of the tale, the text dramatizes the literal crumbling of the House of Usher: racial line and physical estate.

Rather than be terrified by unexplainable events and gloomy atmospheres, the horror of *Usher* arises through the story’s depiction of the familiar in an unfamiliar way. As Freud explains in his essay “The Uncanny”, “the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar” (124). For the narrator, the uncanny arises when he returns to the House: “while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this – I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up” (Poe 141). What had once been a familiar, albeit eccentric, family has now become the decayed and cracked House of Usher that fills the narrator with inexplicable uncanniness. Freud also investigates the relationship between the experience of the uncanny and the German word “unheimlich,” which literally means the opposite of “heimlich”: “belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely” (cited in Freud 126). Therefore, the uncanny experience produced by the House reaffirms its un-homely state; the House is unheimlich. If there were any heimlich qualities in the House of

Usher, for example when the House was a “fair and stately palace” (Poe 147), these qualities have been distorted:

Heimlich thus becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*. The uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, ‘the unhomely’) is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, ‘the homely’). (Freud 134)

The merging of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* is what produces the uncanny: a distorted familiar. Even before the fall, the House was never quite of the *heimlich* disposition:

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament. (Poe 139)

The peculiarities of the family of Usher existed prior to the narrator’s relationship with the House. The *unheimlich* traits extend beyond the walls of the House and into its domain. The placement of the tarn, which “lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling,” (Poe 139) creates an eerie reflection of the House. As the narrator looks down into the tarn he experiences a “shudder even more thrilling than before – upon remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant eye-like windows” (Poe 139). The doubling effect created by the tarn adds to the uncanny experience of beholding the already altered House.

For the reader, the uncanny experience extends beyond the illustration of the House and the sentiments associated with it: Poe presents his reader with an uncanny presentation of Gothic conventions. Botting explains that the Gothic atmosphere:

"signifies a writing of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality" (1). The House's "principle feature seemed to be that of an excess of antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great" (Poe 141). The textual excesses arise in both the descriptions of the House and in Poe's employment of Gothic conventions and language. Unlike traditional Gothic texts, Poe's world of the Ushers is not veiled in either mystery or supernatural events but rather influenced by purely natural occurrences: weather, age, light, genetic disease or deterioration. In many Gothic tales, the supernatural reveals or unveils itself as tricks of natural occurrences and the mystery of the story concludes at the end of the narrative. For example the Nun in *Villette* is the young lover of the book's crimson character who sneaks around the school grounds for his secret tryst. The phantom in the attic from *Jane Eyre* is the wife of Mr. Rochester. The ghost-like monk that haunts the pages of *The Italian* is indeed a human monk, Father Nicola, but neither the suspected culprit of the mystery nor does he possess the ability to glide through the ruins and the streets. The unexplainable is explained. Yet, the haunting events in *Usher* are not exposed in this traditional fashion because nothing has been hidden. The only unveiling that happens occurs on the first page of the text with the narrator's contemplation of the first view of the House: "the hideous dropping off of the veil" (Poe 138). What appears to be haunting and terrible is neither disguised as something else nor veiled: the narrator is aware of the reproductive practices of the Usher family which explain the mental and

physical downfall of both of the twins; the house's ancient status explains the crumbling of the building and the overgrown domain; the storm that brews prior to the destruction of the House is a natural weather occurrence. The ghost-like depiction of Madeline Usher's return from the grave is not supernatural. Rather, Madeline escapes her tomb after being buried alive, despite "a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death" (Poe 151). Madeline was never a ghost and does not come back to life. The only possible supernatural event, the actual fall of the House into the tarn when Madeline kills Roderick, is the dramatization of a natural event: the disappearance of a family line.

Usher describes the dangers and dilemmas of incest as a means of preserving the purity of blood and the ownership of property. Poe voices these ethical concerns through a horror story founded on the Gothic narrative structure: narrator goes on a journey, experiences the supernatural or uncanny, and returns home, changed in some way. *Usher* oozes with Gothic conventions and ostentatious illustrations. For instance, a surprising number of sentences include vocabulary which refers to gloom: "this mansion of gloom" (Poe 139), "a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit" (Poe 138), "in one unceasing radiation of gloom" (Poe 145), and the "gloomy furniture of the room" which our narrator attempts to blame for some of his uneasiness (Poe 152). As Fred Botting describes in his work on the Gothic: "Gothic atmospheres – gloomy and mysterious – have repeatedly signaled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions

of terror" (1). In *Usher* the narrator returns to a frequented spot of his youth, the House of Usher, but upon his encounter with the image of the House, he feels a perversion of the once familiar scene: "There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart – an unredeemed dreariness of thought . . . What was it . . . that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher?" (Poe 138). The threat of the past upon the present also concerns each of the twins. While the ancient line that produced them kept their blood pure from external pollutants, it tainted their genetic makeup creating their ill health both physically and mentally: Roderick "admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin" (Poe 144). The effects of the actions of the past appear visually on the characters of the present.

The effect of doubling, or the doppelgänger, becomes another prominent textual element. The physical House is the double for the family line; the House is reflected within the waters of the tarn; Madeline and Roderick are identical twins and therefore doubles of each other. According to Freud's work, the "self may be thus duplicated, divided and interchanged" (142), for example, the House and the family becoming analogous to one another. In the doppelgänger "there is a constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations" (Freud 142). Again this can be seen in the analogous Houses and in the

similarities of the twins: “A striking similitude between the brother and the sister now first arrested my attention” (Poe 150-1). Most interestingly, Freud explains that the “double was originally an insurance against the extinction of the self” (142). The Usher line grasps to its last hope of existence within the twins. However, since the line has reached such a decayed state it eventually becomes consumed by its double: Madeline kills Roderick and the House sinks into the tarn.

The role of the tarn preserves not just the ruins of the physical house but the entire family line, which has previously been established as analogous to the house, even in life. Tarns are formed by glaciers as a consequence of the long, slow process of the glacial carving of the earth (Marshak). The tarn remains, when the glacier melts, and becomes filled with the substance that created it: glacial melt and debris. Tarns are deposits for the waste of the glacier. In *Usher*, the waste of the family becomes deposited within the tarn. What was once a radiant and artistic family, flourishing with vivacity, is now a diseased and decaying mess:

Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior . . . No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. (Poe 141)

The masonry, although still standing, is in a constant threat of decomposition: “a barely visible fissure . . . made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn” (Poe 141). The House losing itself within the “waters of the tarn” at the beginning of the text foreshadows the final fall of the House when “the deep dark tarn at [the

narrator's] feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'HOUSE OF USHER'" (157). The choice of the tarn as a reflector and a devourer, and therefore preserver, of the House of Usher reveals itself as significant. Poe would not have simply chose to use "tarn" because it sounds better than "pond".

Poe's tale ends at the beginning of the House of Usher's entrance into the realm of the undead. The term "undead" is not analogous with the term "living dead". The word "undead" implies an animate being or object that continues to exist after life expires but it never dies completely; the being or object *was* alive but has not yet died. The living dead implies a reanimation of something that has died and then comes back to animation but not life in the usual sense. A popular example of the living dead is the creature in *Frankenstein* who has been pieced together and given life by the mad scientist Victor Frankenstein. When the House of Usher crumbles into the tarn it takes its place in the category of the undead. The House of Usher slowly decays and withers away but never dies completely as it exists within the tarn in a ruined form. A ruin exists even if its occupants can no longer live. For example, religious shrines and sights hold this feeling of an embodiment of the deity or holy body that it represents, even though it may merely be a pile of stones and rubble. The ruin of the Usher House exists through its representation of the Usher race even after its fall. The only way for the Usher family line to continue its existence is through the entrance into the undead and thereby existing forever as a ruin in the tarn.

The Fall of the House of Usher, with its unheimlich imagery and uncanny Gothic representations, affects both the emotions and the mind. The terror the narrator experiences when he first spies the House of Usher in its decaying form becomes the terror experienced in reading the text. The reader of *Usher* has unlikely encountered incestuous aristocrats or diseased identical twins, however most readers can comprehend the uncanny sentiments produced by the altered natural and familiar world. Poe invokes the fears and elevated senses that are produced upon reading stories of horror. By creating the decaying world of the Ushers, explored through a Gothic vocabulary, Poe has produced a text that allows for the experience of astonishment and terror to be extended beyond the page. After the submersion of the House into the tarn the Usher line has established its place within the realm of the undead. If the undead House can exist within a tarn in Northeastern America, couldn't a similar ruin be in your backyard?

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MARY REYNOLDS

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Mentor: Laura Selph

THE UNDEAD AUTHOR

It is relatively easy to kill a zombie. Many handbooks have been written on the subject and the Internet provides a vast array of tipsheets and instruction manuals outlining the weapons, wit, and force required to save oneself from an attack, be it an attack by a single adversary or a full-fledged uprising of reanimated corpses. Vampires, typically dealt with one at a time, are more difficult to kill (due no doubt to their superior

intellect), but with the proper self-tutored training any average human being should be able to manage the sound and permanent dispatching of almost any member of the genus *undead*. One breed, however, has proven more complicated in its eradication and has permeated most every cultural outlet. In response to this overwhelming proliferation, some of the more intelligent members of our societies have been attempting since the 1960s (arguably since the 1940s) to rid the world of its overbearing presence. Thus far none have prevailed. Part of the breed's aberrant resilience stems from the fact that it is made of neither flesh nor blood. It is an idea, and a relatively new one at that, for whose creation and prevalence humanity itself is responsible: the idea of the Author.

The cult of the Author experienced something of a heyday during the Romantic era. Notions of autonomy and individuality precipitated a fascination with authors' private lives and biographies, which in turn became points of literary discussion and legitimized aids to interpretation. The heavily-stylized romantic work and its emphasis on the individualistic, emotional reactions of its narrator also reflected, or so the critics believed, the personal mentality of its author. This belief was only intensified by the actions of the romantic authors themselves. Writers such as Pushkin and Byron took notice of the intrigue that surrounded their lives and promptly fashioned stylized self-portraits outside the publication of their fictional works. The new authorial intrigue in turn established a new purpose for critics: the discovery of the author's intention with regards to his artwork, and with it the 'meaning' of his text.

Following romanticism, realism provided a response to the ‘tyrannical’ authorial cult by favoring objective precision over subjective individualism. In a style that the French theorist and critic Roland Barthes would later describe as “castrating” (50), realist authors strove for honest and accurate, rather than unnecessarily ornate, portrayals of life. In order to achieve such outward objectivity, the authors – Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Balzac among them – avoided textual indications of an authorial presence, replacing the voice of the romantic storyteller with that of a third-person omniscient narrator whose investment in the story did not go beyond the unspoken and unacknowledged duty to tell it. The critical pursuit of authorial intent, however – a forerunner of what is now called ‘intentionalism’ – remained an interpretive method in the so-called ‘lower’ literary circles. These circles were critiqued strongly by Monroe Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt in their 1949 essay titled “The Intentional Fallacy,” which asserted quite strongly that authorial intent is neither available nor desirable as a method of textual interpretation, and that to use such a method when approaching a literary work robs the text of its aesthetic potential. Anti-intentionalism received further – and perhaps stronger – support in 1968 when Roland Barthes presented his essay “The Death of the Author.”

“The *author*,” writes Barthes, “is a modern character,” a product of certain societies’ infatuation with the “prestige of the individual” (49). The Author is an *idea*, not a person. The writer of a text is only a writer, but the Author of a text (always capitalized) is a being contrived by individualistic traditions. The

storytellers of “ethnographic societies,” for example, are not viewed as Authors, but rather as “mediators” whose “mastery of the narrative code” consists of rearranging and reproducing existing cultural conventions (49). Conversely, the societies to which Barthes belonged (and against which he reacts in this essay) endow Authors with a sort of omniscient divinity with regards to the texts they produce: only the Author knows the true ‘meaning’ contained within his own text. This “tyrannically” exclusive formula permits and supports the Critics’ authenticating search for the text’s theological ‘meaning,’ in addition to justifying their rejection of any contradictory interpretation. Having discovered the ‘truth’ of the text, Critics have assured that its meaning is not only clear but permanently so (53).

To counteract the exclusivity of the Authors’ and Critics’ joint “empire,” Barthes proposes that no Author be “assigned” – by a Critic, no doubt – to a text. The text itself is, after all, only a series of preexisting cultural codes brought together on paper. These codes find coherence and legitimacy not in the Author’s intentions or the Critics’ interpretations, but within the Reader, who “understands each word in its duplicity” and appreciates all possible meanings contained within the writing (53-4). Therefore, it is only through the Reader that the text may reach its true potential. “The birth of the reader,” Barthes declares in his final assertion, “must be requited by the death of the Author” (55): only by removing the repressive pursuit of sacred, indisputable ‘meaning’ may the Reader and the text best serve their respective functions.

Some fourteen years after “The Death of the Author,” Steven Knapp and Walter B. Michaels published their essay titled “Against Theory.” Starkly contrasted to Barthes’ argument, these theorists argue that the very basis of literary theory rests on the “mistake” of examining nonexistent differences between authorial intent and textual meaning. Intent and meaning, Knapp and Michaels say, are one and the same thing, and therefore attempting to “ground” one in the other is irrelevant and “choosing” between them is obsolete. Their reasoning rests on the assertion that language *depends* on intent in order to be considered language; otherwise, it is just a meaningless and random smattering of words.¹ Further, there is neither a difference nor an ensuing choice between the ‘meaning’ that the author intended a text to have and the ‘meaning’ that the reader finds within that same text, and therefore theory, being “designed to help us make such choices,” is itself meaningless.

The argument is admittedly flawed. Barthes’ understanding of the Reader (the body within whom cultural codes, purposeful or otherwise, are consolidated) is not accounted

¹ In order to demonstrate their point, Knapp and Michaels present the scenario of finding a poem written in beach sand. There are two possibilities as to its origin: it may have been written there by an ‘author’ or scribe who wrote the words there with a consciousness of meaning; or it may be the result of a natural phenomenon in which pebbles and sand created the mere appearance of words. In the case of the natural phenomenon, the words can never be considered language: language must have intent, and as soon as words “become intentionless they become meaningless as well” (728). In short, words without intent have no meaning, and words without meaning do not qualify as language. Therefore, only language that carries with it an intended meaning can be meaningful, and the intent and the meaning are one and the same.

for in Knapp and Michael's argument against theory. Any conclusion that the reader draws from a text must coincide with authorial intent in order to be considered a valid understanding of 'meaning,' despite any and all experiences that the reader himself has brought to the text – experiences which the author could neither have predicted nor accounted for. Despite this disavowal of readerly participation, "Against Theory" represents an effective reassertion of authorial authority and the resurrection of discussion surrounding that issue, fourteen years after the very notion was declared deceased.² The Author, at least in the scholarly world, is not verifiably "dead." The presence is still at hand, but its authority is uncertain.

The Author has therefore joined the ranks of those creatures referred to in popular culture as 'undead.' These creatures, including zombies, vampires, and other partially-departed beings, exist 'in limbo': they are neither dead nor alive. In the case of zombies (perhaps the most popular of undead beasts), they are corpses which, after their souls, life-forces, or some other 'humanizing' aspect have abandoned them, are brought back to life by some means of typically-questionable morality. Traditionally, zombies are creatures created by the black

² Here is a brief overview of the essays and articles which reacted to *Against Theory*:

"On the Theory of 'Against Theory,'" Adena Rosamarin, *Critical Inquiry*, June 1983; "Against Theory?", E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Critical Inquiry*, June 1983; "Floating Authorship," Peggy Kamuf, *Diacritics*, 1986; Knapp and Michaels' own "Against Theory 2: Hermeneutics and Deconstrucion," *Critical Inquiry*, 1987; and "Against Theory Beside Romanticism," Orrin Wang, *Diacritics*, 2005

magic of a voodoo witch doctor and controlled by that same magic. As the mere hollow remnants of expended humanity, they are not in control of their own vicious actions: they are ‘possessed’ and controlled by a supernatural power at the hands of another, still fully alive, human being.

This is oddly similar to one particular notion of the author: the romanticized image of the inspired genius. In many cultural conceptions of the Author (typically romantic, but not always) the inspired scribe is viewed as a ‘medium’ of sorts who writes because he has no other choice. He is fatefully ‘chosen’ to have an exclusive view to a great tale and made to write it down for humanity’s benefit. Authors are, like zombies, controlled by some higher force which they in all likelihood do not fully understand, and which they cannot contact; they can only receive its messages and submit to their natural, insatiable drive to write those messages down.

This image is one that authors themselves have used more than once and in many different variants. Italo Calvino, in his magical-realist novel *If on a winter's night a traveler*, presents a group of characters who believe that authors are granted ‘inspiration’ by means of extra-terrestrial intervention: alien beings implant ideas for novels in the minds of struggling authors, who – without being aware of it, and certainly not in control of their actions – provide the means for extra-terrestrial communication through their works. Scientists are then able to “decode the message” and successfully communicate with offworld

intelligence (184), not unlike the critics who solve the ‘riddles’ of authors’ ambiguous works.

It is not only the fictional characters of fantastic novels that are claimed as recipients of otherworldly intervention. Vladimir Nabokov, in his eloquent afterward to *Lolita*, describes the process of writing (after a brief denouncement of literary studies and their pursuit of authorial intent) as something which he cannot control: “I happen to be the kind of author who in starting to work on a book has no other purpose than to *get rid of* that book” (311)³. This artistic ‘possession’ that must be purged through the process of writing is something for which Nabokov admits he cannot account, although he does explain that “the first little throb of *Lolita*” appeared after he read a news story regarding a captive ape that had drawn the bars of its own cage. How this news item morphed into the tale of a pedophilic murderer might be explainable, but not by Nabokov. He asserts that the event had “no textual connection with the ensuing train of thought,” explaining only that the event left him with a fervent impulse to finish the novel known as *Lolita*, as well as a mild fear that insanity would result should he refuse to do so (311-12). Nowhere does Nabokov attribute his artistic drive to the meddlings of extra-terrestrials, but his purported lack of control over his work characterizes him as a similar scribe of otherworldly affairs.

Each of these figures, either real or imagined, seems positively baffled by their artistic expertise. Calvino’s authors can neither control nor understand their inspiration, and Nabokov

³ Italics added.

(while maintaining a sizable amount of condescension for the audience that tries in vain to understand his works) admits that he is completely ignorant as to the origins of his creativity and therefore has no control over his continued association with it. As the classical zombie is subject to the whims of its voodoo master, the storytellers are powerless with regards to their own divine talent. And, just as the witch doctor may easily choose another corpse to animate and force into various evilly-intended actions, the storytellers may one day find themselves devoid of inspiration. As for a critical view of these inspired figures, Roland Barthes would no doubt argue that there never was any real ‘inspiration.’ The authors were merely *reproducing* what culture probably could have reproduced anyway, so long as it came within the grasp of some ‘scriptor’ who might rearrange the cultural codes into a manner more easily digested by readers. For most, however, there remains an almost unshakeable sense that the storytellers are ‘special’ in a manner that most human beings do not share.

Perhaps it is this ‘otherworldly’ connection which spawned the aforementioned ambivalence towards the Author. Arguments against intentionalism often cite the unavailability of the author’s intended meaning for their texts as a means for interpretation. Even if the author is still alive to clarify (which is not always the case), the likelihood of that author fully understanding his own intentions is not guaranteed – and it wouldn’t be, if he were only reacting to and relaying messages from another ‘dimension’ of sorts. There may be other reasons for ambivalence, however, beyond the regrettable incredulity of

authors. The fact that these writers appear to have a ‘connection’ with a world which the reader cannot belong to nor understand, and that an object (the text) is produced because of it, becomes a problematic issue in itself.

It is precisely this wariness regarding the uncertain origins of an ambiguous object that Sigmund Freud explored in his essay titled *The Uncanny*. The essay is, among other things, an examination of the human resistance to, and fear of, death. ‘Uncanny’ may be a tame term to describe the feelings one experiences when encountering a corporeal example of the undead, but with regards to the more harmless figure of the Author, Freud’s essay contains several observations that, for these purposes at least, are key. He writes that “The essential condition for the emergence of a sense of the uncanny is intellectual uncertainty” (125). This uncertainty can no doubt be likened to the uncertainty regarding the influence of the Author in literary study, but Freud does not rest there, and pushes the requirement further: “doubt as to whether...a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate” (135). This doubt is reminiscent of the warily-regarded corpse which, despite every symptom of inanimation, may well return to the world of the living at a doubtlessly inopportune moment. It also evokes the image of a reader who, after having been conditioned by realism to believe that a text is an autonomous object that is separate from its creator (and which should not address him), realizes that the text is referencing another world – the world of the author. Perhaps this reference comes within the text itself, or perhaps the reader is aware of the

various critical approaches or literary styles that allow for outside influence on the supposedly autonomous work. Due to this awareness, the reader is suspicious of a possible living force behind the text which is hidden from view, whose identity is uncertain.

There are, of course, other varieties of uncertainty. *The Uncanny* also discusses the “most prominent” of uncanny “motifs,” the *Doppelgänger*. A broad topic whose name means simply ‘the double,’ the *Doppelgänger* may describe an ‘uncanny’ resemblance between two otherwise-unconnected individuals, or it may refer to something more ethereal. Freud, quoting Otto Rank, describes the origin of the *Doppelgänger* as the concept of the human soul – “the first double of the body.” As a double of the ‘self,’ the soul served as “an energetic denial of the power of death” and “a defense against annihilation” (142); that is, protection against the uncertain finality of one’s inevitable demise. Authors utilize this concept: they are, after all, made of the vulnerable flesh, and no doubt desire an assurance against their own mortality. Authors are given double assurance (if the soul may be considered the first) when they publish a work: their texts become their legacy and the promise that they will persist, in some form, past their own death.

Michel Foucault’s essay “What is an Author?” discusses on the relationship between writing and death. Referencing the Arabian narrative *The Thousand and One Nights*, Foucault speaks of writing as a way to “forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator” (206). In this particular

narrative, this meaning is literal: a captive storyteller continues telling interwoven tales in order to postpone her own execution. However, in a broader understanding – one that has accepted the inevitability of death – it is the “silence” that follows death that is the most troubling. A novel preserves its author not because it grants him literal immortality, but because it “always contains a certain number of signs referring to the author” (215); it assures that the author will be remembered, maintain a *presence* and a voice, even after his death. The text is a ‘double’ of the author in the sense that it immortalizes the personal characteristics that he has placed on the page and holds them there for perpetual safekeeping. The text, therefore, reaches the same ‘doubled’ state as that of its author. It, too, becomes a zombie of sorts – an ‘uncanny harbinger’ of the body which created it. The Author endows his text with a portion of his own animation: he signs his name to it, assuring that he himself is remembered. If his tendencies incline towards romanticism, he may speak to readers directly through the words in further effort to preserve his own persona. In order to assure that he will be allowed a fraction of immortality, the Author must endow his creation with a bit of his own life.

These immortalizing *Doppelgängers* are indeed useful tools for the departed. However, there is a concern for those who have yet to make use of their own personal double – that is, those who remain alive. Freud discusses this problem in *The Uncanny*: “whoever dies becomes the enemy of the survivor, intent upon carrying him off with him to share his new existence” (149). This

demonstrates one of the final principles of the uncanny as it relates to the undead: the fear that we, too, will be caught in the same state of ambiguous animation as suffered by the undead by way of mere association with the monster. Before examining this, however, let us review the Author's and the reader's positions one last time.

Authors are neither dead nor alive; they inhabit, ambiguously, both the 'seen' world around the reader and the 'unseen' world of the dead, through both their textual placement (or deliberate lack thereof) and the cultural understanding of their artistic influence. Many theorists have examined this position, and most have come to the same conclusion: authorial authority is limited, and it is the reader who must make sense of what the author cannot control. The reader, therefore – if the text is to serve its purpose – must engage with the writing and seek out all possible conclusions. If the reader is an open-minded individual, this will not be limited to the conclusions that the author supposedly intended the text to have (as Knapp and Michaels would prefer), nor is it limited to only those contained within the 'closed system' of the text (as is the inclination of the anti-intentionlists and Barthes). A true, full, diverse reading will include the exploration of all possibilities. However, this means something a bit discomforting for the reader: he must enter the world of the undead.

When a spectator reads a book or views a (mainstream) film or theatrical performance, he must submit to a 'willful suspension of disbelief.' This is, in fact, realism's primary purpose.

As Benjamin explained, the deliberate illusion helps to conceal the process of creation. A reference to the body that writes – or the body that produces, in the case of cinema and theater – damages this illusion and, theoretically, prevents full enjoyment of the spectacle. The onlooker must believe that what they are viewing is ‘real,’ and to do so they ignore the farce. There is another type of necessary ignorance, however. It is difficult to achieve when reading a novel due to the lack of control over one’s environment: as Italo Calvino says in the opening chapter of *If on a winter’s night a traveler*, “The TV is *always on* in the next room” (3)⁴. In the cinema and the theater, however, the atmosphere is quite meticulously and forcibly controlled. The theater is darkened, the seats are assigned and properly arranged, extraneous noise is forbidden and the physical climate is as maintained as possible. This is all the pursuit of another type of ‘suspension’ – not the suspension of disbelief with regards to the farce of the play, but rather the suspension of belief in the very existence of one’s own surroundings. Were the spectator to become aware of his fellow audience members, or the reader to hear the goings-on in the world around him, the illusion of reality on the stage or in the book would suffer, and not by fault of its own (and certainly not by fault of its author or performer). If the spectator’s own ‘real life’ imposes on the spectacle, it is as damaging as would be the spectacle’s reference to itself as a contrived illusion.

This distance is maintained with slightly unsettling consequences: the darkness of the theater, the careful allotment

⁴ Italics added.

of space, the coolness of the climate and the hollow silence of the spectators all strike an eerie resemblance to death. Even the obedient and silent stillness of the audience is reminiscent of ‘playing dead.’ However, the spectacle goes on living, and the spectator has one foot in that world. He is not participating, but he is engaged, however mildly; he is still alive, but only in a sense. His own body has been all but abandoned and is instead channeling the ‘otherworldly force’ that is funneled into the spectator through the performance. The reader is possessed by the same force as the writer, and the audience member is possessed by the same force as the actor. However, if the spectator completely forgets his own world, rejects his own existence for the sake of a pristine illusion of reality, then all bearing that the text or performance may have on his life is lost. Therefore, he must think, consolidate the information within his own cognizant mind, and must do so with half of his heart still rooted in the illusion. In order to fulfill his function in relation to the text or the performance, the spectator must submit to his own partial death; he must, too, exist in both worlds, and become one of the undead.

This applies to scholarly reading as well. In taking one side, as theorists often do (consider Barthes’ assertions, and Knapp and Michael’s disavowals), much is missed; the text is not read fully, and the performance is not complete. The reader must be willing to see all possibilities – not only those that apply to him personally, and certainly not only those that apply only to the author. He must be willing to have a place in both worlds, submitting to an illusion while maintaining a pulse and a functioning intellect while doing so. The author and the reader

are, together, neither dead nor alive. For the sake of the text and its thousands of interwoven possibilities, the reader and author must both become, willingly and permanently, the ‘undead.’

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READING STEPHANIE MEYER'S *TWILIGHT* AS ROMANCE

In the past few years the *Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer has risen to astronomical levels of popularity not only with the young women to whom it was aimed but with readers of all ages and walks of life. However amidst all this popularity there are those who take issue with various themes in the book, like its message of abstinence or the heavy Christian overtones. But perhaps the most widely held opinion among

its critics is that *Twilight* and the other books in the series are anti-feminist. Meyer herself responded on her website to these critics, saying, “I emphatically reject [this] accusation... I am all about girl power... I am not anti-female, *I am anti-human.*” (Emphasis in the original.) (Meyer, StephenieMeyer.com) This statement will be examined in greater detail later. She goes on to explain that compared to the super-powered vampires that populate her novels anybody would look weak and pathetic. However in defending herself against those who accuse her of betraying her female readers Meyer is overlooking the fact that she has betrayed her genre as well. The *Twilight* novels fit into that most maligned and loved genre of books, the romance.

Often overlooked by critics and readers of “serious” literature, romance as a genre has historically been one of the best-selling genres. Harlequin Enterprises, perhaps the most recognized name in romance publishing, boasted a total 130 million books sold in 2007 alone (EHarlequin.com). A series of four books, with a fifth installment on the way, *Twilight’s* popularity is remarkable because of the range of its appeal. Total sales of *Twilight* alone have been estimated at ranging between 17 and 20 million (wiki.answers.com).

Romance has been critiqued severely since its emergence as a genre for the flowery style often used by the authors and plot elements that can be viewed as anti-feminist. Though defended passionately by its fans and authors, romance continues to be seen as detrimental to the ideals of female empowerment. However this is not always the case. The debate on romance

literature is complex and multifaceted, and it is not the intent of this essay to go into detail on the topic. Instead it will focus on the specific case of *Twilight* and its relation to the genre and how *Twilight* has subverted some of the inherent feminist characteristics of the romance genre. This subversion in such a popular novel perpetuates negative stereotypes about the genre and contributes to a poor self-image in its readers.

Unlike other young adult series like *Harry Potter* and *Eragon* which have reached similar heights of popularity, *Twilight* does not focus on a larger adventure plot to propel the story forward. Instead it relies on the relationships, primarily romantic, between the characters to maintain the interest of its readers. This key trait is what sets *Twilight* apart from other young adult fiction. This is not to say that relationships are not important in, for example, *Harry Potter*. It is important to keep in mind that though the romance that builds slowly between the couples, Harry and Ginny and Ron and Hermione, plays an important part as the story develops it is not the primary focus of the plot: "...Romance is the only genre that by definition centers on feelings and relationships" (Putney, 100). In *Twilight* almost the entire series is centered on the relationship between Bella and Edward.

In *A Natural History of the Romance*, Pamela Regis identifies what she calls the eight essential elements of the romance novel: society defined, the meeting, the barrier, the attraction, the declaration, the point of ritual death, the recognition, and the betrothal. All of these elements are present

in *Twilight*. This paper will analyze the deployment of two of these characteristics: the barrier and the recognition.

The barrier in romance is anything that keeps the lovers from being together. It can be economic or social considerations, such as a difference in class, or it could be something more internal, like a traumatic incident in a character's past. Often this barrier has to do with the hero. He fears that he is unable to love the heroine, or he must give up his misogynistic attitudes and learn to respect his lover. Whatever the particular barrier may be, once it has been recognized and dealt with the couple is able to move towards their happy end. The recognition is when "new information that will overcome the barrier" is introduced (Regis, 36). This new information can be something tangible, like money or a revealing letter, or something more abstract like the realization of one person's love for another. Whatever form the recognition takes it is the moment when the problems are solved and the barrier is removed. In romances where the origin of the barrier lies with the hero, he must change to become more suited to the heroine. The change is the recognition of and eventual overcoming of the barrier. Making the heroine accept his faults is all well and good, but a true hero must overcome those faults. For example, in the romance novel *The Taming of the Duke* by Eloisa James the hero Raphael must confront his alcoholism before he can begin to court the heroine Imogen. Though Imogen already feels great affection for Raphael she cannot love him until he changes. It is this change that so many champions of the inherent feminism of romance cite as a preeminent feminist trait. By changing to suit

the heroine the hero admits his weakness and confers upon the heroine a certain power over him. While the elements of a barrier and the recognition are present in *Twilight* their application in the novel lacks the feminist undercurrents present in other works. The story of *Twilight* is told by its heroine, Bella Swan, who leaves her beloved mother and the sunny city of Phoenix to live with her father in the little town of Forks, Washington in the rainy Pacific Northwest. At her new high school Bella is popular but she feels out of place. Bella's arrival in and introduction to Forks provides the definition of society. On her first day at school Bella notices the Cullens and the Hales, a group of strikingly beautiful teens who hold themselves apart from the rest of the community. Bella is immediately attracted to the enigmatic Edward Cullen. Their interactions are strained and somewhat distant until Edward saves Bella from a near-fatal accident, unintentionally revealing his inhuman speed and strength to her. He tries to keep her at a distance but Bella makes various connections and realizes that Edward and his family are vampires. Despite his repeated warning that by associating with him Bella is putting her life in danger, since he finds the scent of her blood almost irresistible, the two of them begin what can only be called a courtship. This is where the barrier is introduced. Edward's reluctance to start a relationship with Bella stems from his vampire nature. Edward and his family have taken a vow to never consume human blood, making them vegetarian vampires. He is afraid that despite his family's vow to never consume human blood he will be unable to resist drinking Bella's blood. If he were to do so he would not

only kill her, but he could also expose his family's long-kept secret. In addition to these societal barriers, Bella and Edward are both unsure of each other's feelings. Bella is convinced that no one as perfect as Edward could ever be in love with somebody as normal as her. Edward, who has the unique vampire ability of being able to hear the thoughts of everybody except Bella, thinks that what she feels for him is no more than a crush. Despite an overwhelming mutual attraction their relationship continues to be one of constant insecurity. Because of his inexplicable inability to hear Bella's thoughts Edward asks her repeatedly to tell him exactly what she is thinking. If she holds back even the tiniest morsel of information he becomes frustrated and unsure of the wisdom of his decision to be with her. Both Edward and Bella are convinced they love their partner more than their partner loves them.

After Bella and Edward become a couple they introduce each other to their respective families. Bella is quickly accepted by the other Cullens and is invited to a family game of baseball. While watching the game Bella is spotted by another group of travelling vampires who aren't "vegetarians" like the Cullens. She is hunted by one of them and must flee Forks, aided by Edward's family. She is tricked into surrendering to the hunter and is prepared to let herself be killed to protect Edward. At the last minute he and his family arrive and rescue Bella. While in the hospital recovering from her injuries Bella once again professes her love for Edward and he, somewhat reluctantly considering the danger it puts her in, for her. Thus the barrier is partially removed. Because *Twilight* is only the first of four books in the

series not all the problems are solved at the end of the novel. The elements of betrothal and ritual death are also not completely present in *Twilight* for the same reason. However the key issue, that of Bella and Edward's dedication to each other, is resolved. At the end of the novel the two of them pledge to be together forever (Meyer, 498), which is enough to suggest a betrothal. In romance an official betrothal or wedding is not always necessary as long as it is clear to the reader that the lovers will remain together. In the later novels some of the lingering problems of Edward and Bella's relationship appear to be solved. However these are only superficial solutions and not the turning-point change that is present in other romance novels.

In the novel one of the primary barriers that has kept Edward and Bella apart until this moment has been the fact that he is a vampire. Things that would normally be issues in a romance, like his ability to care for Bella or the acknowledgement of his feelings, are insignificant compared to it. This is problematic and counter to what is potentially a feminist element of romance. Edward is already a loving person. In fact, he is essentially perfect. He loves his family, he is moral and abstemious, intelligent and talented, and devoted in his affections to Bella. There is nothing upon which he can improve, which is the very problem. Because Edward does not need to change he is put on a level higher than that of Bella; he has power over her.

In her essay "Romance and the Empowerment of Women" Susan Elizabeth Phillips writes that it is the very idea of a man who has the power to completely dominate a woman that is so

empowering, because in romance novels it is always the woman who defeats the man (Phillips, 53). She goes on to say that these domineering, sullen and insensitive men are “a potent symbol of all the obstacles life presents to a woman” (Phillips, 57). The hero of a romance must hold power over the heroine in some way, be it political, social, economic or physical. This power he holds over her is often part of the barrier in some way. The story is about the hero’s surrender of that power to the heroine. Because he has fallen in love with her, recognizing her as somebody who must be in his life to ensure his future happiness, he has become willing to give up that power. This change in the hero is at the core of romance. The ups and downs in the relationship are all tied to the hero’s gradual emotional evolution. The changes he goes through are all brought about because of his meeting the heroine. The role the heroine plays for the hero can vary depending on the story. Often her task is to “teach him to love.” By meeting the heroine the hero grows as a person, becoming more complete or more open.

It is important to recognize that it is not the man who changes the woman, using his influence over her to bend her to his will. Rather the woman changes the man into somebody more to her liking by awakening in him certain “feminine qualities.” A man who was once cruel and cold towards the heroine becomes tender and gentle. However this is not enough – to become the heroine’s ideal man he must also acknowledge that it was because of her that he changed. He must concede that she has power over

him. This concession is closely tied to the recognition element of romance. By acknowledging this he has given her the masculine power of control. There is an exchange of power, one that brings both characters to an equal level.

In *Twilight* this key element of transformation is missing from the relationship between Bella and Edward. When they meet, Edward is chilly towards Bella, to say the least. He cannot bear to be in her presence and hardly makes a secret of the fact. His hostile attitude is not because of Bella's personality, but because of his vampire nature. Because his reaction is not due to a character flaw that particular barrier is quickly resolved without any effort on Bella's part. Her task then is not to teach Edward to love, since he already knows how to do that. We see in his interactions with his family that he cares for them deeply and is already capable of loving. There are several examples of Edward's sensitivity.

One such example occurs while Bella and Edward are getting to know each other after he reveals his vampire identity to her. Bella is asking about Edward's parents, Carlisle and Esme. “‘And you love them.’ It wasn’t a question. It was obvious in the way he spoke of them. ‘Yes.’ ... ‘I couldn’t imagine two better people.’” (Meyer, 107) The novel is filled with small expressions of Edward’s affection for his family. His relationship with his adopted siblings is like that of best friends, and they have an easy rapport. When describing the complexities of his family to Bella, Edward’s affection is discernible in the language that he uses. Edward never complains about his siblings and it appears that they never argue.

Edward's other "magnificent" traits are shown at various points in the novel. His chivalry is shown by his carrying books for Bella or giving her his jacket. Even his invasions of her privacy, by sneaking into her room and reading the minds of those around her, are excused as being "flattering" (Meyer, 292). His one vice of driving fast is also excused since his vampire reflexes are infinitely better than a human's, making it nearly impossible for him to get into an accident.

It is not necessary for Edward to learn from Bella. Therefore he does not gain the same things from his relationship with her that the heroes in other romances do. The traits that are taught to other romance heroes are ones that Edward already possesses. The barrier Edward must overcome is so trivial in relation to his personality as a whole that he does not noticeably grow or change over the course of the novel. Because of this the element of recognition has lost its power. He continues to be reserved around Bella and remains a controlling presence in her life. He has not conceded any power to Bella and because of her extreme devotion to him, shown in the way she is willing to die to spare him even the possibility of death, Edward has taken charge of the relationship. He still has his reserve while Bella is willing to give up everything to be with him. Because Bella has no hold over him she gains no power from the relationship, and their relationship is unbalanced. Rather than relinquishing control to Bella, Edward gains control over her.

One way in which this is particularly clear is the physical relationship between the two. Because of his vampire nature

Edward must constantly resist his desire to drink Bella's blood, despite his family's vow to never consume human blood. This desire for blood is closely linked with sexual desire in the novel. The closer Bella is to Edward the more he must restrain himself, and so exchanging a simple kiss becomes a supreme act of will on his part. However Bella lacks Edward's restraint. The first time they kiss she is so aggressive that he must literally push her away. It is Edward who is in control of the situation and not Bella, whose virginity, safety and very humanity is on the line.

It is this lack of control that marks Bella as *not* being a romance heroine. A common trait of romance heroines is their active personalities. Where other women are content to be relegated to a secondary role in their own lives the romance heroine actively pursues her desires, be they emotional, physical or social. Examples include the famous Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice* and the titular heroine of *Pamela*. Unlike these women Bella is almost entirely passive throughout the story. She doesn't even actively pursue Edward, though wants him desperately. In fact the only thing she is proactive about is cooking dinner for her father. Ironically, since vampires consume only blood, this activity would be taken away from her if she were to become a vampire. Even in the moment where she is supposed to shine – the climatic confrontation with the vampire James who has been pursuing her – Bella is merely acted upon. Where another character may attempt to defeat the enemy that stands between her and happiness Bella simply surrenders to death. In this way

the character of Bella has betrayed the ideals of female empowerment that are present in romance novels.

Twilight has been called abstinence porn for the sexually charged yet chaste relationship between Bella and Edward. However unlike most proponents of abstinence until marriage, who advocate young women maintaining control of their bodies by abstaining from sex, Bella allows Edward to dictate the boundaries in the relationship. It is Edward who decides when or if they will kiss. Bella is determined to be with Edward forever, and wants to become a vampire so that she can realize this dream. However Edward refuses to turn her into a vampire, despite Bella making the decision on her own. In this way Edward has usurped Bella's authority over her own body. Sarah Wendell of the romance novel review blog "Smart Bitches, Trashy Books" makes the astute observation that Edward's conflicting desire and refusal to drink Bella's blood can easily be parlayed into a common romance novel trope of the rape or attempted rape of the heroine: "That leashed intention to kill... can be interpreted the same as the leashed intent to rape. But in a strange turn, Bella begs for that violation: she wants to be the same as Edward, and she wants him to kill her and change her."(Wendell)

Bella's desire to become a vampire is also tied to the joining or blending of male and female in romance novels. She even mentions it herself while arguing with Edward about his refusal to turn her into a vampire. "...A man and woman have to be somewhat equal..." (Meyer, 473). Edward's perfection is so complete that the only way Bella can come close to it is by giving

up her humanity. Since vampirism is one of Edward's traits Bella's desire to become a vampire can be equated to an imparting of Edward's masculine power. However because Bella confers none of her feminine power to Edward in exchange—for example her intuition, diplomacy and kindness—there is a lack of equality. Edward's traits overwhelm Bella's. The meaning of Meyer's “anti-human” statement in this context becomes one that is decidedly anti-feminist. Anti-human also means anti-Bella, allying readers against the main character and everything she represents.

Edward also decides what is best of Bella outside of their sexual relationship. Bella is “so clumsy that [she’s] nearly disabled,” (Meyer, 210) which leads Edward to possessive levels of concern. On multiple occasions he refuses to allow her to drive her own car. When she attempts to assert herself he physically drags her away (Meyer, 103-104). Edward enters her room every night and watches her sleep, making himself at home in Bella's private space without invitation. He even controls their conversations. When Bella asks simple questions, trying to learn more about her new boyfriend, he refuses to answer and instead makes her wait until *he* says she can ask him.

It is these inconsistencies that create an overwhelming imbalance of power between Bella and Edward. Bella's self-imposed powerlessness has larger implications outside of the novel. Thousands of young women reading *Twilight* have been exposed to this negative female image in a character that has become a symbol for the modern teen girl. The ideas of equality, feminine power and self-fulfillment that have provided readers

of romance novels with so much delight are absent in *Twilight*. Whether romance literature is inherently feminist or not, *Twilight* lacks the feminist traits that are a large part of the debate on this popular genre.

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"LA LLORONA CRIES FOR ME"

CHICANA FEMINIST REDEFINITIONS OF A LATIN AMERICAN GHOST

There are ghosts among us. They are written into our collective identity, mirroring the living beings within our communities who are removed from positions of power and influence within the dominant discourse. The subalterns, the marginalized members of United States' culture, have brought their ghosts with them, and in some cases, these

ghosts are ready to throw their undearthly support behind those in need of help. La Llorona is one of these spiritual figures: a ghost who has been part of the Latin American identity for hundreds of years, and who has come to the United States to wail out a protest in support of the overlooked and unheard. She is “one of the most famous figures in Mexican and [...] Chican@¹ oral and literary tradition” (Perez 2) and in recent years, “has wandered out of this genre onto pages, canvases, celluloid, and even into cyberspace. [She is] alternately, and sometimes simultaneously, a person, legend, ghost, goddess, metaphor, story, and/or symbol” (Perez 2).

La Llorona’s *llora* (lament) has, for years, been used to support Latin American patriarchal structure as a warning against women who overstep their traditional roles. Now, however, in the context of modern United States society, La Llorona is reappearing as a symbol of resistance. Her ghost wails an unending lament against the social structure that deprives Chicana women of rights and dignity. She is the voice of the oppressed, and her power lies in her undearth. In this essay, I will explore the significance of her story to the Chicana identity movement, both as it is told traditionally and as it has been adapted by Chicana authors like Cherrie Moraga, and examine how her status as a

1 Chican@ refers to persons of Latin American descent, living in the United States. Specifically, the @ sign signifies both an “a” and “o,” making chicano/chicana identity inclusive to both genders, rather than relying on the masculine “chicano” to refer to both groups. The word “chicana” will be used to signify women-specific groups.

phantasmic figure, beyond death or life, lends her strength as a symbol of resistance. I will argue that La Llorona's cultural history and her very undeath is what allows Chicana artists to embrace her as a symbol of strength and resistance.

Figures like La Llorona are central to the process of creating a cultural identity. Communities work constantly towards a process of self-creation and self-definition. This is especially true for communities on the marginal edges of globalized structures, who work simultaneously to maintain traditional values and to incorporate them into a modern and changing world. The stories transmitted through a society supply the basic identity for the people in question. Communities create their own identities and they are “distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 15). This imagined identity is then maintained and emphasized through the stories told by the members of that group. In a modern context, these self-identifications must maintain their power in the face of globalization. For people of Central American descent living in the United States, this means creating and maintaining an identity despite the impositions of the dominant culture. This process is called transculturation, whereby “members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture...[determining] what gets absorbed into their own [culture] and what it gets used for” (Pratt 7). Authors and other cultural leaders must converse with the dominant culture’s views in order to communicate their imagined identities, in a process called autoethnography, which

creates “a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made for them” (Pratt 5). In this way, traditional folktales might be adapted with new characters or interpretations, and old bastions of patriarchy might be reinterpreted as symbols of resistance. The modern La Llorona is a part of these processes and is increasingly drawn into modern situations, including efforts at re-imagining the Chican@ community as an empowered and self-determining cultural group.

La Llorona is a mythical legend. She is a myth in that she is part of a canon of stories that “explicate and reflect a cultural-specific worldview” (Perez 11). These myths “serve as a means of elucidating abstract or complex ideas about the world [...] through narrative” (Perez 7). Legends “are stories usually told in the present about historical figures, places, or events” (Perez 7). La Llorona’s story is rooted in an ancient event that has expanded as an autoethnographic process, that reinforces cultural values and identities. La Llorona is now the property of her living descendants: the Chican@ subalterns of the United States, who intermingle her life, death, and undeath in their oral traditions.

One central but often-overlooked aspect of the La Llorona story is that she is not only a myth or legend, but she is also a ghost. Her phantasmic status, beyond either life or death as she haunts waterways and folktales, gives her a supernatural power that is often ignored by scholars. A brief perusal of folklore encyclopedias will yield a variety of ghostly symbols that apply to La Llorona’s history and modern being. A ghost is defined as

“a deceased person believed to appear to the people of his or her own community after death” (“Revenant” *Folklore*). More important for our purposes, however, is that “the existence of revenants² is interpretable as the result of an unfulfilled duty on the part of either the deceased or the community of the living” (“Revenant” *Folklore*) and “The dead return to complete unfinished business, to warn or inform, to punish or protest, to care or protect, and to impart information which they failed to impart before dying” (“Ghost”). This definition clarifies the multiple interpretations of La Llorona as an undying warning and reminder of subconscious public guilt. La Llorona’s wail warns/informs, punishes/protests, and cares/protects in an ever-changing adaptation of symbolism in the modern Chican@ consciousness.

The traditional story of La Llorona begins with a woman who lived somewhere in Central America, some time long ago. She was a beautiful young woman who fell in love with a man above her status. This status difference was socio-economic, or perhaps she was an indigenous woman, and he was a Spaniard. They were happily married with children. But he strayed, and the grief-stricken woman took revenge by drowning their children in a river. Then she died, and she found that she could not enter the afterlife without her children, so now her ghost wanders waterways, wailing for her lost children and looking for other innocents to carry with her to Heaven. She became La Llorona: The Weeping Woman. As such, she has haunted waterways and frightened children in legend and folklore in Central America for

²A folklore term which means “ghost.”

generations. She is now resurrected and “unliving” in the collective imagination of the folklore of the American Southwest, and is expanding her influence ever-outward as her lament is transmitted through the autoethnographic storytellers.

In this traditional version of the La Llorona ghost story, she represents what a society most fears and despises. Maternal infanticide is recognized to be the deepest level of criminal behavior by most societies, including the ancient Greek legend of Medea. In this case, La Llorona committed a heinous crime and is punished by eternal damnation to wander and wail, forever seeking to amend a crime with more innocent blood, doomed to search without peace. The traditional hierarchy of Latin American culture demands virtue of the women, constructing them first and foremost as wives and mothers. Therefore, La Llorona serves as a warning against what could happen to a woman who acts out against her place in society. Chican@ children fear her as many American children would fear the Bogeyman or other ghostly figures. From birth, there is a fear that La Llorona will “get you;” that an aberrant woman will come to disrupt the social order and steal the next generation.

In contrast to this, there is a growing movement in contemporary literature to reclaim or re-interpret La Llorona in a way that transforms her into a sister within the repressive societal structure that disempowers women, condemning them to a life on the margins of recognized power structures. La Llorona’s very undeath can be seen as a parallel to the immigrant women living in the United States who are trapped without a recognized

“belonging” in social or cultural space. Many of these women live in a vulnerable position that makes them party to discrimination, violence, loneliness, and despair. There is a growing movement of these women to rally around cultural traditions in a way that also brings personal empowerment. Some of these women embrace La Llorona as a figure who “teaches us how to use our voices, whether wailing in protest or shouting in liberation, so that we may actively shape new cultural and social realities” (Perez 73). La Llorona is a figure who has traditionally been utilized to maintain the social balance in Latin American communities, and who is now recognized as a fellow fighter against United States’ oppression of the Chican@ subalterns. Perhaps, rather than being the Bogeyman, she is a “mother/sister/daughter” (Moraga “Looking for the Insatiable Woman”), with a voice who can wail for freedom from within the hierarchical social-cultural framework.

Cherrie Moraga, a self-identified Chicana lesbian feminist, has adopted La Llorona as a key figure in her battle to defend and transition Chican@ identities. She writes, “When La Llorona kills her children, she is killing a male-defined Mexican motherhood that robs us of our womanhood... We wander not in search of our dead children, but of our lost selves, our lost sexuality, our lost spirituality, our lost sabiduria [wisdom]” (Moraga). Moraga interprets La Llorona’s wail as a symbol of collective suffering, and her wandering reflects the struggle of her embattled kinswomen. In this version of the story, she is a symbol of radical strength who rejected the patriarchy so totally that she drowned

the physical and beloved symbols of that hierarchy, begotten upon her own body. Moraga identifies La Llorona's weeping and wailing through the living world and living culture as both a warning and a call to action against forces of oppression imposing their will on her People.

While La Llorona's status as an undead figure is often not explicitly mentioned in works that reference her, her uncanniness is an ever-present factor. She has persisted through the ages, through multiple changes in power structures, cultural adaptation, and migration. Perhaps it is her status as a ghost that allows her to continuously follow her People through place and time, wailing her pain and warnings. One author, Carmen Toscano, addresses her uncanny and "inhuman" status in her short play *La Llorona*. Addressing La Llorona's wailing, one speaker says, "It is not a human cry, but it resounds in our consciousness, it invades the inner coils of our hearing" (Toscano, 318). To this, another speaker replies, "It seems that she carries with her, inside of herself, the voices of many women" (Toscano 318). Here, La Llorona is at once a sympathetic female character, grieving for her lost children, and at the same time, she is a menacing, inhuman being who is not constrained by the laws of ordinary women and mothers. As a ghost, she is a being we recognize. She has the form and appearance of a beautiful human woman. Yet, her state is also gruesome because of her crime, and because, through her, we can see reflections of our unjust selves. Therein, however, also lies her power: as a ghost she is our familiar, coming back to remind us of business unfinished and justice unserved. As

Toscano states, La Llorona is not human, but she carries within herself the voices of a multitude of suffering women, and her wail is an expression of a people's collective torment.

Another Chicana author, Victoria Moreno, has also identified La Llorona as a central figure in her art and in her re-imagining of her Chicana identity. In the introduction to her poem “La Llorona, Crying Lady of the Creekbeds, 483 Years Old, and Aging,” Moreno describes the story as both ancient and immediate. She writes: “We knew she would be forever with us, forever in our memories, crying for her dead children and for her children yet unborn that were to die” (Moreno 319). La Llorona is a modern woman, suffering modern pains, just as she has for hundreds of years. Moreno also suggests that her story is ongoing, that La Llorona is not only trapped in a limbo between life and death, but also between past and future. She weeps for her dead children, but also for the unborn children yet to die. In this way, Moreno utilizes the ancient myth to address the painful realities of Chicana women today.

Moreno's poem begins:

La Llorona

they took away her children

the welfare office came and stole away her children.

because she had no right, they said.

to be a single parent, non-model American family

they took away her children (all unborn) (1-7)

poem continues in this manner, and La Llorona is present.

as suffering now, in the present, crying out against images of the

“modern American woman” that often leave no place for Chican@ ideas of motherhood. She addresses patriarchy and its institutions, such as United States welfare offices, which often deal directly and painfully with Chicana mothers. Moreno continues, “they took away her children/because there was no time/ to build them a better world” (21-23). We can see a powerful and immediate critique of injustices that Moreno herself has observed. In this respect, La Llorona might represent herself, a neighbor, or a friend. La Llorona has been modernized, still wailing against the loss of her children, but now her lament is aimed against the modern institutions that have removed her motherhood from her. This image of the searching woman, the mother frantically wandering and wailing for that most-precious treasure that she has lost, remains central in the poem and is, indeed, a key aspect of the traditional tale.

Victoria Moreno’s poem ends with a reminder of the ancient roots of La Llorona’s story, and how the ancient La Llorona has been transplanted into a modern setting. She tells us “And that Aztec Lady crying down the creekbeds/ ran into a concrete wall and, puzzled blank, stopped her wailing for her children [...] realizing that hope was gone” (35-39). In this moment, we finally have a first person narrator who imposes herself on the story, and declares “I took up the dirge/and, screaming down the streets at night, carried on the insane truth, the pain knowing that/ they took her children away” (40-45). La Llorona’s message is contagious, modern, and immediate. Her being is not so much physical as it is a pull in the consciousness that demands empathy

and action. Her ghost is present because of an ancient injustice that is yet to be overturned. This final stanza states that it was the Aztec Lady who lost her children all those years ago, and is only now losing hope. The narrator herself takes up the *llora* (cry), to wail down the streets as a new La Llorona, continuing in spite of the never-ending pain. La Llorona's ancient message is taken up and continued, living and “unliving” beyond one woman’s experience, into the consciousness of the Chican@ community.

Through the complex process of autoethnography, a community is constantly writing and re-editing itself. The creation of stories—of myths and legends, of heroes and monsters, of religious texts and iconic beings—lie within this process of self-redefinition. The continual presence of a ghost in a community speaks to some unresolved injustice. For generations, the traditional La Llorona story left her trapped between worlds as punishment for the sins of the women who overstep their societal bounds. Yet, perhaps all this time there have also been women who recognize something of themselves in La Llorona. She is a transient spirit, wandering with her People and existing within the marginal spaces of culture and community. As such, she belongs to each of them and they belong to her. She is their undethly reminder of their collective oppression. As Chicana writers embrace her more and more as a sister/mother/daughter, she becomes increasingly suited for that role. Their identity is tied up with hers, and as these women begin to raise their voices against injustices practiced upon them by an unequal society, La

Llorona's voice also is among their number. She has been among their community since the time of their ancestors. Now, with an identity increasingly entrenched in a new United States context, Chicanas are raising their voices together in resistance. La Llorona's wail, added to these others, creates a voice of protest that is immortal, chilling, and impossible to ignore, for there is supernatural strength in an unending, undethly cry.

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CAMERON THURBER

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ZOMBIOTIC (RE)IMAGININGS

*DAWN OF THE DEAD, 28 DAYS LATER, AND THE
EVOLUTION OF INGESTION*

In the 1978 flick *Dawn of the Dead*, zombies looked like decaying drunk people, stumbling slowly, *en masse*, towards a mall. George Romero's film it may be asserted, somewhat obviously, is an indictment of blind consumerism. Subsequent to the film's release, as the mechanisms of consumption have changed – nowadays, many consumers

are a click away from the fulfillment of all their commodity *desires* – so have representations of the zombie. This is evident in Danny Boyle's 2003 film, *28 Days Later*, in which zombies, I will argue, represent highly efficient techno-consumers. However, while Boyle's film purports to be made in the Romero-school of social criticism, I will show that it is, in effect, a victim of the very capitalist coerciveness it critiques.

Desire: traditionally differentiated from need insofar as its objects are not necessities. However, so single-minded has the contemporary consumer become – saving, biding their time, stalking the perfect buy – that desire has become naturalized. Desire has become a way of being, an embodiment so pervasive that the non-desiring body is almost unimaginable, an outcast, a non-target-market, outside the reach of capitalism. The contemporary subject desires, in other words, in order to exist, to live successfully within the coordinates of capitalism. As Zygmunt Bauman argues in *Globalization*, “the dilemma one hears mulled over most often nowadays is whether one needs to consume in order to live or whether one lives so that one can consume. That is, if we are still able, and feel the need to, tell apart the living from the consuming” (Bauman 81).

The figure of the zombie, or the zombie mass, is deployed by Romero in *Dawn of the Dead* to critique the conflation of living and consuming, needing and desiring. During a zombie outbreak, a band of survivors flees to a mall where they are soon surrounded by a horde. The mall, as the quintessential Middle American consumerist utopia, is the site towards which both survivors and

zombies are drawn. While it is arguable that the survivors flee to the mall for pragmatic reasons – it contains the objects they need to survive the zombie apocalypse such as weapons and food – they nevertheless fall prey to the orgiastic delight of consumerism. They are a law unto themselves inside the mall, unfettered by the single constraint that regulates consumerist desire: money, or spending-power. Thus, even in a life-or-death scenario, the survivors cannot resist the pull of unnecessary objects. As for the zombies themselves, what draws them to the mall is less defined. It is unclear whether it is their need for the living flesh of those inside, or some embodied memory of the site of their desire fulfillment prior to their infection. Both “living” survivors and “dead” zombies are driven to the same iconic site by what might arguably be described as conflated need and desire. This conflation is clearly exemplified by the survivors’ “hobby” of shooting zombies for sport from the roof of the mall. While it is arguable that killing zombies is a requisite of survival, it is also undertaken for pleasure (as the fulfillment of some perverse desire). What distinguishes consumers from zombies, *Dawn of the Dead* seems to suggest, is a matter of picking sides.

In relation to techno-capitalism as it exists today, consumerism in the 1970’s was as limited and comparatively unfrightening as its zombies. The materiality of the body was what limited its ability to consume, despite its desire/need. The body had to be transported to the material site of consumption (the mall) and could take with it only what it could carry. In the same way that the rotting flesh of zombies was inefficiently dragged by

insatiable hunger, so the limits of the material bodies of consumers meant they could only ingest so much. Added, their supply of and access to commodities was bound to the confines of the material site of consumption, in the case of *Dawn of the Dead*, the mall.

The techno-capitalism of today is characterized by the limitless avenues of ingestion provided by the internet. Empowered consumers, physically sedentary, are nevertheless given access to the whole globe with the click of a button. The internet has thus forever altered modes of privileged consumption. The well-to-do are no longer limited by their material bodies. Rather, they exact their desires in a virtual space that does not hold them physically accountable for their choices. They are utterly alienated from the means of production, and as such exact a terrible toll on the producers. With frightening speed and cold efficiency they are de-territorialized imperialists. As Bauman argues,

With the power to pass verdicts securely vested in cyberspace, the bodies of the powerful need not be powerful bodies nor need they be armed with heavy material weapons...they need no link to their earthly environment to assert, ground or manifest their power. What they need is the isolation from locality, now stripped of social meaning, which has been transplanted into cyberspace, and so reduced to a merely 'physical' terrain. (Bauman 20)

Romero's zombies, sluggish in their decomposing corporeality, are insufficient to represent techno-capitalist consumers.

And yet zombie films endure, their often generic scenario speaking to contemporary audiences as much as did Romero's

origins. This scenario might broadly be defined as follows: a single survivor or a band of survivors are pitted against mindless flesh eating hordes of zombies that seemingly represent the decimation of civil society. Reduced to mere survival they must maintain their humanity, escape the chaos, search for other survivors, and establish a new civic order. In Romero's films, the survivors rarely, well, survive. More contemporary manifestations of the genre broadly maintain this scenario (what admittedly crucial changes *do* occur will be discussed later). The endurance of the genre is explained by Megan Sutherland in terms of their still resonant message of resistance to the status quo:

With this understanding of the political figure at stake in zombie cinema in hand, then, the expressive potential of the zombie *remake* becomes much clearer...it constitutes a strikingly appropriate vehicle for the kind of political critique the zombie film enacts. For what it reanimates as a text is the very endurance of this political scenario over and against the specific political moments that mark each film. (Sutherland 72)

The specific ideological moment that marks Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, which by and large maintains the conventional scenario of the genre, is one for which Romero's sluggish monsters are singularly insufficient. The film transfers the site of desire-fulfillment from that of the localized suburban shopping mall to a technologically mediated global sphere. Nevertheless paying an homage to Romero's *Dawn* in a scene where the band of survivors run amok in a supermarket, the film's primary concern is the implications of unfettered technological advancement in the pursuit of consumerist efficiency.

This consumerist efficiency, Bauman argues, is facilitated by technologies that function to compress space and time. From the mechanics of transportation to the increasing speed of the internet, desire fulfillment has become more efficient than ever before. And so consumers are no longer limited by what their bodies can carry or the time it takes to carry it.

That all consumption takes time is in fact the bane of the consumer society – and a major worry for the merchandisers of consumer goods. There is a natural resonance between the spectacular career of the ‘now’, brought about by the time-compressing technology, and the logic of consumer-oriented economy. As far as the latter goes, the consumer’s satisfaction ought to be *instant*: and this is in a double sense. Obviously, consumed goods should satisfy immediately, requiring no learning of skills and no lengthy groundwork, but the satisfaction should also end - ‘in no time’, that is in the moment the time needed for their consumption is up. (Bauman 81)

If zombies are the archetypal consumer, then *28 Days Later* re-imagines them as ruthlessly efficient techno-consumers. They run. Fast. As such they pose a more immediate threat to those being consumed. Additionally, the film seems vested in critiquing technological advances as the messianic solve-all of the world’s woes.

The film is set in the United Kingdom where experiments on chimpanzees have spurred a virus into existence. Animal rights activists break into the laboratory and release the infected chimpanzees who pass the virus onto the population. The narrative follows Jim, a bicycle courier, who wakes up from a coma once the zombiotic outbreak has run its course in London.

He stumbles into the deserted London streets and is perplexed by their desolation. He finds other survivors and together they must find a rural military outpost that is purportedly protecting survivors.

The film's opening scene is constituted of grainy images of violence. As the camera pulls back, we see that each of these images are transmitted onto television screens that a chimpanzee, restrained to a chair in a scene reminiscent of *A Clockwork Orange*, is forced to watch. From the beginning of the film, then, time/space compression is in evidence: multiple screens showing multiple instances of violence at the same time. The chimpanzee (here representing the infantile consumer, a *tabula rasa* writ upon by the barrage of images) is conditioned into a consuming violence. The virus thus represents a new technology by which this "condition" is passed on: it is unstoppable, self-perpetuating, and ultra-efficient. The virus is born of the quest for technological advancement (nefarious experiments for seemingly no good reason), but is loosed as a result of a moment of irresponsible desire fulfillment as the animal rights activists self-righteously and disastrously set the chimpanzees free. The chimpanzees turn on their "liberators" and the activists become the first humans to be infected. If, in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, free market capitalist principles create the conditions for a consumerism which is driven by middle-class desire, then the film aims its critique primarily at a single material ideology. From the beginning of *28 Days Later*, we see contrasting ideological positions equally complicit: animal rights activists are ultimately as much to blame for the outbreak

as those who experimented on the chimpanzees. The place of technology in facilitating injustice seems to transcend mere political positionality. Technology here circumscribes all ethical positions.

If technology is efficient in creating ultra-efficient consumers, it is utterly useless in solving the resulting problems: ravenous flesh eating sociopaths. There are several instances in the film that seem to critique technology as the medium by which all desires and needs are immediately fulfilled, even those supposedly in the service of the good. As the band of survivors escapes London and its zombie hordes by car through the deserted roads, they hesitantly enter a tunnel littered with refuse (the inevitable by-product of hasty consumption). A tire on the car is punctured. The technology which promises swift transport (suggesting both temporal and spatial compression) fails them in the moment. They are left vulnerable as they are stuck desperately changing the tire while the zombie horde races toward them.

When the survivors reach the military outpost, they are initially relieved. While Jim had to beat in the brains of zombies with a (low-tech) bat, the military is infinitely more efficient. In a compound surrounded by mine and floodlights, the zombies are easily dispatched. However, their initial relief is replaced by the realization that the military is itself not unlike the zombie hordes that threaten them. The military, in an effort to repopulate the world with uninfected people, take the women survivors hostage so that they might become part of a breeding program: a thinly veiled excuse for sexual violence. In this sense, the female

survivors are objects for consumption, and the military, like zombies, desires human flesh. If the purpose of the military is to guard the lives and lifestyles of the nation-state's citizenry, then in *28 Days Later*, the military reflects the consumerist ethos of the society it protects. Even as it is a benevolent source of hope for the survivors, it presents itself dangerously instrumentalist. Not unlike Brian Massumi's characterization of the US Military food aid in Somalia, the military "presents itself as a life-giving 'service' to a community...upon which the well-being of the national home audience is seen to hang...The army doesn't fight; it does market maintenance work using cruise missiles as a grocery store janitor would a broom." (Massumi 52) For all the good it does, then, the military is a dangerous side effect of the technological scourge as are the zombies. As such, their effectiveness is sustained by technology, and as Christine Cuomo points out, at least in the United States, they are the largest consumer and polluter (Cuomo 30).

As conflict between the survivors and military ensues, Jim is nearly executed, but escapes over the wall of the compound into the countryside (the symbolic barrier between civilization and the state of nature). In this primal existence, Jim returns wields only his bat to defeat a technologically superior fighting force. In one telling instant, Jim encounters a hidden soldier who has run out of bullets. The soldier is terrified, incapable of defending himself. His identity – a hyper-masculine protector role – is sustained by the technology he wields. With his weapon a redundant hunk of metal, the soldier regresses into infantile

cowardice. He is found under a bed in the fetal position. The weaponry used by the two parties is of comparative interest. The military is dependent on remote killing technology. From landmines to floodlights activated by trip wires to guns, they kill many zombies at once without direct contact, and with near instantaneous efficiency. Jim, on the other hand, utilizes a baseball bat and must engage the enemy directly and can only kill zombies (or soldiers) one at a time.

Jim prevails in the battle by turning the force of rapid technological consumption against itself. In the military installation, a zombie (and former member of the military unit) was kept so that it might be studied in ways that echo the chimpanzee experimentation of the film's opening. The military thus hoped to find a cure through its observations. Jim releases the captive zombie upon the compound, turning the destructive power of the zombie against its own kind. Here, Jim corrects the mistake of the animal activists by forcing the consuming drive to engulf itself instead of allowing himself (or people like him) to be engulfed. In Jim's final victory, the film lays bare its own ideological critique: consumption and its empowering technologies are functions of each other, they are inescapable, and the only way to destroy them is to turn them upon each other. However, the film fails to live up to its own ideological critique.

Especially by British standards a high budget film, *28 Days Later* spent money (a lot of money) to make money. Romero's films were low budget and low risk endeavors that allowed him to pander to a limited demographic: the B grade schlock horror

fans spent their money while critics provided the acclaim. *28 Days Later*, on the other hand, had to appeal more broadly. Thus, while Romero's films could afford to kill off its protagonists, Boyle's (at least in its theatrical release) had to provide the cathartic ending the broader demographic demands for the price of a cinema ticket. So, the film ends with Jim, having defeated the military scourge and with zombies starving for lack of living human flesh, waking in a bed in a sunny rural cottage. His co-survivors finish the final letter in a giant, fabric, cheery "HELLO" that is laid out in a field to signal their presence to passing airplanes. Indeed, the film's last is an aerial shot of the survivors waving ecstatically upward. There is nothing ominous about the survivors' reentry into civilization. There is no suggestion that the self-same dysfunctional patterns of technologically driven consumerism will assert themselves anew. It is, rather, a moment of exhilaration and return to a pre-infection *status quo*. This ending is part of a larger trend in zombie films of the last decade where protagonists find ultimate salvation: amongst others, *I am Legend*, *Shaun of the Dead*, *Zombie Strippers*, and *Grindhouse: Planet Terror*.

The ending flies in the face of the *28 Days Later* supposed critique and, it would seem, was a response to the desires espoused by film-producer-run focus groups. The DVD release of *28 Days Later* offers two other endings which are in line with Romero's genre-establishing conventions of the protagonists' demise at the mouths of the zombies. It is telling that the "happy ending" should be the one used for theatrical release. If these alternative endings

are more in the spirit of the Romero-school of social criticism, then their inclusion on a DVD, as options that make the product more desirable to consumers, is contrary to that spirit. For a film that critiques technologically driven consumer efficiency, *28 Days Later* panders to the very drives it purportedly abhors. Romero's cinematic stand against consumption has become just another commodity for profit gain. Just as the machinations of capitalism are laid bare by the genre, the zombie flick has become a testament to its own warning and has been enveloped. Like the protagonist of his films who become infected while fighting the undead, George Romero's genre has been consumed.

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Mentor: Jenny Odintz

UNDEAD COMEDY

EDGAR WRIGHT'S *SHAUN OF THE DEAD*

Alfred Hitchcock once remarked: “The thing I have learned is that you’ll never find an audience that wants to laugh more than a horror audience” (Noel Carroll 147). This observation appears at first counterintuitive. Laughter and fear are usually set in opposition and a move toward laughter would seem to have no place in a horror film. Yet

fear and laughter as well as their associated genres—horror and comedy—share commonalities in the process of provoking the respective physical reactions of terror and amusement. As Noel Carroll states in his article *Horror and Humor* in Sigmund Freud's theoretical text the *Uncanny*: "In Freud's theory the road to comic laughter and the road to feeling of uncanniness are unaccountably the same" (146). Besides the similarity in creating physical reactions in an audience, a likeness is found in each genre's ability to present relevant social commentary. Both comedy and horror may use scenarios and symbolic icons as ways to examine and critique society in either a humorous or cautionary manner. Comedy usually employs bumbling, awkward, and socially inept characters whereas horror utilizes fearful fiends to shape audience reaction. While the horror and comedy genres have different mechanics and symbols to elicit the social commentary, the genres can also be united through parody. Parody is a process of recontextualizing and reconstructing texts, films, or genres to create a new work or genre that plays with similarities and differences of the sources from which it draws (Harris 81). The result of meshing these genres is the Horror-Comedy subgenre. In the last three decades, this subgenre has liberated terrifying monsters, iconic symbols once trapped in the horror genre, by bringing the ghost, vampire, and the zombie into the comedic realm of film. Several films of the Horror-Comedy subgenre have risen to success, earning blockbuster acclaim with *Ghostbusters*, *Men in Black*, and *Beetle Juice*. Among these growing number of horror-comedy films is Edgar Wright's *Shaun of the Dead*, a 2004

British romantic comedy with zombies that compels its audience to alternatively scream and guffaw throughout the film experience. Besides drawing material from the horror and romantic comedy genres, it simultaneously works as an understated parody of George Romero's zombie narrative *Dawn of the Dead*, the second film of his commended *Dead* Series. In this essay, I aim to examine the presented parody in *Shaun of the Dead* by demonstrating the pliability of the zombie horror symbol and how in its flexibility it is able to connect its recontextualized and reconstructed elements by being able to alternatively participate in horror and comedy. In addition, the multiple uses of the zombie symbol concurrently illuminates the social commentary explored in both *Shaun of the Dead* and Romero's *Dead* series and reveal on one hand the tendency of the horror genre toward an inevitable suffering and collapse of humanity and on the other hand the humor-infused horror of *Shaun of the Dead* that allows for positive transformations and resolutions.

In the horror genre, the image of the modern zombie icon is attributed to George Romero's 1968 groundbreaking film *Night of the Living Dead* and the influential subsequent films of his *Dead* Series. Romero's use of extreme gore, rotting skin, broken limbs, gushing blood, the spilling of guts, and the frenzied gorging on live human flesh in a post-apocalyptic setting has firmly cemented itself into other contemporary zombie narratives. Yet before Romero, the undead zombie had haunted American popular culture for nearly a century. Originally derived from Haitian folklore and the native religious practices of voodoo,

countless journals, comic books, video games, films, and novels featuring this horrifying creature have infected the minds of thousands of Americans, becoming a terrifying image and symbol that demonstrates the concerns and preoccupations of its audiences. As June Pulliam in *The Icons of the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares* states: “The zombie itself is a malleable symbol—representing everything from the horrors of slavery, white xenophobia, Cold War angst, the fear of death, and even apprehension about consumer culture” (724). Given the zombie’s versatility as a symbol, the human fear of death, tendency toward consumption, and lack of control remain persistent components to its symbolic appeal as a fundamental element of social commentary in the modern zombie narrative.

In addition to creating the contemporary image of the post-apocalyptic zombie, George Romero’s success was found by raising controversy over his sharp social commentary relevant to his time in his *Dead* series. While he used the zombie symbol in his social commentary to primarily address the fear of death, he also illustrates several societal issues including race, gender, power, and violence. For example, the hero of *Night of the Living Dead* is a man of color, an unheard of director’s choice at a time when Hollywood was dominated by white culture. Known as his most societally revealing film, *Night of the Living Dead* also touches on the Vietnam-era fears of nuclear war and the strong sway of media including the relatively new power of the television, in addition to the dynamics of the nuclear family with the breakdown of the Cooper family who take residence in the

farmhouse basement when the zombie apocalypse hits. In particular with *Dawn of the Dead*, Romero metaphorically reveals the follies of mindless human consumerism, having his survivors take refuge in the center of American consumer culture—the shopping mall. Having chosen a sanctuary, the survivors often reveled during the film in their opportunity to freely obtain materialistic extravagance from expensive clothes and jewels to other unnecessary luxury items. Besides the survivors attraction to the shopping mall, the zombies themselves are drawn uncharacteristically to its doors, underscoring the mindlessness of American consumer culture. Romero's critique on consumerism becomes emblematic of most contemporary zombie narratives, which have endowed the zombie with, as Pulliam notes: "states of existence devoid of meaning and of questionable quality" (742). Romero's zombies are driven solely by thoughtless consumption, as is his survivors who are unable to look at life beyond their own consumeristic hunger. Thus survival and escape, as Pulliam states, "involves not merely avoiding the bite of a zombie, but actively becoming a 'round character,' someone with a varied and meaningful existence" (742).

In the same line, *Shaun of the Dead*'s social commentary revolves around avoiding a meaningless existence but also contains an equally strong parodic component. In Dan Harries' theoretical text *Film Parody* he states that a parody "creates a level of ironic incongruity with an inevitable satiric impulse" (6). In other words, parody can be associated with the witty mockery of the ineptness and inappropriateness, or the utter

absurdity found in the reconstructed text or film that contributes to the underlying sense of ridicule and critique for some element of society or human nature. In *Shaun of the Dead*, the co-writer Simon Peg also plays the monotonous protagonist, Shaun, who spends the days of his tedious life working a dead-end job as a salesman, playing video games with his indolent best friend and flat mate Ed and drinking his nights away at the Winchester Bar. *Shaun of the Dead* puts a spin on the contemporary zombie figure, taking the shuffling undead and pitting it again Shaun and the other main characters in a lampooning manner to emphasize their zombie-like existence. It is this parodic basis in *Shaun of the Dead* that contributes to the set up of the audience's basic but opposing physical reactions to the humor and horror surrounding the zombie symbol.

Although counterintuitive in nature, “comedy and horror are opposites sides of the same coin” (Carroll 147). I draw here from the theories of Noel Carroll’s article “Horror and Humor,” in which the author presents how fictional horror and humor can alternatively function together because “both deal in the grotesque and the unexpected, but in such a fashion as to provoke two entirely different physical reactions” (147). The root of his theory lies in theories of art horror and Kant’s incongruity theory of humor, in which humor lies in the violation of societal norms and expectations. Horror and comedy both require a build-up of tension created by an impure force or object. The result for horror is a peaking and release of the terror while a comedic reaction is a liberating release from the tension with amusement or laughter.

In Carroll's theory, an object is necessary to elicit the tension for the corresponding response of terror or humor, wherein lies the affinity of horror and humor and their ability to function together in the same scenario. As Carroll notes:

[...] these two states despite their differences share an overlapping necessary condition insofar as an appropriate object of both states involves the transgression of a category, a concept, a norm, or a commonplace expectation. (154)

In other words, an impure object must violate established societal expectations to be considered either fearful or funny. The zombie constitutes a perfect example of an impure object. It violates the basic societal expectations of human life. It straddles the categories of life and death—being neither truly alive nor dead—and also between human and creature—having the shape and history of a socialized human but being a creature with the instinctual drives and the uninhibited nature of an animal.

Even with their overlapping elements, boundaries of horror and comedy are found in the context in which the object is placed. Although consistently put into film narrative contexts that are supposed to bring forth fear in viewers, Carroll states that zombies and “[m]onsters [...] can be alternately horrifying or laughable depending upon whether the narrative context invest[s] them with fearsomeness or not” (157). In other words, the fear factor is crucial in creating the horror in a situation while a lack of fear sways an impure object to humor. The audience takes cues from the reactions of the characters in the film toward the monster, as well as from the music and other elements of spectacle that encourage or alleviate fear.

In *Shaun of the Dead*, the bumbling heroes, Shaun and Ed, see their first zombie standing out in their garden the morning after a hard night of drinking at the Winchester Bar after Shaun's girlfriend, Liz, breaks up with him. Upon seeing the zombified checkout girl, Mary, Shaun and Ed believe her to be drunk and that her attack on Shaun is actually an attempt to hit on him. Even as she is trying to devour Shaun, Ed wants to record the "drunk" Mary trying to "get on" with Shaun and goes into the house to grab a disposable camera and proceeds to take pictures. By attributing Mary's actions and condition to alcohol, her threat to Shaun and Ed is minimized, which removes the fear from the audience and thus allows for the humor of Shaun and Ed's inept reactions to emerge. However, fear is quickly restored in the scene when Shaun, angry at Mary for not leaving him alone, shoves the undead girl away and she trips and falls on a pipe protruding out of the ground. Shaun and Ed's reactions turn from shock to fear as Mary stands up undeterred with a large hole through her stomach. This action coupled with the frightened reactions of Shaun and Ed, reminds the audience of the fearful infallibility and ceaseless hunger of zombies and the danger they pose to human life, and hence invokes a fearful reaction in the audience. As Noel Carroll notes in conclusion to his article: "In order to transform horror into laughter, the fearsomeness of the monster—its threat to human life—must be sublated or hidden from our attention. Then we will laugh where we would otherwise scream" (158).

Encompassing horror and humor, parody also utilizes the basic mechanism of violating an expectation or norm and using context to provoke an intended physical reaction. Transgression of societal expectations is an inevitable result of parody with the process of recontextualizing and reconstructing to create a parodic work. However, a parody must keep components of its referents to establish its expectations and norms so that they can be broken. *Shaun of the Dead* takes key components from the romantic comedy and zombie genres, in particular from the first three films Romero's *Dead* series. For example, *Shaun of the Dead* uses both the expected plot formats of a typical romantic comedy and zombie drama. Shaun loses his girlfriend and fights to win her back while also fighting for survival during a zombie apocalypse. In addition, a parody can associate itself to a particular referent in more subtle ways. In *Shaun of the Dead*, even the film's name itself—*Shaun of the Dead*—plays on the name of *Dawn of the Dead* with the rhyme that draws a connection between the two films. However, the silliness of the pun minimizes the fearful connotations and apocalyptic images that *Dawn of the Dead* conjures for the audience.

In addition, *Shaun of the Dead* roots itself in the zombie horror genre and to Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* by the symbolism of the refuge taken by its characters and its contribution to each film's theme. In *Shaun of the Dead*, the shelter sought by Shaun and the other survivors is the Winchester Bar, a refuge that Shaun finds in his monotonous life and, with the excessive number of nights spent drinking there, is a place that contributes to his humdrum existence, which led to his girlfriend, Liz, breaking it

off—a component of the romantic comedy genre. As with the survivors of *Dawn of the Dead*, the characters are happy to drink a few rounds and eat peanuts while waiting for rescue. The zombies too are drawn to the Winchester out of habit, similar to the shopping mall, continuing their undead lives in a place that was a part of their already dull existence. In addition, the zombies themselves are the film's greatest anchors into the zombie genre as they mimic those found in Romero's *Dead* series. Disregarding the contemporary trend of "fast" zombies—creatures that have the speed and physical capabilities of a normal human—found in modern zombie narratives such as *28 Days Later* and the 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead*, Wright and Pegg keep the slow but unstoppable undead figure that Romero spearheaded and continues to reproduce in his later *Dead* films.

Subtler parodic parallels can also be deduced between *Shaun of the Dead* and other films in Romero's *Dead* series. The original music score of *Night of the Living Dead* is found in *Shaun of the Dead*'s opening credits while screenwriters Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg use one of the most famous lines from Romero's watershed zombie narrative. The line is found in the opening sequence of the original *Night of the Living Dead* when Johnny and Barbara are visiting their father's grave; in *The Icons of the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares*, June Pulliam describes the scene: "Johnny attempts to frighten his sister with his best Boris Karloff imitation, telling her in a deep voice that "they're coming for you Barbara" (736). Johnny is inevitably attacked and becomes a zombie. In *Shaun of the Dead*, Shaun's

flat mate says the line to Shaun's mother (coincidentally named Barbara) over the phone after she sweetly refuses to leave her house without her husband who has been bitten by zombies trying to break into their house. Parallels to the *Day of the Dead*, Romero's third film in his *Dead* series, are found in the ending scenes of *Shaun of Dead* in the news clips that show important news stations touting the headway on retraining zombies for domestic work and their use in reality TV shows. These fake news clips as well as Shaun's decision to keep his zombified flat mate Ed in their shed in the garden echoes the friendly relations of Dr. Logan in *Day in the Dead* to the zombie Bub whom Dr. Logan teaches to suppress his urge to eat human flesh and to mimic actions of his former truly live self. In addition, these clips make a quick critique of western society's obsession with entertainment-based TV and the ridiculous depths to which the industry will go to keep its viewers interested. The adroit congruencies to the *Dead* series help base *Shaun of the Dead* in parody, its referent genres, and set up the contrasts for the incongruous humor to emerge.

In addition, much of the parody and incongruous humor found in *Shaun of the Dead* plays on the transgressions by the characters who defy audience expectations with surprising reactions to the impending zombie apocalypse. By Wright attributing elements of *Shaun of the Dead* to the zombie drama, the audience anticipates the way the characters of *Shaun of the Dead* will react to the zombie, as would characters in typical zombie narratives of the horror genre. Characters who encounter

these terrifying situations are usually forced to use their full attention, struck with the fear for their survival, with the ensuing and continuous horror of close calls and killings, epic-style heroic scenes, terrible sacrifice of loved ones, and the undead death of friends and relatives as they turn into flesh craving monsters.

While the characters in *Shaun of the Dead* do encounter and respond to the horror in several of the scenes, the humor is employed by moments of understated acting that simultaneously cause a lack of fear and a humorous reaction in the audience toward the zombie. Exaggeration by under-acting and overacting in a situation is considered the central component to parody (Harries 81). Essentially, actors act as Dan Harries states, “beyond their conventionally expected limits”(83). Although under-acting is subtle in *Shaun of the Dead*, the humorous irony is attributed to many of the characters’ failure to realize or focus on their dire situations. For example, after Liz breaks up with Shaun, Shaun and Ed go out drinking at the Winchester, and when they leave they start singing, being in a playful mood after pounding so much alcohol. As they head home, they are so intoxicated they do not notice the zombie eating a man next to the bar and work in the groans from a pursing zombie in the distance into their drunkard singing. The incongruous irony is found in their unawareness of the zombie situation and their everyday reactions to the flesh eating creatures while any other character in a traditional zombie narrative would have been running away in horror to hide and barricade himself from harm.

Under-acting is also found in the characters' absurd actions in their quest to survive. For example, Shaun and Ed try to destroy two zombies with Shaun's electro albums, carefully shifting through each one to pick out albums Shaun could do without. Humorous irony is found in the roommates' bickering to figure out which albums are terrible enough to throw while the shuffling zombies are slowly pursuing them to tear them to pieces. Another example occurs as, in desperation to reach the Winchester through a massive horde of zombies, the group turns to Diane, Liz's friend and failed actress, to give them tips on how to "act" zombie-like so they can get through the gathered undead undetected to the sanctuary of the Winchester. Using the pajama zombie that Shaun had speared to a tree as an object of observation, Diane proceeds to teach as though in an acting class, asking everyone to "shake it out" and for each person to give his best zombie impression, critiquing and complimenting as necessary. The parody and humor is found in the normal everyday reactions characters have to an extraordinary and horrifying undead situation. Not only does it lessen the fear in the audience by a less extreme outcome to a usually terrifying situation which allows the humor to transpire but it also underscores the depths to which Shaun and other characters are wrapped up in their dull workaday existence; ultimately they require a zombie apocalypse to find change.

In conclusion, although decidedly of the horror genre, the longstanding undead figure of the zombie symbol has found alternately horrifying and humorous qualities in Edgar Wright's

Shaun of the Dead. The interlacing of horror and humor of the romantic comedy genre results in parody, which maintains and breaks expectations of both genres. *Shaun of the Dead* also functions as a particular parody of *Dawn of the Dead* and other films in Romero's *Dead* series. Even so, the zombie maintains its symbolism in *Shaun of the Dead* as a gory figure of mindless consumption that lacks a full and meaningful existence. This contrasts with the horror of the zombie in *Dawn of the Dead*, which offers a critique of the hazards of America's consumerism. Horror and comedy genres provide opposing avenues for social commentary, horror presenting critique through terror and disgust and comedy poking fun at the targeted societal elements. Hence, the horror of *Dawn of the Dead* figuratively shows the definitive result of humanity's failings while the parody and horror-comedy found in *Shaun of the Dead* shows the devastating consequences of human follies but has comedic components, which allow for its characters to change. In Shaun's case, it is the chance of survival and of winning back his girlfriend in a romantic comedy tradition that, overall, results in an unheard of metaphorical reversal of a zombie turning human.

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CREATED HUMAN

THE POSTHUMAN SEARCH FOR HUMANITY IN
FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

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In *How We Became Posthuman*, Katheryn Hayles defines the idea of posthuman as: “envisioning humans as information-processing machines with fundamental similarities to other kinds of information-processing machines, especially intelligent computers” (246). In his article “Animated Bodies and Cybernetic Selves,” Carl Silvio adds to Hayles’ defintion:

Most often, those who use the term intend it to mean something roughly equivalent to ‘cyborg,’ a category of beings that are part human and part machine, or more precisely, that exist in the liminal space between the ‘natural’ and the technological. Cyborgs [...] usually are humans who have had their bodies or minds artificially augmented with technology, though inorganic thinking robots who exhibit human or human-like behaviors and abilities count in this category as well (115).

When one thinks of a cyborg, an image similar to the character Batou from *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* usually comes to mind: “He possesses enhanced cyborg abilities, like armored skin and infrared vision [and] when injured, he augments his body [...] becoming increasingly more a machine than man” (Notaro 614). Can we even consider a person with no biological body to be human?

The Japanese anime series *Fullmetal Alchemist* examines this idea. The purpose of this essay is to examine the character of Alphonse, and to determine that we can consider him human, despite his lack of a body. Based on the graphic novel series of the same name, the series follows two brothers, Edward (Ed) and Alphonse (Al). They live in a parallel world, where people use alchemy instead of the sciences of chemistry and physics. Their father is a powerful alchemist, who has passed his gift for alchemy on to the boys, who show proficiency for the science from a very early age. At the tender ages of ten and nine, they lose their mother, Trisha, to an unnamed illness that, unbeknownst to the boys, has afflicted her for quite some time. In Ed’s grief, he vows that he will become a powerful enough alchemist to perform the forbidden act of human transmutation, and bring their mother

back from the dead. Al seems hesitant, but ultimately goes along with his brother (Episode #3).

Like any science, alchemy follows certain rules. Alchemy's first law is equivalent exchange: "Humankind cannot gain anything without first giving something in return. To obtain, something of equal value must be lost," (Title sequence). When the boys attempt a human transmutation a year after the death of their mother, they naively believe that supplying the physical components of a human body and a few drops of their own blood will satisfy this law. They are incorrect: Ed's left leg, along with Al's entire body, are taken in payment. In addition, the human transmutation fails horribly. As we find out later in the series, when an alchemist attempts a human transmutation, a homunculus is born (Episode #47). Homunculi are artificially created humans with no soul of their own who possess immortality and superhuman abilities. Initially, the homunculus Ed and Al create looks more like a monster than anything human, but later manifests as the character Sloth. Ed sacrifices his right arm to bring back Al's soul and binds it to a suit of armor with a blood seal. Their neighbors, Winry and Pinako, fit Ed with a set of automail, an alchemic animated prosthetic limb. Ed and Al decide to search for the infamous Philosopher's Stone, which is rumored to allow an alchemist to forgo the law of equivalent exchange. The boys hope to acquire it so they can return their bodies to normal (Episode #3).

While Al is not the first image that comes to mind when one thinks of a cyborg, as he exists within a suit of armor and

does not resemble a robot in any way, he most definitely is a cyborg. Alchemy is one of the highest levels of technology that exists in the world of *Fullmetal Alchemist*. When Ed performs the blood seal that binds Al's soul to the suit of armor, he is effectively augmenting Al's soul with technology, thus making him a cyborg. At first glance, Al seems very different from Batou, but in actuality, the characters are quite similar. Both characters are augmented using the technology available in the world in which they are set, only their worlds have very different settings.

Al initially does not question his identity after his transformation, but this changes in the episode entitled "Soul of the Guardian." The boys infiltrate a secret military laboratory where they have learned experiments were performed in an attempt to create a Philosopher's Stone. The boys are separated, and both encounter beings similar to Al: souls bound to suits of armor. These beings, #66 and #48, are convicts who were supposedly executed, but the military instead performed alchemic experiments upon them and now uses to guard the laboratory from intruders. Al encounters #66, who forces him to question his existence:

#66: What a naïve worm you are! What if you're a fake, an imitation? How would you know the difference? Your brother's the one who crafted you in this form, how do you know you don't love him because he made it so you would? Tailored your personality and memories to suit him best?

Alphonse: That just isn't true! I'm Alphonse Elric; I'm exactly the same as I was when I was a boy! I know I am!

#66: Hahahahahaha! But that's the trick isn't it? Your so-called soul- it's invisible. Undetectable by any

scientific tool. But what if you were designed in a way that made it impossible for you to decipher what's real and what lies your brother has been feeding you?

(Episode #20)

At first, Al refuses to believe this is possible, but later in the episode “Created Human,” we learn that it actually *is* possible for an alchemist to attach their own memories and feelings to a homunculus and create a replication of that person subject to the whims and desires of the alchemist (Episode #22). After this discovery, Al spirals deep into depression. He pulls away from Ed, until Ed and Winry convince him that his memories are not fabricated and that he did exist as a boy before the failed human transmutation (Episode #24).

In several instances throughout the series, other characters defend or reinforce Al’s humanity. In the same episode where Al confronts #66, Ed encounters #48, two brothers bound to a single suit of armor, one to the helmet and the other to the body. While they were still “alive,” they went on a murdering rampage as “The Slicer” and were demonized by the public; called animals because “they couldn’t stomach what we did” (Episode #20). After an exhaustive battle, Ed finally bests #48, and the brothers ask him to destroy them because they do not wish to exist after suffering defeat. Ed gallantly declares that he will not kill anyone, which leads to an exchange between Ed and the elder brother about whether or not he and his brother are human. Ed refuses to believe that they are not human, because “If I accepted you’re not human, that means I’d have to admit the same of my brother. I can’t do that. [...] My brother’s a person, I’m telling you. And

that means you are, too” (Episode #20). The elder brother finds this amusing, because the first time the two of them are treated as people “is when we’re scraps of metal” (Episode #20). When they possessed human bodies, they were treated as animals and demons, but when they had no body, they were treated as human for the first time.

Later in the series, Al asks Scar, another character who has experienced much pain and loss because of alchemy, if he senses anything human about him (Episode #24). At first Scar does not respond, but later in the episode after Al reunites with Ed, Scar tells him: “Earlier, I did sense something. Tears that can’t be seen, but felt. Those tears were … human” (Episode #24). Most people have had experiences where they felt the pain of another person near them, even if they could not see the person’s pain. That Scar can feel Al’s pain is further proof that Al has not lost his humanity.

In Baudrillard’s discussion of simulacra, he focuses mostly on what is reality and what is truth. In his argument, he uses the example of the difference between when someone feigns an illness and when someone simulates an illness: “To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign” (1733). He then states: “[...] Feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false,’ between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary,’ (1734).

The homunculi of *Fullmetal Alchemist* are simulating a human existence, as they look human at first glance and can walk amongst society without arousing any suspicion, when they are not completely human. Al cannot quite manage this, although most people assume that a body exists within his armor and are shocked and sometimes horrified when they discover that there is not. The audience is completely unaware that the homunculi are not human until they first display their superhuman powers. The homunculi openly admit that they are not human. Lust and Gluttony declare their desire to become human, whereas Envy seems to possess a disgust of humanity.

However, we must be careful not to completely write off the humanity of the homunculi. As Baudrillard states: “The simulator cannot be treated objectively either as ill, or as not ill” (1734). As stated earlier, the homunculi are simulating a human existence. If we agree with Baudrillard’s theory, then we cannot consider the homunculi human, but we also cannot consider them inhuman either. John Ranyard, a Jungian psychologist, gives us a differing opinion in his analysis of *Fullmetal Alchemist* : “[...] The story of this striving after soul is creatively expressed as the human’s attempt to retrieve soul from the beyond, and the homunculi’s attempt to take soul from the humans- result[ing] in a conflict that creates soul in both beings” (276). Indeed, we later discover that the homunculi have memories of the person they were based on (Episode #47). They also display vivid human emotions, such as grief. In the episode “The Other Side of the Gate,” Wrath cries hysterically in response to the death of Sloth,

and begs the homunculi's master, Dante, to use the Philosopher's Stone to bring her back. Gluttony as well displays grief and confusion when he learns of Lust's death (Episode #49). Lust herself seems to fall in love with Scar prior to her death. The homunculi's emotions differ from Al's emotions in that characters who know Al legitimize his emotions – and his humanity as a whole - whereas Dante delegitimizes the homunculi's emotions: "You're not a human Wrath. Stop acting like one. [...] You don't have feelings" (Episode #49). Dante is so irritated by the homunculi "acting" human, that she later punishes Wrath by using alchemy to remove Wrath's arm and leg (Episode #49). Despite that it could be argued that the homunculi do indeed have souls, they are still not fully human. When Ed and Al attempt to bring their mother back via human transmutation, they create Sloth instead. They believe that by simply supplying their blood, this will bring their mother's soul back from the beyond and bind it to a body because blood is "the spark of human life" (Episode #3). This fails, as the homunculi state several times throughout the series that they do not possess souls.

Another interesting point to consider is the relation of their names to their personalities. The homunculi are each named after the seven deadly sins of Christianity, and they each emulate that particular sin as a major trait of their character. Gluttony is constantly asking permission from the other homunculi to eat people, Wrath is full of anger and rarely thinks things through before he acts, Lust is a near perfect image of the lustful woman and is accused of having a "school girl crush," etc. It is a popular

idea of Christianity that all humans are capable of these seven sins to some degree. Yet humans also are capable of great good as well, sometimes helping another person for no other reason than it is the right thing to do. While the homunculi do display grief for each other's deaths, they grieve for what the dead were able to give them, not the dead homunculus themselves, as Wrath illustrates for us: "Save her please! I need her!" (Episode #49) The homunculi repeatedly act on their baser instincts. Dante only has control over them because she dangles the carrot of using the Philosopher's Stone to make them human.

An additional part of what makes us human is that we are fragile and we can be hurt or killed quite easily. The homunculi cannot be killed as easily as humans can. Bullets do not stop them, nor does penetration of the skull. Killing a homunculus is a very complex task, a trait that subtracts from their humanity. A homunculus's weakness is the remains of the person that they are created from. When they are near these remains, they cannot move and are rendered helpless. The homunculi's master fed them shards of a Red Stone (a weaker version of the Philosopher's Stone) in order to give their body a human shape and which also grants them their special powers. There is a very specific type of transmutation circle that must be used to extract these shards, making them even more defenseless (Episode #47). Al may appear to be more resilient than humans are, but he can be killed by the simple act of scratching or washing off the blood seal from his armor (Episode #22). In this way, Al displays the same fragility that any other human has. He may be immortal in the sense that

he cannot grow old and die, yet the fact that his existence is so delicate makes him seem just as human as anyone else.

In the final episodes of the series, Scar creates a Philosopher's Stone, which is bound to Al's armor, and the boys finally possess the means to restore their bodies to normal. Ed is hesitant to use the Stone however, because he is unsure of what would happen to Al, as he essentially *is* the Stone. The homunculi capture Al, and Envy kills Ed while he attempts to rescue Al. Al uses himself, as the Philosopher's Stone, to resurrect Ed. Ed is brought back to life, but he cannot stand the thought of life without his brother, and so he sacrifices himself to bring Al back—without the Philosopher's Stone. Miraculously, Al is brought back in his ten-year-old body. However, he has no memory of the previous 4 years since the original attempt at human transmutation, which some fans speculate was part of the cost of equivalent exchange in bringing Al back to life in his human body (Wyman). The series ends with Al vowing that he will somehow find a way to bring Ed back, so that the two of them can be together (Episode #51).

Clearly, once Al regains his human body there is no question that he is fully human, but was he human while he had no human body? Other characters believe that he is human, and they can even sense his emotions. While in some ways, he is a cyborg and could be considered posthuman, he is at the same time human in ways that the homunculi are not, such as the fragility of his existence. However, there are similarities between Al and the homunculi, most importantly, the desire of the immortal to gain – or in Al's case, regain- mortality, as well as the

possession of human emotions. In the end, the fact that Al was able to regain his human body at all is strong evidence that he never lost his humanity in the first place. That he loses his memory from his time as a cyborg in the transmutation that brings him back is interesting, but what is important is that he gives them up to regain his body. Although Al's humanity is questioned at several points throughout the series – as well as that of the homunculi's humanity- it is clear that he was, and is, human.

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Mentor: Amy Legette

HEARING MUSIC THAT NOBODY HEARS

SOCIAL CRITIQUE AND BLOODLUST IN *SWEENEY TODD*

Asylums, mental hospitals and other such institutions function to build literal walls between “normal” people and those who are not considered contributing members of society due to a physical or mental disability. Inmates and/or patients are shut away much like the dead are placed in graveyards,

silenced and often forgotten behind locked doors instead of tombstones. Representing this segregation from the living is Sweeney Todd of the eponymous musical play by Stephen Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Its villain lives on the fringe of society and must take on the seemingly non-threatening, working-class persona of a barber to camouflage his “insane” impulses. And so, underlying his cover of a humdrum job, he is singularly dangerous. His “true” self is murderous. His behavior is contrary to established civil order. In this regard he is what Foucault would argue, is the definition of mentally ill:

[Mental illness] is negative, since illness is defined in relation to an average, norm, a “pattern,” and since the whole essence of the pathological resides in this departure: illness, it seems is marginal by nature and relative to culture only insofar as it is a form of behavior not integrated by that culture. (Foucault 62)

More than a definition of mental illness Foucault provides us with a useful critical lens. For if, as he claims, mental illness is a disruption of established cultural patterns, then instances of mental illness throw such established patterns into stark contrast. Sweeney Todd is, of course, not a *real* madman. Rather, he is a representation of madness as written by Stephen Sondheim. While Sondheim deploys Todd’s madness to disrupt established cultural patterns, he also structures that madness to reflect those cultural patterns back to society. Todd is dangerous not merely because of his bloodlust, but also because he reveals that bloodlust to be society’s as much his own. I will argue that Todd should not be perceived as a figure of resistance (despite his own justifications for his actions). He does not represent a departure or alternative

to established social patterns. He is, ultimately, the horrific realization of social practices we don't even question anymore. Sweeney Todd's "true" self, his blood lustful murderous side, is intricately tied to the wrongs he has suffered. A once functioning member of society named Benjamin Barker, he was wrongly sentenced to prison for 15 years, disconnecting him from society and in particular his family. After he escapes Botany Bay in the penal colony of Australia, he returns to London and renames himself Sweeney Todd. He learns that his wife, Lucy, was raped by Judge Turpin, the man who imprisoned him. In Todd's absence, the trauma Lucy endured drove her to attempt suicide by taking poison. Unsuccessful, the attempt left her an insane beggar woman, unrecognizable to Todd. Todd's daughter, Johanna was taken as a ward by the same Judge Turpin and Todd had no access to her. This scenario paints the picture of a man whose very investment in civil society has been undermined. The judge, as representative of social order, is also Todd's ultimate antagonist. Added, his emotional ties to his daughter and wife are more detached than connected. In this, the musical play establishes that Todd is not bound by the emotional, moral or ethical practices of the middle class.

Initially focused, his avenging bloodlust is directed specifically at Turpin. When Todd's revenge is foiled, his rage is loosed more generally upon an unsuspecting public. The killing spree that follows is a compensation for the loss of his wife and daughter. He seeks to fill this void with the blood of others, which he spills from the bodies of his customers as they sit in his barber's

chair. He sings of his new “life” in the song “Epiphany”: “But the work waits, / I’m alive at last and full of joy.” The conflation of “work” – the mundane everyday – with a terrible sociopathic killing spree goes to the very heart of the danger that Sweeney Todd represents. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He is terrifying because of the way he turns “ordinariness” upon his unsuspecting patrons.

“Ordinariness” has long been a chief weapon of both the murderous and those who imagine them in fiction. That there was initially “nothing to fear” about, for example, Bram Stoker’s Dracula was a crucial part of his greater plans. Dracula, as Stoker wrote him, actively *constructed* himself to seem a genteel and benevolent aristocrat: he even grills Jonathan Harker in order to gain knowledge of English customs and inflections so as to seamlessly integrate into his adoptive society. Complimented by Harker on the fluency of his English, Dracula responds “Not so....Well I know that did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger” (Stoker 20).

And yet Dracula turns on Harker. All it takes is the blood that spills after a shaving accident to reveal just how shallowly Dracula’s bloodlust lies beneath his pretense of genteel aristocracy:

... that instant I saw that the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down my razor, turning as I did so half-around to look for some sticking-plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab for my throat. I drew away, and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so

quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.
(25-26)

Of course, Dracula's "normalcy", seemingly easily recovered after his flash of bloodlust, acts in the service of a monstrosity that is supernatural. Todd's bloodlust is not supernatural. Instead it is the result of his own horrible experiences, his trauma and grief. Both Todd and Dracula however, open their victim's throats. The throat as the site of their violence is crucial, for as points of access to the body's insides go, it requires precision. The precision, in turn, requires absolute physical intimacy, which is never a given between strangers. So, whereas Dracula induces a supernatural hypnotic spell in order to render his victims prone to suggestion, Todd manipulates the patrons of his barbershop into positions of vulnerability by mimicking the banal and humdrum: a barber's shave. The banal and humdrum, in this analysis, act as a kind of hypnosis. They lull the victim into a sense of security that comes from repetition. Victims return and return to the barber's chair: what was perhaps the earlier shock of feeling a razor blade against the throat becomes dull with repetition. It is a fear they repress and at the same time a comfort which Freud, if we believe his anecdote about being lost in a small Italian town, found familiar:

[A]fter wandering for some time without asking the way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence began to attract attention. Once more I hurried away, only to return there again by a different route. I was now seized by a feeling that I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad to find my way back to the piazza that I recently left and refrain from any further voyages of discovery. Other situations that share this feature of the unintentional return with the

one I have just described, but differ from it in other respects, may nevertheless produce the same feeling of helplessness, the same sense of the uncanny. (144)

Just as Freud felt at once perplexed and relieved to be back in the piazza, the customer in the barber chair with strap-sharpened steel against his throat again, might re-experience a flutter of his original panic, but comforts himself with the knowledge that nothing bad has or thus will happen. To recall Foucault, if the uncanny is dependent on a patterned repetition, then mental illness is identifiable insofar as it breaks that pattern. If it is acceptable behavior for barbers to scrape hair off throats, then Todd's insanity resides in his tendency to cut into them. His madness manifests in something so simple as the motion of a wrist.

Sondheim uses Sweeney Todd's cutting of his clients' throats to enact a kind of societal critique. He makes this clear through the chorus, which, sometimes in concert with Sweeney's voice, and sometimes independently for the audience's benefit, narrates Todd's internal thought processes: "Lift your razor high Sweeney, / Hear it singing 'Yes!' / Sink it in the rosy skin of righteousness." It is this "righteousness" that Todd hates but also, surprisingly, as I will show soon, cannot avoid enacting. To Todd, the righteousness is most egregiously represented in the figure of Turpin as a judge charged with the maintenance of civil order. It is the processes and established patterns of organized society that, in Todd's experience (facilitated in large part by Turpin), causes nothing but pain and suffering.

And yet Todd himself causes pain and suffering and declares himself the ultimate judge of human worth. He directs his venom at the privileged whose essential ugliness he seems intent on revealing in the ironically titled song “No Place Like London”:

There is a hole in the world like a great black pit,
And the vermin of the world inhabit it,
And its morals aren’t worth what a pig could spit,
And it goes by the name of London.
At the top of the hole sit the privileged few,
Making mock of the vermin in the lower zoo
Turning beauty to filth and greed.

However, Todd’s hatred runs deeper than for the privileged and is also directed at London’s working class. Like Turpin, then, he is judge, jury and executioner. As he sings in Epiphany:

They all deserve to die.
Even you Mrs. Lovett, even I!
Because the lives of the wicked should be made brief.
For the rest of us, death will be a relief.
We all deserve to die!

His hatred, in other words is not merely directed at particular individuals or classes, so much as it is a symptom of the prevailing ethos of his time. Todd’s fateful relationship with Mrs. Lovett, his ground-floor neighbor, lover, and the proprietor of the “worst pie shop in London,” allows Sondheim the opportunity to turn Todd’s general disdain into a revelation of the basic principles of capitalism. Set in the early industrialism of 1840s London, his murder and disposal of his clientele’s carcasses resembles the unsentimental automation of the slaughterhouse. Having bled his clients, Todd pulls a lever so that the chair flips forward and drops bodies down a chute into Mrs. Lovett’s “Bake House”: a room

perfectly fitted with an oven and meat-grinder for the processing of human remains into pies. These pies, in turn are served to Mrs. Lovett's increasing customer base as her store is transformed from the worst to the best pie shop in London. This cannibalism, rather than absolute horror, seems for Todd to be the *embodiment* of London's capitalist ethos. As he sings in "A Little Priest," "It's man devouring man out there / and who are we to deny it in here." Mrs. Lovett's Pie Shop becomes immensely profitable, even driving Mrs. Mooney's Pie Shop out of business. Mrs. Mooney used cats for her filling: "What a cause: Enterprise. / Popping pussies into pies". That Mrs. Lovett's pie shop is more successful is not only a reflection of the relative tastiness of human flesh (one must presume), as it is also a purer embodiment of capitalist principles.

Here, then, we have the crux of this discussion. For Todd is not a figure of resistance. He is, instead, the horrendous physical form that capitalism, undiluted by sentimentality, would take if it were human. He is both supply and demand (he supplies the human meat for the pies that he himself also consumes). Just as no profit is enough, so Todd kills for no real reason but the killing itself:

I want you bleeders.
No not one man,
No not ten men,
Nor a hundred can assuage me.

Perhaps the clearest indication that Todd is not to be understood as a figure of resistance is the manner in which his own life mirrors that of the customers who place themselves at

risk under his blade. Just as their subjection to the blade of a potential murderer is blunted by the repetition of the ritual of shaving, so Todd's murderous rampage becomes routine. It is, in this regard, not a break from but a continuation (or repetition) of his humdrum life as the barber, Benjamin Barker. Indeed, Sondheim intently insists on the connection between Todd and his earlier law-abiding self. Returning from Australia, Todd is reunited with Barker's razors and they immediately evoke a feeling of purpose within him. Holding them up he declares, "My arm is complete again." He continues "I know you've been locked out of sight like me my friends, well I've come home and found you waiting... and we'll do wonders..." The cut-throat razors, in this reading are uncanny. Like Freud's piazza, they are a relief to hold because they are comforting, but discomforting too (they are to become implements of murder). And if, like a customer under a blade for the first time, Todd feels a thrill when about to kill Turpin, he comes, through repetition, to feel next to nothing when killing pie-filling.

All that separates Todd from the society that he hates is the movement of a wrist. He is the terrible embodiment of "benign" capitalist values. Contemporary consumers are separated by middle-men from the murder of the animals they consume. Those with money live thousands of miles away from the people who sew together their shoes in destitute conditions (it is notable, in fact, that when Todd is eventually killed, it is by the hand of the child – Toby – he exploited). Sweeney Todd, Sondheim's musical play suggests, is who we would be if we were the

principles we lived. He is undiluted capitalism. We are not separated from the insane by the walls of an asylum. In fact, we are all inmates and choose to ignore it.

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I AM WHO

THE CREATED AND THE EXODUS FROM HUMAN
DEFINITION

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Science Fiction is a realm of human creations set in an undefined future where the physical limitations of science are set aside by the human imagination. Largely, these creations are tools, meant to serve a specific purpose; however, these human made or manufactured machines are often all but human

themselves. In early science fiction these robots, androids, or humanoid devices were often portrayed as submissive to their creator's whims, or as completely static beings that are only defined by whatever genius or mad scientist created them. However, as science fiction has progressed with the times, so has the role of the created; moving away from their antecedents and the structure of human sign towards something new and undefined. In societies defined by post modern thinking and a post human mentality, such as the world portrayed in Japanese director Rintaro's animated reimagining of Fritz Lang's science fiction classic *Metropolis*, the created becomes disconnected from its roots as a creation. Tima, the robotic recreation of a young girl, and culmination of a historical progression of the created in science fiction, becomes largely undefinable within the network of human signification.

Machines and the People who Make Them

The humanoid machine, or artificial human, has played a role in fiction from as far back as Pygmaelion and Galathea. However it was the medium of the novel which really brought the position of the created to the forefront of literature. Mary Shelly's Frankenstein introduced the world to the first artificial human in a science fiction setting, perhaps even pioneering the genre. The "monster" in Frankenstein is actually articulate, intelligent, and highly inquisitive, as opposed to the shambling Hollywood version that Boris Karloff made famous nearly a century later.

Shelley's *Frankenstein* sets up the quintessential science fiction question of self identity: can a creation be considered on equal terms with its human creator? In the end Frankenstein's monster is defined as something separated from humanity; a monstrosity. Because of this, he turns malevolent claiming; "I am malicious because I am miserable; am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?" (Shelly 98). Because of Victor Frankenstein's abject horror when confronted with his creation, and the monster's unsettling appearance, he is prevented from fitting into other societal groups. The main goal of the created in *Frankenstein* is to be accepted and loved as a part of human society, but this goal is never obtained due to being signified as a horror that is separated from humanity.

The world of science fiction, although kicked off by philosophical books such as *Frankenstein* is best known for its pulp fiction inspired special effect extravaganzas shown in dazzling celluloid. The film that pioneered and embodies this genre, and the needlessly complex machines that accompany it, is Fritz Lang's visionary *Metropolis*. This film's robotic villainess was originally meant to be created in the image of the mayor's dead wife Hel, but after abandoning this idea, she was instead modified to cause mischief by becoming the evil doppelganger of the kind and socially minded character, Maria. Throughout the entire film the robotic Maria is seen engaged in morally questionable acts, first seen suggestively dancing in the Yoshiwara nightclub, and then, by posing as the real Maria, causing a full scale riot by the lower classes (*Metropolis* 1927). This robotic

succubus is unrepentant and unchanging to the end, and even while being burned at the stake she cackles and smiles mischievously. In this vision of the future, the created never even questions her purpose. Although she shows skills and rationality in social interactions, she is completely controlled and defined by the purpose her creators gave her. As science fiction progresses however, the automatons that people create seem less and less satisfied to do the work that humanity has created them for, and consequently seem more and more like human beings.

Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner* played an important role in modernizing science fiction. The movie centers around "replicants," bioengineered humanoids created to do harsh work that would be hazardous to human beings. After a bloody revolt which happens sometime before the setting of the film, these replicants are banned from Earth, and hunted down by people known only as "Blade Runners." The main plot revolves around a group of these replicants sneaking back on to the planet, finding their maker Tyrell, the owner of the company that created them, and attempting to force him to increase their paltry four year lifespan. Although this drive for a longer, more human life is the central conflict of the film, the real depth comes from a character named Rachael, a prototype replicant with the implanted memories of Tyrell's niece. All of the replicants *look* human, but Rachel is the only one that believes she *is* human. This film breaks down the borders between creator and created, making both the viewer, and the characters suspicious about their own identities. Since memories can be implanted within the world of the film,

there is no way to tell who was created artificially. This concept that a person may be a creation without even being aware of their creator or intended purpose is taken even further in the 2001 anime version of *Metropolis*. The character who embodies this is Tima, who draws from previous works and then goes beyond them, asking not for love, orders, or a longer life, but only “who am I?” (*Metropolis* 2001).

What Is the Self? : Robotics and Identity

The question of identity posed by Tima leads to many existential problems, most notably, how does one quantify/qualify self identity, as well as can a human creation, robotic or otherwise, really be a “who” and not a what? To determine if these questions can be answered one must look towards modern attempts to define the self such as French psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan’s model of self identification. The humanoid creations of science fiction are all able to reason in a way that at least seems human; even the static robotic Maria can at the very least choose which actions will cause the effects that she is programmed to produce. But thinking does not a human make. A calculator can solve mathematical equations, but that does not give it any kind of unique sentience. The very act of self recognition, or misrecognition, is intrinsic to symbolic definition. This is more complicated than it seems however, because seeing an image in a mirror and declaring that “this is me” is not enough, “since to know oneself through an external image is to be defined through

self alienation” (Silverman 158). That is to say, that a picture of an individual is not a person, just as Rene Magritte’s picture of a pipe, is not a pipe. These things are all external signifiers, things that Lacan calls the *imaginary*, “making it possible to discover correspondences and homologies” (157 Silverman). If a robot with human features were to identify itself based on what its physical appearance corresponded to; either similar to or exactly like that of other humans, then the conclusion it would draw is largely one of humanity. But a subject must have more than a “monkey see monkey is” mentality to be anything more than a mimic, or hollow imitation of humanity.

The second phase of self identity according to Lacan is *signification*, which is inextricably linked to language. What this really means is that a subject needs to have something that causes it to “abandon all relation to the real, and take up residence within a closed field of meaning” (Silverman 164). This field of meaning is part of the symbolic order, showing that a subject’s individuality is tied up within a set of cultural values (Silverman 165). This particular view of individuality gives the created an equal starting point with humanity to develop a sense of self. A human being may have lineage and history to look back on to prove to themselves what they are, but, “within the Lacanian argument the signifier is the mark of the subject’s radical alienation from the real – from its organic nature, from actual mothers and fathers” (Silverman 164). The signifier removes the subject from his/her physical form, which, for the sake of self identity, eliminates the

distinction between human biology and a more artificial composition. It also removes the reliance on parents, or in the case of the created, their creators. A human being and a doll look ostensibly the same, and may even share the same set of signifiers even though their similarities are only skin deep. Most of these signifiers rely on language, both as a means of communication, and as a cultural device, but language is a difficult tool to judge the self with because language itself is estranged from the physical world which makes it just as difficult to quantify.

Language expresses a system of classification that sets up a symbolic lexicon for creating structure in an unstructured world, giving titles and purposes to things that would otherwise remain undefined. Although language seems to present a centered structure by which the state of a subject's individuality, may be judged, deconstructionists such as Jacques Derrida would argue that, "The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure – although it represents coherence itself . . . —is contradictorily coherent" (Derrida 355). As a central system of signification, language actually has no tangible center and no relation to the physical world. This means that, calling something an individual, or *saying* that one has a sense of self awareness, do not create or prove an identity. However, even though language may not contain an immovable universal center to existence, it does create a symbolic realm of signification in which the actions and objects in the universe correlate, making human sense. Humanity *needs* language; and trying to fit into this symbolic net is something that defines us. And even if something is not strictly

Tima: Enter Metropolis

Tima is similar to previous figures in science fiction, but her lack of definition pushes her away from the signifiers that previous constructs relied on. Like Frankenstein's monster, she is a product of science, estranged from humanity. Like the robotic Maria from the 1921 *Metropolis*, Tima is practically indistinguishable from a specific human being, and was also created to fulfill a defined role. She also shares with Rachael from *Blade Runner* the belief, throughout most of the film, that she is a human like any other. What makes Tima unique from her genre's predecessors is her constant undefined state. Tima begins estranged from her origins. She adapts, and over the course of the film learns language and some of the symbolic framework associated with it. Through language she develops a sense of self unique from the replicant's physically rooted selves and the robotic Maria's preprogrammed personality. Tima ends up being something that, although influenced by, is not solely determined by her creator, her design, or the people that she believes she is one of. Tima is ultimately separated from the things that usually define the created. Although she is designed to be a reanimation of a human, she transcends her creation, her purpose, and her symbolic definition to arrive only where she began, by asking "Who am I?"

human, trying to fit in to this “metaphysical complicity” also shapes the role of the created.

The impetus that fueled Tima's creation comes from the rich right wing party leader Duke Red. His reasons for having Tima created are two fold. First, Tima is designed to look like his deceased daughter, making her a replacement, or even some kind of reincarnation brought back from death and made to fill the role the daughter held in life. She was also created to be the head of Duke Red's military instillation/super-weapon, the "Throne of Power" which resides atop the ziggurat, a structure that, like the 1927 version of *Metropolis*, bears a striking resemblance to the tower of Babel; a monument to the failure of language. These are the reasons behind Tima's conception, and what her creator actually intended her to be, but, until the very end of the film, Tima remains unaware of the purpose behind her design, or even of her design at all.

Before Tima is activated, the abandoned factory where she is being created is destroyed by Rock, the jealous adopted son of Duke Red, who, with his military clothing and red armband, bears obvious similarity to the fascist police forces of World War II. This is important because Rock is the very embodiment of the anti-robot sentiment that permeates the world of *Metropolis*; from the idle graffiti of "fuck robots", to the upper levels forcing most robots, and the lower classes, underground to live in the shadow of the wealthy elite. This class based hatred sets up another role for Tima to fill, that of the sub-human, something that is human like, but inferior in every sense of the word. Although Rock constantly degrades Tima for her inhuman artificiality throughout

the course of the movie, she never seems to question one of the first things that she is taught after the factory explosion, that even if she does not know exactly what she is, she is still “I.”

Tima is activated as the factory around her is being burned to the ground. The first thing that happens as she awakens is the arrival of the young protagonist Kenichi, who, seeing a strangely glowing and unclad girl, drapes his coat over her, and drags her away from the fire. The human clothing is a signifier of humanity, and after awakening to the world only to find herself wrapped in the clothing and the social web-work of humanity the only reasonable path is for her to believe that she is human. When Tima and Kenichi first converse in the sewers after the factory collapses their conversation shapes Tima’s consciousness, convincing her that she must be someone, even if she does not remember who. The first question that Kenichi asks the silent figure of Tima is “Who are you?” She mimics his question as a reply. Kenichi then begins to explain how language sets up a concept of self, “when you are talking about yourself, you say ‘I’, that’s how it works.” This becomes a difficult conversation for even Kenichi to follow, and he ends up in an odd linguistic contradiction, “you are I, and I am you.” Even he has to stop and puzzle out what this means. However, even through this semantic haze that draws attention to the fact that the concept of self identity always comes through the other, Tima manages to find the phrase which both drives her to find a human identity, and ends up defining her; “I am who / who am I?” which, from the way it is phrased in the Japanese version, could be interpreted as both as a

statement and as a question. Either way it is comprehended, this phrase requires some sense of individuality that is either found through finding a place in society in the case of “who am I?” or determining that her place lies someplace undefined by standard society with “I am who.” Even though what she is remains largely undefined by language; being both I and who, it gives her the foundation in the symbolic network needed to develop a sense of individuality.

Although in the beginning, Tima is encouraged to find out who she is, as the movie progresses, she is again and again told that she is just a machine; a tool that does not have a “who,” so much as a “why.” Rock, the anti-robot Gestapo-esque figure is the one who most often antagonizes Tima, but his jeers only sow the seeds of misdoubt as opposed to completely destroying the role she believed she was filling as an amnesiac human being. What Rock really does is destabilize the language that signifies her sense of self. When Rock directly tells Tima that she is a robot, she denies it, but when he asks “so who’s your father, where is he?” her response is “My father is . . . Kenichi.” This may be true symbolically, but begins to show that her dependence on being human has some problems; particularly the fact that she is not the same thing as a human, even if she has been occupying the same place as one on a symbolic level.

In the end, Tima learns that she is a creation, and that she was designed to control Duke Red’s vast array of technological weapons from atop the “Throne of Power,” showing that she was indeed created to fill a specific role. When Tima asks “am I human,

or am I one of those poor robots?” the Duke responds that “you’re no mere human being. . . yes you are a robot, but you stand at the pinnacle of existence.” Duke Red’s claim of Tima transcending human boundaries leaves her once again with the question of “who am I,” if not a human, then what? Surely she cannot just be another automaton. At this point, Tima is shot by Rock and the programming that was presumably supposed to have been activated, if it were not for the factory fire, finally takes over. Tima takes her place on the throne of power, and, no longer possessing the lack of purpose that gave her free will, fulfills her programming by becoming the perfect weapon of war. Once she has declared that humanity will be eradicated in a small number of hours, Kenichi’s uncle/mentor Detective Ban tells Duke Red what has happened: “Your super being says she doesn’t *need us*” (*Metropolis 2001*). Now that she has a purpose and an exact definition, Tima is no longer something that can even be signified as human. This becomes readily apparent as Tima begins to physically merge with the machinery of the throne. However, as the movie ends, she is pulled from her mechanical womb by Kenichi while the mighty tower explodes and then crumbles as Ray Charles begins to sing, “I Can’t Stop Loving You.”

Tima—now detached from the throne of power, but with thick wires connected to her and half of her human complexion torn away to reveal her mechanical interior—advances on Kenichi, choking him easily with one mechanical hand which dances like a marionette’s. Yet Kenichi still tries to “save” Tima, asking her to remember whatever it was that made her “I” and

him “you”. As they fall from the quickly crumbling tower, whatever device that activated Tima as the center of the Throne of Power fails, yet she remains passive, hanging limply from one of the cables that connected her to the machine, now lacking the purpose that once drove her. The throne of power is gone; she has nothing left. As Kenichi desperately struggles to hoist Tima back to safety Ray Charles continues to croon:

“I can’t stop loving you, I’ve made up my mind
To live in memory, of the lonesome times.
I can’t stop loving you, it’s useless to say
So I’ll just live my life, in dreams of yesterday.”

(Metropolis 2001)

This applies to Kenichi, as he “can’t stop loving” Tima, even though she has changed from the human he thought she was. He can not bring himself to accept this change, and dwells in dreams of a simpler past. More importantly however, this song applies to Tima and her predicament as a human creation that can no longer be thought of as either human or machine.

Tima cannot stop loving Kenichi and his gift of signification, but at the same time, Tima has grown beyond being something that can be signified in the same terms as a human being. Tima, her mechanical nature now revealed to her, can not return to the human realm of interaction and signification. Instead, she now lives outside of it in the undefined and lonely space that exists outside of language. It is useless to say anything about love or other human interactions because nothing applies to Tima. Nothing sticks to something that cannot be defined in human terms, but remains something more than an unfeeling machine. So Tima, still hanging unmoving from a cable that proves the

artifice of her construction says the only statement that is left to describe her, “I am who / who am I?” She can be controlled by humanity, but no longer can she be defined by them; there is simply no place left in the world for her to exist. And so she falls, still unmoving, abandoning the world to live on in her dreams of yesterday.

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