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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation combines the biblical story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and the Haitian folklore of the zombie to explore theories of circumscribed subjectivity. I survey a broad range of narratives that reflect the power dynamics involved in identity formations, especially those related to substitution of the self by a language that both defines and informs the associative collective group. The advantages of identity for the group often comes at the expense of the individual, as illustrated in the second chapter on the Haitian institution of *Restavecs*. A close look at how a single word can make over three hundred thousand children disappear from the social landscape while, simultaneously, affording its members the use of those children for personal gain, I focus on the excluded presence of the human being reflected in language. Jean Robert Cadet's autobiographical account illustrates that, for the individual, identity formations can become the artificial consciousness that informs, not only the language used, but also the self. This three ring circus (the community, the authority of language, and the individual) reflects a pattern repeated in a broad range of narrative mediums. Alongside biblical, mythological and autobiographical texts, other illustrations of this construct are analyzed in films by Lars von Trier and Jonathan Demme. Both directors produce visual

representations of the primacy of language and the difficult nature of communication. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is analyzed as an example of the fragile nature of the self, constantly threatened by language and the internalization of identity constructs. On a more positive note, the final chapter of this project examines the works of Octavio Paz, Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Márquez to illustrate literary representations that resisted the problem language posed to the individual.

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Introduction

The idea for this dissertation began with an outburst I made while talking to a friend. "Jesus can only bring Lazarus back from the dead; he cannot give him his life back!" I was taken aback by it because I had not intended to make such an assertion. I was prepared to let the issue lie, but I wondered where such an incongruous thought might have come from; why did I say it? It was a case of speech coming before thought. While investigating the possible reasons for my outburst, it seemed to me that my first exposure to the representation of a resurrection that omits life was in the zombie figure. But somehow wires got crossed. The Christian narrative and the Vodou folklore had been fused and out came this thought. Normally, I would dismiss this outright, as a result of a mix up, but I could not do this. There was something in the fusion that rang true to my ears. It was not that I sought to transgress the Christian narrative nor did I want to illuminate the Vodou religion through the zombie narrative. Frankly, I cared little for either belief system. The similarity of the narratives, however, was of particular interest. Why would such narratives enter the social arena? That is, why would Christians tell this story of a dead man being brought back to life? Why would Haitians speak of the walking dead? Why did one group think it a positive experience to be brought back from the dead, while another felt it ought to be avoided at all costs? It was the metaphors of Lazarus and the zombie juxtaposed with allegorical narratives that made me consider the project. What, really, is a resurrection? What is life? What does it means to die and return from the dead? Here were two traditions, each with their unique historical

meanings, and each participating in shaping the identity of the social groups born into their particular traditions. If they were fused to one another, they revealed a third narrative. That third narrative illuminated a human condition for the social subject immersed in language. I took this as my starting point.

The Christian narrative of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a story of hope. Metaphorically, I understand the story to mean, because of all that ails society, the human being does not really live. We are most often dead by dint of mechanical operations that govern survival. It seems to me, in Western culture, we are always in search of the career, love, material wealth, and religious belief that infuse us with life. In the search for meaning, we aspire to resurrection, all the time. We meditate, pray, play, and fight, all in the pursuit of spending a moment in the light, becoming meaningful in what appears to be a meaningless, grey existence. The biblical narrative seems to point us in the direction of life being something we either have to earn or we receive by virtue of Grace. It is separate from us in some way, or at least it can be lost but restored. Life, in this context, is living consciously, existentially, and boldly, which means only few can really claim to have this definition of life. The Vodou narrative begins with the premise that we are already alive the moment we take in our first breath. All of life's labors, battles, boredoms, disappointments, and successes are part of the experiences that give us a name. It is a non-discriminating belief, where black and white, good and evil, weak and strong, are indistinguishable from one another. It is painful, absentminded, often cruel, but always sublime. Life is not something we aspire to; we do not get life *after* we are born; living means protecting life from being ravaged by death. We are miserable creatures because life is fragile, an idea both traditions appear to agree on.

As previously mentioned, if you take both traditions and combine them, they tell a third, more compelling story. If you take Lazarus in the Christian tradition, you get a name that readers can assume represents his life and agency. It is because of this name that the Christian story implies Jesus resurrected a Lazarus who fully embodies personal agency. The zombie, however, gives us nothing about the precondition or name of the zombie victim. The zombie is not a person, but a condition. This is the reason the zombie folklore rarely has a name associated with it. Whatever the properties reflected in a name (personhood, agency, life), the zombie is a condition which negates all associations with personal agency. Thus, within the Christian tradition, Lazarus is a life that is meaningful, present and embodied – life is positive and worth bringing back from the dead. When we consider the zombie, we do not consider it in terms of its preconditions. The zombie *lacks* life. Therefore, we would not think of the zombie as a human or an agent in the world; it is the meaningless - the negation of the life that the Christian story characterizes as most meaningful. When the stories are fused, Lazarus represents the meaningfulness that is *lost* in the making of the zombie. The figure of the zombie gives us reason to pause and consider Lazarus, the subject. The figure of Lazarus gives the zombie what it needs to reflect profound loss, not only lacking properties. When you consider that the zombie is not human, therefore, not sympathetic, the Lazarus figure gives us someone to mourn; a meaningful loss and the dead we cannot bury.

The Lazarus story gives the subject a voice that, within a certain context, is lost to zombification. Alone, the Lazarus story represents an ideal and the fantastical; the zombie story represents a physical reality born of drugs and manipulation. Together Lazarus is brought down from the fantastical and given consideration as a real human

condition; the zombie rises out of merely physical consideration and is given stakes and consequences for the subject lost in its narrative. The combination of these two stories best reflect how what is meaningful becomes meaningless. I am investigating that moment between these two polarities. It is this that got me started on my interest in identity and agency, agency and language, and identity, language, and the body.

I am a Haitian, African-American, American, Christian, educated, middle-class woman – but my name is Ketty. That's a problem. Misery is acting in accordance with each of the dictates that correspond to social identifiers. Long before I ever assimilated politically-correct jargon, censorship prevailed in each one of these constructs. Ketty speech is not Haitian, African-American, Christian, or American. Ketty speech implies personal speech born of personal experiences and engagements with the world. It would be what we count as the unique blueprint that identity constructs cannot co-opt. And yet, it seems to me this speech does not really exist, at least not independently of identity constructs. That is, the groupings that identify me as a social subject and my "self" can never be mutually exclusive of one another. They are always competing and their presence is demanded by all members of society, lest I become unintelligible in social context. Naturally, I can get around this by asserting my personal will through these identities, but this act is only necessary because complete dominance of these identities can assume the name Ketty. In other words, how do I speak apart from these identities once I have agreed that they speak for me?

There is another way of looking at this problem. Even if I can speak independently of these identities, others may only understand me in their context. In other words, the moment I say (or I am told) "I am a Black woman," that identity

precedes any discourse I might have independent of the historical narrative that defines "Black woman." Language, then, is not only a personal problem; it is also a social problem. Let me offer a few examples.

In 1987, I attended a bible camp revival meeting wherein a gray-haired minister pounded the message of the biblical story of Rapture and the Apocalypse to a mesmerized crowd in a fluorescently lighted gym hall. I cannot remember what he said, but I recall my response: I was crying, sobbing really. I had abandoned myself to the sound of this man's voice and the call to conversion. I still remember recovering from having lost sight of the people sitting in the pews next to me; I also recall my cousin, who only appeared to me when I told her I needed to go to the bathroom to get tissue to wipe my eyes and blow my nose (come to think of it, I cannot believe no one in that crowded hall offered me a tissue!). I had been converted. But to what? What was "conversion?" The "religious experience" was euphoric. I felt light and bounded to no element of my past. I was giddy with joy. In keeping with the religious language, I was a "newborn" Christian, "born-again," exonerated. My behavior quickly shifted into something unrecognizable as Ketty. After the meeting, I went to the bookstore and stocked up on "Jesus loves you" sweatshirts, books, notebooks, and pens. There was an excitement, which I now attribute to a new language that freed me from the old one I could not escape. Now, every encounter was laced with my new identity. If kids in school teased me, I simply thought they "knew not what they were doing." If I was angry, I chose my words carefully in order to avoid "sinful" gestures. I was changing internally, but I did not know what I was becoming. If I asked, I was told to have faith. And, even if the

internal change presented itself as a detriment to my personhood, it was a sacrifice, a martyrdom, well worth any personal loss.

This internal change was compounded by the external responses I received whenever I asserted my new religious faith. I was less and less able to have a personal experience. My experiences were mediated by a discourse that explained each moment even before I could consider its impact on my life. For example, if abused, Christians were often persecuted. If denied friendship, loneliness was for "God's glory." Persecution and suffering were inevitable and marks of continued faith and service. What's a happy Christian, after all? But, then, this also meant that joy was to be regarded with suspicion. If I did have friends, they went through a long interrogation procedure. In social context, communing with a large group outside of the church, laughing too loud or dancing meant I was enjoying the world, and that did not reflect the Christian faith. I was somber, though joyful. It was a morose joyfulness; one that was joyful merely because it anticipated death. For a girl only sixteen years of age, my conversations took on a rather morbid turn. No engagement with the outside world could escape the apocalyptic references. And, finally, when regarded by outsiders, unless a Christian as well, I was a freak. That, of course, only further validated the new identity. I was becoming a construction, and one that existed long before I was born. I was in uniform with "all" other Christians and showing signs of individuality was rejected and denounced as prideful, satanic, or demonic. In my body there was room for only one agency: Jesus Christ's. When you think about it, heaven is not populated by many people, just one person with many bodies. What was a euphoric experience became dreadful. I was terrified of everyone and everything, God most of all. Nothing I did

escaped a pat answer and scripted explanation. It got so that I did not need to ask anymore questions. Somehow I already knew the answers. Knew the rhetoric and the patterns of speech. Understood my place was not to ask questions unless it yielded self-denial and clear subordination to this discourse called "Christianity." And I did not resist; I was a Christian because I personified each of the dictates that corresponded to Christian ideology, as told by my church. There was no complaint.

That has to be the most explicit illustration of my questions regarding identity, but this problem was not new. After all, what was I running from? Recalling childhood memories, one often returns to events that reflect conflict during the developmental years. Along with learning speech and place in the world, the childhood development process also involves teaching the child what he or she is. Between ages four and fourteen, reading was discouraged, dancing not permitted, wearing pants was out of the question, braiding my hair was scandalous, movies were worldly, playing the guitar was grossly inappropriate, etc. etc. But I want to point out that each of these represented a discourse, an explicit means by which identities are formed within certain social parameters. No reading, guitars, or wearing pants framed "female." No movies, hair braiding or dancing framed "Christian" – and more explicitly "Haitian, Southern Baptist Christian." As a child, there should be no real conflict, as children have not yet formed enough of a personal identity to counter such constructs. Yet, I find that I was cognitive of the denial of pleasure in exchange of identity. In fact, identity owned pleasure, too. That is, how I expressed pleasure was clearly marked by encouragements to play with dolls, cook with my grandmother, play cleaning housewife, pick out pretty skirts, show an interest in hair and makeup, read the Bible, etc.

When I was not at home being taught how to be a Haitian, Christian, girl, I was in school learning how to be Black. Since the race dynamics in the United States are quite different form those in Haiti, I had to learn how to be this, too. As most African-Americans will attest to, I remember the day I discovered I was Black. We had moved to Rosedale, Queens from Park Slope, Brooklyn. The last thing I remember about Brooklyn was being in the second grade and noticing anther student who insisted on getting my attention. I remember him because I recall he had "white" hair and that made him "white all over." I was really shy and rejected his efforts until he wore me down with his jokes and little offerings. We would be friends. I remember the story because I did not think he was White, just "white all over." I do not recall any tension, aside from the normal tension born of shy children and awkward socialization processes. In Rosedale, I was Black and, if he was there, he would have been White. My family was the second Black family to move into the area, so we were greeted with protests and picket lines asking the schools to bar our entrance. My sister and I made friends with the next door neighbor's children, but we had to do it in secrecy, from 3:00 when we got home from school until 6:00 when our parents returned home from work. We were categorically banned from having contact with one another. I would later find out that our neighbor headed a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the area.

The in-class and schoolyard teasing and bullying were inevitable. It was clear to me that some simple issue with Black was at the heart of the matter. It was not complex because I understood that this problem rested solely on my skin color. That is, I knew it was because I was not white, but, since I could not see myself and I could only see those speaking to me, who were white, I understand that they saw difference in my brown skin.

That's all. Thus, I felt I should go to another school where I looked more like the other children. As Real Estate companies "block busted" the neighborhood, moving white families out and Caribbean and African American families in, the school quickly became mixed. Today it is 97% African American and Caribbean. It seemed that the bullying should have eased up, but it got worse. Now, African-American kids saw difference, but I was at a loss as to what that difference was. If it was not skin color, what was the issue? At first I thought that perhaps they had selected my sister and me as targets because we were amongst the first Black students and there was already a ritual of abuse in place. I assumed that their hostility was born of a self-preservation instinct; if they joined the others, they are likely to be overlooked as targets. But when all the "Whites" were gone, the hostility escalated.

Language: "kids are mean," "habit," "Blacks have learned self-hatred," "Oppressed people often become oppressors themselves" or "difference makes people crazy." There is one interesting thing about all of these rational explanations, when white children bullied my sister and me, it was because of difference, when Blacks did it, the common explanation is that it happened because we were "the same." Ultimately, I do think it was due to difference. It may have been the fact that I never wore pants, was afraid to curse or fight (lest I go to hell when Rapture comes, which I thought it might at every moment!), or it may have come from my general demeanor and physical appearance. I really do not know. I do believe, however, that violence often reflects an engagement with difference of some kind. These childhood experiences suspended my notions of skin color as the only framework that explains human - and thereby social – conditions. Skin color played no role in my home life and it was merely a physical

apparatus that determined difference in school, but language played a central role in what was becoming the conflict of existence. Difference, and therefore conflict, existed when I was not being *some identity, speaking its language*.

In each of the examples, conversion processes play a role. Certainly not always the spectacle I experienced when I was sixteen at the revival meeting, but nonetheless a crucial part of identity constructs. I think we convert children into identities, abstract languages that exist long before there can be a discourse about personal agency. Uniformity means the collective has to agree, at least in some measure, on the nature of being a social subject. Children assume identity constructs mainly because they were imposed early in their development. When, as an adult, agency emerges in new forms and articulations that do not correspond with the identity, there is a problem. Thus, when boys and girls "come out" and express their sexual orientation as different from the intended identity, when Whites get into Hip Hop, Blacks join predominantly White fraternities and become conservative Republicans, women want jobs traditionally occupied by men, men want to knit, etc. Whatever the reason, the difference marks treason and the failed attempt on the part of a particular social group to properly socialize and convert the individual into categories of preexisting identities. What is more, the individual failed to embrace the language that correlates with the identity.

Asked what I think should be done to rectify the situation, I replied, "I do not know." If it were only a matter of having an identity imposed that the individual can resist, then the simple solution would be for the social group to ease the constraints imposed on its members. It is not simple because language does not merely sit on the surface, apart from the individual. What the social group does in defining the

characteristics of an identity and imposing them on the body is only one half of the problem. It only represents the external forces responsible for denial of agency. The other half of the problem is in when and how the individual comes to reflect the imposed identity. Language enters the body and becomes the internal landscape. As I learned to use language I also learned what language to use, when and how. And when I exercise this language, I believe it to reflect my personhood. I think what I am saying is entirely me. How I came to understand what I was has partly to do with what I internalize and when I internalized it. It is a matter of beliefs, but not beliefs that we are easily able to access. It is one thing to say, "Logically, there is no God and therefore I am an Atheist;" it is another thing to tear the idea out of you, out of your deepest subconscious definition of a self. I say this to point out that while we try to protect ourselves from external intrusions that might deny our free will, in reality we are often vulnerable and accessible to external influence, most especially in the language we use to describe who we are and what we are. We are almost always a product of ventriloquism.

In my example of Lazarus and the zombie, I merely hoped to point out that resurrection by another, external and alien force, even of the divine, means the individual who has risen from the grave is bound by the forces of that which raised him. Assuming that there is such a space and time that can be occupied which is independent of external influences (the juxtaposition of life and death in one body), that we are ultimately free to choose what external influences will define us and how, the Lazarus/zombie narrative merely locates a time and space wherein we are powerless over those influences, as when we are children, or when we are tired, weak, feeling ill, dead, etc. (The zombie makes sense to a body of people who at the very moment they were violently dislocated from

their place of origin, and at the very moment when their agency was being most severely denied, they were forced to convert to Catholicism. The Lazarus story makes sense to a people whose mythology, dating back to Greek mythology, always propositioned resurrection as a positive solution to death.) To speak a new language and occupy a new definition of being in the world. Thus, the individual comes to occupy a new space, a new definition of self which must necessarily include the intruder. Is Lazarus not a Christian? If a name is what determines a self and individuality, does it not matter that whenever we mention Lazarus' name, we cannot escape the discourse that is Christianity and Jesus' miracle? It is true that this does not quite make Lazarus a zombie, but the zombie exemplifies the paradox. A zombie is a creature whose death was interrupted by an external, alien force. The creature is now bound to the will of its master, *the bokor*. I see both narratives as illustrating a problem difficult to describe. I am Woman and Ketty, Haitian and Ketty; this is as Lazarus. A construct alien to me claimed my body when I could least act for or against it; I bear its markings in my rhetoric, even if they do not always correspond with my lived experiences. The social, in language, addresses me as though I am the history of an alien discourse, thus, I will be that discourse first, alien first. As I struggle to honor what I do know to be my personal, subjective experiences, I find that my viewpoints, how I interpret what I can hear, see and touch, and how I engage the world around me are often marked by identity constructs. When my personal agency is completely removed from the language I speak, when a "self" is essentially dead in order to uphold the discourse of a preexisting construct that is alien to my body, I am converted. When I convert, willingly or not, fully given to the discourse, I am now a

zombie. When the language becomes God *and* I cease to exist, then I am a creature, an aberration, but a very common one.

Chapter Two of my dissertation takes the child's viewpoint in Jean Robert Cadet's *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle Class American* and those of two accomplished European directors in Lars von Triers *The Five Obstruction.* I chose to open this chapter with Cadet's autobiography because of the nature of the identity construct of *Restavecs*, a word meaning something benign, but whose signification is to the detriment of children. The chapter rests on one single question: how is it possible that one word can make three hundred thousand children disappear?

In this case, it is easier to explain this chapter by beginning with my reading of Lars von Trier's *The Five Obstructions*. This film analysis is not meant to help viewers understand Lars von Trier or Jargon Leth, the other director who stars in the documentary. It is not a new analysis of the film itself or the genre. The focus of this analysis is to use a main section in the film that positions a silk screen between the director Jargon Leth and the Indians gathered behind it as an illustration of the problem language/identity poses to agency. The documentary illustrates this type of divide several times, but I went into detail about the silk screen because it best conveyed what I wanted to point out about the problem. In this section, Jargon Leth is crystal clear, and so is the project before him. In order to crystallize his own project, the silk screen barred the locals from entering a space alien from the place where he is filming his movie. *The Perfect Human* is dressed in European garments, behaves with European mannerisms, and sits at a feasting table adorned with European tableware. The issue at hand is Lars von Trier wants Jargon Leth to allow the environment to affect his mentor, influence his

perspective, and rattle his arrogant ego (they're both pretty arrogant). Leth will not permit the contamination. Leth produces the film, but he uses a silk screen in an attempt to retain the purity of his original production. It is not that *The Perfect Human,* as film, must remain true to the original, but the *Perfect Human* as a film directed and produced by a European in Europe must remain true, even in the poorest area of India. All the facets of the film, its meaning, its history would be lost without that silk screen. And what must that silk screen do? Hide its natural environment. Bar the most obvious elements in the landscape, blur the language that would render the fusion incompatible and unintelligible.

The importance of the screen is to illuminate the question, in the business of language, when two contrasting influences are positioned in the same place at the same time, which is the priority? I see the Indians in India as the natural environment, the main source, a central component of the things that are produced in the place. In a sense they are the body, but Jargon Leth's imposition of a silk screen to separate them from his production is an attempt at denying the influence of the body that is used to produce his film. Rather, it is his discourse that is of primary concern and retaining its purity the project. But, what is pure? Lars von Trier's challenge is meant to point out that there is no such purity, not in film or language. If you change the location, then you necessarily introduce a new historical framework, the cinematic experience should necessarily change. If you move the human, then language necessarily changes, identity must necessarily shift to align itself with the new environment. Efforts to deny this are efforts that appear closer to zombification.

When we go back to the *Restavec* we find ourselves reading the autobiographical text of a man whose experience is like that silk screen. His natural existence is blurred or barred to illuminate the guardian's identity. But his language also reflects that silk screen, where he must always use one thing against another, one meaning that filters out another. Finally, the silk screen is not just the juxtaposition between two individuals, but rather, it is the word itself that facilitates the signification which is then translated on to the bodies in question. *Restavecs* exist because the collective has agreed that they do not. The word means, "to stay with," which is difficult to translate properly. Saying that someone is "staying with you" is vague, ambiguous. It is not a "guest" because a guest would demand certain social etiquettes not clearly afforded to someone who is merely "staying with" you. The ambiguity of the term is all powerful; it could mean guest, which would imply a certain measure of respect on the part of the host, and it could be that lazy cousin no one wants to deal with, which would mean you're a saint for putting him up. Thus, if you go to a Haitian's house and ask about the oral institution of *Restavecs*, you are likely to get a response like "there is no such thing," or "I heard about it; it's terrible, but no one I know does that." The fact that servant girls are bringing you tea and juice while the host is denying the existence of the institution might then prompt you to ask (if you have the courage), "well, who is that?" This would yield a response like, "my cousin's niece" or "just a worker?" In other words, someone who is "staying with" me. See the problem? So, where are the *Restavecs*? These responses are not just responses; they are explicit instructions to ignore what you see.

The identity that correlates with the word, *Restavec*, is even more complicated than the problem I just described. The *Restavec* is ambiguous because we do not know

the nature of one who is merely "staying with" another person. There is a negation implied by the word. Then, the word means a child whose family hopes to find him a better chance than one they could provide. A gesture filled with unconditional love, selflessness, and hope, the child is given to a wealthier patron who has promised to provide food, shelter and education. The word also means the exploited and severely abused. By creating the word, the culture managed to completely negate the human being that corresponds with the word. We cannot do anything about the *Restavecs* because it would deny a poor and defenseless child hope; we cannot do anything about the institution because the word doesn't really mean anything, just someone staying at someone else's house; we cannot do anything because even with the cries and torments obvious to the naked eye, the word instructs us not to see or hear anyone there. How, then do you address the human rights violations if there is no human there, let alone in peril? Then, what of the child? If your entire community has agreed you are not there, you do not exist and your cries and torments are summarily dismissed, would it not enter your deepest sense of self? How is a child to resist what the identity foisted on to his body produces when in social context?

Jean Robert Cadet attempts to address this problem by accessing a word which elicits a response: slave. For him, the *Restavec* is simply a slave, thus granting many theories on why the institution persists and how. You know the saying, "A rose by any other name is still a rose?" Not always. *Restavec* cannot co-opt "slave," but I understand Cadet's motivation to do it. Slavery is a documented institution that prompts outrage. The word references a body denied basic human rights and reduced to something less valuable that livestock. But, the history that corresponds to slavery includes finances,

monetary exchange for life, and it continues to haunt those who exist on both sides of the exchange. *Restavecs* do no such thing. There is no haunting because the children were willingly granted to their owners by their families - for hope. There is no accountability on the part of the community because the exchange has no legal or public place; it is a private exchange between two parties with separate agendas, the child in the middle likely to suffer dire consequences of the agreement.

The *Restavec*, to me, demonstrates the power of words and identity politics better than any discourse I can use from conventional models. I wanted to use Cadet's autobiography because unlike Man, Woman, Black, White, Gay, Lesbian, American, European, or Haitian, here was a word that meant "no one" and yet it is as much an identity as any of the others. It represents the best illustration I can find of a body which has no witness, which must adopt other identity constructs to be heard or suffer the condemnation implied in the identity grafted on to the body at the earliest of developmental stages. His culture cannot hear him, cannot see him, but they can use him. That is, his body can be used, but it is an abstraction, one that does not register as meaningful and content driven. I wrote this chapter because, although there is a general notion that Haitians are superstitious, there is nothing superstitious about zombies if language can be used to make a human being disappear while simultaneously using its body. The *Restavec* has to be the personification, the materialization of the Haitian zombie in real terms. The effort to find Haiti's zombies was misconstrued as an effort to find people who were poisoned and dragged out of their tombs. Rather than seek zombies at the gravesites, we should have been looking for the zombie in common

households. We should have been looking for them in everyday exchanges and language and in the development of identity.

Consider, if words can make human beings disappear, what else can it do? How does it instruct us? It gets a little hairy when we get into chapter three because the point of this chapter is to look for the sacrificed element. Rather than try to define agency and the important element that is compromised or lost in discourse, I open this chapter with Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* because of the differences between Hannibal Lechter and the character, Buffalo Bill, and I end the chapter with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* because of patterns and constructs which have various characters defining a singular identity. This is the microcosm of identity constructs, when different bodies share one identity discourse. Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo Bill are serial killers. It seems the premise of the film is to distinguish one from the other, despite the common identity construct. Demme spends the better part of the film pointing out the difference between Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo Bill by depicting Hannibal Lechter as a socialized, intelligent, and highly functional killer, while Buffalo Bill remains an anti-social and grossly dysfunctional one. They are both serial-killers, but Hannibal Lechter has the added element of eating his victims, a ritual which addresses the nature of sacrifice in this film.

In Hollywood's long history of representing good guys and bad guys, Hannibal Lechter is the bad guy "you love to fear." He is depicted as clearly unable to exist within social confines, and yet he is the central character whose presence the film cannot afford to expunge. He stays right up to the very end of the film. Buffalo Bill, on the other hand, is the main concern. He is the one Agent Sterling is trying to capture, and yet, not having

seen much from him or heard much out of him, the film cannot get rid of him fast enough for the audience. So, what is it? Is it merely because Hannibal Lechter helps the good guy (woman), Sterling? Is it because Hannibal Lechter will not threaten our heroine, but Buffalo Bill will? In this chapter, I move away from these questions to take a look at how Demme juxtaposes Hannibal Lechter against Buffalo Bill. I find that Demme's depiction of Lechter is telling in that it is his (Lechter's) ability to affect and influence his interlocutor that helps him transcend identity constructs. He is unusual because, unlike Buffalo Bill, he is not driven by psychosis, paranoia, or delusions of being something he is not. Buffalo Bill's problem is that he is destroyed by the schism between self and an identity imposed during crucial developmental periods of his life. Unable to transcend his experiences, he seeks out other identities that will transform him. Hannibal Lechter embraces his grotesque nature. He affects us because he will not submit to language - what and how we define serial killers. This does not mean Hannibal Lechter is any less driven by a death drive than Buffalo Bill, but it does go to the heart of the matter: what does it mean to be an agent and a subject who is fully responsible for personal actions against another person? Thus, when Hannibal Lechter kills his victims and consumes them, he does not need any historical, psychological, or psychoanalytical diagnoses to balance his grotesque nature. He is depicted as one who eats his victims, knowingly, erotically, in communal form. His victims are clear sacrifices that strengthen his personal agency. He speaks proudly of his victims, how he came to consume them and why. Buffalo Bill does not grant his victims a name. He will not engage them as humans; his actions are not his own in contrast to Hannibal Lechter.

I started chapter three with *Silence of the Lambs* partly to buffer my reaction to Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Easily the most offensive book I had ever read, it was only made more offensive when I was expected to honor it, as though it was written in my defense. When I started my research, I could find the Lazarus/zombie problem in many places. Many were small, inconsequential examples of the discourse, but nonetheless, demonstrative of the problem I sought to address. In summary, the Christian narrative posits Jesus imposing his will on Lazarus in order for God's glory (essentially Jesus' glory) to be known to mankind. On the other hand, Jesus cannot be imposing his will on Lazarus because Lazarus is dead, and therefore not in any position to reflect a person capable of responding to the acts for or against his body. This problem is a lot like the *Restavec* problem, where language dictates both luck and misfortune, simultaneously. We assume, after the resurrection, that Lazarus is there, but his voice is neither heard nor warranted. The story is not really about Lazarus; it is about Jesus/God. This is probably bothersome to me because it is reminiscent of the Genesis narrative, where Eve is depicted as a creature created *for* another, a gift to be used as a gift. Thus, Eve's honor is her shame. The Lazarus story is the gesture of omnipresent power over the powerless. Whether it is in your personal favor or not is entirely beside the point. The zombie story simply points out that it is never in your favor. In the zombie narrative, the *bokor* uses the body of his victim so that he may make his glory known. He is extended through the body of his victim, and the victim has little recourse in the matter, for the victim was dead. Lacking consciousness, let alone agency, the victim is "resurrected" to be modeled in a fashion that best illuminates the *bokor's* power and presence. Thus, I see the *bokor's* motivation and Jesus' motivation as similar to one

another in this case. Even with Jesus' motivation to save mankind from certain death and destruction, the two representations are, in a word, patriarchal.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is perceived by some to fill the void in literature where Black female voices should reside. It is also perceived as an example of the invasiveness and destruction inherent in society's preoccupation with the female body, most especially the Black female body. So, with such grand narratives backing the novel, why is Morrison's *Bluest Eye* among a discourse of the walking dead? There are two reasons: first, when I first read *The Bluest Eye*, I was around the age of 24. I had just recently left my home and my neighborhood. I was on a mental hiatus, taking time to reflect, critique culture and Christianity (religion in general) relatively undisturbed. Then, I read this book. When I reached the end of the book, I tossed it in the trash in a fit of anger. I was not expecting Morrison's relentless violence and I was unforgiving. I did not think of the book or the author again until I was working on my Master's degree when I was told by an African-American female professor that I was "obligated" to add Morrison to my examination list. I explained to her that I did not want to add her, as I did not care for her particular brand of writing. She explained to me, "what you feel about it does not matter; she should be on your list." The implication was that Morrison belongs on every canonical list of Black female academics. Perhaps all academics should have her on their list, but at minimum those who "look like me."

Second, as I recall my childhood experiences, if there was one thing I could not bear in all of the insults hurled at my sister and I, it would have to be the arrogant notion that what was being said was my Totality. Not only the taunting in elementary school, but especially the presumptuous disciplinary stance of the men in my religious and ethnic

community. I learned of patriarchy in gestures activated by language. Every passage in the Bible was read in defense of man and to the detriment of women; in school, every passage in literature was read in defense of Europe and Whiteness and to the detriment of Africa and Blackness. I did not distinguish them from one another, as the final result always looked the same: zombie-makers. Killing the Other so you can resurrect it for personal glory under the guise of a greater good.

The Bluest Eye emphasizes the problem of the *Restavec* or voice of the Other. It is a two pronged discourse, where I say, "It's not me," and I get the response, "who said it's you?" So I respond, "Why do I have to put it in my list?" Response: "because it's you." Thus, it represented the problem between personal agency and the collective. But also, in an ironical twist, Morrison's novel was meant to illustrate the dangers of overestimating the value of White beauty, especially in White women. Instead, I was, for the first time, extremely sympathetic and empathetic to the discourse surrounding feminism as instigated by those women. As a Black woman, race preceded gender. Even as patriarchy posed a constant threat to agency, race dynamics made survival difficult before gender had a socio-political hand in the discourse. *The Bluest Eye* helped me experience the outrage that is having a representation of your body and experiences used by another more omnipotent hand - whose perception of that body lies in a perceived vulnerability, helplessness, imbecility, and tragic short-sightedness. Unlike Frieda, Pauline, Geraldine, and Pecola, Claudia, Morrison's imaginary double, is smarter and less gullible. Claudia observes and judges; she acts. The other characters are "acted upon" by men, film, and other women. Thus, Claudia, alone, transcends the violence around her because she is not part of the fray. But we also have the creator, Morrison, who

admittedly wrote the novel in a disciplinary fashion to warn Black women of the consequences of admiring "Whiteness." Suddenly the historically, sadistically mutilated bodies represented in novels written by men and denounced by feminist was not a "secondary" concern. I could now fully appreciate the gesture of difference used in a derogatory fashion against the female body, but escaping judgment by virtue of its merits and its utility for the greater good. Morrison's voice is patriarchal voice, and her novel is not an exercise in opening dialogue. The characters are her creations, her act, her purpose and agency, but extended to all the bodies she wishes to consume as she represents them.

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* reminds me of Alejo Carpentier's *Kingdom of This World*. In *Kingdom of This World* Carpentier paints a picture of post-independence Haiti and positions one of the main characters, Ti Noel, as an ex-slave who is as vulnerable and impressionable as Pecola. Carpentier, like Morrison, takes a patriarchal position warning Blacks not to model themselves after the Europeans. The novel is a postmodern tale that exemplifies tyrannical rule and the consequences of imitating European colonialism. It's another depressive view of Haitians, but more importantly, it's also a medicinal narrative for the masses.

The fine line between Magical Realism and the arrogance of patriarchal writing is noted in my final chapter. Ultimately, by the time the reader reaches chapter four, it should be clear that zombification is not only pervasive, but also universal, crossing all class boundaries, racial and gender categories. I use a variety of disjointed and conflicting narratives and genres to demonstrate the pervasive representation of this problem. However, I add that there have been representations that have sought to escape

this linguistic and developmental conundrum. I argue that Jorge Luís Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and Octavio Paz have written narratives that use language as a tool, not to confuse or mystify the reader, but, rather, to subordinate language to experience so that the reader can experience the process of a narrative, not the narrative[1]. In this case, the narrative comes off "fantastical" or mystical, but, I argue, in reality these stories are expressions of agency. The living author. The living text.

[1] What I mean to say here is that these writers are interested in *utilizing* experience in their narratives. The reading experience subordinates us to the writer and locks us in the reflections or ideas put forth. Borges, Márquez, and Paz challenge the reader to share the experience. They activate the reader, while maintaining their own agency in the works. Their works produce relationships; not attempting to dominate, nor be dominated, they seem to be free even in their most constrictive ideas.

"But Larry grew increasingly neurotic and obscene
I mean he, he never asked to be raised from the tomb
I mean no one ever actually asked him to forsake his dreams
He ended up like so many of them do, back on the streets of New York City
In a soup queue, a dope fiend, a slave, then prison, then the madhouse, then the grave
Ah poor Larry.
But what do we really know of the dead And who actually cares?"
Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, "Dig, Lazarus, Dig"

Chapter One:
Lazarus and the Zombie in Cultural Context and Theoretical Practice

The first literary articulation of subjectivity and selfhood that influenced Western culture is hard to trace. As far back as the Bronze Age, which dates the ancient Sumerian tale of *Gilgamesh* to varied tales that circulate religious institutions in contemporary cultures, like the Christian story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" or the Haitian account of the zombie,[1] representations of the individual and subjectivity remain at the forefront of theological and philosophical inquiry. Either born out of this exploration or measured alongside of it, metamorphosis or change in the person has also preoccupied the minds of those seeking representation and study of the human species. [2] Despite the

[1] The Christian story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" and the Haitian story of the zombie will occupy the main parts of this chapter, but a discussion on mythology will precede it.

[2] N.K. Sanders. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960. This is among the oldest known literary text studied in Western culture (~2000 BC) and it concerns, mainly, the development of the hero, Gilgamesh, in his journey towards life's true meaning and the horrible reality of death. This text is also useful because of its sub-plot characterized in the image of Enkidu, Gilgamesh's companion. This concerns the idea of change and radical shifting of perspective and place in the world.

social classifications and the development of the sciences,[3] the schism between mind and body, individual and community, human and other species, and humanity and nature continues to haunt culture and intellectually sophisticated institutions. Perhaps this goes to the heart of why mythological study continues to inform us and illuminate human conditions still yet to be articulated in language. Why we study myth is best described by Robert Segal, who says of Mircea Eliade, "The Romanian-born Mircea Eliade […] credited myth with several functions. Myth serves to explain the origin of the world – the world as a whole and all phenomena in it. Myth serves to justify phenomena by tracing them back to primordial origin and thereby […] conferring on them the sanctity of antiquity. Moreover, rituals are among the many phenomena justified by myth. On the other hand, myth is itself ritually enacted. When enacted, myth serves as a time machine, carrying one back to the time of the origin of the phenomenon explained and justified. By returning one to the time when, it is believed, God was nearer to humanity than God is now, myth serves its ultimate, distinctively religious function: providing proximity to God."[4] Even if we were to denounce myth's association with the existence of a god, we would still have to confront ritual behavior that informs culture and rises out of mythology and religious belief. We would still have to "return" to the stories.

A. M. Hocart says, "In the course of their explorations, the scholars of the Renaissance came upon Sophocles and Aeschylus, but they interpreted the drama of those times as they interpreted their own stage – that is, as literature enacted. They failed to realize that the early Greek drama, literary as it might be, was still something more

[3] In this case I am not only referring to the sciences as it pertains to the individual human body, but also chemistry, physics, astronomy, technology, etc.

[4] Robert A. Segal, "Mircea Eliade," *The Myth and Ritual Theory* (Malden: Blackwell, 1998) 180.

than mere theatricals, that it was still part of the national ritual, and that myths were enacted not merely to amuse, but because the religion demanded it. This connection of drama with religion is now generally known, but it is doubtful if it is generally realized – to most scholars the Greek drama remains literature pure and simple" (145). Hocart's assertion rises out of an understanding that with Ovid, Virgil and Horace distancing themselves from the beliefs associated with myths, Western culture was bound to follow, engaging myth as merely a tool for literary and dramatic expression (144). Nevertheless, Hocart warns that we would be remiss to neglect the power of myth in religious and cultural development. Because "at all times and everywhere man's intense desire and determination to destroy death and 'put on immortality' has found expression not only in his ritual behaviour but also in his mythology" (James, 156), myth and ritual are the means by which human beings associates himself with the notion of a divine. Thus E. O. James claims we need only look at the use of myths like those found in the Old Testament, to observe "the stories telling the human race originally was created immortal but by some accident, ruse or device it lost this priceless boom and became a victim of death and all other ills to which stricken humanity has been heir throughout the ages" (157). For this reason, Christianity was born out of a need to resolve this grand conundrum, and such stories exist in similar form worldwide. More importantly, belief in the biblical stories that inform Christianity is no longer necessary; Western culture continues to reflect an adherence to the rituals and beliefs first established through the interpretation of Greco/Roman-Judaic myths.

From this bird's eye view to the most subtle observation of individual existence, myth is a magnifying glass, at once moving close to the object of interest, then retreating

from it; constantly shifting the view so as to never truly offer a stable perspective to the observer. Interpretations, therefore, run the gamut. For example, our interpretation of myth, according to E.O. James, is motivated by our desire to "destroy death" and "move closer to god," but this interpretation of myth limits its many functions and establishes the groundwork for difference between people and cultures. On the one hand, E.O James points out, "It was left to the well-known Sanskrit scholar Max Muller and to A. Kuhn to make the study of mythology a crucial issue by tracing its origin to a 'disease of language.' From a comparative study of the Indian Rig Veda, the Iranian Avesta, the Scandinavian Edda and the Homeric literature, they endorsed the view of the brothers Grimm that both mythology and language are rooted deep in the heart of the common people, and are not the creation of the higher ranks in society" (159). On the other hand, further difference was made when myth proved beneficial to "higher ranks." The term "folklore" was employed to describe the less lofty vision of myths told by "common people." "The term "Folklore" was coined in 1846 by T. H Thomas to take the place of the rather awkward expression "Popular Antiquities", which hitherto had been used to describe the oral traditions and culture of the unlettered classes in civilized communities, compromising beliefs, customs, institutions, pastimes, sayings, songs, ballads, stories and arts and crafts, both as regards their origin and their present social functions" (168). Sir Lawrence Gomme took to distinguishing between folk and myths, and then from European peasantry from 'aboriginal' populations" (169).

Despite the differences between folk and myth, the stories shared by these communities are sacred. They are usually stories that have been told many times before because of some inherent quality that make them exceptional. All of the stories begin

with a form of ritual, and "ritual (comes to) dominate the situation…because the deepest emotions of the human heart, and the most profound convictions of the mind, find expression in actions before they are given utterance in words and elaborated in systematized theologies and philosophies, aetiological mythologies, spiritualized worship and ethical rules of conduct" (157). Ideally this is the way these stories developed and are adopted by the members of a community. In this, the difference between the aboriginal and the European is trivial. The difference between the primitive man and the sophisticated, civilized man is also trivial. They share an alliance with the stories they adopt, and the language used to perform them. Ritual and myth are inextricably intertwined; the rejection of myth, therefore, is never fully realized. In the actions of a particular group, the myth lives on and can be, to some extent, extracted for analysis and observation. E.O. James describes an approach to myth that explains ritual, but as they are connected, one can look to ritual to find the underlying myth and its corresponding philosophy. This view goes against the idea that the unsophisticated, uncivilized, and/or unlettered man lacks myth; on the contrary, significant observations can be made by looking to the stories and rituals imbued with important philosophical outlooks. Indeed, folklore is intricately woven into the fabric of myth-telling, and ritual is myth-performance.

I. Myth, violence and the Other in cultural context

In an essay by René Girard, "What is Myth?" Girard points out that myths are most disturbing when they point to a violent act. As myths are shared stories that represent or reflect the whole, Girard claims, "Each time an oral or written testament

mentions an act of violence that is directly or indirectly collective we question whether it includes the description of a social and cultural crisis; that is, a generalized loss of differences (the first stereotype), crimes that "eliminate differences" (the second stereotype), and whether the identified authors of these crimes possess the marks that suggest a victim, the paradoxical marks of absence of difference (the third stereotype). The fourth stereotype is violence itself […]" (284). This fear, which governs our fear of contamination, makes it all the more urgent to locate the "pollution" and purge it from our midst. The existence of one or more stereotypes, as defined by Girard, or the "juxtaposition" of two or more stereotypes "convinces us that (1) the acts of violence are real; (2) the crisis is real; (3) the victims are chosen not for the crimes they are accused of but for the victim's sign that they bear, for everything that suggests their guilty relationship with the crisis; and (4) the import of the operation, (which) is to lay the responsibility with the crisis on the victim and to exert an influence on it by destroying these victims or at least banishing them from the community they 'pollute'" (284). In this description of myth, Girard describes man's fear of being the same. We do not want to associate ourselves with the pollution that is Oedipus, for example, so we look for the ways we are not Oedipus; we look for ways Oedipus' difference marks him and sends him into exile.[5]

Compare this reading of man's fear of the "elimination of difference" with what continental philosophers describe as a fear of alterity. In an essay by Jung Lee, called "Neither totality nor Infinity: Suffering the Other" Lee says, "In regard to matters of subjectivity, Western ontology, from Descartes' *cogito* to Locke's unity of consciousness to Husserl's intentionality, has been plagued by an allergic reaction to the alterity of the

[5] *The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles*, trans. by Paul Roche. New York: Plume, 1996.

other[6] as a phenomenon beyond merely a modality of unity and fusion, irreducible to the categories of the Same*:* 'Since its infancy, philosophy has been filled with a horror of the other that remains other, with an insurmountable allergy.'[7] This revulsion toward the other ultimately leads to a 'totalitarianism of the same' whereby the difference of the other is effaced" (250). In addition, Lee summarizes Julia Kristeva's work as follows:

> Unlike the valorized Levinasian Other, the contours of Kristeva's (M)Other reveal a darker side, an Otherside, of alterity which can expose the "horrors of being," the return of which can make up our "apocalypse." As such, Kristeva, contra Levinas, recognizes the necessity, the *therapy*, of violence as a prophylactic to psychosis and suffering. Moreover, as a psychoanalyst, Kristeva appreciates not only the irruption of the face from without but also the *disruption* of the other from *within* in the form of the unconscious. Levinas's avowedly 'antipsychoanalytic' predilections prevent him from recognizing that the movement toward the Other must inevitably commence with a conciliation of one's inner disruptive forces: 'If I fail to fuse the parts of my dismembered body into a whole, I cannot exist, speak, or enter into relationships with other people.' Without a stabilizing apparatus, a re-membering of one's fragmented psyche, the subject remains vulnerable to the travails of psychical horror, severely constraining the kind of generosity and patience required by 'Levinasian ethics.' Ultimately, as Kristeva argues, our consciousness of our unconscious can sustain a kind of solidarity, a 'paradoxical community,' in which we can be-with-others in our weakness, as subjects who can potentially be sick. We are *not one*, as Levinas correctly diagnosed in his economy of alterity, but we are also not two. (254)

On some level, it seems Lee's summary of Levinas and Kristeva contradicts or contrasts Girard's analysis of myth telling. But they are, in actuality, saying similar things. That is, the collective that seeks distance from the "contaminated" individual is also the individual that fears the Other. In a sense, the two theories compliment one another, as fear of the Other is a fear of contamination. The existence of Oedipus

[6] Jung Lee points out that he is referring to the general definition of other, as in *Autre,* in this case, and not the personal *Autrui*.

[7] Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context,* ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 346.

frightens the collective because he removes the element of difference, exposing the forces of pollution on to the citizens of Thebes.[8] His singularity defines the plurality. From the collective citizens of Thebes to the individual body of a single member of the community, all hide from Oedipus; all fear the power of the Other. Why?

"The polarization of the Same, as something of a phenomenological black hole in which any trace of alterity is negated, and the Other, as the site of infinity, leads Levinas to re-iterate, though now inverted, the language of domination and the logic of totality in his schematization of responsibility and substitution. The subject is 'incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give [. . .] having nothing at its disposal that would enable it to not yield to the provocation' (261). Accordingly, this reading of Levinas reflects a fear of penetration and a loss of the subjective self. Substitution, rather than change, is the paradigm set up by these analyses, where myth reflects René Girard's assertions of violence and the victimization of the collective through the victimization of the individual. "In abnegation, in sacrifice, in substitution, the "my" of "my being" is undone and overwhelmed by the deposition of the Other" (261). The exact nature of the threat named, we are afraid of being replaced, consumed and violently substituted by the other. In such a case, we are afraid of the godhead represented by the other. More importantly, we are terrified of our encounter with the vast vulnerability of our existence, that we can, so easily, be consumed and substituted in the presence of the other.

[8] "Oedipus the King" from *The Oedipus Plays* by Sophocles.

Nietzsche and Foucault articulated this,[9] essentially theorizing, "If *throughout* the social body, infecting the *relations* of power in the order of things rather than on the *subjects* of power, as something possessed by some/the Same and imposed on others/the Other. In this sense, power is regarded not so much as a force in relation to a being or object (e.g., the Same *over* the Other) but as a force in relation to other forces that it affects or that affect it" (261). In Andrea Nye's essay, "Woman Clothed with the Sun: Julia Kristeva and the Escape from/to Language," Nye writes, "Plato's sun with its remorseless clarity signifies rational order, the systematic arrangement of concepts reflected in logical form or, more recently, semantic theory. The woman can never be the sun but is only covered by it, constrained by it as by an alien and restrictive garment forced on her from above. In the story, it is the sun that the woman, with her feet in the moon, must cast off. Leaving her child, for which she has labored and given birth, to be educated by the authorities above, to be trained in the proper authoritarian modes of knowledge, she must go down to the wilderness to be nourished by the earth. Having escaped from her masters, she becomes again an animal. But what does this mean? Does it mean that in the wilderness she must be silent because language, after all, is the prerogative of the sun? Does it mean that in the wilderness there can be only groans, glossolalia, cries, only the rhythms of her body, instinctive drives, expressible in snatches of melody and scraps of song? Does it mean that, once cast down, the woman is mute and even the great eagle wings that carry her to safety cannot give her speech? Such is the dilemma of the woman speaker" (664). For Kristeva, the violating force is the symbolic order and the world of language, which she categorizes as the paternal force. What has

[9] See Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Helen Zimmern, 4th edition (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967) and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

been sacrificed and violated would be the natural internal forces represented in the semiotic, maternal aspect of all existence.[10] The story above is one example of how myth illustrates this violation, substitution and oppression, of forces of nature and security in self and subjectivity. Such illustrations are reflected in many cultural narratives, where even our earliest and most primitive ancestors knew such dangers lurk beneath the cloak of identity. Despite the attention placed on the preservation of the self and subjective experience (much of the philosophical and psychoanalytical debate, as described in Levinas, Foucault, and Kristeva, has optimistic edge; posturing towards compromise or resolution[11]) myth telling may have no other purpose but to reflect the existence of the phenomenon. That is, it may have no other reason for being but to point towards an empirical truth; an observation of irreconcilable human conditions. In this project, I analyze the story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" from the Christian bible and the story of the Haitian zombie, reading each narrative against conventional ideologies that categorize them according to myth and folklore. In other words, the effort to find a "solution" or "cure" for oppression in philosophical and psychoanalytical research is really guided by religious motivations that still believes in some ideal wholeness, peace,

[10] See "The System and the Speaking Subject" in *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 23 – 33. Also, "The Semiotic and the Symbolic" in *The Portable Kristeva*, edited by Kelly Oliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 32 – 69; "Strangers to Ourselves" (1989) and "From One Identity to an Other" (1975) in *The Portable Kristeva*, edited by Kelly Oliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 93-115.

[11] In an interview with Julia Kristeva, Scott L. Malcolmson says, "You've spoken of a national sense of humiliation, and of a national "wound." In *Strangers to Ourselves,* you argue that each of us is both a self and a foreigner, or "stranger"- that there is an internal tension, constitutive of identity, which can be conceived of as a sort of unhealable wound. Yet at the national level, you seem to be saying that the wound of split identity is in fact healable." Kristeva responds, "There is no possibility of a nation without a wound, or of a nation without foreigners. But still one must recognize the wound in order to be healthy, in order to avoid falling into the mania of naming scapegoats." Thus, though Kristeva affirms that there can be no cure for the infliction of the "wound," some form of awareness may offset further violence. See Julia Kristeva; Scott L. Malcomson. "Foreign Body." *Transition*, No. 59. (1993), pp. 172-183.

and security. Since I am reading both narratives, not as motivated by religious postures towards god, but rather, as myths that point out that there is no resolution, religious or otherwise, what we call the wound born of the violence of the Other is a fatal wound. Myth reflects the paradoxical and tragic conceptualization of the human being.

The Christian story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" in Western culture reveals as much a negative and devastating truth about the absence of a subjective self as does the figure of the zombie in Haitian Vodou. There is no resolution to the problem of substitution and self-effacement influenced by the Other because, as both the Christian and Haitian stories point out, such violations are unto death. A plague is never a matter of diagnosis and cure. Such acts always reveal the futility of compromising with the gods and the vulnerability of humanity.

II. Religion and mythological fusion in Christianity and Vodou

The Christian story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" and the story of the Haitian zombie are well-paired, as much of the rituals articulated in them share commonalities. Though both narratives carry similar underlying messages, the Haitian zombie is less masked by religious motivations towards an ideal than the Christian story. Already a negative symbol in both the African and Western language, I will begin with the zombie for my analysis, followed by the Christian version in the New Testament of the Bible.

In 1948, the renowned anthropologist, Alfred Metraux, traveled to Haiti in an effort to comprehend the rituals and beliefs associated with Vodou. Not long after, Zora Neale Hurston, in her anthropological research, also traveled to the Republic to offer her

views on the subject. Both were able to affix their impressions and understanding of the island in *Voodoo in Haiti* and *Tell My Horse*, respectively. Sidney Mintz, in a prologue to Metraux's text says, "The anthropologist's unknown world […] is really an interior world, a world that is strange because of the way it is perceived. A good ethnographer, no matter how unrelativistic, always recognizes that reality is, among other things, what people have learned to see" (2). Mintz's assertion helps to situate the analysis offered by anthropologists on the subject of the zombie vis-à-vis culture and identification. On the one hand, the function of an anthropologist is to report what he/she observes and to compile as much empirical data as they can on the group they study. On the other hand, how much can really be understood by the anthropologist, given the structure of the relationship that bears itself on the project? Since I am Haitian, the anthropologist is a bit of an intruder; a rather rude one at that. It is not merely for the sake of being observed like a "laboratory" animal that I tend to be leery of their findings, but rather it is the lack of caution that accompanies the anthropologist's gaze. As pointed out earlier, consider the threat posed by an encounter with the other: "For Levinas, the modern ideal of autonomy, defined as freedom, remains anteceded by the "primordial call of the other": 'The ethical 'I' is subjectivity precisely insofar as it kneels before the other [. . .]. Ethics redefines subjectivity as this heteronomous responsibility, in contrast to autonomous freedom.' The primacy of this responsibility circumscribes the bounds of autonomy to the point of 'substitution,' whereby the subject as 'hostage' stands infinitely accused by the summons of the 'face' of the Other: 'It is thus a position already deposed of its kingdom of identity and substance, already in debt, 'for the other' to the point of substitution for the other, altering the immanence of the subject in the depths of its

identity'" (Lee, 261). Thus, the anthropologist is in no way threatened by this possibility; rather, it seems the anthropologist is fortified in his/her identity as Other and difference. Such a gaze leaves a good deal of doubt that what is observed is also accurately representative of the population studied.[12] Nevertheless, Alfred Metraux and Zora Neale Hurston offer insight into the ritual and practice of zombification.

Very little is known about the emergence of the Haitian zombie. Historical data lacking or scarce, early accounts of the phenomenon are based on travel writings and anthropological expeditions, mainly in the early twentieth century, particularly during the U.S. occupation of the island.[13] There are few literal articulations that trace its origin, yet the phenomenon became an intriguing part of American intellectual, political, and social debate. Most notably, in March 1975, Wade Davis traveled to Haiti under *The Zombie Project*, funded by the Botanical Museum at Harvard, to retrieve the drugs used to create the victim of zombification.[14] His findings produced *Serpent and the Rainbow*, which, ultimately, became the subject of Wes Craven's Hollywood film, *Serpent and the Rainbow (1988).* Yet, even before Davis, Hollywood's fascination with the subject gave

[12] Contrast the anthropologist's work on Haiti with the findings of the avant-garde artist, Maya Deren, who came to her understanding of Vodou accidentally while researching ideas on dance and choreography. Of particular interest is her description of "The White Darkness," where she experiences the effects of Vodou during a religious ceremony. I am not concerned with the specifics of the religious experience, but rather, with the idea that she was irreversibly affected. In a prologue to her book, *Divine Horseman*, Joseph Campbell says, "Whose interpretation, then, of the sense and experience of a religion is to be preferred in the name of science: that of the one who has been touched and psychologically transformed by the rites, or that of the one who has not? To whom, for example, do we turn for the sense and experience of Christian worship: to Dante or to Max Weber? It has always been my finding that the poet and the artist are better qualified […] than the university-trained empiricist" (xvii). Campbell confirms my suspicions that though certain facts about Haiti are conveyed in anthropological narrative, caution should accompany the person whose identity is so rigidly formed as to discount the possibility that the other threatens it. Such an acknowledgement would be met with a humility and respect lacking in anthropological gazes.

[13] Hans W. Ackermann and Jeanine Gauthier's "The Ways and Nature of the Zombi" in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 104, No. 414. (Autumn, 1991) 466-494.

[14] Wade Davis, *Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

rise to films like *White Zombies* (1932), *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). The fascination with zombies far exceeds the pop-culture interest; it is susceptible to research and observation by ethno botanists, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, etc. With all of the information gathered on the subject of zombies, I still find that it is the zombie of my childhood that best represents the terrifying figure. The zombie was a story told to me to transmit, not a superstitious belief in the walking-dead, but rather, an idea. The distinction between the zombie spoken of in the oral tradition that defines my body of knowledge, and the one studied by university academics, are two entirely different creatures. In the latter case, the zombie is merely a figure manipulated by drugs, empowered by superstitious beliefs, dispelled by science; it may be useful to chemists and pharmacologists, or for a study in human consciousness.[15] The former is myth. And in this case, the myth of the zombie reflected the frailty of human consciousness, vulnerability of subjectivity, and the illusion of self, or "I;" the fallacy of identity; the terrifying notion that I could be seized well beyond the body, die to an unknown source, and used for and by another. Worse, with my death secured, no "I" would exist to resist the violent effects of substitution. The enigmatic figure of the zombie represented the last word on power dynamics, namely to be human was to be unprotected and vulnerable to seizure by the other. Though the term "zombie" is

[15] There is a good deal of research on the zombie and the mind-body problem. Thomas Nagel wrote an essay, "Conceiving the Impossible and the Mind-Body Problem" in *Philosophy*, Vol. 73, No. 285 (Jul 1998, which attracted a host of responses. See Katalin Balog, "Conceivability, Possibility, and the Mind-Body Problem" in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 108, no. 4 (Oct. 1999) 497-528; Rom Harré, "Nagel's Challenge and the Mind-Body Problem, *Philosophy*," vol. 74, No. 288 (April 1999) 247-270; Barbara Montero, "The Body Problem," *Noûs*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (June 1999) 183-200; Jaegwon Kim, "The Mind-Body Problem: Taking Stock after Twenty Years," *Noûs*, Vol. 31, Supplement: Philosophical Perspectives, 11, Mind Causation, and World (1997) 185-207.

relatively new, the figure is really an exacerbation of an idea already in circulation in the history of ideas for many centuries.

i. The frailty of self reflected in Haitian Vodou's *Ti Bon Ange*

In defining the zombie, Zora Neale Hurston says, "This is the way zombies are spoken of: they are the bodies without souls; the living dead" (189). Alfred Metraux says, "Zombi are people whose decease has been duly recorded, and whose burial has been witnessed, but who are found a few years later living with a *bokor*[16] in a state verging on idiocy" (281). In *Passage of Darkness*, Wade Davis' definition allows for better understanding of the figure. He says, "The concept of slavery implies that the victim of zombification suffers a fate worse than death – the loss of individual freedom implied by enslavement, and the sacrifice of individual identity and autonomy implied by the loss of the *ti bon ange*" (9).[17] The three definitions can be viewed as follows: Hurston claims that no soul, as such, exists in the zombie, the zombie is "dead;" Metraux does not address matters of the soul, but merely concludes that the zombie suffers from severe psychological impairment; but, Davis' claim, that the zombie is a figure of "enslavement" and loss of "individual identity," does a better job of describing a condition worth exploring.

The zombie is not so much a "body without a soul," but rather a body that is missing some essential element. Davis ads,

[16] *Bokor* means sorcerer.

[17] *Ti bon ange* is one of two souls that make up a human being. The two souls are *gros bon ange* and *ti bon ange*; "big good angel" and "little good angel," respectively. The terms are used interchangeably depending on the definition of each soul.

> The two aspects of the Vodoun soul, the *ti bon ange* and the *gros bon ange*, are best explained with a metaphor commonly used by the Haitian themselves. Sometimes when one stands by the late afternoon light the body casts a double shadow, a dark core and then a lighter penumbra, faint like the halo that sometimes surrounds the full moon. This ephemeral fringe is the *ti bon ange*, the 'little good angel,' while the image at the center is the *gros bon ange*, the 'big good angel.' The latter is the life force that all sentient beings share; it enters the individual at conception and functions only to keep the body alive. At clinical death, it returns immediately to God and once again becomes part of the great reservoir of energy that supports all life. But if the *gros bon ange* is undifferentiated energy, the ti bon ange is that part of the soul directly associated with the individual. As the *gros bon ange* provides each person with the power to act, it is the *ti bon ange* that molds the individual sentiments within each act. It is one's aura, and the source of all personality, character and willpower. (187)

The g*ros bon ange* is simply law. According to Leslie G. Desmangles, it is "a life-force, and internal dynamism planted within the body that serves as its shell" (66). This "life-force" is not alterable and you either have it or you do not. "It derives it substance from, and is an offshoot particle of [God]" (66). For Desmangles, the g*ros bon ange* represents "the root of being, consciousness, the source of physical motion, the inherent principle within the body that ensures life; it is identified with the flow of the blood through the body, and movements of inhalation and exhalation of the thoracic cavity. Breathing and the throbbing of the heart are vital signs of life, but the *gros bon ange* is not breath or palpitation itself; rather, it is believed to be the life-source from which these motions originate" (67). This element of the soul cradles all life; once it has left the body, nothing exists and one can speak plainly of the finality of death. The zombie has this element. The *ti bon ange*, as described by Wade Davis, can be translated into Julia Kristeva's articulation of the semiotic in her essay, "Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science." She points out, "semiotics is established as a

science which seeks to represent that which per definition cannot be represented" (75). Perhaps this explains why there are so many conflicting definitions of the zombie soul.

"Zombi lore is closely linked to the Haitian concept of the soul. This subject has been investigated by many scholars with rather conflicting results, each report containing different, more or less complementary elements of a tradition that appears confused in itself" (Ackerman and Gauthier, 470). The issue with the soul has been at the heart of cultural language and interpretation. If Western culture has only spoken of the body as containing a single soul, what is the body that contains two? Such an encounter can only lead to the problems inferred by the following passage: "*The Gros Bon Ange* appears as a life force and corresponds roughly to the Christian soul, whereas the *Ti Bon Ange* is perceived as a guardian soul resembling the Western spirit. To some investigators, the *Gros Bon Ange* governs thought, memory, and sentiments, the essence of human personality; it leaves the body during sleep, is displaced during possession by *loa*, or Vodun gods, is the target of magic and sorcery, and can be captured and sold. Other investigators who have obtained recent detailed information on this dual soul hold the opposite to be true (qtd. in Davis 1984, 1985:181, 1988a:186; Hurbon 1988:231). They argue that it is the *Ti Bon Ange* that directs human personality, wanders during sleep, is displaced by loa, is the target of sorcery, and may be stolen. These apparent contradictions are probably a matter of semantics, or due to variations in information from individual informants; for example, Hurbon states first that the *Gros Bon Ange* is the target of sorcery and zombification (qtd. in Hurbon 1972:167), and 16 years later he says that it is the *Ti Bon Ange* (qtd. in Hurbon 1988:236)" (Ackerman and Gauthier, 481).

What is important about the zombie is that it is not human because the human is clearly divided between two forms of life; one which allows it to exist in the world, and another which animates it in the world. Both are necessary to be an agent in the natural order of things, but the zombie lacks the portion that animates life. I paired the notion of the zombie soul with Julia Kristeva's theory on the symbolic/semiotic because of the matriarchal presence in the study of Vodou. Kristeva's correlative between the semiotic and the maternal makes sense vis-à-vis the discourse on the zombie soul. In Vodou, the maternal principle is as much an integral part of devotion as the paternal. In Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*, Hurston describes a sexually charged ceremony, saying, "'What is the truth?' Dr. Holly asked me, and knowing that I could not answer him he answered himself through a Voodoo ceremony in which the Mambo, that is the priestess, richly dressed, is asked this question ritualistically. She replies by throwing back her veil and revealing her sex organs. The ceremony means that this is the infinite, the ultimate truth [...] It is considered the highest honor for all males participating to kiss her organ of creation, for Damballa,[18] the god of gods has permitted them to come face to face with truth" (137). In addition, Maya Deren speaks of the feminine principle in Vodou as follows: "Voudoun [Voodoo] has given woman, in the figure of Erzulie,[19] exclusive title to that which distinguishes humans from all other forms: the capacity to conceive beyond reality, to desire beyond adequacy, to create beyond need. In Erzulie, Voudoun salutes woman as the divinity of the dream [. . .]. In a sense, she is that very principle by which

[18] Damballa is one of many gods in the Vodou pantheon, though he is analogous to Zeus in many instances.

[19] Erzulie is the most notable female deity in the pantheon of Haitian gods; she is referenced by most anthropologists and Vodou practitioners when discussing the Vodou female principle.

man conceives and creates divinity."[20] This is not to say that one can equate the notion of two souls, as espoused in Haiti, directly with the semiotic and the symbolic, but they are well connected to one another. The difficulty and confusion that rests beneath a standard definition of the two souls has a great deal to do with patriarchal structures encountering matriarchal paradigms.

If we take the element of the matriarch into account, then the "two souls" is less confusing than what has been previously recorded. Davis is right to say that the *ti bon ange* is the *source* of "personality, character and willpower," and, I would add, "vitality." The New Oxford American Dictionary defines vitality as, "the state of being strong; energy," and "the power giving continuance of life, present in all living things." The value of vitality is neither new nor exclusive to any region, as noted in the impassioned response to Viagra. If we look closer, the introduction of Viagra is not merely about men and their capacity to have sex. It seems that the prospect of impotence is related, albeit marginally, to death. Lee Quinby relates masculine virility with apocalyptic ideology. In her essay, "Virile-Reality: Armageddon to Viagra" Lee says, "masculinist power is viral in the sense that, in virile-reality, it is all too easy to come down with it that in many of the practices and accepted truths […] masculinist power is spread through infectious values" (1080). She points out that the marketing of Viagra, as a solution to masculine impotency, implies that all people benefit from its "healing" potential, but such assumptions are sexist and short-sighted. "Insidiously, the ostensible 'cure' is a chief component of this virile/viral/virtual ideology. Its millennialist rhetoric promises to empower individuals and groups that have been held back, providing an illusion that the new technologies, in and of themselves, proffer salvation. But this millennialist desire for

[20] Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: the Living Gods of Haiti*. New York: Mcpherson & Co., 1953. pp 138.

a perfect solution-like the notion of perfection itself- is a tainted version of power that retains structures of misogyny, racism, and homophobia by announcing them as resolved. In contrast to patriarchy's rigid pecking order, which privileges men and subordinates women, virile-reality is more seductive, bringing women as well as men into the fold of masculinist desire" (1083). Thus, what she associates with male virility, which she correlates with the technological age, represents a form of oppression made more subtle by the idea that virility represents life: a "cure." "Like Viagra, the pharmaceutical response to male impotence, virile reality is a union of simulation and flesh that assumes penile erection to be the be-all and end-all of sexual pleasure. This totality is phallic perfection made literal" (1083). Even without Quinby's analogy to forms of oppression, the essence of her essay points towards an association made between the virile/vital phallus and all-encompassing life, and the impotent penis and death. If we were to take this as representative of aspects of the soul, which would make sense in patriarchal cultures, then a zombie would be impossible. Simply put, a body cannot live without its vitality. It is the source of life; the blood's movement in the veins. If we were to turn our focus on to the female body, as representative of human possibilities, consider, then, the female genital.

The vagina can function without its vitality. In fact, female genital circumcision is as male castration. Stripped of its vitality, however, the vagina appears to continue to function on command; to provide pleasure and life to alien sources. In an essay by Leonard Kouba and Judith Mausher, among the many reasons for female circumcision, cultures that perform the operation justify it, saying, "In order to protect the family honor, girls in Africa are circumcised to decrease their sexual urge before marriage, thereby

preventing them from being "wayward" and bringing shame on the family (qtd. in Ogunmodede, 1979: 30). By removing a female's sexual organs and preventing her from attaining pleasure (i.e., removing the source of her pleasure - the clitoris), she will not be tempted by extra-marital affairs, thereby disgracing her husband. "Therefore, to keep the young girl pure and the married woman faithful, genital operations are maintained as one of Africa's most valued traditions" (99) According to Kouba and Mausher, many women accept the practice “to please their husbands” (99).

Note the following description of a young woman undergoing this process:

> Typically, female circumcision is performed without anesthesia and under septic conditions. The female is usually operated on in a sitting position or lying on her back while her thighs are held apart by helpers. The operator spreads a cloth on the ground on which the traditional tools are placed. These may include a cutting instrument, a collection of thorns for suturing the wound, and a powdery mixture of sugar, gum and other herbs, ashes or pulverized animal manure which will later be applied to control any excessive hemorrhaging. While the girl’s body is firmly held, the operator begins to cut away the genitalia. Sometimes the child will actually bite off her tongue from the pain. In order to prevent this, a bamboo stick or similar object is placed between the teeth. If the child should faint, powder is blown up her nose to revive her (qtd. in Lantier, 1979). The operation takes about fifteen minutes. Frequently, before the wound is closed, the mother and all other women present are allowed to inspect and palpate the wound to be sure the procedure has been properly performed (qtd. in Pieters, 1977: 730). Finally, the girl is suitably sutured and the powder mixture is applied. In the case of infibulation, her legs are bound together with strips of cloth from the waist to the ankles and she will remain immobilized for up to three weeks in order for healing to occur. (101)

In this example, the violent imagery is the restraining of the body *to* mutilate the sexual organ, where bodily restraint and sexual mutilation are fused into a single act of violence, a metaphor and a physical reality in one. The result of female circumcision is that the vagina lives though it is deadened. Despite the religious and cultural ideology attached to those who practice female circumcision, the act represents human

subjugation, either to god or man. The victim of female circumcision is as the victim of zombification; vitality deadened, though made to function for an alien source. The zombie represents the idea that all human beings are subject to this symbolic form of castration.[21]

Another text that best illustrates the discourse on the *ti bon ange* is the myth of "Pandora's Box." Actually, it is Pandora's jar that reflects the image of the zombie. The loss of the *ti bon ange* is the loss of the contents in "Pandora's box." In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Zeus and the gods on mount Olympus design Pandora to punish mankind because Prometheus stole fire and tried to hide it from the "father of all gods" ("Works," lns. 80-95). "Since before this time the races of men had been living on earth free from all evils, free from laborious work, and free from all wearing sickness that bring their fates down on men […] but the woman, with her hands lifting away the lid from the great jar, scattered its contents, and her design was sad troubles for mankind. Hope was the only spirit that stayed there in the unbreakable closure of the jar, under its rim, and could not fly forth abroad, for the lid of the great jar closed down first and contained her" ("Works," lns. 93-95). Thus, the loss of the *ti bon ange* is much like opening Pandora's jar and finding that it is empty. More than the good and evil that defines mankind, the zombie is not human because, more than a loss of consciousness, subjectivity, soul, desire, character, personality or willpower, the creature has no Hope in him; Hope being a "spirit" and not an ideology, the zombie is a person who does not hope. The zombie is an object, though an empty one, good only as a repository for the one who holds it. In the image of the zombie, the myth implies the primacy of Hope as a quality born of Eros

[21] This discourse on genitalia is not meant to suggest anything related to real physical or material conditions. I use it to perform a symbolic reading of ideas associated with sexuality, gender and power dynamics.

("Theogony," ln. 120). What is most disturbing about the zombie is that it is lacking this essential quality.[22]

This notion of male and female principles is only meant to suggest that the human is made of multiple dimensions, each with its own functions that govern the primacy of life and death. The loss of any one of the elements that define life seriously compromises the definitions afforded agents of existence. The importance of the loss of an element like the *ti bon ange* is vital to any discourse concerning oppression and subjugation. In fact, time and space is redefined without the *ti bon ange*. The individual without a *ti bon ange* represents an individual driven by law, only. Desire and connectedness with the external world, or the Other, is implausible. More importantly, no hope exists to re-activate the possibility of such encounters. However we choose to define the Zombie, the altered state of the creature reflects the loss of "the essence of one's individuality" (Davis 187). It is unrecognizable to living properties that have this element.

III. The myth of resurrection narratives in Lazarus and the Zombie

"The fear in Haiti is not of zombies, but rather of *becoming* a zombie" (Davis 121). As the *ti bon ange* represents a most valuable aspect in humanity, "it is the logical target of sorcery, and its peril is compounded by the ease and frequency with which it

[22] The Oxford Dictionary defines hope as "desire combined with expectation." I am making a distinction between "hope for," which I consider the more common, less noble quality of the word, and "hope towards," which represents the gesture towards life. There is no basis for my elevating Hope to the level of a spirit, except the assertion made by Hesiod. Insofar as Hesiod points out that this element remains in the jar, it goes to my theory that it is an essential element and in its absence reflects the image of oppression suffered by mankind. But I am also using Pandora's jar as a metaphor for that which lies between Zeus (male principle) and Pandora (female principle): the human object. The only life remaining within is Hope, where if removed, the human is only an object; Pandora's empty jar.

dissociates from the body" (Davis 187). Thus, the possibility of becoming a Zombie is real for the Haitian peasant. But it is also real, symbolically, for all humans. The *ti bon ange* is not a folk anecdote, but, rather, the vital force, semiotic, conscious, subconscious, spiritual energy that defines individuality, subjectivity, and agency in the world. It is the element most closely associated with hope *towards* life, and therefore most susceptible to repression, oppression and manipulation. Worse, the Zombie represents the death or total absence of this element. What is the body that exists without it?

In reading the myth of the Zombie, the process of "raising the dead" is similar to the process illustrated in the story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" from the New Testament Bible. Though the stories share similar attributes, the cultures from which they arise are radically different, so that the interpretations are also different. In fact, the relationship between the Haitian peasant who practices Vodou, and the European who practices Christianity is hostile and antagonistic. "As a religion that developed in the context of slavery and colonialism, Vodou marks a fluid boundary between domination and resistance and defines a zone of struggle between public and private discourses of dominant and subordinate groups" (Trefzer, 301). Thus, the subordinated group that practiced Vodou was a people who used creative means to "voice subversive ideas" through metaphorical and linguistic performance (Trefzer, 301). In this case, Vodou is a form of cultural resistance and we can read the processes of making a Zombie from this perspective; as a subversion of the Christian ideal represented in "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead." The act of colonialism being so desperately offensive, the development of a religion that responds to it would be inevitable. That is one way to read the stories expressed by the Haitian peasants; as a retaliation and rebellion against those who have

oppressed them. The Zombie comes to represent the slave in cosmic terms rather than merely social and political terms, and it may be a direct reflection of colonialism's effect on the group. The voice denied a space in the world is also speaking by imitating a sacred narrative in Christian ideology, though concluding its effects are not a "promise towards god,"[23] but a degradation and humiliation; a radical Othering that offends all of nature. The historical narrative of the small island of Haiti supports this view.

a. A brief history on African and Christian syncretism in Haitian Vodou

Leslie G. Desmangles traces the syncretic religion of Haitian Vodou and its Catholic complement. Desmangles points out that "Africans probably began to arrive [in Haiti] around 1512, twenty years after Columbus' first trip" (19). Before this time, the island was inhabited by natives who probably migrated there a few hundred years before and were abused, killed, or died of diseases of which they were not immune. The group from Africa brought with them their religions and cultural traditions, and many of them were highly trained tradesmen, priests, and members of royalty (19). The Spanish imposed conditions on the new inhabitants much in the same way they imposed cruelty on the natives. In an effort to maintain control over the small island, the Spanish tried to impose rigid constructs to protect the wealth generated by the slave population, but France, discovering a bounty of gold on the land, moved in at the end of the sixteenth

[23] See George Eldon Ladd, "The Kingdom of God: Reign or Realm?" in Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 81, No. 3. (Sep., 1962), pp. 230-238. In it he sates, "'The greatness and originality' of 'Jesus opened a new chapter in men's attitude towards sin and sinners' because he sought out sinners rather than avoiding them (qtd in C. A. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels, I,* p. 55). The seeking God, the God who is not content to wait for men to turn to him but who searches for the lost, the God who has again become active in history for man's salvation -this is the corollary of the God who has become dynamically active in his kingly rule in Jesus to bring men into the blessings of his rule." This promise is heavily referenced in the New Testament Bible, most notably in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

century to settle alongside Spain's coveted treasure. As the French grew in the small colony, the Spanish were overwhelmed and soon the island was dominated by French colonists. In 1697 the Spanish ceded the Western part of the island to France in the Treaty of Ryswick (19). Nevertheless, while the Spanish were in power, religion dominated the ideology that governed the small island. Alongside the desire to cultivate profit from the island was an enthusiastic desire to spread Christianity among the settlers. Missionary activity was strong and only began to wane as profits from sugar, indigo, cocoa, and coffee facilitated decadence and prominence. By the 1700s there was less emphasis on religion and the new settlers charged their slaves with producing more and more product for export and consumption (20). The decline on the emphasis on religion and the increased interest on the island's material resources did not, however, reflect a lack of interest in religious observance by the Haitian peasants.

Although the island of Hispaniola is shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, what happens to religion as a result of the Treaty of Ryswick[24] and French rule in Haiti may shed some light on the development of Haitian Vodou. In essence, by the time France assumed leadership of the island, interest in the West Indies had become exclusively and concretely commercial. "By 1730 a new breed of businessmen had begun to migrate to the island, and soon seven maritime companies were contracted to transport slaves from Africa" (20). Concern over the bodies of slaves became part of a social and political discourse embedded in Enlightenment, where, although the "death of

[24] The Treaty of Ryswick, signed in 1697, essentially, pitted France against the Grand Alliance, England, Spain and the Netherlands. The pact allowed France to keep certain "properties," their share of Hispaniola for one, but eventually proved financially disadvantageous for Louis XIV. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Sixth Edition. 2001-2005.

god"[25] would not be proclaimed until the 19th century, God was already dead on the island; at least, in general appearance. Desmangles points out that this cultivated a space wherein the rituals and practices of African religions could thrive (20). "[The] debauched Frenchmen regarded the clergy with hostility and antagonism, and with good reason; not only did the clergy continuously admonish them for their immorality and exhort them to return to the straight and narrow, but the church had been largely responsible for the content of the Code Noir,[26] which the planters did not like" (23). The Catholic Church recognized some responsibility for the island and did not immediately abandon their missionary efforts until the Haitian revolution at the end of the 18th century, but by then it was too late, the fusion of Christianity and African religions already gained tremendous momentum; the syncretic relationship would be called Vodou and it would become the religion observed by most of the inhabitants, transcending colonialism.[27]

Whenever we talk about syncretism, we run the risk of gesturing towards hegemonic readings. There are two issues in the analysis of Haiti; one which posits leaders as imitators of the colonial powers, which would explain Louverture, Dessalines and Henri Christophe's insistence that the new republic adhere to Christian ideology.[28] The other claims that "toward the nineteenth century, orthodoxy declined rapidly in Haiti.

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[25] See Freidrich Nietzsche's "The Madman" in *The Gay Science* (1882, 1887) para. 125; edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp.181-82.

[26] 'Adopted by the French parliament in Paris in 1685, the Code regulated the social, political, and religious life of all the French colonies throughout the world" It was particularly antagonistic, as it gave the population of affranchis (freemen) nearly identical rights and privileges as whites (Desmangles, 23).

[27] For more information on the history of Vodou in Haiti, or the history of colonialism, see Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: the History of the Caribbean 1492 - 1969*. New York: Vintage, 1970. Or, Laurent Dubois, "Vodou and History" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 43, No. 1. (Jan., 2001) 92-100.

[28] See Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*, translated by Harriet de Onis. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975.

Two generations of Haitians had received no religious instruction and knew little about the rituals of the church […] they continued to adhere to Vodou, using the rituals of the church to mask practices of their native traditions" (42, 43). The latter argument recognizes the practice of Catholicism, but only as a cloak,[29] while the former seems to imply a complete rejection of ancestral religions in favor of one that could only be mimicked. Desmangles concludes by saying, "As is the case in contemporary Haiti, Roman Catholicism and Vodou formed two religious hierarchies, two parallel systems, which became juxtaposed […] that which permitted the shift from one system to the other was the process of reinterpretation by which the content of Catholic theology translated itself into Vodou beliefs" (Faces, 47). Thus, Vodou represented the marriage, so to speak, of two opposing religious forces.

Although we can not ascertain the origin of the Zombie folklore, we can, at least, imagine the various turns that gave rise to its continuity on the small island. The pre-Zombie lives-alive; that is, of the two souls that are necessary for wholeness, both occupy space and time. Both function in a process towards their natural end. Intervention of the process may appear inconceivable, but not to a group that shared a radical intervention of personal process. It would seem that the *ti bon ange*, so heavily guarded, would be the element necessary for a rise in consciousness; the effort to "rehabilitate the African"[30] by Catholic missionaries was an effort to change consciousness, but at the expense of this element of the soul. The end result would render the subject's consciousness mastered by

[29] Milo Rigaud in *La tradition vaudoo et le vouduo haitien.* Paris: Niclaus, 1953, says, "Christian syncretism is but a surface aspect of voodoo, the Haitian folk religion that has two major African sources. The *rada* cult comes from Dahomey whereas the *petro* cult, which is usually said to be Creole, has its roots among the Kongo." This view is also pervasive in most commentators on Haitian Vodou.

[30] See Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: the History of the Caribbean 1492 - 1969.* New York: Vintage, 1970.

another, driven more by those who lead it than by natural processes of development. Perhaps this is why it is hard to believe that the actions in favor of Christian culture demanded by the first leaders of Haiti would have been authentic, or genuine, efforts towards transformation of religious observance. It is not so much because we have no documentation of Toussaint, Dessalines, or Christophe's conversion, but because their existences reflected schisms between bodies and processes, their actions fell into binary constituents that either affirmed the slave *or* Europe; self-affirmation was questionable. Toussaint and Dessalines are not "non-Christians" because they led a revolt that cost the lives of many people and are suspected to have practiced Vodou; they are "non-Christian" because, bearing their circumstances and given the stresses particular to the island, *every* act gave rise to questionable origin. No one, neither the European nor the African descendant, could trust the product of colonization as authentic, thereby fostering the question, what is the post-subjugated subject? In an era of allegiances to nation states, conflict between opposing identities left a social stigma that reached beyond slavery and the stereotypes of Africans that plagued the West.

Despite the theories that rise out of these historical observations, on the other hand, the syncretic relationship between Vodou and Catholicism in Haiti also lacks this reactionary, anxiety-provoking element of rebellion in its description. Theoretically the religion developed as a reaction against subjugation and bondage. "There is absolutely no human group which does not react to the changes, disturbing events and crises which the dynamics of history introduce into the *physical* or *cultural* context to which the group belongs. Any quick change, any internal or external conflict whatever, produces a crisis. To each crisis, society responds by slowly developing new forms and new *means to bring*

about balance within the limits of the particular cultural group. Sometimes the crises and wounds are so serious that they threaten the very existence of the group. Their whole existence seems to be on the line. In such a case, the most secret and active forces in their whole culture are mobilized so as to develop adequate means for their liberation. These means are the *force of religious life*."[31] In practice, however, the Haitian practitioner does not suffer any tensions over the fusion of the two religions. In fact, John K. Thornton, in his essay, "On the Trail of Voodoou: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," remarks that Christianity was an influence already introduced to Africans long before the historical Middle Passage. Though African schools of thought rejected many of the religious practices observed by Christians, like baptism, the ideas circulated amongst West Africans.[32] Thorton suggests three things: one, that the Vodou practitioner was able to fuse Christianity with African religious rituals comfortably, because he/she was not necessarily new to the idea; second, it removes the rather short-sighted idea that Vodou is merely a reaction against colonization,[33] giving its practitioners some credit for having had a history that existed *before* the Middle Passage; and third, it blurs the line

[31] Lanternari, Vittorio. *Les Mouvements religieux des peuples opprimes*. Paris: Maspero, 1964.

[32] John K. Thorton, "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," *The Americas*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (Jan., 1988) 261-278.

[33] See Bettina E. Schmidt, "The Creation of Afro-Caribbean Religions and their Incorporation of Christian Elements" in Transformation Vol. 23, no. 4 (October 2006) 236 – 242. In it, Schmidt says, "The word syncretism has negative connotation; it is also too simple to embody the full meaning of the creation process (Cf. Leopold.Jensen 2004 for an overview about the syncretism debate in religious studies). The idea of syncretism would indicate that these religions were formed by mixing the dominant Catholicism with suppressed African traditions during the time of slavery. Hence, using the term syncretism would give a pejorative undertone to African traditions which does not appear to be true to reality." I would agree with Schmidt that the "rebellion" interpretation seriously undercuts the rich philosophical inquiry that can be made in researching Afro-Caribbean religions, and it makes the devotee a human subject relative to European colonization and political strife. It negates the base structure of will, as Schmist points out, "If they used Christianity just as a cover-up during the period of slavery, why not stop it now?"

between religious observation in Africa and Europe.[34] By separating Christianity, radically, from African religions, the approach to the narratives that come from each culture is rigidly studied in their difference; both represent folklore and are relegated to anthropological and sociological research. Like people, religions are not isolated structures; they are affected and change with influence from other sources. Just as Christianity is a fusion of myths influenced by Greek. Roman, and Judaic tradition, so too, Vodou is a religion influenced by African, Islamic, and Christian tradition. "The process of creating new religious belief systems is very complex and is based on more levels than the superficial similarity of iconography" (Schmidt, 236). If we take Thorton's approach, we can read the Haitian Zombie story alongside the Christian story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" as mythology. The stories complement one another, where the biblical story of Lazarus of Bethany illustrates a condition called the Zombie. The tension is not located in the cultures that created the story, but in the fusion of two stories that reflect the human condition vis-à-vis language.

IV. The "I" in Zombi and the "we" in Lazarus

The processes of making a Zombie do not only reflect the processing of raising the dead in the biblical text, but because of the Zombie narrative, the end result of the Christian story bears a meaning that undermines the interpretation that the concept of resurrection is absolutely positive for mankind. If we use the Haitian idea of a *ti bon ange*, then rather than Lazarus represented as a positive resurrection, he represents that which is made radically "other" because of the intervention of an alien force.

[34] Ibid.

The New Testament of the Bible tells the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11:1-44. The story positions Jesus en route when word is sent that Lazarus, a personal friend, is gravely ill. At this point in the narrative Jesus, who now performs miracles with some regularity, has already demonstrated his peculiar ability to "heal the sick" (Oxford New English Bible, John 3:7 -8, John 5:5). Jesus, however, rejects the proposition to rush to the sick bed of the dying man; rather, he postpones his trip pronouncing "it (as) for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:4). Several days later, Jesus appears at the site where Lazarus' body has been buried for four days. Conversations between Mary and Martha, the dead man's sisters and prominent figures in the narrative, and Jesus indicate that the women grieve more out of regret that Jesus delayed his visit than over the deceased. More exchanges between the local Jews and the two women reveal a motivation to support and comfort the grieving family, which lends itself to further exchanges between the locals and Jesus, who at the sight of the weeping women will wonder why the one who "opened the eyes of the blind…could not prevent this man's death" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:37). Finally, the narrative articulates another interaction between Jesus and his disciples, who neither want nor care to have Jesus in such a politically precarious location, especially given the certainty that Jesus' talents are wasted under the current circumstance of death. After much exchange between the living, Jesus proceeds to have the tomb unsealed. He calls out Lazarus by name and the "dead man comes forth" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:44), as summoned.

I clarify the direction of the biblical chapter because so little of it concerns Lazarus. C.K. Barrett, in *The Gospel According to John*, says, "The meaning of this

narrative for John is as simple as the narrative itself. Jesus in his obedience to and dependence upon the Father has the authority to give life to whom he will. The incident is a dramatic truth already declared in 5:21" (Barrett, 322).[35] But, the narrative is not simple. The first verse tells the reader that, "*there was a man named Lazarus who had fallen ill*" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:1). Rather than bypass this first line, the articulation deserves some consideration.

i. Naming as difference

The difference between Lazarus and what will be known as the Zombie rests upon a name. "To have a name is to have a means of locating, extending, and preserving oneself in the human community, so as to be able to answer the question 'who?' with reference to ancestry, current status, and particular bearing, with reference to the full panoply of time."[36] In the Afro-American community for example, "naming has always been an important issue […] because of its link to the exercise of power" (King, 687). A consequence of slavery, African-Americans regard the abandonment of their African identity, and the renaming of those captured with their masters' identities as a profound form of subjugation and powerlessness (King, 688) "In Chinese society names classify and individuate, they have transformative powers, and they are an important form of self expression" (Watson, 619). For men in Hong Kong, "naming marks important social transitions: the more names a man has the more 'socialized' and also, in a sense, the more 'individuated' he becomes" (Watson, 622). "A proper name is a name of a particular thing; and a necessary condition of its being particular is its having a (particular)

[35] John 5:21 *As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to men as he determines.*

[36] Michael G. Cooke, "Naming, Being, and Black Experience." *Yale Review* 67.2 (1977) 167-186.

historical position. The thing named may also be unique in virtue of possessing some characteristic or set of characteristics possessed by nothing else."[37] Thus, when the biblical story tells us "a certain man was sick, named Lazarus" (Gideons Holy Bible, 11:1), it immediately performs an act of locating and representing a subject. Whoever Lazarus is, we assume an identity, and we assume it to have the characteristics of a person in a particular historical moment of his existence. In short, a name is the *ti bon ange*. That is, if the *ti bon ange* represents the essence of the individual - the personality, character, will of a person - and his individual relationship to space and time, then the name references those qualities; it is the word that cradles identity. Zombie is nihilistic of the name. Thus, when reading the first verse of the John 11, the reader assumes the identity associated with that name throughout the narrative. This assumption is premature.

ii. Illness of the self, illness of the whole

What we know about Lazarus is limited to his illness, and in Haiti illness resonates as something grave and impure. Alfred Metraux tells the story of Antoine, a victim of *l'envoi morts*.[38] He claims, "According to hungan, illnesses resulting from *expedition des morts* are not easily cured. The dead embed themselves in the organism into which they are inserted and it is very difficult to make them let go" (275). In this case, the invasion of the individual by the "dead" issues the first signs of illness. The idea here is not that people are only ill when they are "invaded' by an external force, but

[37] Sidney Zink, "The Meaning of Proper Names." *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 72, No. 288. (Oct., 1963) 481-499.

[38] Envoi Morts is "Sending of a dead against a person in order to make him ill or cause his death. This form of witchcraft is also called *expedition*" (Metraux, 375).

rather, illness represents a weakness and a compromised state of the *ti bon ange*. Metraux continues to say, "With earthy complexion and wasted body he lay on a mat motionless as though eking out what little remained to him of life. A few weeks earlier this same man was a sturdy stevedore in the Port-au-Prince docks. His story was simple: he was taken suddenly ill and then went into alarming decline…Antoine, seeing the dead would not yield, fell into such a state of prostration that he could no longer swallow" (276). This initial stage is alarming. Antoine's family seeks the assistance of others in their attempt to revive their ailing loved one because illness underscores the disturbing vulnerability of the person, and, by extension, the group.

In both the Haitian and Christian narrative, the ailing body is an impurity, and family members are obligated to seek help. In Lazarus' case, John 11:3 states, "The sisters sent a message to [Jesus]: 'sir, you should know that your friend lies ill.'" The suggestion here is that Jesus, who has already proved himself in the healing arts, can restore their brother's health[39]. In fact, later in the narrative Martha, one of Lazarus' sisters, tells Jesus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:21). Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger*, reminds us that "accounts of a primitive religion talks about fear, terror, or dread in which its adherents live. The source is traced to beliefs in horrible disasters which overtake those who inadvertently cross some forbidden line or develop some impure condition" (1). Douglas adds, "A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone" (113). "Along with death, phenomena

[39] Interestingly enough, in the Haiti, the *bokor* accused of sending the *l'envoi morts*, causing illness, is also the person sought out to heal the sick (Metraux, 276)

connected with human physiology such as pregnancy, childbirth, illness, bleeding, and sexual activity are all sometimes deemed to cause states of pollution, and persons and things connected with them may also do so."[40] Though the Haitian story suggests a fear of vulnerability reflected in foul play by an outside source, the underlying issue is the development of illness and the need to purify the person and the group of what that illness represents. In Christianity, the symbolic representation of illness "is to be seen in connection with the state of the natural man […] 'sick' announces the condition of the sinner's soul, for sin is a disease which has robbed man of his original health."[41] Lazarus is also from the "House of Bethany," which means "House of Affliction."[42] Thus, although Lazarus may not have invoked illness in his body (we cannot know what or how the subject ails), his condition is one of guilt precisely because he cannot avoid his humanity and human err of defilement. If Lazarus is guilty of bringing pollution, then how he is used and what happens to him, personally, reflects a condition suffered by the social group.

The idea that man is inherently guilty is not new. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, man is guilty of losing favor with the gods:

> For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils. And Zeus will destroy this race of mortal men also when they come to have grey hair on the temples at their birth. The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade; nor will brother be dear to brother as aforetime. Men will dishonour their parents as they

[40] Emiko Namihira, "Pollution in the Folk Belief System." *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Supplement: An Anthropological Profile of Japan. (Aug. Oct., 1987) S65-S74.

[41] Arthur W. Pink, "Christ Raising Lazarus" *Exposition of the Gospel of John*. Feb., 14 2005. PBM Desktop Publications. Oct. 13, 2007 < http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john.htm>.

[42] Ibid.

> grow quickly old, and will carp at them, chiding them with bitter words, hard-hearted they, not knowing the fear of the gods. They will not repay their aged parents the cost their nurture, for might shall be their right: and one man will sack another's city. There will be no favour for the man who keeps his oath or for the just or for the good; but rather men will praise the evil-doer and his violent dealing. Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speaking false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy, foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. ("Works," lns. 170 – 201)

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Jove[43] says, "One house has fallen: many more deserves to; over the broad earth, bestiality prevails and stirs the Furies up to vengeance" (24). In the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian Bible, Adam and Eve are chased from the Garden of Eden because they disobeyed God's command that they not eat from the tree of knowledge (Gideons Bible, Genesis 3:1-24). "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cher-u-bims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gideons Bible, Genesis 3:16-17, 23-24). The God of the Judeo-Christian tradition punishes human beings more than once over their guilt. "And God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of thoughts of his heart was only evil continually […] And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth […] for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gideons Bible, Genesis 6:5-7). And even in more contemporary terms, Georges Bataille says, in *The Guilty*, "Maybe mankind's a pinnacle, but only a disastrous one" (7). Thus, Lazarus' illness represents all people; it implies the guilt of the whole.

[43] Jove is the Roman name for Zeus. Zeus is the "father of all gods" referenced in Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 820 – 868.

This analysis of guilt and the community inserts a paradox. On the one hand, Lazarus is alienated by his illness. Diane Price Hendle asks, "How does illness interrupt or redefine a person's sense of self" (771)? She says, "For centuries, illness was associated with evil; following St. Augustine's model, sickness was seen as a manifestation of human original sin and individual wrongdoing" (773). Lazarus is therefore not only responsible for his own illness, but he is set apart because of it. His name reflects and isolates the one who contaminates the community. On the other hand, illness is represented as a communal problem. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, René Girard says myths reflect our fear of a violent act that implicates all. We are afraid of Oedipus precisely because his defilement is a "[crime] that 'eliminates difference.'" Our impetus is to ban the ailing subject so as not to be associated with his defilement.[44] In the case of the Christian story, the desire to cure the illness is a desire to purge the defilement. The desire to offset death is a gesture towards purification.

iii. Death rituals as defilement or purification

This reading of Lazarus as an alienated subject who suffers from illness juxtaposed with his representation of all mankind is critical to an analysis of the resurrection story. It references the particular motivation of a particular culture grounded in creation stories that posit death as evidence of guilt and contamination. In the case of the Zombie, there is no single name associated with the story. Because the Zombie references no one person in particular, the names associated with the condition lack the power afforded the story of Lazarus. This is the reason both stories need each other. In Haiti, the idea of death does not imply guilt or contamination; on the contrary, the dead is

[44] René Girard, "What is Myth" in Myth and Ritual Theory (Malden: Blackwell, 1998) 285 - 304.

believed to purify the community, as death not only represents a transition to another life, but it also takes away illnesses that defile the group (Desmangles, 65). Death is accepted as a natural process. In fact, the transition from the living world to afterlife is of paramount importance to the Vodou devotee. "After death, the harmonious relationship between the twin compartments of the self is fractured and each follows its separate destiny. The expiration of the last breath is the expulsion of the [*gros bon ange*][45] from the body. Liberated, the [*gros bon ange*] is believed to enter into heaven […]" (Desmangles, 68). In contrast, because the body no longer has the element of the *gros bon ange*, the *ti bon ange* is believed to house "all intelligence and conscious experiences" (Ibid). "The Vodou death rituals move a community toward the future; they celebrate the birth of the [*ti bon ange*] into a new dimension of life. The death rituals restore the [*ti bon ange*] to its primordial state before it assumed form – a condition of freedom from the limitations and struggles of human existence" (Desmangles, 73). Following a period of time in the afterlife, the *ti bon ange* of the deceased is transferred to a "sanctuary where they turn into guardian *loa*" (Metraux, 259).[46] The emphasis on death, then, is on the individual. Ironically, of course, the individual is absent in the articulation of the Zombie. This motivates the Haitian Vodou devotee to be concerned with every aspect of the processes of ailing and death. If Lazarus were in a Vodou culture, *his* personal illness and death would be the central concern, but in the Christian

[45] Desmangles uses the term *gros bon ange* to describe the element of the *ti bon ange* discussed in this paper. *Ti bon ange*, for him, refers to the *gros bon ange*. In order to avoid confusion, I switched the terms in his quote. As noted earlier, there is some confusion about the terms and their respective meaning.

[46] A *loa* is an ancestral god or divinity. The pantheon of gods in Vodou reflects a belief that there is one all-empowering god who presides over all living matter. The gros bon ange is the material born of this element and without it life can not exist. When a person dies, the gros bon ange returns to God. But this overarching figure is generally unconcerned with the minor details of the living; it, therefore, falls on the ancestral spirits, who become deities after death, to address human concerns, particularly that of their respective families" (Desmangles, 78 – 83).

narrative, it is Jesus and the community or the representation of mankind that is significant. Therefore, while one addresses the individual, the other addresses the community.

With Lazarus alienated by illness and his voice absent from the text, the central focus of the story falls on Jesus and the witnesses. "When Jesus heard this he said, 'this illness will not end in death; it has come for the glory of God, to bring glory to the Son of God" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:4). Thus Lazarus' illness becomes a function of external purpose. Then "after hearing of his illness Jesus waited for two days in the place where he was" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:6), suggesting that this delay wills Lazarus' death. William Temple, in *Readings in St. John*, says, "[Lazarus' illness] and the death in which it culminated were both for the glory of God, as manifested in the restoration of Lazarus to life; and this glory of God took the form of the glorifying of the Son, who was disclosed as the Lord and Conquerer of death" (177). The Calvin's New Testament claims, "From it we gather that God wants to be known in the person of His Son in such a way that whatever honour He demands for Himself may be paid to the Son" (23). Jesus' refusal to go to the sick bed of Lazarus illustrates an important point: namely, that in the interest of establishing Jesus as equal in power over life and death as the Father, and in the purification of mankind, Lazarus is left to die. Resurrecting Lazarus will satisfy God's desire that Jesus be treated with the same honor afforded Him, and the miracle will foreshadow the Passion, crucifixion and Resurrection of the Christ. Thus Jesus will tell Mary, "I am the resurrection and I am life" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:25). Lazarus reveals a hollow or false center of the narrative. He is neither the primary concern, nor the secondary; the narrative positions Jesus as the

primary subject, and mankind's salvation as the secondary subject. The reader should not assume that Lazarus is implied in the latter concern, as the miracle is performed for the living; those uncontaminated by death, and relieved of Sameness with Lazarus.

A word on Jesus: there is too much information on the representation of Jesus as both God and man for me to include in this project. However, Jesus' dual identity is critical for Christian believers, but I want to point out that the metaphorical distant between Jesus and a *bokor* is not great. It is a matter of space and time. According to the Christian bible, Jesus says, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him" (Gideons Bible, John 14:7). Thus Jesus establishes himself as both man *and* God in a particular historical moment. In Western culture the fusion of God and man is, again, not new. In the figure of Dionysus, Dionysus is born of a mortal woman and Zeus, the father of all gods, thus making him both man and God, simultaneously.[47] The *bokor* is considered a sorcerer involved with witchcraft, but he is purely human. It may be that the egregious nature of "raising the dead" in Haiti stems from the inferior position of the human vis-à-vis God. It is the height of offense to be manipulated by one who is not a god. But recall that in Vodou, the human becomes a postmortem divinity. The position of the *bokor* is merely that of one who has not become god, *yet*; that is, his divinity is implied.

The concern for the community, the witnesses, in the story is purgation, salvation, and purification; the concern for Jesus is recognition of his existence as God. "Lazarus is dead" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:14). So when Jesus tells them, "Our friend

[47] See "The Bacchae" in *The Plays of Euripides*, translated by Paul Roche. New York: W.W. Norton, 1974.

Lazarus is asleep, but I shall go and wake him" (John 11:10), according to the Haitian narrative, Jesus informs us of his intent to commit a violence *against* the individual.

For the purposes laid out in the Christian narrative, Lazarus, who was ill, must die. According to the Haitian narrative, death is only an event that fosters the transformation of the individual's *ti bon ange*, which remains. In Haiti the Vodou practitioner believes that the individual who has died is "still at risk in death" (Davis, 188). The Vodounist "does not believe in a physical resurrection of the body, the soul must be definitively separated from the flesh. This takes place during the *Dessounin*, which is the major death ritual. Throughout the period between death and *Dessounin* the *ti bon ange* is extremely vulnerable,[48] and only when it is liberated from the flesh to descend below the dark abysmal waters is it relatively safe" (Davis, 188). The point of this passage is not meant to impart any eschatological understandings of Vodou; rather, it is meant to illustrate the frailty of human identity. The crucial ritual associated with the deceased is an acknowledgment of personal agency; it reflects attention to the individual, as determined by historical time and space. "Because it is the *ti bon ange* that experiences life, it represents a precious accumulation of knowledge that must not be squandered or lost […] Much ritual effort, therefore, is expended to secure its safe and effortless metamorphosis" (Davis 188). We can correlate this time between death and *Dessounin* with "On his arrival Jesus found that Lazarus had already been four days in the tomb" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:17), where it would appear that Jesus times his act when Lazarus is most vulnerable. In the Haitian narrative, the *bokor* also arrives at the gravesite of the victim anywhere between 24 to 48 hours after burial (Davis, 212). I would suggest that this question of timing points out that there is a relationship

[48] *Dessounin* lasts a period of about 7 days (Davis, 188).

between the amount of time spent in a state of unconsciousness and the optimal moment of seizure by the other.[49] Donald Bretherton, points out that when Jesus tells his disciples "Lazarus is dead," he means, "the juxtaposition of 'sleep' and 'death', 'sleeping' and 'waking,' either suggests that for Jesus sleep connoted death, or that he was referring to another kind of condition for which there was no adequate terminology, and which lay somewhere between sleep and terminal death. He would then appear to be trying to explain to [the disciples] the nature of this "death," which was no ordinary sleep but a near-death state" (170). Based on Bretherton's analysis then, the Christian narrative substantiates the theory that there is an optimal time and space between death and "terminal death."

Imagine the profound contradiction inherent in resurrection narratives with Lucretius' assertion, "Death is nothing to us and no concern of ours [. . .] When we shall be no more, when the union of body and spirit that engenders us has been disrupted - to us, who shall then be nothing, nothing by any hazard will happen any more at all. Nothing will have power to stir our senses, not though earth be fused with sea and sea with sky [. . .] Rest assured that we have nothing to fear in death. One who no longer is cannot suffer, or differ in any way from one who has never been born."[50] Nevertheless, both narratives point out that the individual is never safe, not even in death.

iv. Caves, tombs and the vulnerable states of existence

[49] Timing is an important element in circumscribed subjectivity, but I will not enter into it at this time. I merely want to point out that in both the biblical narrative and the Haitian story, an emphasis on time exists: Jesus' decision to wait four days before going to Lazarus' tomb, and the seven days Vodou practitioners believe the *corps cadavre* (dead body) must be left alone. We can say that this is merely a coincidence, but for the Vodou practitioner, this time is when a *bokor* can best seize the dead.

[50] Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*, translated by Frank O. Copley. New York: Norton, 1977.

In *Love's Body*, Norman O. Brown says, "the cave is a womb […]. The wanderings of the dead are perennial adventures; a journey by water, in a ship which is itself a Goddess, to the gates of rebirth" (46). These creative expressions of the dead allude to individuality; an obsession with avoiding the obliteration of the self; a desire to escape the material world and enter into a world less encumbered by the needs of the body. However, E.M. Corian says that the mind must submit to a process of elimination if we want to realize the freedom described in Lucretius' assertion. In *The Temptation to Exist*, he says, "one always perishes by the self one assumes" (5). In a sense, both authors aspire toward the same ideal. The decaying body in the tomb/cave is significant if you consider it a sacred place where the self releases its tentacles. Man returns to nature. However we choose to define the afterlife, the living often place an emphasis on the resting place of the deceased. In both the story of Lazarus and the Haitian story of the Zombie, the deceased must be entombed. After some discussion with Lazarus' sisters, Jesus goes to the cave where Lazarus is buried (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:38). In the case of Marie M., a zombie transported to a convent in France in 1936, Hurston says, "the public clamored for her grave to be opened for inspection" (204). In 1912, of a man who would be found roaming the streets of Port-au-Prince, Davis says, "The priest at the request of the wife and the doctor who had declared the patient dead assisted in dressing the corpse in proper funerary clothes. The next day the priest conducted the service and watched the coffin being buried" (62). In 1898, "a young Cap Haitien boy got into trouble with a girl and refused to accept responsibility for her pregnancy. When the girl's family approached his, they were offered no settlement. Two weeks later the boy died suddenly and was buried" (62). Whether we address Lazarus or the potential

Zombie, it seems the tomb represents a place apart to return to the core of existence; it is radical internalization, where the subconscious is released into nature and, most importantly, where the self is believed to dissolve.

The enclosure of a tomb holds great significance. There is a great deal of literature that attests to the primal happenings of enclosed spaces and the consequences of intrusion by the other. In *The Trial*, Franz Kafka has the character Joseph K. arrested in his bedroom. So closely tied to the cave, the bedroom represents dream states, or states of passage wherein the victim is vulnerable to domination. The narrative's beginning leaves the reader wondering whether the rest of the story is not a figment of the imagination - a dream.[51] Mary Shelley's main character, Victor Frankenstein, retrieves his victim from an enclosed grave in *Frankenstein*.[52] Liza Potvin in an essay, "Voodooism and Female Quest Patterns in Margaret Atwood's Cat's Eye," says the character "Elaine [who is turned into a Zombie] has difficulty recalling the event of burial" (641). All that the victim recalls when entombed is, "perhaps the square is empty; perhaps it's only a marker, a time marker that separates time before it and time after" (641). Thus, the tomb not only represents vulnerability, but accessibility. Elaine recalls, "I know the others came and got me out after a while […]. At first there's nothing, just a receding darkness, like a tunnel" (641). The authority of the intruder is set, as the fragile nature of the *ti bon ange* is punctured to replace it with a language wholly foreign it.

v. Interrupted and seized by the other.

[51] Franz Kafka. *The Trial*, translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

[52] Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein* (1818). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000.

The ritual of "raising the dead" performed by Jesus and the *bokor* share, most especially, certain curious similarities. For one, Jesus tells the locals to "take away the stone" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:39); he does not do it himself. The *bokor* also does not remove the opening of the grave himself; he has it "opened by [his] associates" (Hurston, 192). Secondly, the deceased can only respond to its name. "Then Jesus raised his voice in a great cry: 'Lazarus, come forth'" (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:43). Similarly, Hurston says, the *bokor* "calls the name of the victim. He must answer because the *bokor* has the soul there in his hand" (192). In addition, Metraux points out, "a corpse can only be raised if it answers its name" (56). E.M. Corian warns us, "to bear a name is to claim an exact mode of collapse" (5). This is never truer than at the climactic moment when the deceased is restored to the world of the living in both narratives. "Metamorphosis or transubstantiation: we already and from the first discern him making this other […] Make for us this offering consecrated, approved, reasonable and acceptable which is a figure of the body of Christ."[53] Lazarus is a sacrifice. We cannot know why the deceased can only respond to its name, but we do know that Jesus calling forth Lazarus is the last time Lazarus' name is mentioned in the biblical narrative. The biblical story does not say "Lazarus came forth," but rather, "The dead man came out" (Oxford New English Dictionary, John 11:43). This is crucial. As the Zombie is a nameless "dead" that has come forth at the behest of another, so, too, Lazarus no longer bears a name and is "dead" though he lives. That is, Lazarus does not come out in possession of his own name. Based on the Vodou narrative, the Zombie is subordinated by the *bokor* because the *bokor* has his *ti bon ange*, which is reflected in the utterance of his name. When Jesus calls Lazarus forth, he is not communicating with a person

[53] Norman O. Brown. *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

because the person is dead; he uses the name to bring forth something unrecognizable to the reader or listener, but in using the name, any meaning associated with it is also changed. Lazarus' name does not correspond to the figure emerging from the grave; it corresponds with Jesus. So when Jesus says, "loose him and let him go," (Oxford New English Bible, John 11:44), what, in fact, is loosened?

We have no further need to refer to Lazarus; his name will forever be inscribed in history, Christian history, as the "dead man" Jesus restored to life. His creation story begins with the one who called him out of the tomb and the function of the memory associated with him will serve Jesus. The added detail in the Haitian story, "the *bokor* has the soul there in his hand" (Hurston. 192), is symbolic of the power of the person who speaks one's name. In essence, the person who speaks your name owns you. The narrative suggests that the danger of a name is in the qualities bestowed upon it. Thus, the vulnerability of the contents of the *ti bon ange* is located in the name. If Lazarus' *name* belongs to Jesus (Jesus masters the name), then *he* belongs to Jesus, so what is reflected in the corresponding body? Logically, if we were to give Lazarus a voice he would say, "I am Jesus," and by extension Jesus would have to say, "I am Lazarus." Thus, the possessor of the name (contents of the *ti bon ange*) would correspond with the body. But, of course, this would be an incorrect reading of the situation. If Lazarus cannot say, "I am Jesus," but he also can no longer say, "I am Lazarus," then what is he? This is why Lazarus is a Zombie, because of the absence of any authentic "I am." Symbolically, Lazarus is not alive, but he appears alive through a correlative that is Jesus. Jesus, as "life," is extended through the restoration of Lazarus' body and the seizure of

his name (*ti bon ange*). Furthermore, if the biblical story is a mythological tale that represents all of mankind, what does it mean for Lazarus to be a Zombie?

vi. Defining the Zombie in the midst of cultural representation

In literature, the representation of the Zombie body is standard: "The resurrected individual is deprived of will. memory, and consciousness, speaks with a nasal voice, and is recognized chiefly by dull, glazed eyes and an absent air" (Ackermann and Gauthier, 473); "Zombi are recognized by their absent-minded manner, their extinguished, almost glassy eyes, and above all by the nasal twang in their voices" (Metraux, 283); "According to folk belief, these sad individuals may be recognized by their docile natures, their glassy, empty eyes, the nasal twang to their voices […] and the evident absence of will, memory, and emotion" (Davis, 60). The study surrounding the Zombie, then, would appear to isolate the condition around the body in question. But note that the Haitian narrative suggests that a Zombie is not possible without the *bokor's* influence. There must be mediation for it to exist. I believe that Zombie studies reflects a continuous ritual of isolating the defiled, the contaminated, which is why the focus on the creature is isolated to the condition of the individual. Additionally, as noted earlier, Vodou supports this position, evidenced in the attention to individual seizure of the *ti bon ange*. I fused the Lazarus and Zombie narratives to dispel the myth that relegates the Zombie to uniquely individual conditions. The Zombie is the universal form of the body that has undergone conversion.[54]

[54] Conversion processes refer, often, to religious or ideological transformations, but the Oxford English Dictionary defines it, "turning in position, direction, destination." This broader definition is the one I am referring to in this instance. It better reflects the fragile nature illustrated in the subjects studied here.

Because of the description of the Zombie mentioned above, we are tempted to seek out representation of the creature in other forms of literature. Most notably, the Holocaust *Muselmänner* is described by Primo Levi as follows: "Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand."[55] Interestingly, a picture of the "Tomb of Lazarus" located in Judea in *The Biblical World* accompanies the following description: "few places in Judea awaken more memories of Jesus than El-Azariyeh, the miserable little Mussulman town that marks the site of Bethany. It consists today of about forty rude hovels, but boasts of various buildings which, were their identification possible, would be sacred indeed […], the house of Simon the Leper and the house of Mary and Martha. But more sacred than these – at least to the Moslems who regard Lazarus as a saint – is the tomb of Lazarus."[56] If the *Muselmänner* described by Primo Levi is a Zombie, and Lazarus is a Zombie, then this would indeed be – a bizarre coincidence? But the *Muselmänner* is not a Zombie; it is a figure systematically worn ("too tired") by physical and mental battery. In Vodou terms, the Gestapo does not possess the *ti bon ange* of the *Muselmänner*, this element simply left. The body is

[55] Primo Levi. *Survival in Auschwitz* (1958), translated by Stuart Woolf. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

[56] See photograph of "Tomb of Lazarus" in The Biblical World, Vol. 8, No. 5. (Nov., 1896) 402.

reduced to a state that only *appears* Zombie-like. The Zombie in the Holocaust narrative would be more akin to the Gestapo.[57]

In "The Convert as Social Type," David A Snow and Richard Machalek study the religious convert. In their essay they describe the physical aspects of the convert as follows: "Some would have us believe that the convert has a characteristic phenotype, a sort of Cain's mark. Delgado (1980, p. 22) cites several adjectives used by psychiatrists, psychologists, and other observers to describe those who convert to cults autistic-like, zombie-like, programmed, glass-eye stare, fixed facial smile, and stereotyped, robot-like responses" (261). But their essay suggests that the most revealing aspect of the convert is not their physical properties, but rather, their language. "After a period of time it became clear that the talk and reasoning of some members varied considerably from the rhetoric of others. Further investigation revealed discernible patterns in this talk and reasoning" (260). Combined, this becomes the representation of the Lazarus/Zombie crisis. Snow and Machalek say, "To the extent that conversion is viewed as a radical change, we propose that it is the *universe of discourse* which changes" (265). Furthermore, the convert is expected to "demonstrate their conversion" through the renunciation of a former life (268).

The power dynamics inherent in the myth of Lazarus and the Zombie are reflected in society, but the current direction is too focused on isolating individuals. The convert is a social animal, just as Lazarus represents the social group. Thus, all individuals in any

[57] Further articulation of how the Gestapo represents the zombie will be made in another project. For now, I will only say the German who becomes a Gestapo can be reflected in the Lazarus/zombie narrative through willing submission to ideology. Though alive, their actions and speech are guided by an allegiance to ideological forces that bar them from nature. They cannot encounter the life of the victim of the Holocaust, as they cannot participate in the world; their existence is entirely objectionable because of their subjugation to discourse.

social group are implied in the defilement called ‘Zombie.’ Zombie theorists ask, “What is the ‘living-dead?’” But I submit that it would serve us better to ask, “What is the ‘living-alive?’”

Any discussion of literature and belief must at some point enter into the mystery of voice and words. In a sense every one of man's works is a word. For everything that man makes manifest his thoughts. A dwelling or a spear tip communicates even when communication is not particularly intended. A building or a tool, we say, "shows" thought. In this, it is a kind of word, a saying of what is in one's mind.
Walter Ong, "Voice as Summons for Belief: Literature faith and the Divided Self"

Chapter Two:
Emphasis on the Zombie in Linguistic Variety

I. Kristeva's Semiotic in Zombie Context

"Meaning has become the central problem of philosophy and the human sciences […]. 'What does our language mean, to what does it refer'" (Oliver, xi)? In the Lazarus/Zombie problem articulated in chapter one, this question is at the heart of the schism between the individual and language. "With the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy, and poststructuralists' attention to language and metaphor, the connection between lived experience and the language in which we articulate that experience has become complicated" (Ibid). In her introduction to *The Portable Kristeva*, Kelly Oliver concludes by asking, "Can we say what we mean and mean what we say" (xi)? Oliver summarizes the history of philosophy's interest in linguistic study, beginning with Hegel who she says, "Through the dialectical movement of consciousness, the meaning of the world is realized in its philosophical articulation […]. There is a necessary relationship between conceptualization, which [Hegel] insists is necessary to self-consciousness and articulation." (Ibid). Ultimately, according to Oliver, Hegel believes we reach our "highest level of consciousness" when there is no gap between language and our

experience" (Ibid). Nietzsche, on the other hand, claims, "grammar […] is responsible for our belief in subjects and substance that transcends activities. In '*Truth and Lies in the Ultramoral Sense*,' he describes the meaning of words as the result of an arbitrary process of sedimentation and coagulation over time, a history which we forget when we use words" (Ibid). Of Heidegger, Kristeva writes, "Heidegger insists that [language] is the unfolding of meaning itself, including the meaning of human experience. We do not speak language, language speaks us" (Ibid). Finally, she points out, Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida entered the scene wherein Derrida, prompted by Saussure's argument, "that words have meaning only in relation to other words […] the signifier (sound pattern of a word) and the signified (concept) have an arbitrary relationship," claims, "the signified itself is also the product of differential relationships between signifiers; meaning is produced through an endless chain of signifiers" (Ibid). Thus Derrida will introduce the term *différance* "to refer to the difference through which meaning is produced, a difference that can never be articulated or conceptualized" (Ibid). If Oliver's summary of the discourse on language and meaning, language and the human, especially the individual, is accurate, then the Zombie problem becomes part of this dialogue. The question behind the Lazarus/Zombie problem is not in the meaning of language itself; it is not the relationship between meaning, language and experience; it is in whose meaning, whose experience do we utter when we speak? The Lazarus/Zombie problem is the association between the external source whose experience references the spoken words and the speaker, who is embodied by the thought, though it is not *his* thought; thus, he is embodied by the other.

Kelly Oliver describes Julia Kristeva's theory as one which seeks to "bring the speaking body back into the discourses of the human sciences" (xvi). Kristeva's theory is divided into two poles called the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*,[1] where the *symbolic* represents "the element of signification that sets up the structures by which symbols operate" (xiv). The *semiotic* is "the organization of drives in language; it is associated with rhythms and tones that are meaningful parts of language and yet do not represent or signify something" (xiv). In other words, the *semiotic* represents the "drives" that are part of the "materiality of the body."[2] She is careful not to reduce these drives to merely a function of biology; rather, they "both connect and differentiate the biological and the symbolic within the dialectic of the signifying body invested in practice (qtd. in Kristeva 1974:167)" (xvii).

If, as Kristeva claims, "language expresses bodily drives through its semiotic element," (xvi) then the speaking subject who experiences "emptiness" from within is a subject whose semiotic component has been repressed. Thus, if we were to read the Zombie within these parameters, we might find that the *ti bon ange* referred to in chapter one reflects Kristeva's semiotic. However, as pointed out in chapter one, the Zombie is misinterpreted as "empty." Oliver says, "Theories that propose the meaninglessness of

[1] Kelly Oliver asserts that the symbolic and the semiotic should not be confused with what has previously been written on the subject of these two terms. She says, "The symbolic element of language should not be confused with Lacan's notion of the Symbolic, which includes the entire realm of signification. Kristeva's symbolic is one element of that realm. While Lacan's Symbolic refers to the signification in the broadest possible sense, including culture in general, Kristeva's symbolic is a technical term that delimits one element of language associated with syntax. In addition, Kristeva's semiotic element (*le sémiotique*) should not be confused with semiotics (*La sémiotique*), the science of signs" (xv). Thus, my investigation aligns itself with Kristeva's definitions, so as to limit the problems that might be associated with these terms.

[2] Both the term "drives" and "materiality of the body" are used in both Kelly Oliver's introduction and Kristeva's essays. Kristeva uses the term "drives" to reference the Freudian concept if the "id", or the "instinctual energies that operate between biology and culture" (xvii). See Julia Kristeva's *La Révolution du langage poétique*. Paris: Editions du Seuil. Translated by Margaret Waller as *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia Press, 1984.

life or the impossibility of connecting language and life can be seen as symptoms of a general malaise caused by a feeling of emptiness" (xvii). Kristeva "diagnoses this emptiness as a lack of psyche or soul. In *New Maladies of the Soul*, she suggests that our souls (psyche) have been flattened and emptied by the rhythms and images of our culture, which are two-dimensional. Life takes place on the screen. Yet these media images merely cover over the surface of the emptiness that we feel facing the loss of meaning" (xxiv). Thus, this type of person is one who needs assistance in reactivating the part of the self that has been "flattened" by superficial images and psychotropic drugs pervasive in culture. Repression, however, implies a form of hope that is completely lost in the example of the Zombie. It is not repressed psyche that holds the Zombie hostage to language, but the acquisition of the psyche by another.[3] Language for the Zombie *is* the other. In the case of the Zombie, we seek the location of its soul. Thus, the problem here is that we do not know what it can feel,[4] or if we can trust that what it says reflects its own feelings and experiences. In other words, can a Zombie be its own witness?

[3] I believe a good deal of the problems regarding interpretations of the zombie lies in the phrase "I am." In Haitian Creole there is no translation for "I am." And by "I am," I am referring to the great "I am" repeatedly mentioned in both the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible. In Exodus 3:13-15 of the Oxford New English Bible, God tells Moses, "I am who I am;" in John 8:58, Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Though, this does not mean that non-believers have to believe that Jesus is, in fact, the great "I am." It's more important to me that the assertion in Western culture points to a belief and a centralization of an ultimate, incorruptible self. This is a topic for another time, but it is interesting to me that though Haitian Creole does have a term for "I am," *mwen*, the term does not categorically refer to such divine aspirations. As far as I know, there is no such saying as "I am" as posited in the Christian tradition. Thus, the zombie is a reflection of corruptibility from without, while the Christian assertion seems to bar this possibility. The soul can be repressed, but it cannot be apprehended, for "I am."

[4] Again, I make this point because we misinterpret the zombie as a creature that cannot feel. I return to the physical manifestations of the zombie in contrast to the metaphysical embodiment of the idea. The zombie appears catatonic, but the fear associated with it is not about this physical aspect. It is about the apprehension of what makes it *seem* catatonic. Also, it is frightening because its physical appearance does not correlate with its actions, for it does act. It cannot connect with another because it is disembodied by its own soul, but it can be something in the world because another soul keeps it alive and we witness the other *through* it. "Can it feel for itself?" is one question. "Can it speak what it feels for itself?" is an entirely other question. More, what it feels is suspicious because its *ti bon ange* (soul) is disembodied into the hands of another.

II. *Restavecs*: The Loss of Agency for the Imposition of Language

Kristeva's theory positions us alongside the testimonies of the violated subject. In Jean Robert Cadet's *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle Class American*, the subject of zombification becomes crucial to his testimonial. Jean Robert Cadet was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and given to wealthy guardians when he was about five years old. He does not know his real name, nor does he know the date of his birth.[5] This exchange from his biological family to domestic-servitude is called *Restavecs*[6] in Haiti and it is responsible for the subjugation of hundreds of thousands of little children.[7] Cadet's life in *restavec* servitude is the main focus of his autobiography. In it, he vividly describes the daily abuses and humiliations suffered by children unable to defend themselves, and, most importantly, undefended by the community that bears witness to their lot. Though few scholarly articles address the social institution, human rights organizations and figures like Oprah Winfrey have tried to assist Cadet in his quest to expose *Restavec* servitude and draw attention to the violations suffered by the children enslaved by it.

There are many descriptions of *Restavec* servitude, but most bear similar patterns of abuse. In "Of Haitian Bondage" Tim Padgett describes the life of "Michele" as follows, "Michele wishes now that she had grown up in her squalid Haitian birth city of Port-de-Paix. When she was a young girl, her impoverished parents sent her to live with her more affluent aunt and uncle in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, with the promise of a

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[5] "Jean Robert Cadet" 16 October 2007. http://www.freedomcenter.org/pdf/freedom-heroes/CadetBio.pdf

[6] *Restavec* is an oral institution. That is, it is not legally sanctioned by the Haitian government, but it is so pervasive as to adopt the quality of institutions. Certain conditions are standard; for example, it is usually a young child who "stays" at the home of a wealthy family and the impression is that the child will be given an education, skills for survival, room and board. In exchange for this, the child is expected to perform certain household duties for the host family.

[7] See Padgett, Tim. "Of Haitian Bondage." *Time Magazine* 5 March 2001. 16 October 2007. <http://www.racematters.org/ofhatianbondage.htm>

better future. She got instead an old mattress in a closet, 18 hours a day of cooking, cleaning and waiting on her aunt's large family, and years of beatings and sexual abuse by her cousins."[8] In "Life is Tough: Children in Domestic labor in Haiti," Barbara McClatchie Andrews describes a thirteen-year old "Nehemie" as follows, " Her account would be all-too-familiar to a quarter of a million young Haitian women, many much younger than she. Nehemie is a restavek, an undocumented, unpaid, unprotected, live-in child worker. A de facto slave. She gets up at 6:00 a.m. to light the cooking fire and prepare breakfast--most often a cornmeal gruel--for her 'family.' Afterward she accompanies the three younger of the family's six children to their school. The streets in Cit, Soleil are not considered safe. The week before our interview, in the sort of occurrence for which the slum has a reputation, eighteen young men died in a gang war. Returning to the house, while the children are out, Nehemie picks up their used clothes and washes them in a basin of cold water placed on the floor. Later she will press the garments with an iron that has been heated with coals from the charcoal brazier on which she cooks. She washes the dishes in the same basin and sweeps the floor. This is a task she repeats many times a day because dust permeates everything in Port-au-Prince. Every day Nehemie must also walk several blocks to the water depot. There she will hoist a five-gallon can of water onto her head in order to carry it home. This should be enough for the household's daily supply, but if it runs out she will have to go back for more […] If she works too slowly, her 'aunt' hits her with her fist. Tantot, her 'uncle,' meets out the same treatment, but Nehemie tells me she is better off than her friend Merlande

[8] Ibid.

whose 'uncle' fondles her."[9] Her article goes on describing Nehemie's situation, which ends with a statement far too observant for such a small child. When Andrews asks "for anything positive" Nehemie "hesitates" and "tells me, her voice barely above a whisper, "la vie est dure."[10] Thus, these children live in despair.

On the pervasiveness of the situation, Cadet says to an audience at the International Institute for Labour Studies in Geneva, "Anyone of you sitting here at this very moment can go to Haiti and ask for a child to live with you. All you need to do is to find a family with too many mouths to feed and promise that you will send the child to school and she is yours. You can treat her the same way slaves were treated under the French colonists. You do not have to make her a part of the family, learn her name, send her to school, provide her with health care, buy her clothes, give her affection, or treat her like a human being. You can make her sleep outside, torture her to death and dump her body in the trash, and no one will question you, and there will be no government investigation to find out the cause of death. In fact, the same specialized whips that were manufactured to torture the slaves during the 1700s can be purchased today on the streets of Port-au-Prince to torture children in domestic servitude" ("Invisible" 3,4). So, why does this institution exists in Haiti?

As I have traveled to Haiti on a number of occasions, I have come to know the faces of these children called *Restavecs*. The sheer burden of having to live in their condition is evident in their eyes, body language, and relentless fear of the other. I distinctly remember a little girl squatting while she washed dishes on the front porch one

[9] McClatchie Andrews, Barbara. "Life is Tough: Children in Domestic Labor in Haiti." (2003) *The World and I*. 20 October 2007. <http://www.worldandi.com/newhome/public/2004/January/clpub1print.asp>

[10] Ibid.

day while visiting distant relatives. She never looked up; she was never introduced or addressed. My mother, who was there, never looked in her direction. This was peculiar to me because there were introductions being made throughout the visit. Family members were asked to come out and meet my family, and we, in our turn, took time to make long introductions and share acquaintances. This little girl simply was *not there*. Even I could not muster up the nerve to ask; somehow, before ever learning about the institution, I knew I must not ask. It was clear that she did not exist, and any act to the contrary would be problematic. Several days later, at a social function, a newlywed couple asked me to "take" their daughter when she turns five. Their only request was that I not allow her to forget her biological parents. I was stunned. Years later, upon asking my family about the institution, I was told not to discuss it unless I commend the families who had *restavecs*, for their charity. They seemed to be saying that the living conditions espoused by Cadet, Nehemie, and Michele, among many, many others, were rare or unique situations which did not reflect the normal every day "reality" of the institution. Nevertheless, my mother once told me that in Port-au-Prince every morning at 6:00am she, as did the entire neighborhood, heard the sounds of a young child being beaten. The screaming and crying finally got to her, so she went to the house to discuss the matter. The woman who opened the door was the guardian of the child and complained that the child was lazy because he refused to get up when instructed. The child was a *restavec*, and the woman was asked to cease her beatings, as it went "beyond the limits of cruelty."[11]

[11] These are my mother's words. She told me the story after a long silence on the subject of *restavecs*. I could not help but notice how tense everyone got when I asked about it, so I believe my mother told me the story to let me know that she, as everyone else in the community, was conscious of the real nature of the institution.

There are a few explanations for why *restavecs* exist in Haiti. Cadet says, “You have to understand that Haiti, after its independence, was an isolated country. It was under quarantine by France, the United States, practically all the European countries. Isolation really added to the problem. A lot of the people who are practicing this today are people who felt powerless; having those child slaves gives them some power” (“Invisible” 9). Andrews says, “Figures tell the story of why the institution of *restavek* labor came to be. Poverty is at the root of the problem. Eighty percent of Haiti's population lives below the poverty line, the average family income seldom exceeding $250 (U.S.) a year, a sum that must--on average--feed, clothe, and shelter four or five children. Most of the population is young (40 percent are under fifteen) and most Haitians die before fifty. Almost half of Haiti's families are headed by single women, and the burden of sustaining their families can be too great. Many families fall apart” (3). And because of the history of Haiti under French rule, a common response is simply, “the institution is old, perhaps dating to the earliest days of post-independence Haiti. When the slaves were made free, they either became underpaid workers on Haiti's plantations or joined the ranks of the unemployed. This became a situation which years of exploitative governments have not changed. The institution may have been inspired by the French au pair model, in which a less fortunate child becomes part of a more fortunate family whom she serves as a nanny” (4). I will not argue the points made here by Cadet and Andrews, but I believe that some accountability must fall squarely on those who know and have opted to hold their peace. It seems to me, rituals inscribed in language are at the bottom of these developments.

III. Metaphor and Crisis of Language and Identity in Jean Robert Cadet's RestAvec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American

Who is the Zombie in the *Restavec* situation? In my previous chapter I argued that though the physical appearance of the Holocaust *Muselmänner* resembled a Zombie, it was the German Gestapo that best reflected the idea behind zombification. In the case of the *restavecs*, I would argue again that the Zombie is the members of a community that choose silence over outrage when they witness these acts against children, but the children also reflect the processes of zombification. In fact, I selected Jean Robert Cadet's autobiography as an example to demonstrate the universality of the Zombie because *Restavecs* are children who are initiated into this linguistic ritual *before* they fully develop self-consciousnesses.

The paradox of the Zombie is that it is both guilty and innocent at once. On the subject of its guilt, according to the myth, it is socially ostracized, exiled and abandoned. In *Passage of Darkness*, Wade Davis says, "The belief system's inherent need for validation and the purpose of zombification itself creates a form of social death for the victim, and this in turn has physical ramifications" (212). It is guilty for being a Zombie, for its defilement of the community, for contaminating nature with its presence, for implicating humanity, and for reflecting those who failed to protect their most precious resource: the self, the *ti bon ange*. Nevertheless, given the context of its making described in chapter one, it is also innocent. It is seized in its most vulnerable state. I selected to analyze Jean Robert Cadet's autobiography because it is not so easy to make the claim that children, the representation of innocence, can be made and grow up to be Zombies. On the contrary, Cadet's testimony makes him a witness and a hero. In

addition, unlike the physical properties of the Zombie, Cadet can see, hear, feel, and reason (so can the Zombie, by the way), but his language points out that what (and how) he is able to articulate himself is a product of the external forces that defined him.

Cadet's autobiography follows the conventional model of the genre; it is an attempt to explain or justify his existence, or a tool used to indict the offenders that maligned his life. To that end, there is nothing particularly unusual about how he conveys his experience. It is a straightforward chronicle of the events of his life. The narrative is told in the first person and reads rather easily, summed up in "from hell to glory"; Haiti enslaved him and America freed him. Nevertheless, his contribution in exposing the system of *Restavecs* does a great deal to illuminate the Zombie problem as it relates to its author. Despite his assurances that he has not only survived the horror of servitude in Haiti, but also successfully emerged as a role model and ambassador, the language he uses reveals that the conflict and crisis inherent in the historical imposition on and of his identity still remains. We must ask, are you sure you are what you say you are? Are you sure you know what you say you know? Can the one who has been denied agency in the world become its own witness? Despite the obvious pathos inflicted on the reader (how can you not feel sorrow and rage at the injustices inflicted on a child) and the fact that he joined the American Army, became a teacher and speaker in defense of others who suffer the predicament of his childhood, for all intents and purposes, he is a hero. Were it not for the language he uses to tell his story, the final conclusion would hold, but his language forces us to seek assurances; we are not convinced.

The Zombie signifies no particular individual. It references a condition; it is a metaphor. Thus Lazarus, the Zombie, references the condition and not the person.

Lazarus is a metaphor. The human who aligns himself with the discourse of an identity becomes a metaphor. It leaves us tasked to address the condition, the signifier, which is NOT the person who bears the name or identity; it is the discourse. According to Stephen Davies, the traditional definition of metaphors tends to fall into several camps: first, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* "is known as the Comparison Theory. In its various forms the Comparison Theory analyzes the metaphor 'A is B' as 'A is like B in certain unspecified respects,' or 'A and B are differently like some unspecified C in certain unspecified respects,' or 'A is to an unspecified C as B is to an unspecified D.' The Comparison Theory holds that metaphor may be explained as a form of indirect or implicit comparison" (291); The Connotation Theory claims, "there is in a metaphoric sentence a logical conflict between the core meanings of the words used, so that one or more words must be understood according to their marginal meanings" (291); and the Interaction Theory "holds that the metaphoric sentence has at least two subjects, one of which has its normal reference and colors the conception of the other subjects" (291). But Davies goes further to say, "The metaphoric meaning of the metaphor is not entirely independent of the literal meaning of the words used. In some way, either extensionally or intentionally, the literal meaning generates the metaphoric content" (292). This is where we begin an analysis of Jean Robert Cadet's autobiography. To what extent can he escape the metaphors that define his experiences? To what extent can we be certain that his name, as much his title, references him and not the signification associated with metaphors? All of the theories above work well with the problem of *Restavecs*. On the one hand, the literal meaning of the word means "to stay with." This is true; the child is "staying with" a family. The word also implies a child abandoned by his or her biological family due to

extreme poverty, the charitable defense of the child by a wealthier patron, and the child's fortune of room, board, and education. The word also means a child abandoned by the community and dependent on the mercy of a "guardian." What is most often *observed* is that *restavecs* are the excessively battered, those forced into long hours of labor, uneducated, unclothed, sexually abused, turned out into the street, socially negated, and ultimately "the hopeless."[12] The issue here is that the word means a great deal more than any single definition could pin to it. Add to this the name of the child who is identified by the word and you have the conflict that is Cadet's autobiography.

Walter Ong's essay, "Metaphor and the Twinned Vision," gives us something to consider as we analyze Cadet's autobiography. When we talk about metaphors, we understand that it is something so far removed from its reference that we are forced to think of similarities to comprehend the connection. Ong says, "Metaphor has many aspects, but for the present we may consider it, in a least-common-denominator definition, as the use of a term in a sense or signification improper to the term. Thus we include what all definitions or descriptions of metaphor somehow or other takes into account: a kind of doubling, a bifocal quality. This twinning aspect of metaphor is implied as soon as we speak of an "improper" signification, which suggests a "proper" one" ("MTV" 41). The "twinned vision" referred to in Ong's essay points out a disparity between the subject and the referent, but it also points out that the conflict inherent in metaphors leaves room for purgation. That is, in saying Jean Robert is a *restavec*, are we saying *restavecs* have the qualities of Jean Robert's experience? Or, is Jean Robert defined by the qualities called *restavecs*? These are two different questions;

[12] The perception that the *restavec* is hopeless is made clear in the previous examples and further on in this analysis. It is not that the *restavec* is hopeless, but he or she is often treated this way by his or her social environment.

thus, the moment we say, "Jean Robert is a *restavec*" we mean both Jean Robert, the person, *and* an identity, a symbol.

Because the word "*restavec*" affirms the power of a community while, simultaneously, negating the individual to whom the word refers, by *being* a *restavec* Cadet's speech comes to reflect the same principal patterns of affirmation and sacrifice[13]. He negates one experience that informs his identity in favor of another from the onset. More importantly, he chooses an identity that reflects another community, rather than one that affirms his individual subjectivity. For example, though his native language is Haitian-Creole, he writes his autobiography in English (the book is translated into French and Creole, but originally written in English).[14] Judging from the title, we also know that a dual system is at the heart of his discourse, and one that seeks to replace one "subjectivity" for another. "From Haitian Slave Child to Middle Class American" does not reflect his transition from one state to another.[15] That is, the statement does not imply a journey from Haiti to America, nor from slave to middle class; more important about the title of Cadet's autobiography is the fact that "Middle-class American" is a gesture that eliminates or replaces "Haitian Slave Child." This attempt, although understandable, even before we get into the text, indicates a *pattern* of speech consistent

[13] I will discuss sacrifice in detail in Chapter 3.

[14] I am not saying Jean Robert Cadet should have written his autobiography in Creole. On the contrary, not only was he left uneducated by his native community, his autobiography points out that he was educated in the United States. Although his native language is Haitian-Creole, he learned to write in English. Also, I suspect that in an effort to reach a much wider audience, he used prudence in writing his book in English rather than Creole. The point I am making here is that his articulation in English allows him to distance himself from the language of his masters.

[15] I say this though the preposition, "from," denotes transition. The issue here is that the terms, "Haitian-slave Child" and "Middle-class American" are used in a manner that reflects very strict and inflexible corresponding images. One is destructive, the other affirming; one is dangerous, the other safe; one is degradation, the other proud; one is powerlessness, the other power. Thus, the title does not suggest any flexibility in the images of each of the corresponding identities such that a transition would have occurred.

with elimination and replacement of subjects in discourse. Through this we get a sense of how language plays out in Cadet's testimony. The pattern is repeated and the text is replete with similar gestures that desperately try to emerge out of *Restavec* servitude at the expense of the condition and experience attached to personal subjectivity. Though Cadet has found refuge in America's social system, he has not found the freedom implied by his title. On the contrary, "Fear of freedom, of which its possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he prefers to the risks of liberty" (Friere, 20).

We want to believe Cadet escaped slavery. An American audience reading this narrative would be remiss not to sympathize with the subjects who suffer from the malicious treatment suffered by *restavecs*. The American identity almost obligates a negative response to any subject who has reduced another to the figure of slavery, imagined or otherwise. [16] In this case, emotions are predictable. But I would like to try to problematize this possible response to Cadet's autobiography, for what are we sympathetic with? Is it the plight of these children or the memory of slavery? They are not one in the same.

When did the institution of slavery become an abhorrent figure in American history? In an article by Frizhugh Brundage, slavery was once considered "a 'peculiar' institution." He says, "Antebellum southerners […] had referred to slavery as their "peculiar" institution, as if to render it a quaint curiosity. In [Kenneth] Stampp's book,

[16] I have no evidence that this is the general opinion of Americans. In fact, based on current response to "the Apology Act," which would offer some reparations to descendents of slavery, it seems while many Americans feel slavery was wrong, they don't necessarily see it as a problem that deserves the attention the "Apology Act" would grant. Nevertheless, I have not found any current reputable books, essays, or articles that still try to justify slave-ownership or imply that it was to the benefit of the Africans. If these opinions still exist, it is clearly too politically incorrect to voice them.

the phrase evoked altogether different meanings. For Stampp, slavery was "peculiar" in the sense that it was aberrant, deviant, grotesque, and strange. He had no tolerance for the moonlight and magnolia mythology that contaminated many portraits of the Old South. Slavery, […] as Stampp pointed out, had been America's 'most profound and vexatious social problem.'"[17] On the other hand,

> During the first half of this century, the prevailing interpretation of slavery reflected the influence of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips. In numerous books and articles written during the teens and twenties, Phillips deployed his considerable literary skills and extensive research in plantation records to present an almost idyllic picture of plantation slavery. He emphasized the humanity of slave holders and left no doubt about his belief in the inherent inferiority of blacks and their suitability to chattel slavery. As rendered by Phillips, slaves were not unlike the amiable, submissive, child-like primitives who were then stock characters in minstrel shows. Blacks were less the victims than the beneficiaries of the slave trade; they had escaped barbarism and had been introduced to the rudiments of civilization.[18]

There is an uncanny resemblance between Brundage's description of the conflicting attitudes towards slavery and those that surround the *Restavec* institution. Thus, it has been argued that the colonized simply pick up the habits of the colonizer; the two mirror each other, especially in the most egregious act of developing human bondage. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire says, "almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors'" (30). Freire explains that the oppressed perceives the oppressor as powerful, "ideal men" and the "model of humanity" (30). He adds, "This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor"

[17] See Frizhugh Brundage. "American Slavery: A Look Back at The Peculiar Institution" in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 15. (Spring, 1997) 118-120.

[18] Ibid.

(30). This is not an uncommon philosophy in postcolonial studies. Thus, it would appear that when an image, or even the slightest reflection, of slavery appears, it reflects, not a subject, but the identity of the colonizer. To look upon the oppressed must be to look upon the oppressor, only.[19] If America mourns for Cadet, is it not over the reflection of their personal history? I pose this question because the translation from *restavec* to "slave-child" reflects two different cultures, though they are fused in the image of a single colonizer.[20] The words are not easily translatable, despite the "imitation" theory.[21]

"Slave" to "middle-class" is a victory for both the author and the reader; it is an affirmation of America and the acquisition of "the American Dream." Our enviable shores facilitated that which Haiti failed to secure. Nevertheless, as Cadet's wife points out in a foreword to the autobiography, "I lie beside him now each night as he sleeps. And when that sleep is fitful – when I hear his laboring breath, his muffled cry, or feel his arms tremble and his legs thrash about – I know that the reality from decades ago is upon us again" ("RA" Foreword). His wife speaks of his nightmares as events that resurface the past, but his nightmares also reflect the patterns of his speech; a speech that is indistinguishable from him. His speech constitutes the upholding of a language that defined his agency many decades ago.

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[19] I will go into this topic at a later time, but these assertions are very demonstrative of the Lazarus/zombie problem. It precludes the possibility of another language in the subjugated person. If Jean-Robert Cadet, as a *restavec*, is the zombie/subject of Haitians who were "zombied" by the French, who zombied the French? For any identity implies zombification. Thus, we have zombies born of zombies born of zombies.

[20] I will go into this later in the chapter, but for now it matters a great deal that the children are *given* to their owners and not sold. They are not kidnapped, nor forced into the home of their patron against the will of family members. They are not the spoils of war. They are handed over to their guardians on the basis of a promise. This is inherent in the word "*restavec"* and it is represents a crucial difference between it and America's notion of slavery.

[21] "Imitation" theory is my term.

How can we know Cadet's speech is the nightmare of which his wife speaks? There is more than one way to read Cadet's autobiography. On the one hand, it is a physical text. That is, it retells, chronologically, the events of his devastated childhood in physical and mental bondage. It is, literally, the memory of the environment that defined his early experiences. On the other hand, translating experience into written form is never simple. "The post-modern trope of resistance and recovery […] speaks of the irony of representation, of that inescapable difference between appearance and reality, and exposes writing as the means that makes reality accessible only by occulting it in a simulacrum that substitutes itself for the reality it pretends to represent. It parodies the sign that seeks to become speech by cannibalizing the reality it represents. It stigmatizes writing as the enigma that seeks to enclose within itself both the representation and what the representation represents. It speaks of writing as the identity of means and ends that overcomes its object by becoming it" (Tyler, 131). Though Cadet's autobiography is a reflecting mirror (his speech reflects his words), more than Cadet's assertions of events are the reflections of the patterns of his speech and the symbolic representations inferred by his use of language; the spaces in-between the words that tell us more about Cadet than the physical description of his childhood. We must go further, if at all possible, because if we do not then we run the risk of reading the Lazarus/Zombie problem inscribed in Cadet's autobiography as an aesthetic.

Cadet explains that there are three kinds of children in Haiti: the elite, the very poor and the *Restavec*:

> I knew three groups of children in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: the elite, the very poor, and the restavec, or slave children […] Children of the poor often have very dark skin. They appear dusty and malnourished. In their one-room homes covered with rusted sheet metal, there is no running water or

> electricity. Their meals of red beans, cornmeal, and yams are cooked under clouds of smoke spewed by stoves made of three coconut size stones and fueled by dried twigs and wood. They eat from calabash bowls with their fingers and drink from tin cans with sharp edges, sitting on logs, while being bothered by flies. They squat in the underbrush and wipe with rock or leaves. At night, they sleep on straw mats or cardboard over dirt floors while bloodsucking bedbugs feast on their sweaty flesh. They walk several miles to ill-equipped schools, where they depend on lunches of powered milk, donated by foreign countries that once depended on the slave labor of their ancestors. After school they rush home to recite their lessons loudly in cadence before Caribbean daylight fades away, or they walk a few miles to Park-Champ-de Mars and sit under street lamps to do their homework while moths zigzag above their heads. ("RA" 3)

We cannot know why he goes to such great lengths to describe the "very poor" as he does here; perhaps it is because he wants to point out that there is nothing that mediates the "elite" and the "very poor;" perhaps it is so that he can prepare the reader for a condition that is even worse than what is described in his articulation of the "very poor" (if the very poor is this bad, the *Restavec* is unimaginable and unconscionable); perhaps it is only to point out the dire conditions of children in Haiti. The act of describing the conditions of these children is told in what appears to be merely an objective, albeit sad, almost anthropologic, matter-of fact modality. The image is meant to guide the reader, not only to a place where he/she has neither experience nor reference, but where conscience dictates unquestionable trust in Cadet's perspective and testimony. Socially and politically speaking, we trust the accuracy of the testimony, but to say that this is the only way to read Cadet's illustration is premature. Cadet is creating the landscape of his language; it is the place of his nightmare performed in speech.

The very first quality of the "poor" in Cadet's description is "very dark skin." This is also a political matter. The description invokes the history of the "dark-skinned" subject maligned by colonialism and abandoned to abject poverty. Cadet wrote this

merely to articulate a curious coincidence. "The traditional ranking of white, colored, and black is still significant in the islands […]. The correlation between color and wealth and power is far from perfect, but generally the poorest people are black and those with the highest status are white or near-white."[22] Thus, this primary observation draws attention to the political nature of Haiti's "very poor." It is not merely a matter of skin complexions, but class differentiation, where the "very poor" *equals* the "very dark skinned," the lowest stratum of society. If the "very dark skinned" are at the political bottom of society, what is a *restavec*? But, why begin the description with the "very dark skinned?" What does "very dark skinned" represent? If we say it only represents the political and social aspects of a society, then we reduce Cadet's testimony to just political material. Rather, what Cadet internalized in his experience as a *restavec* reflects his descriptions, "very dark skinned" being one of them. Thus, what might the description represent? On the one hand, yes, it represents the material reality of the extreme poverty of dark-skinned people in Haiti and an unjust system that disseminates material goods in unequal measure based on skin color. On the other hand, it also represents qualities that are less defined by material; lack, fear, condemnation, unprotected, abandoned. It represents the nightmare, in its most inimical form. For this reason, Cadet produces a meta-narrative, with many layers of meaning.

The description is a painting, with "very dark" covering the expanse of the canvas. It is a reversal of anthropomorphic connections; a metaphor. In other words, it is an association with what "very dark skinned" represents. When we make anthropological gestures, we raise humanity to the level of nature. Man becomes sky,

[22] George E. Simpson. "Social Stratification in the Caribbean" in *Phylon (1960-)*, Vol. 23, No. 1. (1st Qtr., 1962) 29-46.

earth, water, fire, light, dark. Cadet brings nature down to the human. Nature becomes the very dark skinned, the poor, the wealthy, the light skinned, the embraced, the abandoned.[23] This is important because the Zombie figure is precisely that which has been removed from the grand expanse, the grand narrative of Nature. The Zombie is precisely that whose universe is social because his God is another human. Thus, "very dark skinned" *is* brooding night, a natural darkness that exists because of culture, not because the sun descended from the sky. The social defines nature because Cadet's experience is purely dependent on the social.[24] And what is most difficult is that the human becomes the object of the metaphor. Usually, when we use a metaphor to describe an individual, we say, "that man is a house;" we may mean, "that man is big." It

[23] This has to be fleshed out when I write a book on the subject. For now, let me explain that if very dark-skinned people are socially made to bear the associations made with "Night," as it is described in literature dating as far back as Gilgamesh (which I would argue is a real unconscious association made by some people), then very dark-skinned people have the problem of being unable to escape a color associated with descriptions wholly independent of their person. However, if night no longer harnessed by years of literary and oral description, becomes that which is associated with the skin color, and it is the skin color, not historical Night, that bears negative qualities by virtue of its social experience, then the point is not to escape the skin color, but to escape night. To me, this is about moving and flexibility, where in the former example skin color in its subordination to Night is inflexible; in the latter example, night retains its flexibility, but it is subordinate to the social and, by extension, to race. In this way, I can move from night to day, from dark to light. This theory is also supported by Cadet's wife's words: "My mornings greet me with another truth: our son. I know that the combination of my white skin and my husband's brown skin could have created our lovely, beige-skinned boy only through the echoing effects of genes […], my husband's father. My husband tells me that our son is his reason for writing this, his source of strength. I smile" (Cadet, Forward). It is not Cynthia Nassano Cadet's whiteness, nor the interracial marriage between the two that calls attention to her words; rather, it is the language she uses that surround this particular articulation. "My whiteness" and "beige-skinned boy" is preceded by "My mornings greet me" and followed by "I smile." As noted in Cadet's descriptions, and throughout the autobiography, when describing the "very poor," "very dark skinned," "morning" has turned to night and no one is smiling. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon says, "Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly *white*. I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*" (63). I don not read this only as an illustration of the desire to be a different race, but also as desire to be "morning" (nature), "greetings" (communication, speech), smiles (laughter, joy), and hope (life, the *ti bon ange*). I really do not think this is only about envying the material, political and social power of the White European.

[24] This assertion is made because in his autobiography Cadet hardly ever mentions nature outside of its relationship to the social. He does not speak of his experience of rain, heat, or hunger independently of the social environment. Even love is contingent on escaping the social. This is what leads me to believe that Cadet's Nature is entirely dependent on the social and culture structures that defined him.

is unusual to say, "that house is a man." If we were to lay this concept out in terms of Cadet's illustration, we might say, rather than "the very dark-skinned are Night," we would say, "night is the Very Dark-skinned." In this case, "night" is the metaphor of "the very dark-skinned," where, as per Aristotle's theory, "A is B" or "A is like B" and "children" reflect a marginal C that connects the two "unlike terms" (Davies, 292). Let me be perfectly clear; it is not the real "very dark skinned" children referred to in his autobiography that represent brooding night, but the language that reflects what and how Cadet sees. The remaining description, for example, sheds some light on Cadet's language.

In order to best illustrate Cadet's metaphorical articulations, I took some 50 words out of his description, in its proper order, to analyze;

> […] very dark […] dusty […] malnourished […] one-room […] covered […] with rusted sheet metal, […] no water or electricity […] clouds of smoke […] dried twigs and wood. […] eat […] with […] fingers […] drink […] sharp edges […] bothered by flies […] squat […] wipe with rock or leaves. […] Night […] sleep on […] dirt floors […] bloodsucking bedbugs feast on […] sweaty flesh. […] daylight fades away […] while moths zigzag above […] heads. ("RA" 3)

The landscape (or space) is infinitely small. This place, "covered" by dust and "malnourished," without "water or electricity [light]," informs the reader of a location or place so contained and bound to earth, it may be beneath the earth, perhaps a kind of grave. What are "twigs and wood" if not the resources used to burn or bury? Where is the subject surrounded by "smoke," asleep on "dirt floors," where "bedbugs feast on sweaty flesh," where "daylight fades away" while "moths zigzag above heads?" It seems to me, Cadet's use of language inadvertently describes the landscape of the dead. Nevertheless, they "eat," "drink," "squat," and "recite;" most importantly, they are

"bothered." They speak. This is, to me, the only evidence of a living subject, though living in a nightmare. Thus, there are two temporal articulations in Cadet's description; one is an observation made from a socio-historical perspective. It tells us what he physically observed; Cadet is speaking as an objective participant and a witness. The subject of witnessing is made more complex by virtue of who is testifying. The other is a series of associations that reflect where he is, now. One is a literal articulation of a particular space observed at a particular time that is not the time of the testimony. The other is metaphor. It does not recognize space or time. It is the site of Cadet's recurring nightmare, inscribed in language. There is what Cadet observes, and then there is what the Zombie can see. The Zombie always sees death first, for it knows death. The oppressive *human* conditions of *restavec* subjects are already revealed in Cadet's language even before he describes the institution. We can read Cadet's account to be a literal interpretation of events, but the symbolic elements of his speech are found in his metaphorical articulations.

When we use a metaphor, there is what Ong describes as "improper signification." That is, the "twinned vision" in a metaphor refers to a doubling in perspective. A man is obviously not a dog, but when we use the metaphor to describe the man, we prioritize one aspect in favor of the other. It is not a proper signifying of the subject, and yet, we use it to articulate or compress what we experience in multiples. To emphasize the importance of metaphor, Ong goes on to say, "the term 'improper' signification is not to indicate that the second signification is wrong, awkward, or only grudgingly allowed […] in metaphor, there is merely a signification, which has a kind of priority, a prescriptive or presumptive right to the term for the simple reason that, in the

hurly-burly of semantic activity, it somehow got prior hold of the term" ("MTV" 41). Further, "It is a commonplace that in metaphor a term does not abandon one signification for another, but rather stands related to two significations at once" ("MTV" 43). Thus, Cadet is at once a subject and a restavec. What we mean by *restavec* is not what we mean when we say "Cadet" anymore than saying "very dark skinned" means the children of the very poor, but like "very dark skinned," the meaning afforded to *restavec* seems to eclipse what signifies the person. Even if Cadet tries to describe his personal experience as a *restavec* in 'human' terms, he always runs the risk of meaning *restavec*, as it is defined by the social and cultural constructs of his environment. We get lost sifting through meanings and voices because there are many. This means Cadet is buried, and I would add, buried alive in meanings and conjectures he cannot escape.

Ong points out, "When we speak of a man as a cur, the metaphor is effective in so far as we can keep the term "cur" attached primarily not to a man but to a dog. If the primacy of this original attachment is compromised, if the word becomes attached to the second meaning more or less directly so that the primary meaning is eliminated or at least is no longer effective – as when we speak of the foot of a mountain or the head of a table – metaphor becomes spent, or even ceases to be a metaphor at all" ("MTV" 42). Indoctrinated in the *Restavec* discourse, Cadet is himself a metaphor, where the primary meaning is not in Cadet's subjectivity, but in *restavec* discourse. His testimony only works if we maintain the definition of *restavec*, not Cadet. Moreover, if we do this, then we are derailed. We run the risk of saying Cadet represents *restavecs*, which is to say, we cannot know anything about Cadet. Yet, the autobiography is written precisely to communicate the "Who?" in Jean Robert Cadet. As Ong points out, "The doubling or

twinning of two concepts which metaphor thus demands is a clue to the psychological and linguistic importance of metaphor. At the heart of the linguistic situation, there is another kind of twinning which the human intellection must constantly seek to circumvent but which it can never succeed in escaping […]. It is the enunciation or statement, the operation by which a subject is joined to a predicate to make a unit discourse which has, as we say, complete sense" ("MTV" 42). So most of what emerges in Cadet's narrative has the characteristics of the active metaphor. To understand this one must address the meaning of the term, *Restavec*, which generated the foundational context for Cadet's speech.

IV. The Institution of *Restavecs* as Metaphor for Culturally Sanctioned Subjugation of Individuals

Primarily, *Restavec*, like all names and titles, arrests the individual within parameters. It replaces the subject and becomes the primary agent that answers our "Who?" Cadet points out that his humanity is grossly compromised by *restavec* servitude; he is dehumanized, and most completely by language inscribed in being a *restavec*. The *Restavec* discourse still inhabits him. He is substituted by the identity and substitution is primary for the Zombie. In fact, his speech suggests he is unable to speak outside of the patterns of substitution demanded of him by the discourse. He is a condition because, as a person substituted by the term, *restavec* does not refer to any one person in particular. It is a "living" word,[25] which is why its power so completely rejects any categorization. The word itself is more a symbol, than an institution; it is an active

[25] By this I mean that the meaning of the word changes depending on who speaks it and to whom. I will address this later in this section.

idea. When you say, "You are a *restavec*," not only are you using it in its metaphorical sense, but also its social, cultural, political, psychological and philosophical sense. Cadet describes the *Restavec* as follow:

> *Restavec* are slave children who belong to well-to-do families. They receive no pay and are kept out of school. Since the emancipation and independence of 1804, affluent blacks and mulattoes have reintroduced slavery by using children of the very poor as house servants. They promise poor families in faraway villages who have too many mouths to feed a better life for their children. Once acquired, these children lose all contact with their families and, like slaves of the past, are sometimes given new names for the sake of convenience. The affluent disguise their evil deeds with the label *restavec*, a French term that means "staying with." Other children taunt them with the term because they are often seen in the streets running errands barefoot and dressed in dirty rags.
>
> *Restavecs* are treated worse than slaves, because they don't cost anything and their supply seems inexhaustible. They do the jobs that the hired domestics, or bonnes, will not do and are made to sleep on cardboard, either under the kitchen table or outside on the front porch. For any minor infraction they are severely whipped with cowhide that is still being made exclusively for that very purpose. And like African slaves of the past, they often cook their own meals, which are comprised of inferior cornmeal and a few heads of dried herring. Girls are usually worse off, because they are sometimes used as concubines for the teenage sons of their "owners." They are often referred to as "la pou ca" [translated "here for sex"]. And if they become pregnant, they are thrown into the streets like garbage. ("RA" 4)

Like "very dark skinned children", this description depends on the memory of the *image* of human rights violations. However, the desire to elicit response from the reader based on images in this oral tradition is premature. *Restavecs* are not slaves. In "Interfaces of the Word" Walter Ong says, "any discussion of literature and belief must at some point enter into the mystery of voice and words. In a sense every one of man's works is a word. For everything that man makes manifests his thought" ("BW" 259). The *restavec* is a product of a particular *social* idea and despite the "imitation" theory, it deserves some analysis.

As Cadet points out, the word, *Restavec*, comes from a historical notion that emerged following the Independence of Haiti in 1804. Cadet himself, repeatedly, says, "African slaves in Hispaniola led uprisings against their French masters in the late 1700s and eventually gained their independence in 1804. They named their new country Haiti, and modeled their new government after the same one that had enslaved them for over two centuries. The Haitian elite who wished to live the same privileged lives as their former French masters took in children of the very poor as house servants and called them Reste-Avec, a term that means "to stay with" ("Invisible" 3). Haitian national pride rests on the Revolution of 1804, on the resistance that ended the institution of slavery. In fact, beyond the shores of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capitol, the celebrated Booker T. Washington is quoted as saying, "I am pleased to note that the author takes a hopeful view of Haiti and says that this little nation is not quite so black as she has been painted. […] With reference to the problem that confronts the Negro in the New World, it appears that the problem in Haiti is for an independent Black people to develop themselves and the great resources of their rich island."[26] Thus Haiti, by definition, represented the hope of the African Diaspora; the first independent Black nation which emerged out of the "dark ages" of colonialism and slavery. Thus, the terms of the word *restavec* accounts for this national pride. *Restavec* cannot mean slavery if "Haitian" means independence from slavery. And, if "Haitian" means independence from slavery and *restavec* is a term born of Haitians, the term must mean, in some direct or indirect way, independence from slavery, too.

[26] See Booker T. Washington. "The Negro in the New World" in *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 10, No. 38. (Jan., 1911) 173-178.

Restavec, although inscribed with elements of slavery, is more complex than observations allow. It is also informed by religious (both Christian and Vodou) ritual. On the one hand, the term implies charitable and benevolent acts that govern 'salvation.' As I recall the family who asked me to take their daughter back to the U.S with me, I seriously considered the proposition. It was not out of a desire to have a child of my own or to save the child from the grips of poverty. I did not want to see a child taken from her parents, but I thought the parents demonstrated an amazing show of unconditional love by offering up their daughter, sacrificing their attachment to her, in the hopes that they could facilitate a better life for her than what they could provide. It was a grand gesture on their part, an overwhelming exposure to their vulnerability, and a tremendous responsibility on my part to respond in an equally grand manner. I imagined the possibility of taking the little girl and bringing her back to the United States to educate her until she could return home, well cared for, as promised. Thus, my "charity" would save a little girl and the hopes of a family trapped in a terribly insecure position. That would be nice and clean were it not for the vulnerability and complexity of multiple souls described in Vodou. Were it possible for my feelings of charity to be stable throughout that little girl's life, perhaps this grand salvation narrative could be realized. But Vodou instructs there is no such stable "self." The persons in the act of the exchange are as ethereal as the narrative and the words that facilitate the exchange. How long would it be before the power I yielded over the child, begin to take a life of its own? How long before charity becomes personal sacrifice? After all, responsibility for the child would fall squarely on my shoulders. And, finally, how long before it occurred to me that I am the only source of protection for that child? The child's parents a long distance from me,

in a position of gratitude, unable to reach me - and the improbability of reaching them - the child would be completely dependent on me as both God and law. And finally, who is going to challenge what I do with this child under the protection of a grand narrative like the "unconditional love and self sacrifice of parents" and "Christian charity?" You would have to be crazy. Language is a stable filter that blocks sight and sound. The Zombie narrative instructs the precarious and dangerous nature of such power dynamics; most importantly how they function in language.

For the child, social death means the victim of violence is also the beneficiary of Grace. Canceled out, the child cannot emerge as a source of concern; given the option between death-by-starvation on the streets of Port-au-Prince or domestic servitude in the home of a bourgeois, language dictates that the child received a "lucky break." Demonstrated in his narrative, Cadet's situation is illustrated in the life of a child that goes from nightmare to hellish nightmare, not because he is subject to abuse, but because he is expected to show gratitude *despite* the abuse; not because he is abused, but because *restavec* means salvation from physical death. The joining of seemingly conflicting ideologies, Christianity and Vodou, illustrates the powerful effect of linguistic oppression. Its power lies in its contradictions and absences. *Restavec* often translates as child slavery, but slavery is an acknowledged, documented institution which prompts moral outrage; the specific history of the word underlies both imagery and sound, one that *Restavec* cannot co-opt. Unlike the colonist's slave, where financial exchange and contracts mediated the institutional form, *Restavecs* are born of an oral institution and are *given* to their masters under a separate narrative that does not easily translate into the word "slavery." It is an oral agreement and there is no financial exchange between

parents and "guardian." Orality, therefore, allows for its absence. And absence in oral language can be of equal or greater power than what is imposed by text. Actions are noted in language and can be acknowledged or dismissed without further complications; the repercussions of this? Profound crisis for the child. While *Restavec* thrives in Haiti, no political agent is responsible for its development. The social can, therefore, resist an obligation to its existence, and, since the term bears no place in public dialogue, the child implied in the condition does not really exist vis-à-vis language, or law.

Though the term *Restavec* means "to stay with," it is defined by who it references. For the child, a *Restavec* can neither witness its own degradation nor have a witness who speaks on his behalf. The word rests on the one who "rescues" the child. Since the word can refer to either charity or malicious treatment, it falls on the "master" to define the word relative to the child. In seeking real-life examples of people who had *restavecs*, one woman admitted she had a "child," but she quickly stated that she sent the child to school. Another aunt, reputed to have thrown several girls out on the street because they had been raped and impregnated by her adolescent son, angrily refused any interviews that implied wrongdoing on her part. I was asked by other family members to tread carefully and ask questions that celebrate her heroic efforts on behalf of the children. Thus, it was not the children that became the subject of *restavecs*, but their masters. And since they are the only permissible source of testimony, no testimony exists for the silenced subjects. Robert Harvey, in his essay, "The Play of the Witness," points out that someone like Cadet (or *restavecs*), would need us to utilize the Lyotardian concept of *The Differend* if we wanted to locate a *real* witness.[27] "All of the basic concepts upon which

[27] My emphasis on 'real' points out that the silencing of the *restavec* and the "grand narrative" of the guardians cancel any real testimony we might derive from the discourse. As Robert Harvey discusses in

the *The Differend* is built – e.g., damage and wrong, litigation and *différend* –, all of the critiques that the work launches – that of metalanguage, of speculative *Resultat,* of narrative legitimation -, all of the fundamental elements mobilizing the non-system called *The Differend* stem from the experience of radical wrong meted out under the name [*Restavec*]" (2).[28] There is no legal system that monitors the *Restavec* institution; it is a harm executed now which has no recourse in Haiti's justice system. Thus, Harvey adds,

> That title – *The Differend* – already informs us that it will have been a question of a situation arising from a legal context. The *différend* differs from litigation in that without a rule of judgment applicable to every game of defense and prosecution – the game of adversaries that we call a trial – it is impossible to always render equitable verdicts. Yet *différends* may not be eternal. Three 'ways out' are conceivable: (1) ignoring the *différend*: the current rule of judgment, though not recognized by (or incomprehensible to) one of the two parties is nonetheless applied and a wrong results; (2) the current rule of judgment is judged to be couched in terms that seem to accommodate the weak party, resulting in what appears to be a reparable damage, but which in fact is an unresolved (but masked) wrong; or (3) honoring the *différend*: all parties recognize that no rule of judgment sufficiently broad to encompass the heterogeneity of discourses appearing before the court currently exists and judgment is suspended indefinitely. (3)

Harvey's first and second propositions reflect the problem in Cadet's testimony. His demand for justice is "incomprehensible" and therefore ignored by his community or the articulation is so "accommodating" to the weak, it renders it suspicious to his community – causing the victim/s more damage. Thus, Harvey's essay instructs us to

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his essay, to the truth, we have to invoke the differend, especially as it relates to "survivors" like Jean Robert Cadet.

[28] Robert Harvey never says "Restavec." In his essay he speaks about the Holocaust and Primo Levi's autobiographical accounts. In addition, his discourse on the witness focuses on what "passes" between the victims of the Holocaust who did not survive (died or muted) and those who did. His essay addresses legitimating the speaking survivor as a witness for the dead or muted victim. This is, of course, not a perfect parallel to the *Restavec* institution, but it is very useful, nonetheless.

look to the aspects of the survivor's testimony that speak for the dead, from the dead.[29] The guardian, certainly, cannot be reliable witnesses.

Ong says, "As a 'word,' a painting may be polysemous and mysterious. Yet it remains something that some person has projected outside himself and made accessible to others […]. It externalizes something conceived within the artist, although not fully conceived until it was in some way externalized – in order that this something might be assimilated into another or others, or at least may be available for such assimilation" ("BW" 260). Though Ong is referring to the 'word' as having the same constituents as the work of an artist, this articulation is not far from the activity inherent in *Restavecs*. In a sense, the child is a blank canvas for its master, at least in the eyes of his "guardian" and the community.

Ong adds, "in so far as words are formed within us, they are destined for externalization. One might conjecture about intelligences with ineffable words that remain forever media of interior contemplation and cannot be projected to the exterior. But the fact is that our natural interior words or concepts are not of this sort. If we can conceive a thought within ourselves, it is the sort of thing our fellows can enter into. If we can think it, others can, too…there is no private language, even of inarticulate symbols" ("BW" 270). And this is precisely the problem of the *restavec*. Wherever the notion of *restavec* emerged, it was one that spread extensively in language and the collective internalization of a thought. Agreement on its meaning or lack of meaning, its subjugation to the guardian, and its negation of agency, was not only shared by the community, but given *back* to the child to consume in equal measure.

[29] I might be pushing it here, but I want to stress the importance of reading Cadet's autobiography beyond the initial layer of descriptions. We need to consider, closely, what this witness has seen and how a wrong has been done to him. This, it seems to me, requires more than a straightforward reading.

V. A Final Word on Agency Caught in the Claws of Language

What does it mean to be without witnesses? Or, how does it happen that the child has no witness? Given intonations and meaning are free in oral language, *restavec* can mean an individual who was charitably taken from the streets, or an individual who has been abused, or an individual who is denied class consideration. I can utter the word with disdain, indifference, or admiration. Understanding is determined by the speaker and the listener, where the speech communicated lacks substantial foundation for observation of a specific condition. The speech is *free* of image. The subject is negated through the designation of the term.

Cadet never emerges from this tomb-like structure because the tomb moves wherever he goes, in language. Although Jean Robert Cadet writes an autobiography, a text asserting the self and a life, the narrative is replete with similar characteristics of the contradictions that illustrate the presence of the other in him.

I do not want to confuse the elusive nature of words with something which lacks historical context. Ong says, "The context of thinking is words. If I hadn't learned words like 'mama,' I could never have got started thinking. And my thoughts are not in good condition, they are not at the optimum, until I have them in words. Then I know what I am thinking, what I mean. How can I tell what I mean until I hear what I say? It's by formulating my thoughts in words that I bring the thoughts to maturity…this means that we do not have any completely private thoughts […]. The words that I use to formulate my thoughts are not my own. All language is public. All thinking is public in the sense that it shapes up in the public medium – language" ("BW" 21). Community

determines the word, the word determines thought, thought determines meaning, and meaning determines being. If the community agrees *restavec* means "either, or," then Cadet is this, too: either, or. A learned language, Jean Robert Cadet becomes an accomplice to his own negation. Walter Ong says,

> Sound is different from any of the other sensory fields in that it indicates the present use of power. Sound shows that something is going on, something is happening, power is being used. The truth is caught in folklore as well as in the philosophy of the past and the present. Homer speaks of 'winged words.' This means words fly away, they are evanescent. But it also means that they are powerful; you have to be strong to fly. In the Bible we find this sense of the word developed with extreme sophistication. "dabar" in Hebrew means a word and it means as event – both. So God's word is God's action, his breaking into history, an event, a happening. A word is an event, it is a happening. ("BW" 26)

Thus, the act of saying *restavec* is the same as the act of stating then negating the presence of someone. More importantly, this becomes a pattern reflected in Cadet's speech even when he is not speaking directly of *restavecs*.

Consider the following examples: the first line of Cadet's story begins with, "A blanc (white person) is coming to visit today. He's your papa, but when you see him, don't call him papa. Say, "Bonjour Monsieur and disappear" ("RA", 1). In this first passage the assertion, "blanc," represents a directive, namely that you are not "blanc." It also means "blanc" is special and you are not. [30] Thus, "blanc" exists, and you do not. Cadet points out that the word, "blanc," exists outside the language of negations. The word is the first act that instructs Cadet to deny the notion of a self. Secondly, "He's your papa," which affirms some existence, but is immediately followed by "but don't call him papa," which denies the existence. He is allowed to speak: "Say, bonjour, monsieur," which acknowledges that he exists, but this too is immediately followed by, "then

[30] Cadet will later on explain, "Blanc was a magic word that seemed to hypnotize vendors and creditors into submission" (Cadet "RA" 10).

disappear." The whole sentence is determined by assertions and negations ending with Cadet being made to exist only to negate. In other words, the language is teaching him how to filter himself out of existence. And it works. If we look at the title of the text, we can trace the same movement in Cadet's assertion, "From Haitian slave-child to middle-class American." Haitian is negated by American, as middle-class negates slave-child. Beyond the national and class implications are the patterns of language which reflect how Cadet sees the world. "Middle-class American" is an attempt at validation and emergence, but, at the expense of "*Restavec*." "Slave-child" also replaces "*restavec*." Cadet agrees with the terms of the word: the *restavec* remains mute.

Cadet illustrates this linguistic pattern throughout his autobiography. He says, "I was a *restavec* in the making. Raising me as such was more convenient for Florence, because she did not have to explain to anyone who I was or where I came from" ("RA" 4). Thus, he describes his social place relative to his guardian, Florence. It is an instruction to "disappear" that surpasses the relationship between himself and Florence. In this assertion, Cadet accuses the community that failed to seek an explanation. With no voice, Cadet is hard pressed to escape the language that defined him. Note the following excerpts:

> As a restavec, I could not interact with Florence on a personal level; I could not talk to her about my needs. In fact, I could not speak until spoken to […]. I also did not dare smile or laugh in her presence. ("RA" 4)
>
> […] I approached Florence, trying to convey my anxiety without words. ("RA" 8)
>
> […] since I wasn't allowed to ask her questions, I considered asking her anyway and taking the risk of being slapped. But I couldn't vocalize the words […]. ("RA" 8)

Cadet's language is a series of negations: "I could not interact;" "I could not talk;" "I could not speak;" "I did not smile or laugh;" "I [tried] to convey without words;" "I could not vocalize." As pointed out earlier, this is a condition created by his social subjugation, but Cadet internalizes it, as expected. I do not consider it only a description of violence suffered in the past. He writes it to convey memory, but his memory colors his perception of the world. He was taught to "disappear," so in interactions, speech, or laughter, he does. What is the body made not to interact, speak, or laugh? What are the qualities of interaction with the world, communication with others, and laugher, if not the very qualities that define the missing *ti bon ange* in the Zombie? To awaken from the "living dead" articulated in the Zombie narrative, Cadet would have to exist beyond Florence and the community that silently condones *restavecs*. But in this case, he is a child. "My clothes were rags and neighborhood children shouted 'restavec' whenever they saw me in the streets. I always felt hurt and deeply embarrassed because to me the word meant motherless and unwanted" ("RA" 5). I argue that the word did mean "motherless and unwanted" because his community agreed upon it. I find it interesting that when invoking the memory of the young Cadet, the author recalls "to me the word meant […]" almost as if he created the meaning of the word himself. To reemerge from this form of negation, Cadet would have to transcend the public, the collective agreement that gave meaning to his person through the term, *restavec*.

Cadet's problem is exacerbated by the advantages the community gains by having and developing Zombie-conditions. Besides the inherent conflict in the word, *restavec*, there is the extension Cadet's body offers the group. In chapter one, I pointed out that the *bokor* is able to extend himself by holding the *ti bon ange* of the Zombie victim hostage

and using the undifferentiated space for his own purposes. It allows him to extend beyond his own physical limitations in time and space. Communities get to share in the same process through language. Communities expand in an ironical way through the processes of subjecting members, especially children, to language and identity constructs. Cadet says, "On one occasion Denis leaned over to one side and passed gas loudly. As he chuckled, he knocked me off the stool with his foot. 'You little pig, can't you say excuse me?' he said. Florence and Lise laughed loudly. Without raising my head to make eye contact, I nervously said 'Pardon […].' A precedent was set. Every time an adult passed gas, I was compelled to say 'Excuse me'" ("RA" 24). This is the explicit illustration of a body that is someone else's speech. Imagine the ability to commit an act which, extended in the body of another, both references you and vindicates you, too. For Cadet it is the split between body and speech, where his speech does not exist within him *because* his speech is another's. The *restavec* serves as an acceptable *visual* of the problem speech poses; political language dictates that everyone there is silenced by colonization, but if a negated person assumes *your* thoughts and *your* voice, such is the affirmation of *your* existence. Agency denied, Cadet's person is invisible, but he is not useless.

It seems Cadet only other recourse would be to adopt another language. He wrote his autobiography in English. Creole violated him. Of course, English hardly succeeded in releasing the voice that could speak beyond the conditions that defined him in Haitian Creole. It is not the words that act as the source of his violation, but rather the presence of the violence of *Restavec* and "Florence" that still embody those words.

VI. The Figurative *RestAvec* in an Analysis of *The Five Obstructions*

What does Lazarus, the Zombie and an *ex-restavec's* memoir have to do with a film produced and directed by two White European well-accomplished directors? Well, on the surface, nothing. But the Lazarus/Zombie and *restavec* sections of this project also have little to do with conventional perceptions of the Christian theological Lazarus, the Vodou Zombie, and Jean Robert Cadet's effort to bring awareness to the plight of Haiti's *restavecs*. This project seeks to understand how language inserts itself into the person; it is an exercise in locating the power of linguistic substitution first, and its effects on the people who internalize it, second. In this case, Lars von Trier, Jargon Leth and the viewing audience are as vulnerable to these power dynamics as Lazarus, the Zombie, and *restavecs*. The purpose of the preceding sections was to represent the vulnerability of the self. In *The Five Obstructions*, Lars Von Trier is interested in the same problem and uses his mentor in an experiment that seeks the collapse of Jargon Leth's sense of identity. In Von Trier's pursuit for this collapse, what he seeks to find is the true death in all people because language imposes itself on our experience of Nature. For Von Trier, we are meant to collapse, as what holds us together is an artifice that fragments our nature.

The Five Obstructions is an experimental docudrama produced in 2004 by Lars von Trier. In it there is a scene wherein a white translucent filter divides the director from a group of onlookers. This white translucent filter is a metaphor and a visual representation of the problem language poses to the human. I argue, using this metaphor, that the human is never actually seen, but, rather, filtered through language. We think we see the characters on the screen; thus, we believe we understand the narrative of the project, but in reality we are "obstructed" by and through that very language. Von Trier

points out that we are just as frightened of the challenge of truly seeing and hearing as his mentor. In addition, as language filters our view and our aurality, it is, ultimately, Jargon Leth and the audience (in their need to protect their role and identity vis-à-vis the film) who fail to realize the reality of their limitations.

In "The Five Obstructions," Lars von Trier challenges his idol, documentary filmmaker, Jorgen Leth, to remake a film he produced nearly 40 years earlier, five times. Each time that Jorgen Leth reconstructs the film, he must adhere to a set of obstacles which Von Trier hopes will force his mentor to produce "crap." Von Trier, who claims to "be an expert on Jorgen Leth," and in fact believes he "knows him better than he knows himself," hopes to bring Leth to a place of "human error," self-realization through total breakdown and loss of artistic confidence. He says he wants to "banalize" him, but Leth rises to the challenge and produces the five films, each time returning with innovative ideas that subvert von Trier's attempts.

The film, "the Perfect Human" was originally produced in 1967 in Belgium. The dual begins in a living room in Denmark, which Lars von Trier secures as the ground base for the project. As we view the film, we will travel with Leth from Zatropa to Cuba, Bombay, Belgium, Haiti, and back to Zatropa; von Trier will remain in Zatropa, Denmark throughout the experiment. The opening scene depicts the two men discussing the parameters of "the game." Despite what seems to be von Trier's motivation, an attempt to undermine his mentor's confidence, the project is filmed and produced for public consumption; that is, the audience is always present, even as von Trier describes it as a psychological exercise personal to Leth and himself.

The base where Leth and von Trier meet, and where they initially shoot the film, is in Zatropa, Denmark. The images will speak to the tension inherent in language. Initially, the two men appear somewhat comfortable with one another; the first image is of Leth casually drinking out of a coffee mug, while von Trier explains the project then invites him to re-watch "The Perfect Human." The image then breaks wholly into the film and the audience watches a film already in circulation for some 40 years. So, already language divides us; von Trier conveys that he has already seen the film 20 times; he will also later claim that he is an expert in Jorgen Leth; Leth wrote and produced the film; and the audience may or may not have seen it. In any event, the point here is that if we consider the relationship between the audience and the two men, we know, instantly, that we are, somewhat, insufficient. What is a new thought for the viewer juxtaposes what is an old thought for von Trier and the origin of the thought in Leth. The audience is not being told this, the audience is positioned as having to experience the project alongside the two directors, but the overarching language that distinguishes the product from the consumption of the product sets the tone of the film and prepares the audience for further conflict.

What is the language? As when we read, the viewing audience is passive. There is the screen or monitor that fosters a safe distance from the two directors, but the environment seems to invite the audience to participate in the narrative. Von Trier and Leth sit comfortably on a sofa, much like we sit comfortably on our sofa or theatre seats to view the film. When the film comes on, we are not viewing von Trier and Leth watching the film, we are watching it with them, as they do. This "capturing" of the audience should take us, not into our own thoughts, but the thoughts of the director; we

are “secondary” to the experience. Primary is the experience of von Trier, then Leth; this is the initial moment. After a brief viewing of “the Perfect Human,” where the audience gets merely a taste of the original, von Trier begins to speak casually to his hero about the first series of obstructions. The men seem genuine; Leth speaks about his home in Haiti and his love of Havana cigars. The first task, then, is to reconstruct the film in Cuba, using Cuban actors and Cuban music. For Leth it is his first task, but for the audience, imbedded in the thoughts of von Trier and Jorgen Leth, it is their first task, too. Von Trier is not trying to “break” Leth, he is trying to break the audience. This instance of communication is less a project for the two directors, and more a project for the audience. Because we only see snippets of the film and we are neither director, our minds are “young” and fertile for this kind of transference. Because we are alienated; we are removed, while simultaneously initiated into the thoughts and experience of those who have alienated us; that is simply because, they know what we do not; this is *our* point of origin.

What we want is to perhaps say, “I am watching Jorgen Leth take on the challenges imposed by Lars von Trier; I sympathize with him as he undertakes the challenge.” This statement puts us at a safe distance from the narration, but in fact, the audience is, in a matter of speaking, Leth himself; not merely sympathizing with him, but reduced to an obscured reflection of the man. To say you “sympathize” with Leth is to assume you know what Leth is experiencing, but we are not all filmmakers. The “first obstruction” is to “reconstruct the film with only 12 frames,” followed by “answering all the questions” posed in the original. If you never made a film, what’s a “frame?” And why is it a challenge? And if you did not see the original, or memorize the script in the

original, what questions? A narrative addressing these issues is entirely beside the point. What we know is that the two directors know precisely of that which they speak, and, also, that which the audience is likely to feel alienated. Thus, we watch Leth agonize over having to make a film with 12 frames in Cuba, where he has never been. We watch him select the actor and actresses, agreeing to some and refusing others; we do know what he thinks, and consequently what he is looking for. As he selects the actresses most "appropriate" for the task, we view the pictures with him and we say, "yes," with him and "no" as well. We know he is looking for the perfect man and the perfect woman, but it is not that we determine who in the selection is the perfect 'subject,' but rather, who we think Leth thinks is the perfect 'subject.' We instantly know what he is looking for because our thoughts are not our own. To this I would add that "the perfect human" does not represent an actual objective fact or observation; we do not know why the subject Leth selects is "perfect," but this is merely because it is not the 'subject' represented in the words, but Leth's thought. Both the words and the 'subject' belong to the thought, which have no particular form; it is merely that Leth wills the thought, and we accept; we internalize his thought, even as we may come to reject it upon reflection.

The second "obstruction" makes the point clearer. Von Trier asks Leth to find the "most miserable place on earth." Now, Leth informs the viewer that he remembers a time in Bombay, India when something horrific happened that marked him permanently. We are never permitted to know what this event consisted of, but we are taken to the location where he films his second reconstruction of "The Perfect Human." In this scene, the "perfect human" is Jorgen Leth himself. As in the previous clips, Leth is wearing a tuxedo. He removes the tuxedo piece by piece. He jumps up and down, arms flailing as

he rises and descends. He sits at a table, where he serves himself fish, rice and vegetables, while drinking a glass of Chablis. The linen is deftly laid out in white; his tuxedo, in immaculate order; his table manners, seemingly flawless. Surrounding him and his camera crew is a crowd of onlookers native to the region. I have to point out that even before the filming of this scene, we have been in the car with Leth, apparently waiting for his driver to move past some traffic. In the meantime, a young Indian woman, holding her child, begs for money, gesturing her hand towards her mouth in an effort to communicate hunger. Leth tries to convey he has no money; he mentions it again, and shows signs of discomfort. The woman is persistent; she offers her hand then tries to peer through the tinted glass that separates her from Jorgen Leth. Leth turns to an unknown source to ask for some rupees to give her, struggles with his window, and then finally is able to open it and deliver the money. Content that he has done what was expected, she remains staring at the tinted window (we see her clearly); the amount is not enough, and she gestures towards her mouth with her hand again. Leth reiterates that he has no rupees. If we consider the position of the Indian woman, who remains outside the vehicle, trying desperately to see through the tinted glass, we see a reflection of our own dilemma. She has an objective, a desire: to communicate her need and perhaps compel her listener to offer up some relief. We, too, have an objective: to comprehend and participate in the challenge; perhaps to communicate our role in the duel. Just as her view is obstructed by a tinted glass, so are we obstructed; we know little about Leth and his position on charity (it's a moot point) and we do not know who accompanies him, or where he is, except perhaps Bombay. As the woman represents a role in *and* outside of Leth's narrative, so, too, the audience represents a role in *and* outside of the film. And as

the woman, nevertheless, depends on Leth's acknowledgement, so, too, the audience is dependent on Leth's acknowledgment and respect for their "willful participation." As Leth offers a small sum to the woman, leaving her unsatisfied, so, too, he films the scene in his car, giving the audience just a bit of information, but leaving them at the door, peering through a dimmed glass, gesturing towards their mouths.

This primary image of the impoverished Indian mother reinforces the subject of this discourse. When the filming of "The Perfect Human" in Bombay takes place in a crowded alley in the "red light district," we remember. Throughout the film, Jorgen Leth is separated from the onlookers by a "transparent," filtered screen. As we view the filming of a white, older man, wearing a tuxedo, jumping, undressing, drinking wine, and eating a lavish meal on a pristine table in an environment of onlookers in India, we can talk of the temptation to speak to the perversion of the situation. However, the scene is demonstrative, not of a contrast between the singular Leth and the masses, Europeans and Indians, or of the privileged and the disadvantaged, but of the contrast between the thought and its audience. Like the onlookers, the audience may say to themselves, "I am watching Jorgen Leth behave in such such way." But, it is not the onlookers that reflect the audience, nor Leth; it is the transparent screen, where between the crystallization of Leth and his film, and the obscurity of onlookers, the audience's view and thought is obstructed by language, an obscured object. Ultimately, this translucent filter is the reflection of the audience. Were we "mystics," Peter Tracey Conner says, "the mystic's gaze, Michel de Certeau has argued, is directed not toward objects or appearances but rather toward existence itself: the mystic is moved above all by "a passion for what is, for the world as it 'exists,' for the thing itself. (49). But such is no more possible in the

exchange between the audience and the film, than it is for the onlookers and the filmmakers in Bombay. The gulf that separates one individual from another is an opaque filter, and the thing crystallized *is* language, not "existence itself;" what we *see* is the divide.

If thought and agency are indistinguishable from one another, then the human is a filtered screen, where external thoughts and personal experiences are divided and disembodiment ensues, consciousness compromised. A thought can be clear, but existence remains elusive and obscure in language. Connor goes on to say,

> If there is a 'fixed referent,' de Certeau poses a 'fundamental experience or reality' behind the mystical documents transmitted to us, it would be this 'passion for what is its own authority and depends on no outside guarantee.' De Certeau's distinction sheds light on the dilemma facing the mystic who would describe his experience, and it helps explain the often vociferous disdain for language which is so characteristic of mystical writings. For while a 'thing' is commensurate with the various attributes that constitute its phenomenal appearance, each of which can be named, described, categorized, the 'thing itself' resists the act of naming; the one who would attempt to name it is in the untenable (Bataille would say 'impossible') position of representing something that 'is its own authority,' while employing another authority – the always compromised authority of textual mediation – in order to do so. The mystic holds to what many would see as an impossible dream, namely, that of presenting rather than representing experience; or, put another way, the mystic hopes to overcome the 'curse of mediacy' that is the essence of symbolism (50).

Connor's assessment relies on Georges Bataille's *Inner Experience*, wherein Bataille points out that "experience is its own and only authority" (12); silence is the only mode that accompanies it. Any speech is immediately subordinate and inadequate, and, Walter Ong, in "Voice as Summons for Belief," claims humans can mediate and invade the other with thoughts internalized and then "processed for externalization" ("VSB" 111). So, what happens to the individual subordinated to the processes of language? Primarily, the two readings point out that there is no "passive" audience; passive is an

act. In language, the other bears the thoughts from the external and "accepts" its terms; we do not think about *our* experience because it is outside the rules of language. There is no other place for our experience, just our *response*, which is reflected in our speech.

In the "Five Obstructions" von Trier tells Leth that the final obstruction is "easy" in comparison with all the others. All that Leth must do is read a letter written by Von Trier. The letter, however, is from Leth to von Trier, though written by von Trier *for* Leth. In it, von Trier speaks as Leth, but Leth speaks von Trier's thoughts as his own, thus he reads aloud his thoughts about the experience of the past two years. The letter reads as follows,

> Dear Silly Lars,
> You thought you could trip me up. You say your obstructions had no underlying plan, but you had a theory. You thought "this is Jorgen." "Just what is Jorgen?" "Jorgen is a wretch, just like me"…Just as you wanted to be chastised, you would now chastise Jorgen. It was a personal assault. Don't pretend it wasn't. You thought "Jorgen is trying to hide his true self behind his provocative perverse perfection." "He wants to conceal his angst behind a personal fiction of rows or Armani suits on hangers protecting him through his months of depression on Haiti." "Jorgen gets the rush of Sartre and Hemmingway's historical wings to wave away the discomfort and that damned insecurity because he hasn't the guts to take wing for himself." "I see though him."
>
> It was arrogant, but I realize it was meant kindly. You wanted to get into where the scream was, and let it out. "He is the most beautiful bird, but he just doesn't believe it." "I'll chase him till he takes wing." You ordered me around and issued prohibitions to distract me, to penetrate my armor; "we could distract Jorgen by getting him to make a film." "This is how the perfect human makes a film; watch him now, then he'd give himself away for sure…or, what if I provoke him?" "Film him with his guard up and we'll find all the gaps." But no matter how odd the clarinet sounded, you could not see behind my eyes. No matter how close you got, you couldn't see beneath the skin of my hand to the nerves and most delicate blood vessels. Nothing was revealed and nothing helped. I didn't come staggering out of the ruins to thank you, Lars. Or did I? You've got me now. You're forcing me to read your words. So let's get it over with.

> Dear Lars, thank you for your obstructions. They've shown me what I really am, an abject human human. I try to fool the world because I don't want to be part of it. My trick is cheap and I repeat it, endlessly. If I go on telling the viewer what I see like a prisoner of war repeating his name and number without adding anything – emotions are far too dangerous – the world and I will fall for it. I call it art, but I am certain that I cannot do a thing. I only do all this so I can put up with myself. My films are bluff. A hideaway, Lars.
>
> Thank you for chastising me so lovingly. Was that nice? Does it make any difference? Maybe you put words into other people's mouths by getting gout of saying them yourself. No, it makes no difference, and you know it. Your theory didn't stand up, Lars. Your pedagogical mission didn't get to grips. My hand shook less obstruction by obstruction. I grew more sure of myself as we receded from the person my film was really about to anybody but you. You say I didn't dare to find my way into what I so dishonestly and skillfully conceal and you imagine to be so valuable. But its no good. The dishonest person was you, Lars. You only saw what you wanted me to see. The skepticism you felt about yourself must go for me, too. But you exposed yourself. You wanted to make me human, but that what I am! You got me to play along but you let me get on the defensive. As we all know, it's the attacker who really exposes himself.
>
> The truth is, you got it wrong! I obstructed you, no matter how much you wanted the opposite. And you fell flat on your face. How does the perfect human fall? This is how the perfect human falls (Five Obstructions).

In the attempt to distinguish speech from language, I want to point out that the letter is Leth telling von Trier that he succeeded despite von Trier's attempts to "break him," and it is Leth whose voice is heard by the audience, but it is precisely von Trier's thoughts and response to Leth. Von Trier, perhaps, had hoped that this "obstacle" would best close the gulf between himself and his mentor. Von Trier penetrates his mentor, where to "speak" another's words as yours is an erotic and colonizing effort to dominate the other. It allows the thoughts of von Trier to emerge as an extension of von Trier's thoughts as the expense of whatever Leth truly feels. But more importantly, this scene betrays the final "shutting out" of the audience. In this scene, we do not witness with our eyes, but with our ears. Although the words are accompanied by an endless array of

images of Leth listening, working, laughing, and playing, it is an aural exercise, where all that has been said and implied are primary; what we see become mere metaphors for what is happening in light of our participation in the project. Leth, of course, is the honored hero in von Trier's tribute, but Leth is also the tool for the singular thought and focus of von Trier, whose thoughts were originally dominated by Leth in his role as mentor. In fact, I believe that Jargon Leth pursues this experiment because he cannot eject his mentor from himself. Around and around we go. The point here is that we are always trying to break the gulf between us; we penetrate the other, but, as Leth resists all of von Trier's attempts, so do we resist the attempt by others to penetrate our agency. It never works. Language is that communication that cannot be captured in word and image; it is the thinly opaque filter that is an experience of external thought. Although Leth seems to have arguably succeeded in avoiding the "internal" collapse von Trier had planned for him, he did devote two years of his life to von Trier's project. His resistance is his response. The same is true of von Trier's erotic preoccupation with his mentor, and the same is true of the audience that participates in the narrative. It is said that this is an exercise in "egomania," but I would argue that the only reason we call it "ego" driven is because of how diminished we are by this expression of linguistic power dynamics. We are precisely as Lazarus, the Zombie, and the *restavec*; subjects defined and limited by the dictates of another's thought, and excluded from the discourse.

Human culture is human sacrifice, together with symbolic substitution.
Norman O. Brown

Chapter Three:
The Nature of Sacrifice, Repetition and Representation in Identity Constructs

The imposition of language in human experiences often reflects forms of sacrifice. In the case of *Restavecs* (cf. Chapter 2), the guardian's ego extends at the expense of the personal and individual development of a child. In "The Five Obstructions" a filter represents, not only the limitations necessitated by language in what we apprehend through sights and sounds, but also the absence of whole experiences and engagements which are lost in order to develop narrative structures. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss in *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* define sacrifice as a "procedure" which "consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and the profane worlds through the mediation of a victim, that is, of a thing that in the course of ceremony is destroyed" (97). The "procedure" in the case of language is especially problematic because what we aspire to communicate with, what we determine as the sacred world in which narratives emerge, is an artificial construct that replaces the real. We confuse the real with the articulation it leaves behind; thus, also leaving behind victims of such processes.

In Chapter One I tried to offer a definition of the Vodou *ti bon ange* vis-à-vis the Zombie to underscore that it signifies the loss of a component of the real in order to effectively produce a narrative. That narrative can be religious in nature, but it can also

be the narrative that ultimately defines individuality and the other vis-à-vis the author of that otherness. In other words, in the case of *restavecs*, in order for me to be a self, I must incorporate a narrative, be it magnanimous and charitable, that of a Christian or a cruel oppressor, or the victim of oppression subject to repeat the offense of those who oppressed me. In any case, I need the child in order for these narratives that define me into existence – and I need the narrative in order to exist. My actions must be interpreted by a preexisting narrative, no doubt created through repetition of linguistic processes. As for the child, the child must remain passive. Even in "charitable" efforts, the child must not emerge independently of my actions. This need that ties us to language and social encounters is not new. Psychoanalysis goes into great detail about these processes and the consequences that lead to neuroses and other pathological behaviors that are then subject to treatment and scientific observation.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud describes the mental processes of victims of traumatic experiences. Freud writes, "It seems […] that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (43). For Freud, repetition is the normal behavior in organic beings. ""Let us suppose, then, that all organic instincts are conservative, are acquired historically and tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things. It follows that the phenomena of organic development must be attributed to external disturbing and diverting influences. The elementary living entity would from the very beginning have had no wish to change, if conditions remained the same, it would do no more than constantly repeat the same course of life. […] Every modification which is thus imposed upon the course of the

organism's life is accepted by the conservative organic instinct and stored up for further repetition" (45). Thus, if we were to return to our examples of *restavecs*, we could easily conclude that the behavior of the guardian, as well as *restavecs* articulations, are merely historical processes of repetition, perhaps dating back to "perceived" trauma brought on by slavery and destitution.

This primary element of instincts and its propensity to repeat is also articulated in Freud's assessment of early disturbances of the pleasure principle. Freud theorizes that the "there exists in the mind a strong tendency towards the pleasure principle, but […] that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure" (6). He distinguishes between the *pleasure principle* and the *reality principle*, in such a way that it is the latter that replaces the former element in order to self-preserve the individual. He describes the reality principle as that which "does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long and indirect road to pleasure" (7). *Unpleasure* being a general malaise that impedes the progress towards pleasure, Freud claims that individuals who have been subject to trauma may repeat the trauma, for example in reproducing it in a game, in order to have mastery over it, thereby reliving it actively rather than passively. Though this may help the individual cope with historical trauma, it, more importantly, is attributed to *unpleasure* and the mind's concern over its repeated occurrence. In a sense, Freud is operating with the ego and the instinct's fear and anxiety over the events that cause *unpleasure*.

Freud proposes to differentiate among anxiety, fear, and fright. He says, "Anxiety describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. Fear requires a definite object of which to be afraid. Fright, however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he runs into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes a factor of surprise" (11). The *restavec* operates within each of the parameters set forth in Freud's observation of the mind. Logic dictates, therefore, that the victim of colonization and child-slavery is not a Zombie, but a condition determined by repetition of trauma. Re-enacting the scene of subjugation for the guardian protects against the ravages of passive subjugation in slave or political powerlessness. The recurrent nightmares of the *restavec* child permit the victim to return to the state of fright without having to relive it in reality. In the end, each uses his/her personal means to master the effects of trauma. Freud points out that the workings of the instincts that construct these repetitive processes have an aim – namely, an aim towards death. Ultimately, it is this drive which compels an organism to return to its first, most primal state.

There is no question that Freud's articulation is applicable to the theory of Zombies, in that it initiates the idea that the organism will repeat processes of an earlier state towards its death. The problem for the zombie is the external control over its death instincts. "What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die in its own fashion" (Freud, 47). This may be why in the story of the Zombie, after awakening from its morbid sleep, it seeks to return, not to the living world, but to its grave. In a sense, Freud's analysis helps to articulate how one can still be alive, yet already dead. It is not physical, nor does his analysis help to guide the reader towards the binary of death-drives

versus life-instincts. Rather, the Zombie is guided as much by a death instinct as the non-Zombie or pre-Zombie. The only difference is in what guides it towards death. If it does not guide itself, it is a Zombie. If it does, it is human.

If this were all there was, there should be no cause for concern. After all, if the "ego-instinct" is a drive towards death anyway, then what is so harmful about whom or what brings it to its final conclusion? Why would a personal desire to control an inevitable return to inanimate entities be cause for any alarm? It seems to me, this is about the *possibility* of a "prolongation" of life, as posited by Freud's analysis of sexual instincts.

Freud says, "We have unwittingly steered our course in to the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For him death is the 'true result and to that extent the purpose of life', while the sexual instinct is the embodiment of the will to life" (59). Furthermore, he says, "we must regard as in the highest degree significant the fact that [the prolongation of life] is reinforced, or only made possible, if it coalesces with another cell similar to itself and yet differing from it" (48). In short, assuming the desire towards "the will to life," the life instinct cannot exist without the sexual instinct, without aligning with the other. "We might attempt to apply the libido theory which has been arrived at in psycho-analysis to the mutual relationship of cells. We might suppose that the life instincts or sexual instincts which are active in each cell take the other cells as their object, that they partly neutralize the death instincts (that is, the processes set up by them) in those cells and thus preserve their life; while the other cells do the same for them, and still others sacrifice themselves in the performance of this libidinal function" (60). Naturally, in the development of culture, the sexual instinct is less about reproduction and

more about the mutual relationship between intellectual aspirations of similar yet different minds. According to the Aristophanes of Plato's *Symposium*, the human being is split and intellectual desire and physical desire of the body occupy two separate spaces. "Now, says Diotima, some people are pregnant in body, and for this reason turn more to women and children with immortality and remembrance and happiness, as they think, for all time to come; while others are pregnant in soul – because there surely are those who are even more pregnant in their souls than in their bodies, and these are pregnant with what is fitting for a soul to bear and bring to birth" (56). Thus, communication can easily be the means of "copulation" between human species. Because of this, I believe that the figure of Lazarus and the Zombie, Jean Robert Cadet's autobiographical articulations, and the communication between Lars von Trier and Jargon Leth embody that which cannot communicate, even as they attempt to reach across the abyss to prolong a life long dead to the natural processes instigated through the sexual instincts. The ego, as Freud points out, is antithetical to the will to live. In its development, the drive towards death is revealed and imposes the loss of any instinct that bears upon life. To live we must coalesce with the other, but to be an individual, we must destroy the other as we march towards our own demise.

In all of the previous examples I tried to demonstrate how those who develop an individuality of their own, in fact, fail to "reproduce." Rather, they repeat. The only figures clearly lacking an ego are the figures of Lazarus and the Zombie, where, paradoxically, they are attributed a distinct place in the society of language that merely reflects the cultural drive towards death. Nietzsche says, the relationship of spirit to the physical body is "the degree and kind of a person's sexuality (which reaches) up into the

ultimate pinnacle of his spirit" (BGE, 444). If this element is cut off, and given language offers up the possibility of such disturbances, to what extent can we find representations of what becomes of this individual?

The Zombie is an individual who neither communicates with us, nor with itself. The Zombie is exactly that which has no desire, that which lacks the element of Eros. And in this way I am defining desire, not as pursuit of want, but as movement and a function of connectedness and communication. There is something amiss about saying the Zombie merely lacks consciousness. It is true that the creature is not conscious, but it is more relevant to talk about it in terms of its lack of the properties necessary for consciousness to emerge. As an object of biological study, his loss of consciousness is problematic only insofar as it relates to the sciences and institutions of learning. The Zombie is a lot more insidious than that. The Zombie would be the tree that does not seek earth or water. Its living properties would be determined by something entirely other, and determined by something so removed from itself and its natural condition, yet it would not wilt or die. Or, it would subsist until such time as physical death would claim it; yet again it would not be a tree, for trees depend on basic natural elements for propagation, development, growth, and natural death. I use the example of the tree because it does not need consciousness for its existence. Its being depends on what we have marked as Eros, but this is about an element fully necessary for movement. And the Zombie, a creature lacking this element, is pegged as an unnatural being; it is completely removed from earth because it lacks a basic element of sexual instincts. Thus, it is not living to us.

It was always possible to kill the sexual instinct in the individual; there is no question that such mortality leaves behind not only a mere occupant of space, but something devoid of movement and engagement with time. If, as Freud points out, the primacy of sexual instincts is a basic component of life, then it would be the primary object of desire for those who "murder," both literally and figuratively. The Zombie is entirely other because it does not have instincts, most especially the type of instinct that would make communication possible; it represents total loss and complete death because it is denied access to the social world where it would contribute to the prolongation of its species. The question, then, is not why do human beings attack the sexual instincts of the other (I believe Freud explains this thoroughly in his analysis of instincts and ego development), but how do human beings kill, specifically, the sexual instincts, the drive and will towards life of the other? Certainly, we know it happens in the course of violence of words and actions, but how do we read the death of this instinct? At what point in the chaotic discourse of sacrificial procedures, does the drive towards life cease to exist in the victim of violence? More specifically, I realize that Freud's universal message is that we are all, to some extent, driven to repetition unto our death. We all encompass a death drive. However, Freud also claims we are driven to prolong life through the embodiment of Eros.[1] Freud points out that this is far more important than a discourse on pleasure, and I would agree. The "Lazarus/Zombie" figure believes he

[1] The implication in Freud's analysis is that there is a binary, namely the death drive and life instincts. The two, it appears, do not coexist, but Maurice Blanchot, in *The Writing of the Disaster*, says, " Between the two falsely interrogative propositions – why is there something rather than nothing? And why is there evil rather than good? – I do not recognize the difference which is supposed to be discernible, for both are sustained by a "there is" [un "il y a"] which is neither being nor nothingness, neither good nor evil, and without which the whole discussion collapses, or on account of which it has already collapsed" (65). Thus, Blanchot asserts that there is no real difference between the death drive and life instincts. Despite this, I am claiming that there is a difference between the person who encompasses both undifferentiated life and death instincts, and the person who appears to encompass neither. The distinction is made in the form of experience versus discourse which drives individual instincts.

experiences pleasure; he also believes he experiences unpleasure, but this is determined by the discourse that defines those experiences. Thus, my question is not about the violent psychological results of denying an individual pleasure. This analysis is interested in the individual who says, "This pleases me" and "This does not please me," but censors Eros by defining who, what, and how he/she is *permitted or able* to desire, "coalesce" and "copulate."

I. Two Kinds of Death Narrative in Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*

In 1991, Jonathan Demme directed the film *Silence of the Lambs*, based on Thomas Harris' novel, of the same name. The film was a national sensation and yielded a frenzy of scholarly articles on the subject of serial killers, feminism, queer theory, and class dynamics. Elements of sexual undertones were addressed in terms of the characters involved and gender differentiation. I would like to read this film in terms of my theory on circumscribed subjectivity using as examples the character constructs of Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo Bill. Were you to die at the hands of a serial killer, if this was the immanent nature of your demise, if you could only choose the hands of the killer who would enact this fate, would you prefer to die at the hands of Buffalo Bill or Hannibal Lechter?

Clarice Ann Starling (Jodie Foster), an FBI trainee, is assigned to a case involving a serial murderer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), who kills his victim and then skins them in order to devise a dress. In order to get close to the killer, Clarice must enlist the trust and advice of Hannibal Lechter (Anthony Hopkins), another serial killer who, after killing his

victims, eats them. The premise of the film is psychological; Hannibal Lechter is a renowned psychologist described as "brilliant" or "very intelligent." The film's focus on psychology is consistent with contemporary scientific advances and beliefs about the domination of the mind and psyche over acts and experiences, particularly interpretation of those experiences. Jack Crawford, an FBI agent, requests that Starling create a psycho-behavioral profile of Hannibal Lechter, but he warns her, "be very careful of Hannibal Lechter…tell him nothing personal…believe me, you don't want Hannibal Lechter inside your head." The story goes on to develop a narrative concerning the relationship between Lechter and Starling. Starling, whose only ambition is to successfully complete her FBI training and solve the Buffalo Bill case, is contrasted with Lechter's "mind-play." The story implies that Hannibal Lechter not only knows the proper name of Buffalo Bill, but his location as well. Had Lechter been "cooperative," the film would have ended within the first 20 minutes, so Lechter, it seems, represents the obstacle to the investigation, and his developing relationship with Starling is the lynchpin to its successful conclusion.

The audience is introduced to Hannibal Lechter through the testimony of Jack Crawford and Dr. Frederick Chilton, asylum Psychologist. Crawford, as previously mentioned, cautions Agent Starling, but concludes his warning with, "never forget what he is." When Starling asks, "What is he?" the frame cuts to Dr. Chilton's response, "he's a monster, pure psychopath." This articulation by Chilton will contrast another scene when a law officer, in a show of trepidation, tells Starling, "they say he's a vampire; is it true?" Starling responds, "I don't know what he is." Starling's response reveals the juxtaposition between herself and Dr. Chilton. Dr. Chilton believes he knows his subject.

Confined in the asylum, Hannibal Lechter is reduced to an interesting psychological project, but as the audience gets more acquainted with the character, Lechter becomes a source of power that exceeds far beyond Chilton's belief in psycho-behavioral determinism. Starling's response reveals "openness," an acknowledgement of the unknown, and, thereby, the possibility of movement.

What is Hannibal Lechter? The tone of the film begins with Starling's encounter with Dr. Chilton; even before we meet Hannibal Lechter the audience is bombarded with the sexual undertones of the narrative. Dr. Chilton propositions Starling, who, of course, avoids his intimations by insisting her function is merely to obtain the psychological profile of her subject. From this vantage point, Starling is "just business." Though this implies that Starling is a new figure of the female subject on screen, I believe this to be a necessary component in the effort to crystallize Hannibal Lechter. Starling's character mutes the sexual desires of Lechter's interlocutor. This is important to the exchange between Starling and Lechter because Starling then represents the audience. Her position is the audience's position. Innocent. Like the audience, our heroine is, however, open. Nevertheless, the sexuality that surrounds the occasion of her first visit to Hannibal is less a product of gender than a product of time and space – life and death; it is a premonition of what is to come, beginning with base structures of unfulfilled sexual desire and developed into an exchange bearing the mark of life and death instincts. The sexual undertone underscores dissatisfaction for Starling and the audience, which will reconcile itself through Hannibal Lechter.

On their way to the initial visit with Hannibal Lechter, Chilton remarks to Starling that "Crawford is clever using you…pretty, young woman to turn him on…I don't

believe Lechter's seen a woman in eight years…boy, are you his type." Chilton's banter goes on this way and is matched only by Miggs, another inmate at the asylum who we are first introduced to, fleetingly, by his cry to Starling, "I can smell your cunt." Following Starling's interview with Lechter, the audience will hear Miggs masturbate and see his extended arm fling what appears to be seminal fluid on to the face of the heroine. It takes us only moments to realize, when we first see Lechter, that he is different. If any sexual desire exists in him, it is not obvious to the naked eye. His demeanor, it seems, is relaxed, courteous, curious and slightly amused. This complexity in a single character juxtaposes the arrogance of Chilton and the crass nature of Miggs.

After being warned about Hannibal Lechter's propensity for violence via the picture of a woman whose face was torn off and tongue eaten "while (Lechter's) pulse never went above 85," Starling, who should be positioned in a state of cautious progression, asks to go alone to her meeting. Given the context of Starling's encounter, the audience already "identifies" with the heroine; we would also like to get away from Chilton, Miggs and the un-desire-able; therefore, as she meets Hannibal Lechter alone, so do we. But let me point out, before I describe Hannibal Lechter's peculiar ability, despite feminists who claim Harris' representation in developing Starling's character is a tribute to the heroine and advances the determination that women can be professional and encapsulate undeterred desire for career advancement, the role of Starling could only have been played by a woman.[2] Thomas Harris' narrative requires an agent that will

[2] In "Subject to Sacrifice: Psychoanalysis, and the Discourse of Species in Jonathan Demme's Silence of the Lambs," Cary Wolfe reiterates the Carol Clover's article on the female subject and horror/slasher films. "In Clover's ingenious argument, slasher film or films of demonic possession, while apparently obsessed with the investigation and regulation of the category of the feminine, can in fact serve – through the dynamics of cross-gender identification with the 'Final girl' (the sole female survivor of the generic slasher film) - as staging grounds for unavowable forms of masculine experience – most fundamentally masochism" (142). So, just within this framework we can see how Jodie Foster's character identifies with

facilitate penetration by Hannibal Lechter; the character must be able to allow Lechter access. And the audience does not identify so much with her, but rather, experiences Lechter *through* her. The body of the character must be open as a portal from Hannibal to audience; it is not likely, given gender dynamics, that such a role would have been best utilized by enlisting the male hero. Starling is actually somewhat "empty." Still, we must not confuse her brand of "emptiness" with what we will encounter in the form of Buffalo Bill. I would like to suggest that her character is more demonstrative of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of death and life instincts. "We say […] that there is no death instinct because there is both the model and the experience of death in the unconscious. Death then is a part of the desiring-machine, a part that must itself be judged, evaluated in the functioning of the desiring machine and the system of its energetic conversions […]" (332). Thus, while Deleuze and Guattari appear to disagree with Freud's conclusions about death and life instincts, I believe this articulation relates only to certain circumstances and bodies that reflect the characteristics described here. Starling is a good example.

Hannibal Lechter, as previously mentioned, seems disinterested in any explicit sexual encounter with the Starling; nevertheless, when he asks her to "come closer," we very cautiously approach the window with her. Lechter notes that her I.D. will expire in one week and expresses shock at Crawford's presumption that he could send a trainee to him, wherein Starling responds, "yes, I'm a student. I'm here to learn from you. Maybe you can decide for yourself whether I'm qualified enough to do that." Starling's response

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cross-gender subjects, masculine subjects, and masochistic subjects simultaneously. I mention this to say her character is far from a one-dimensional reading. See also, "Writer on the Lamb: Sorting Out the Sexual Politics of a Controversial Film," in Village Voice, 5 March 1991; Douglas Crimp, "Right On, Girlfriend! In Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 300 – 320.

should be a verbal ploy to pacify her subject, but in Lechter's response, "that's rather slippery of you," another meaning is afforded. The basic set-up of the relationship rests upon the erotic nature of Hannibal Lechter and the mentor/mentee desire articulated in Starling's speech. Another way to experience this is in the camera's capture of Hannibal's piercing, unfettered gaze followed by Starling's insecure, "avoiding his gaze," eyes. In this scene you get Hannibal's absolute certainty of his agency and Starling's displacement; you experience Starling's innocence and Hannibal's knowledge; this is a play on the Greek mentor and his young beautiful boy. The mentor loves; the mentee learns. In fact, at the commencement of the film, Starling is ensconced in her FBI training routine. Although she is in a training facility, she is alone as she climbs a hill and runs through a wooded path. At the end of her trail a sign is posted that reads, "Hurt, Agony, Pain, Love-It." The sign refers to customary military training, but in Starling's case, it is a premonition of her encounter with Hannibal Lechter. The hyphen between "Love-It" is no mistake. There will be a "love" exchange between Lechter and Starling.

At the asylum, Lechter immediately asks what is now *his* subject, "what did Miggs say to you?" She responds, "I can smell your cunt," to which Lechter replies, "I myself cannot." Then, he proceeds to experience her scent. The time Lechter takes to lean towards the small air holes in the glass that separates him from Starling then articulate the contents of his experience captures Lechter's characterization. We assume his assessment of Starling's perfume is accurate, as she does not reply, but shows signs of embarrassment and discomfort. Lechter not only exposes Miggs as a fraudulent version of sexual instincts, but also, his impotence. Lechter's sensual demonstration reveals that despite the fact that he is the one imprisoned, this simple act reflects his absolute

freedom, sovereignty; he can get beyond six-inch glass. Starling's response is important to the narrative because it elevates Hannibal Lechter beyond mere self-gratification; she is affected by the act. Thus, within the first few minutes of their encounter, Lechter establishes a means of communication with Starling; a relationship of mutual gratification between Lechter, Starling and the audience.

Hannibal Lechter is a whole entity in motion; he communicates and consumes that which fails to communicate; it is this element that allows Lechter to go beyond the prison walls of the asylum.[3] The paradox is although he is in an asylum built to study and perhaps rehabilitate the mind, it is he who is fully *sane*. His deluge of insights dropped on Starling during this first interview reveals Lechter's presence of mind; he has a command of the other. His speech is quick, direct, and cruel. He "undresses" Starling rapidly by telling her what she has done, how she has been used, what she wants, where she is from, etc. The speed of his speech ravages her, disorienting her further. His tone, both mocking and unflinching assaults her; her ability to withstand this assault will determine her "worthiness." Of course, she bucks at the assault and, although she can not respond to his rapid invasion of her person, tries to turn the tables on him, saying, "you see a lot doctor, but are you strong enough to point that high-powered perception at yourself?" She accuses him of being "afraid" to reflect on himself, but what agent Starling is unable to grasp is that Lechter knows exactly what he is, and only through this is he able to "disrobe" his interests so quickly and definitively. Nevertheless, her

[3] I want to make it clear that Hannibal Lechter is governed by desire, which I will explain differentiates him from the perceived desire of his peer, Buffalo Bill. Lechter's desire is his desire and that element is best described by Raphael Demos in "Eros." "The Eros is a principle of betweenness, as follows: Eros is desire. Now desire is neither immortal nor mortal; neither divine, nor human. Not divine, because desire implies lack, a deprivation. The Gods who possess everything, desire nothing. Not mortal, because total absence of the Good would entail absence of desire. Neither the completely ignorant nor completely wise desire the truth. Desire is a mixture of being and non-being – it is a demon" (340). It seems to me that the power afforded Hannibal Lechter is partly due to the activation of this quality.

challenge exposes her and solidifies the relationship. She is a worthy mentee; so, although Lechter initially dismisses her, he will call her back to his cell and instruct her. Again, Lechter could have told her who Buffalo Bill was, but instead, he sends her on a chase, not to find Buffalo Bill, but to find herself.[4]

The difference between Lechter and Starling is Starling's dependency on the mind. She thinks; but Lechter *feels* what he thinks. His mission is to teach Starling to feel her body through her thoughts. This is why the next time we see Starling, she is outside the asylum crying and remembering her past, her father. Hannibal Lechter had already, inadvertently, answered her question. Back at the asylum, in noticing a series of drawings depicting the landscape of Florence, she asks him, "all that detail just from memory, sir?" He responds, "memory, Agent Starling, is what I have instead of a view." To ask whether he is able to see himself, for Lechter, is the same as asking whether he remembers. He does, in detail. Thus he invokes his first lesson: where are your memories? Lechter's capacity to remember in great detail reflects his mental intellect, but more importantly, his memory is a component of the life and death instincts described by Freud. The death drive and sexual instincts are dependent on memory and repetition. One must remember. Memory revisits the body, arrests time, while, simultaneously, propels us toward our fate. Deleuze and Guattari point out that "Death is not desired, there is only death that desires, by virtue of the body without organs or the immobile motor, and there is also life that desires, by virtue of the working organs. There we do not have two desires, but two parts, two kinds of desiring-machine parts, in the dispersion of

[4] Bruce Robbins, in "Murder and Mentorship: Advancement in The Silence of the Lambs" discusses the theory that although Jodie Foster's character is defiant of "the regime of compulsory heterosexuality," her desire for professional advancement merely replaces sexual needs and desires. Thus, Hannibal Lechter is a type of lover in that he offers her what she seeks the most – what she desires.

the machine itself" (329). For Lechter, death and life occupy the same place. Thus, remembering does not mean he is stuck in the past, but rather, the past occupies his present and future. Any desire towards the future, life, rests on the past, repeating through memory, and death.

"A census taker once tried to test me; I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." Easily the most memorable quotation in *Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal Lechter is most glorious and horrific in this scene. A sublime experience for both Starling and the audience, in this scene we come to know our hero, and why his killings are radically different from Buffalo Bill's. The quote demonstrates Lechter's capacity for recall; he not only remembers the insult, he connects it to Starling's insult and expresses the memory of his sensations, and its subsequent consequence. He follows the comment with an act: the sifting of his teeth. Not merely vindictive, his actions are access to more than the body, they access agency, which is defined by memory, sensuality, and intention.

Hannibal Lechter is different from his "peer" serial killers. When he asks Agent Starling why she thinks Buffalo Bill skins his victims, Starling responds, "serial killers usual keep some token of their victims." Hannibal Lechter quickly replies, "I didn't." Agent Starling says, "no, you ate yours." The contrast between keeping a "token" of his victims, and eating them underscores Lechter's propensity for the erotic. The quote and his subsequent act of reliving the erotic nature of consumption indicate Lechter's satisfaction in consuming, not merely the body, but the subject as a whole. The victim is not objectified. Hannibal Lechter does not desire human flesh, but the human in its entirety. He eats the whole being: character, personality, and will. He knows his victim

intimately, and he allows for that knowledge through connectedness of mind and body. When he says, “I ate his liver with…a glass of Chianti,” it is more a religious experience, communion, than a pretentious expression of social class dynamics. It is not accurate to interpret Hannibal Lechter as merely a “sophisticated” killer; his interest lies in agency. The liver is just that, a liver; but, for Lechter, it is the insult and the agent who imposed the insult. The liver is undistinguished from the insult. It is the body part that stores nutrients and synthesizes proteins for strength, detoxifying agents hazardous to survival, while regulating biochemical reactions necessary for life processes. Eating the liver arrests these processes for the offender. Next to the heart, the liver is the single most important gland in the human body. One should not assume that Lechter’s propensity for eating his victims is analogous to our propensity to eat animal meat from the local market.

Communication is an important element in the characteristics attributed to Eros. For Lechter, it is the ability to communicate which determines intellect, transcendence and transformation. Lechter asks the mother of a victim of Buffalo Bill, “did you breastfeed her?” She responds, “yes, I did.” Lechter then says, “toughened your nipples didn’t it? Amputate a man’s leg and he can still feel it tickling; tell me mom, when your little girl is on the slab, where will it tickle you?” It seems like an odd thing for our hero to say, as though he had come down to the level of Miggs. In fact, when Agent Starling interviews Lechter again, he asks whether Crawford “wants you sexually. Do you think he visualizes scenarios, exchanges, fucking you?” Starling replies, “it’s something Miggs would say.” The reaction to Lechter’s banter to the grieving mother also yields responses such as, “you son of a bitch” and “take this monster out of here.” In both cases, the

words are an enticement not merely to unnerve the listener, but to assess the level of communication between those who claim to love and respect their children or employers. Communication is the measure of their authenticity, and thereby intelligence. Thus, Hannibal measures the level of intimacy he is not afraid of, but most of us are.[5]

Our fear of Hannibal Lechter lies in his ability to encapsulate clearly the relation between interdependency and ritual. It is not clear why he consumes the agent most offensive to him, but at the end of the film, when he is seen pursuing Dr. Chilton, he is heroic. By now, Dr. Chilton's arrogance has offended our senses, and Lechter's pursuit relieves us of his presence. The film implies that Lechter will kill Dr. Chilton, but unlike Buffalo Bill, we are engaged in the act through Lechter. Lechter will perform a ritual purgation on behalf of the audience, and Starling. All of this implies memory and repetition as a necessary component to this sacrificial form. Neither in the case of the "census taker" nor in the impending doom of Dr. Chilton, does Lechter show signs of random determination. Rather, it is his memory of insult, a person's voice, which compels Lechter to pursue his communal act with the body. The insult, or challenge, represents a violent attempt at "penetration" and dominance, which Lechter finds to be a particularly egregious act. The underlying quote about the liver is not unlike his comment to Agent Starling when she asks him to fill out a questionnaire. "Oh no […] you were doing fine. You had been courteous and receptive to courtesy. You had

[5] I also want to point out that Lechter's banter also illustrates his sexual instincts. Gad Horowitz, in "The Foucaultian Impasse: No sex, No self, No Revolution," says, "For Freud, sexuality is not a simple, fixed drive that is simply inhibited or blocked by internalized social control, but a multiplicity, a chaos of pleasure strivings – 'polymorphous perverse sexuality.' Sexuality is certainly not the essence of selfhood but rather that out of which the ego, the I, is constructed" (67). If we take the two scenes in their entirety, this quote from Horowitz fits in well with what we can hope to articulate about Demme's motivation. The socially repressed articulations of the interlocutors juxtapose the blunt, unrepressed articulations of Hannibal Lechter. The banter develops an ego associated with Hannibal Lechter, a banter that can only have been bluntly sexual in nature.

established trust with the embarrassing truth about Miggs. And now, this ham-handed segue into your questionnaire […] it won't do." Lechter has an established morality. The film will ultimately imply that after Starling leaves the interview, Lechter kills Miggs by whispering to him until he "swallows his own tongue." This issue of courtesy so occupies Lechter, after he dismisses Starling, when Miggs flings his seminal fluid on to her face, he cries, "Agent Starling come back! Agent Starling [...] I would not have had that happen to you […] discourtesy is unspeakably ugly to me." So, Miggs' death is not merely in defense of Agent Starling, but in defense of all humans; it is punishment and purgation; "unspeakably ugly" noting the power of voice that reflects a lack of regard for the other. Later, after Lechter escapes from prison, Agent Starling says, "he won't come after me […] he would consider that rude […] I can't explain it." But, if we consider Lechter's regard for agency, not merely the body, then we must acquiesce to his refusal to sacrifice one who has been "courteous" and open to communication. Starling successfully demonstrated a will towards life. If Miggs and Dr. Chilton's deaths purge us of their offensive *natures*, and we conclude that Lechter is guilty, then we are guilty, also. Lechter bloodies our hands, involves us in their murders; we cannot say our relief in death is independent of Lechter's actions.

Hannibal Lechter tells Agent Starling that, in compensation for Miggs' violation, which implies his violation (he would not have let it happen), he will give her what she "wants most." She asks, "What is that?" He replies, "I will make you happy." Juxtaposed with the final scene, when we see our predator pursuing Dr. Chilton (and we know he will succeed), Lechter delivers; we are "happy." This reading of the "religious" nature of *Silence of the Lambs* is not suspicious. Thomas Harris is well aware of the

difference that lies between Hannibal Lechter's person and dogmatic ideology. Lechter will point out that to punish him for Miggs' death, "(Chilton) will raise the volume of the gospel program" playing in the backdrop of his cell. Lechter calls it a "petty torment;" it is, given what we know of Chilton and the hero.

Of the many paradoxical elements in the film, one is most demonstrative of the gap between dogmatic adherence to ideology and agency. When transferring Lechter from the asylum to Tennessee, he is bound with his face contorted by a metal contraption. This allows him to speak, but, presumably, not to attack his prey. This image betrays the incomprehensible element that underlies Lechter's agency. Lechter's "madness" involves, most assuredly, his speech. He "whispers" to Miggs all afternoon, causing the victim to cry and ultimately end his own life. The strength of Lechter's ability to communicate is demonstrated in hearsay, but is wholly misunderstood by his oppressors. Despite Lechter's constraints, he moves. His freedom is not determined by the apprehension of his body, nor his mind. To "apprehend" Lechter, one would have to destroy both the "body with organs" *and* "the body without organs." He is a radically different type of killer than his counterpart, Buffalo Bill.

It is Lechter who introduces us to Buffalo Bill. His assessment of the serial killer is, "Billy is not a real transsexual, but he thinks he is; he tries to be; he's tried to be a lot of things, I expect. Look for severe childhood disturbances associated with violence. Our Billy wasn't born a criminal, Clarice, he was made one, through years of systematic abuse. Billy hates his own identity, you see, and he thinks that makes him a transsexual, but his pathology is a thousand times more savage and more terrifying." Buffalo Bill's pathology is the problem of zombification. If Hannibal Lechter represents one end of the

spectrum, Buffalo Bill fully encompasses the other. I want to point out that Hannibal Lechter is not so much a god, as he is fully human. He is the full embodiment of agency. I suspect that it is this quality about him that led to a series of sequels; the audience wishing to see him again. Lechter is flawed, as we can not say he does not have physical and sexual needs; nor can we say his actions, killing "innocent" guards, paramedics, and tourist, are acts befitting a hero. Nevertheless, Hannibal Lechter, unlike Buffalo Bill, communicates with his environment. And whether that leads us to death or invokes life is a rather moot point.

Buffalo Bill is completely other. Lechter's assessment of Buffalo Bill is not so much psychological as it is metaphysical. He represents the defiled and uncommunicative individual. It is easy to read Buffalo Bill as an agent determined by social forces, but it would trivialize his difference if we merely associated his pathology with psychological trauma. The problem, Lechter points out, is that he thinks. That's it. To think while simultaneously hating, rejecting, your "identity" yields a savage revelation about the human species. His thoughts are not of his body, so we have a problem. Buffalo Bill's killings are guided by illusions of the most egregious nature: language and identity politics. He thinks he can create an identity in the *image* of the other. More than thinks, he *believes* he is already the thing itself.[6] What is meant by "severe childhood disturbances associated with violence?" What is "systematic abuse?"

[6] Any analysis of Buffalo Bill is rather sketchy because it implicates those who identify with genders that differ from their biological make-up, or sexual orientations that go against the norm. My point rests on Leo Bersani's assertions on Foucault in his essay "Sociality and Sexuality." In it he says, "Foucault seems to have thought of cultural subversion and renewal as inherent in homosexuality, but, to a large extent, it is also something not yet realized. Homosexuality 'is not a form of desire, but something desirable. Therefore, we have to work as becoming homosexuals'" (641). Bersani goes on to say, "we might, curiously and impressively, help to bring heterosexuals closer to what Foucault also called, 'a manner of being that is still improbable." Thus, this unrealized potential of sexuality is at the heart of the Buffalo Bill problem.

For Buffalo Bill, our imagination runs through what we already know, especially given the class dynamics depicted in the film. Perhaps severe physical abuse? Perhaps neglect, rejection, and abandonment? Facts are irrelevant. Hannibal Lechter instructs Agent Starling to look beyond the facts. "Our Billy wasn't born a criminal." Billy was connected, and whatever disturbance, violence, and abuse he suffered pierced through that which is responsible for the development of agency, creating the creature renamed Buffalo Bill.[7]

Buffalo Bill's primary "want" is to make a dress out of the skin of female victims, thereby transforming into a "woman." This is one of those areas in the film where one gets a sense of Jonathan Demme's vision, and Thomas Harris' perspective. When we first see the only still-living victim, "Katherine," she is driving along a highway singing to a rock and roll tune on her radio. She is happy. Not merely there to identify with, she is not "woman" at this time; she is the pleasure principle. We recognize ourselves in her whether we own a car or not, whether we know the song or not, whether we have ever sung to a favorite tune, male or female. In this capacity, she is recognizable to us. She only becomes "woman" relative to Buffalo Bill. For him, she is a tool into language. Buffalo Bill's propensity sacrifices, not the body, as he uses the skin to graft a dress, but all life forces. "Woman" makes no reference to a person or living entity at all. He calls Katherine "it" throughout the abduction. Her physical body is redefined to become the

[7] See *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* on interruption of the pleasure principle and child neuroses. Freud says, "The early efflorescence of infantile sexual life is doomed to extinction because its wishes are incompatible with reality and with the inadequate stage of development which the child has reached. That efflorescence comes to an end in the most distressing circumstances and to the accompaniment of the most painful feelings. Loss of love and failure leave behind them a permanent injury to self-regard in the form of a narcissistic scar, which in my opinion, contributes more than anything to the 'sense of inferiority' which is so common in neurotics" (22). It seems to me that the description of Buffalo Bill fits this model, though exacerbated on multiple levels. It also seems that the Freudian theory explains his pathological need to repeatedly murder women in order to fashion a dress.

"woman" that serves as the basis for Buffalo Bill's actions. "Woman" is a dress. To make a dress, any skin will do; he could have easily used the skin of an animal or a male, but it must be the female skin, as *it* is imbued in this particular language. Actually, Buffalo Bill did not create this illusion; as Hannibal Lechter points out, society is responsible for his transformation. This transformation is not male to female, it is human to Zombie. The danger he poses to society directly relates to the rigid structures of language. We have to distinguish Buffalo Bill's "desire" from Hannibal Lechter's.

A scene depicting Katherine's mother, the Senator, pleading for her daughter's life shows the mother repeating her daughter's name. The Senator says, "I know you can feel love and compassion […] you have a wonderful chance to show the whole world that you can be merciful as well as strong. That you're big enough to treat Katherine better than the world has treated you. You have that power. Please." Starling and some other agents remark, "she keeps repeating the name […] so he sees Katherine as a person, not just an object." The audience already knows that this is futile (I rolled my eyes through the whole thing), not only because it would make for a bad movie if it works, but because it can not work; Buffalo Bill cannot communicate. Harris tries to make this point clear when we see Buffalo Bill instructing Katherine to put lotion on her skin, she pleads with him, desperate to communicate, but he repeats his instructions using the term "it." "It places the lotion in the basket." Finally, he appears to be at the breaking point, losing his temper and demanding her compliance. She complies. The scene reflects the absolute necessity for the sacrifice of Katherine's agency to uphold the Buffalo Bill's narrative. To see Katherine as agency would undermine his pursuit of "woman." It would confuse his subordination to replacement and substitution, not of male to female. He can neither

connect nor communicate. And, in this case, "cannot" is not "will not." Language demands the deterioration of connected processes; the narrative will not hold up if its rigid parameters are obstructed by movement. All senses, especially hearing and seeing, must be directed to the language, not the other. All acts to the contrary are a betrayal of the politic.

We do not understand, sympathize, or empathize with Buffalo Bill. Despite the fact that he is the occasion for the entire drama, he is the least memorable character in the film. He communicates neither with his victim nor the audience. We are repelled by him, but not merely by his existence, but by his blunt otherness. He is defilement and must, of course, be removed from our "environment." Starling will kill him, to our great relief.

I return now to the difference between Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo Bill. Whereas we not only forgive Lechter his acts, we applaud him for seeking out Dr. Chilton in absolute freedom. Buffalo Bill must go; we cannot forgive him his acts because they are not the acts of what the social construct defines as a master; they are the acts of a slave. This unbearable character reflects such profound emptiness, scholarly articles and outcries based on gender and class identity resist the possibility that he could, in fact, reflect society.[8] He does. A slave to language, he is infinitely translatable. Only Lechter remains definitively Hannibal Lechter.

[8] I realize that there are many articulations on Buffalo Bill that suggest his characterization maligns homosexuals and trans gendered people. In "Unmasking Buffalo Bill: Interpretative Controversy and "Silence of the Lambs," Kendall R. Phillips summarizes the essays written on the consequences of Buffalo Bill's representation. "Larry Kramer's is the first essay to appear in this series, and he utilizes an interesting amalgam of strategies to focus the reader's attention on the material consequences of interpretation. Dr. Isay explains, 'there is no doubt' the character of Buffalo Bill is depicted as a transsexual who is also a homosexual, at which point Kramer parenthetically reminds us that 'most transsexuals are heterosexual,' and that the character in the Thomas Harris novel is not a homosexual. The Dr. Isay voice expresses concern over the consequences of the "homophobic" characterization which

II. Black Female Symbols of Sacrifice in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

In language, the written word becomes the ground wherein religious ritual plays itself out. As a form of stable law, the written word becomes the means by which the external world accesses the agents it represents. Thus, society looks to the written word to encounter the other. If the other says, "I am not what the written word claims," speculation and suspicion falls on the body of the other to offer up evidence. Thus, I am not the authority of my own experience and I compete with the limitations of language. I must invoke much ritual and effort to guide the society I live in to the contrary of the written word, often by applying an addendum to the original text. It is very difficult to disregard the written word all together, even as its claims are found to be false representations of the truth. What we call the "disembodied" voice is a product of representations substituting real experience, where the experience must become subordinate to the limitations of language that claim to reflect it adequately. Like the filter in my section on *The Five Obstructions*, we leave behind possibility. The absent voice offers up evidence that some unquantifiable, unreachable element got lost in the exchange from bodies to written expressions and representations. The result of such fracture leaves voice unable to fully register its own reality. It fails to encapsulate its own existence. Its torment lies in the substitution of its inquiry for discourse, a stable narrative that explains or defines its subjective experience. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is an example of this problem.

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include playing on consciousness of the 'homophobic' characterization which include playing on unconscious heterosexual hatred and diminishing the self-esteem of gay men" (38). I must reiterate that this reading does not seek to address any genuine questions relating homosexual or trans-gendered people. I propose that, as postulated by Hannibal Lechter, Buffalo Bill is nothing at all. The danger in Buffalo Bill lies precisely in the absence of any authentic sense of self. He can only grasp an illusory self, which is precisely why he is a serial killer.

Before delving into Morrison's novel, the subject of sacrifice is broad and varied, so let me specify what I mean when I use the word. Where sacrifice, as it pertains to language, is concerned, "one of the aims of this work is to demonstrate that the expulsion of a sacred spirit whether pure or impure, is a spiritual component of sacrifice, as primordial and irreducible as communion" (9). Hubert and Mauss explain the complex structures of sacrifice in primitive cultures, but similar behaviors and patterns emerge in civilized societies, albeit less obvious to the naked eye. Ultimately, "Sacrifice might be minimally defined as the act of giving up something in order to receive something of greater worth."[9] I define the sacred as the real, lived experience that is then taken up in language and turned into an object. "Sacrifice has sometimes functioned as a kind of paradigmatic or metonymical placeholder for all religious ritual, or as the foundation of all morality and ethics. Sacrifice has even been identified as the origin of civilization itself […] and there is a certain sense in which all life – human and non-human, cultural and natural – might be regarded as a series of deaths and rebirths, that is, as a continuous process of sacrifice."[10] Thus, language is a component of rituals involving sacrifice.

In the "Unsacrificeable," Jean-Luc Nancy describes Georges Bataille's views on sacrifice. He says, "Bataille's thought is well-known to be marked not only by a particular interest in sacrifice, but obsessed and fascinated by sacrifice. 'The allure of sacrifice' is said to respond to nothing less than the following: 'what we await, from our childhood on, is this upsetting of the order we are suffocating in […] the negation of this limit of death, fascinating as light (qtd. in Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres completes* [Paris:

[9] In "Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual and Mystification and Mythical Demystification" by Brian K Smith. *Numen*, Vol. 36, Fasc. 2. (Dec., 1989) 189 – 224.

[10] Ibid.

Gallimard, 1988], vol. 11, 484)" (20). Nancy claims Bataille "willed sacrifice itself, in the act; at least he never ceased presenting his thought to himself as a necessary sacrifice of thought" (21). This form of sacrifice is what I mean to investigate as inactive or absent within the context of the problems presented in this project. Rather, it is "No less known, however, is the slow displacement, the long drifting, that led Bataille to denounce the *theatre* of sacrifice and consequently to renounce its successful accomplishment" (21). What Bataille detests is the emptiness associated with forms of sacrifice, which are theatrical turned ritualistic and passed as the real. Bataille defends his definition of sacrifice as follows:

> The question of sacrifice must be stated as the ultimate question. Corretively, any attempt to answer the ultimate question must obviously resolve, as well, the enigma of sacrifice. Discourse on being, metaphysics, is meaningless if it ignores life's necessary game with death.
>
> The problem with the ritual killing of live beings must be related to that of their structure. The time has come to get to the bottom of things, without fear of difficulty or discouragement. I deliberately adopt as my point of departure the conceptions formed by 'French sociology.' French sociology, which stresses the importance of the study and interpretation of sacrifice, relates that work to the conception of the 'social being.' This conception is generally startling, but it is readily acceptable once we agree that this being is composite. A clan, a city, a state are like persons, beings in possession of a single consciousness. The idea of a 'collective consciousness' runs counter to the principles of a unified psychological entity. But those principles are not easily defensible. Consciousness is surely a mere field of concentration, the ill-defined field of a concentration which is never complete, never closed; it is merely a gathering of reflections in life's multiple mirrors.
>
> Being, in man's definition and instantiated by him, is never present in the fashion of a pebble in the river, but rather as the flow of water or that of electric current. If there does exist some unity within presence, it is that of eddies, of circuits which tend toward stability and closure. […] An inner change of state is easily grasped when I communicate with another – when I talk or laugh, or lose myself within some turbulent group. [This change is caused by the passage of live current from one to the other, but in most

> cases these passages occur without forming stable circuits, such as a clan, city, or state.[11]

To change is to accept sacrifice as a necessary component of communication. And to communicate with the other is to acknowledge the death of that which existed before the communion. This is not so much repetition of ritualistic motives, as it is Bataille's insertion of a very different type of morality. Bataille desires that which is "incommensurable with the moral ends usually proposed."[12] "Sacrifice" he says, "explores the depths within worlds, and its requisite destruction reveals its laceration. […] Morality is always concerned with well-being."[13] So, although its aims are similar to sacrifice, morality seeks "states of glory, the sacred moments which disclose the incommensurable, [exceeding] the desired results."[14] In describing Friedrich Nietzsche's position following his years of success, Bataille says, "Nietzsche is unable to precisely define it, but he is driven by it, he assumes it utterly. This burning with no relation to a dramatically expressed moral obligation is surely paradoxical. It cannot serve as a point of departure for preaching or action. Its consequences are disconcerting. If we cease to make burning the condition of another, further state, one that is distinguished as good, it appears as a pure state, one of empty consumption. Unless related to some enrichment such as the strength and influence of a community [or of a God, a church, a party], this consumption is not even intelligible. The positive value of loss can seemingly be

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[11] See "Sacrifice" by Georges Bataille in *October*, Vol. 36, Georges Bataille: Writings on Laughter, Sacrifice, Nietzsche, Un-Knowing (Spring, 1986), 61-74.

[12] See "On Nietzsche: The Will to Chance Preface" by Georges Bataille. *October*, Vol. 36, Georges Bataille: Writings on Laughter, Sacrifice, Nietzsche, Un-Knowing (Spring, 1986), 46-57.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

conveyed only in terms of profit."[15] To this Bataille adds, "[Nietzsche] must have realized that he failed; he knew, in the end, that he had been preaching in the desert. In destroying, the good, in denouncing the emptiness and the life of morality, he destroyed the effective value of language. […] Nietzsche conceived and preached a new doctrine; he went in search of disciples, he dreamed of founding an order; he hated what he got…common praise!"[16] I address this case with Bataille's interest in Nietzsche to emphasize a point about the subject of sacrifice. It appears Bataille is pointing towards the structures Nietzsche built that resisted the necessary component of sacrifice in the construction of his language and thus his message.

Bataille speaks of sacrifice in many ways, but the way that corresponds with this project is best described in his essay, "Hegel, Death, and Sacrifice," where he discusses the subject of sacrifice stemming from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Alexander Kojève. In this essay Bataille joins the two philosophers in a tête-à-tête with the relationship between death and negation, and pleasure. "It was precisely the univocal character of death for Hegel that inspired the following commentary from Kojève, 'Certainly, the idea of death does not heighten the well-being of Man; it does not make him happy nor does it give him any pleasure.' [Kojève] believed it his duty to reject vulgar satisfaction. The fact that Hegel himself said, in this respect, that Spirit 'only attains its truth by finding itself in absolute dismemberment' goes together, in principle, with Kojève's Negation."[17] Thus, Bataille concludes, "Satisfaction and dismemberment

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] In "Hegel, Death, and Sacrifice" by Georges Bataille. *Yale French Studies*, No. 78, On Bataille. (1990) 9-28.

coincide, however, in one point, but here they harmonize with pleasure. This coincidence takes place in sacrifice."[18] The point I want to emphasize here is that Bataille's assertion helps ground an understanding of the depth which must traverse discourse in the subject of sacrifice. It is the meaningful associations forged in experience of death, life, and the language we use to express the poles of our existence. My interest in Toni Morrison's novel is based on these assertions. I believe that Morrison's novel is concerned with and demonstrates sacrifice. Does the text illustrate this form of sacrifice, or is it merely a performance bound by repetition of discourse and representation?

How do we read the body vis-à-vis language? What bodies do we read? In the case of language and sacrifice, the body comes to bear meaning through language, an artificial organ, language attaches to the body and becomes the sole voice of the individual; as the body speaks, so, too, the artificial element of language. It is as though despite any attempt to define or articulate experience, the body must be subject to readings that long since determined the limits of speech and voice vis-à-vis those experiences. So when we read Morrison's novel, we must remember that a good deal of the motivations behind her work are based on the perception that absence of linguistic representations is tantamount to the absence of a social body. In an essay called, "Seeds in Hard Ground: Black Girlhood in The Bluest Eye," Ruth Rosenberg describes the motivation behind Toni Morrison's (among other African American female authors) determination to write works based on the African American experience. "Black girls did not exist as far as the publishers of school anthologies were concerned. […] It was the absence of fictionalized characters with whom to identify that started […] the road to being a writer" (436). Rosenberg adds, "At some point, in virtually every interview with

[18] Ibid.

a black woman writer, comes […] the consistent response to the question of why she became an author is that she could not find the books she needed" (436). Thus, Morrison's motivation behind her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was based on lack and absence. It was based on a moral obligation to fulfill a need for representation not reflected in the books distributed in her time, and it was based on a violent rejection of representations of whiteness. It seems to me that this motivation already presents us with a problem. This implies that valid existence in the social climate requires that the body is represented in the pages of literature; that is, lived experience is documented and *captured* in aesthetics and representation. It seems it is not merely a matter of pleasure, but of a fundamental need that determines more than just place in society. It is confused for real life, real engagements, and mortality. "Morrison […] immerses the reader in the black community. The constant censorship of and intrusion on black life from surrounding society is emphasized not by specific events so much as by a consistent pattern of misnaming. Power for Morrison is largely the power to name, to define reality and perception."[19] What, then, is a medium which houses so much power and individuals who place so much faith in its graces? To what degree can authors like Morrison or her characters participate in the ideas put forth by Bataille if their agenda is set forth from the onset by a need for fictitious representations of lived experience? Thus, I argue that the compelling argument that led to the publication of *The Bluest Eye* only further exacerbates the discord between language and body. The writer's response is a reaction to absence and lack, but the absence and lack inscribed on the bodies of those affected are based on the limitation and artificial nature of language: a medium

[19] See "Self, Society, and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction" by Cynthia A Davis. *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 3. (Summer, 1982) 323 – 342.

replete with absence and lack. One should be cautious not to try to offer up representations that imply a solution to the problem.

Black women writers after the civil rights movement hoped to respond to the offense against them marked in representations by seeking to create their own representations within the context of a totality of experiential existence. With what few representations that did exist, so offensive and racially motivated, they sought to "tell the truth" about who they really were, what life was really like for them, how they really lived, what they really thought. "Morrison's early works explore the results for black women when the values are real and powerful but are designed primarily for middle-class whites."[20] She says, "When the strength of a race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble. . . . The concept of physical beauty as a *virtue* is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the Western world, and we should have nothing to do with it. Physical beauty has nothing to do with our past, present or future. Its absence or presence was only important to *them*, the white people who used it for anything they wanted […]."[21] Thus, authors like Morrison ran the risk of overcompensation and mirroring the constructs that determined the absence and lack they tried to reject.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola represents the plight of the little Black girl, abandoned and tossed to the side by society. Morrison admits she failed to give the character a voice, though she explains it was in order to effectively offer a lens through which the

[20] See "Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison" by Jane S. Bakerman. *American Literature*, Vol. 52, No. 4. (Jan., 1981) 541 – 563.

[21] Toni Morrison, "Behind the Making of The *Black Book," Black World*, Feb. 1974, Pg. 89.

reader could encounter the feelings of young girls in Pecola's horrifying position.[22] But would it have made any difference if she had given Pecola a voice? To what extent does Toni Morrison adhere to cultural linguistic shadows? Even with a voice, it seems Pecola would have been created in the image of "Black Woman," as imagined and articulated through the artificial means of language. In *The Bluest Eye*, all black women's bodies are inscribed in various forms of pain. This message repeats throughout the entire novel, without break. On the one hand we cannot say Morrison is insincere in her articulation; on the other we should be skeptical. In the context of her motivation, her language represents a totality. It is rigid, even as it is a poetic expression of experience. Language, superimposed on to the whole body, both individual and collective, predetermines the experiences of that body and the voice that will emerge from it. Pecola can speak, but she would only be able to speak the blanketed voice of that which has been substituted and defined for her as "the suffering of little black girls."[23] In this context, with language, it is not the pain, but the limited way one can speak of pain. Pecola, like the many other characters in Morrison's novel, is the ultimate sacrificial character. Morrison violently sacrifices her (in a very particular way) so that the Black community, Black language, can be heard. "What is 'at stake' in Morrison's novels and in black fiction in general is a consistent emphasis on the need to resist forces stemming from society which may serve to destroy 'continuity of the black cultural heritage' by a conscious embracing

[22] See the "Afterword" in *The Bluest Eye*, Plume Publishing, 1994.

[23] This is not to say that Pecola should speak less of her pain, or that Morrison should temper the blows in her narrative. The point here is to be leery of the text because of an absence of movement. It is an eternally rigid novel. Morrison points out that people survive, but the disturbing element in the novel is the way that female characters are "held still." The onslaught of oppressive forces, and the consequences are the main ideological forces in the narrative, but the reader should be very careful not to assume these characters have agency. The desire to say they are "speaking," even in their pain, can only come from the fact that they so obviously are not.

of the past combined with a concurrent quest for identity."[24] I do not think there was any error in her omission of Pecola's voice. It was my experience of this text that invoked a sense of caution whenever I saw the image of a young black girl on the cover of a book. I assumed pain and suffering of that child would be etched in the narrative. I was far less intrigued by the possibility of encountering new forms of expression. The body, and the image of that body, is pain and pity, as determined, not by lived experience, but by the artificial element of a language which eclipsed those it tried to represent.

In *Love's Body*, Norman O Brown points out that, "The fund of personality, the fund of soul-stuff available, is fixed and collective. The only soul is the group-soul, and this consists of nothing but group functions" (94). Particularly expressed in language, such is the case in Morrison's novel. Although Pecola is the central character where all violence is directed, her experience is articulated through Morrison's mythology and reflects the experience of all women and women of color both within and beyond the novel. "Since the project of representing African-Americans focuses most specifically on the histories and bodies of black women, the novel's alternating perspective reproduces formally their complicated subjectivity in particular. […] Morrison seems to move her examination of Pecola's life back and forth from axis of race to that of gender."[25] We have to be especially careful not to confuse the characters with real expressions of Eros. I believe that element can only be inscribed in the author. This component lacking or compromised in the characters, however, is translated as love, and constitutionally absent

[24] See "Black Naturalism and Toni Morrison: The Journey away from Self-Love in the Bluest Eye" by Patrice Cormier – Hamilton. *MELUS*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Ethnic Women Writers VI. (Winter, 1994) 109 – 127.

[25] In "The Bluest Eye: Notes on History, Community, and Black Female Subjectivity" by Jane Kuenz. *African American Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Women's Culture Issue. (Autumn, 1993) 421 – 431.

in this story of the black female body. Of the very few words emanating from Pecola's lips, the first, and most notable, are, "Then Pecola asked a question that had never entered my mind. 'How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?' But Frieda was asleep. And I didn't know" (Morrison, 33). In this scene she is speaking to two friends, Frieda and Claudia, where both girls acknowledge what is an obvious element of communal life: the absence of love, or the difficulty in apprehending it. This assertion takes place when Pecola gets her first period. The first menstrual period represents death. Everything will die; her innocence, her mind, her infant, ties to family, community, and nature. The community lives exists this death - inside Frieda's sleep and Claudia's inability to answer the question. In speaking of absences, Pecola is the whole body of that particular community of persons captured in absence.

What we have to do is distinguish between the individual, who is concretely violated, and the voice superimposed on to that body. "Morrison's critique of the visual system within popular American culture and her rejection of white-defined female beauty are reflected in her first novel. […] *The Bluest Eye* reveals the crippling effects of white standards of female beauty on a young black girl."[26] But where, then, is the author in the "life" of that black girl? If we are to call literature living texts that do more than merely tell a story, where is Morrison in the construction of Pecola and her subordination to the effects of white standards? Morrison, in a moral consideration for her project, in her defense of the group, overlooks her creation in the figure of Pecola as much as those represented in her accusations. She is as guilty as the "white problem" she names. The problem with Pecola is that Morrison has her becoming, not tragically human, but

[26] See "Out of Sight: Toni Morrison's Revision of Beauty" by Malin LaVon Walther. *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Women Writers Issue. (Winter, 1990) 775 – 789.

tragically physical. When, if we say Pecola is the personified sacrificial subject, did the community or Morrison execute this act? Sacrifices are based on the secrecy of societies; outsiders do not participate in the functions. The impossibility of access is best described by Brown when he says, "Man and the God are not in contact. In this way sacrifice is distinguished from most of the facts grouped under the heading of blood covenant, in which by the exchange of blood a direct fusion of human and divine life is brought about" (11). In sacrifice, if there is no fusion, then there is only death. Life forces are held up by connectedness with divine[27] properties. With language, life is substitution, and, thereby, dead to the natural world, but understood by the initiates of the group as living. Clearly stated, it is not that the individuals initiated in language identify and understand one another; they identify with the language, which defines the other, and everyone is "other." In this way, Pecola, as a separate agent, was always incomprehensible and inaccessible; Morrison makes an astute observation.

Long before Pecola's great tragedy, Morrison established a physical world depleted of life. Pecola's environment is her religious domain, her ancestral ground. The person, or mask, she bears is related to a religious exchange. Brown says, "Personality is not innate, but acquired. Like a mask, it is a thing, a fetish, a fetishistic object or commodity…" (94). We never *see* Pecola, rather, Morrison's use of her body gets the reader to see a condition. What makes this more complex is the fact that Pecola is a name that corresponds so completely with a representation of the "condition," but the

[27] By "divine" I mean the natural; our historical attempts to explain our relationship with external forces. Any representation of an ordered and chaotic universe, and its impact on our lives is dependent on recognition and empathy. The "divine" can be a religious, paternal god, the pagan, mother earth, or ancestral guides; either way, not only are such domains absent in the young Pecola's narrative, but all access to the metaphysical is summarily cut off and violently, methodically, eviscerated. Pecola is not tragically human; she is tragically physical.

person is absent. Recall, "A Person, is he, whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man…When they are considered as his owne, then he is called a Naturall Person: And when they are considered as representing the words and actions of another, then is he a Feigned or Artificiall person" (Leviathan, 133). Pecola is not a "feigned" person, but she is "artificial." In fact, it is this problem of substitution that makes Pecola's image so disturbing. "Names and personalities are fixed by archetypal persons and situations; the voices coming through the masks are always ancestral voices. The masquerade or carnival is a danse macabre, a visit of ancestral spirits, represented by the authorized bearers of their persons. The life of the clan consists in the perpetual reincarnation of ancestors – a reincarnation achieved by magic, by imitation (identification), by dramatic representation" (Brown, 94). Because she is a representation, our first description of Pecola is not her body, but the body of her home. "There is an abandoned store on the southeast corner of Broadway and Thirty-fifth Street in Lorain, Ohio. It does not recede into its background of leaden sky, nor harmonize with the gray frame houses and black telephone poles around it. Rather, it foists itself on the eye of the passerby in a manner that is both irritating and melancholy. Visitors who drive to this tiny town wonder why it has not been torn down, while pedestrians, who are residents of the neighborhood, simply look away when they pass it" (Morrison, 33). What is the difference between the gazes upon Pecola's body and the illustration of this abandoned building? What marks the difference between Pecola and her family? Her family and the building?

> They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although though their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly

> and aggressively ugly. Except for the father, Cholly, whose ugliness (the result of despair, dissipation, and violence directed toward petty things and weak people) was behavior, the rest of the family – Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy and Pecola – wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them.
>
> …you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. 'Yes,' they had said. 'You are right' (Bluest Eye, 39).

Interestingly, Hubert and Mauss point out that "there are cases where the effects of the sacrificial consecration are exerted not directly on the sacrificer himself, but on certain things which appertain more or less directly to his person. In the sacrifice that takes place at the building of a house, it is the house that is affected by it, and the quality that it acquires by this means can survive longer than its owner for the time being" (10). The inanimate object of the building is animated through this process of consecrating both persons and objects. The building is not metaphor, but "symbolic substitution," likely to outlive the Bredlove family. The abandoned, ugly building is Pecola, literally. We do not sympathize with a building, nor, according to Morrison, do we sympathize with "little black girls." Transference of person to object, the name, Pecola, is a mask no one wears. We are disturbed by our search for a person.

If there is a tension in Morrison's novel, it is not that Morrison denies Pecola a voice, but, rather, that *she* gives her community a voice through Pecola. The fictitious young girl's feelings are as follows: "Pecola covered her head with the quilt. The sick feeling, which she had tried to prevent by holding in her stomach, came quickly in spite of her precaution. There surged her desire to heave, but as always she would

not…'Please, God,' she whispered into the palm of her hand. 'Please make me disappear.' She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush. Slowly again. Her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now. Yes. That was good. The legs all at once. It was the hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, too, went away. Then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done, almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left" (Morrison, 45). There is an intersection in Pecola's young body: her desire for that body to disappear, and the author, who, is "making disappear" the body. We are engaged in Pecola's desire to erase herself through Morrison's execution of that erasure. In other words, to whom do the words and actions belong? Morrison's motivation and Pecola are indistinguishable. We feel for a child characterized in the privacy of thought, made public by the author. So, the public speech is manipulated by Morrison, even as the private desire *appears* genuine; the disappearing scene is perfectly demonstrative of the sacrificed, then substituted individual. The notion that one can speak for those who can not speak for themselves is the making of a Zombie.

Morrison does not ease the pressure of this "disappearing act." Although we have been introduced to the "ugliness" of the Bredlove family, we have also been participant to what is often called Pecola's "invisibility." In a small grocery store, where Pecola seeks out the purchase of "Mary Jane" candy, the store owner is depicted as violently dismissive of her young body. "He urges his eyes out of his thoughts to encounter her. Blue eyes. Blear-dropped. Slowly, like Indian summer moving imperceptibly toward fall, he looks toward her. Somewhere between retina and object, between vision and

view, his eyes draw back, hesitate, and hover. At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance" (48). The novel imparts the very important element of the gaze; the possible effects of a harmful gaze, which denies connectedness and recognition. But like the child, the characterization of the store-owner is Zombie, in that what he is able to see is entirely dependent on what his cultural language permits. "He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see. How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant storekeeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his mind honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary, his sensibilities blunted by a permanent awareness of loss, see a little black girl? Nothing in his life even suggested that the feat was possible, not to say desirable or necessary" (48). It seems as though Morrison is saying he ought to be responsible for his failure to see the young girl; that he, representing his cultural language, is guilty of this violence. But consecrated in language, there is no "he" or "he" is an abstraction. It is pointless to speak to that which has neither eyes nor ears. "She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition – the glazed separateness" (48). He senses through language, substitution, where "other" is unaccounted for. The store-owner is violence, but not in *Naturall Person* - in substitution. His person is a representation of "white," "immigrant," and "business-owner." For Morrison, each quality is a quality in privilege. But, a privileged slave is as egregious a sight (perhaps more) as an underprivileged slave. Zombies do not necessarily look malnourished; it depends on the master. We assume the store-owner simply denies Pecola access to "human recognition," but that should be our first clue that something is amiss.

As for Pecola, Morrison adds, "…she has seen interest, disgust, even anger in grown male eyes. Yet this vacuum is not new to her. It has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So, the distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes" (49). An excellent example of enclosure in language, Morrison's use of Pecola is primal. Like her mother, Pecola understands "blackness" as the cause of her calamities; "whiteness" as the baseline solution. Although articulated in various ways, Morrison has Pecola reading the world in exactly the same dimensions as her mother. Desperately seeking acceptance to the "other" social group, Pecola wants to be a part of a language which promises something other than the one invoked on and performed within her own community. In this case, Pecola's desire is understood, for while Morrison illustrates the sad trajectory of her life, she validates the nightmare of a language called, "blackness." Shortsightedness would say that it is better to be a "white" slave than a "black" slave, but Zombies bear little rationality; neither form is natural; both require sacrifice of agency and substitution.

Freud's theory on the sexual instincts and its role in creating life, immortality of the species is another theme in Morrison's novel. In particular, women - mostly Black women - and their relationship to sex represent death of the species precisely because it is often obstructed by culture. Morrison's novel reflects this in a deluge of events and complaints. She begins with child molestation:

> What happened, Frieda?
>
> She lifted a swollen face from the crook of her arm. Shuddering still, she sat up, letting her thin legs dangle over the bedside. I knelt on the bed and

> picked up the hem of my dress to wipe her running nose. She never liked wiping noses on clothes, but this time she let me. It was the way Mama did with her apron. "Did you get a whipping? She shook her head no. 'Then why are you crying?' 'Because.' 'Because what?' 'Mr. Henry.' 'What'd he do?' 'He…picked at me.' 'Picked at you?' 'You mean like Soaphead Church?' 'Sort of.' 'He showed his privates at you?' 'Noooo. He touched me.' 'Here and here.' She pointed to the tiny breast that, like two fallen acorns, scattered a few faded rose leaves on her dress (99).

In this scene, Freida represents the vulnerability and the ease with which the sexual instincts of little girls become fractures, invoking fear of the act and, by extension, seriously compromising the possibility of regeneration of the group. It appears here that this can only lead to the next possible stage of social reproduction articulated in characters like Geraldine. This character denounces marital sex as an exercise in unpleasant obligatory functions,

> These particular brown girls from Mobile and Aiken are not like some of their sisters. They are not fretful, nervous, or shrill; they do not have lovely black necks that stretch as though against an invisible collar; their eyes to not bite. These sugar-brown Mobile girls move through the streets without a stir. They are as sweet and plain as buttercake. Slim-ankles; long, narrow feet…They straighten their hair with Dixie peach, and part it on the side…They go to land-grant colleges, normal schools, and learn how to do the white man's work with refinement: home economics to prepare his food: teacher education to instruct black children in obedience; music to soothe the weary master and entertain his blunted soul…the careful development of thrift, patience, high morals, and good manners. In short, how to get rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of the passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions. He must enter her surreptitiously, lifting the hem of her nightgown only to her navel. He must rest his weight on his elbows when they make love, ostensibly to avoid hurting her breasts but actually to keep her from having to touch or feel too much of him.
>
> While he moves inside her, she will wonder why they didn't put the necessary but private parts of the body in some more convenient place – like the armpit, for example, or the palm of the hand. Someplace one could get to easily, and quickly, without undressing. She stiffens when she feels one of her paper curlers coming undone from the activity of love; imprints in her mind which one it is that is coming loose so she can quickly secure it once he is through. She hopes he will not sweat – the

> damp may get into her hair; and that she will remain dry between her legs – she hates the glucking sound they make when she is moist (82 - 85).

What this scene offers the reader is less an attribute of social conditioning. It is part of a trajectory of the death instinct of the group. Geraldine performs her obligatory sexual duties. She can conceive. She gives birth to Junior, but her desires are displaced on to a cat; a figure that cannot contribute to the survival of the species. Her love interest in the cat reflects the cutting off of the attributes of Eros or the sexual instincts which are essential to the species' survival. It is not merely that her son, Junior, represents maternal abandonment, but, rather, he represents the alienated and disconnected element which remains. Junior is just a body. He is also a dangerous element, as he has no centrality; nothing that distinguishes him from an object. Morrison distinguishes between the reproduction of the physical element and the spiritual element that binds the group. Geraldine is matched and overcome by Pauline. In Pauline we get a representation of distortion:

> Then he will lean his head down and bite my tit. Then I don't want him to rub my stomach anymore. I want him to put his hands between my legs. I pretend to wake up, and turn to him, but not opening my legs. I want him to open them for me. He does, and I be soft and wet where his fingers are strong and hard. I be softer than I ever been before. All my strength in his hand. My brain curls up like wilted leaves. A funny, empty feeling is in my hands. I want to grab holt of something, so I hold his head. His mouth is under my chin. Then I don't want his hand between my legs no more, because I think I am softening away. I stretch my legs open, and he is on top of me. Too heavy to hold, and too light not to. He puts his thing in me. In me. In me.
>
> I know he wants me to come first. But I can't. Not until he does. Not until I feel him loving me. Just me. Sinking into me. Not until I know that my flesh is all that be on his mind. That he couldn't stop if he had to. That he would die rather than take his thing out of me. Of me. Not until he has let go of all he has, and give it to me. To me. To me. When he does I feel a power. I be strong. I be pretty. I be young (130).

I realize this appears to be a demonstration of real erotic possibilities, but consider with whom she engages in this sexual act. Cholly, her husband, is a model of the castrated male. What we know of Cholly is that in the prime of his sexual experimentation, two white men holding long rifles suddenly caught him about to have sex with Darlene. "There stood two white men. One with a spirit lamp, the other with a flashlight. There was no mistake about their being white; he could smell it. Cholly jumped, trying to kneel, stand, and get his pants up all in one motion. The men had long guns" (147). The obvious correlation between power and the phallic symbol represented in the long guns cannot be ignored. The symbol of light held by these two men in the form of a spirit lamp and a flashlight also cannot be dismissed from the events that follow. Cholly is ordered to "Get on wid it, nigger" (148), wherein Morrison writes, "He dropped back to his knees. […] With a violence born of total helplessness, he pulled her dress up, lowered his trousers and underwear. […] He could do no more than make-believe. […] Cholly, moving faster, looked at Darlene. He hated her. He almost wished he could do it – hard, long, and painfully, he hated her so much" (149). Thus, in this scene, more than Cholly's displaced anger at Darlene, Morrison illustrates the early adolescent trauma that would infect, figuratively, all of his engagements with women. The scene renders Cholly impotent. It is not that he will not be able to have sex, but rather, he will be unable to engage desire. Cholly represents the incapacity to reproduce. Again, there is the distinction between physical reproduction and the "continuation" of his species. So with his eroticism trampled by the event of his childhood, we cannot ignore this element in favor of an eroticism represented in Pauline's expression.

If Cholly cannot engage his lovers, who, then, is the object of Pauline's desire? With whom does Pauline experience this magnificent show of erotic love? It is not merely that Morrison portrays Pauline as someone completely infused in fantastical images of romance. Consider, in her words, the theatrics expressed in this love-making scene: "Then he lift his head, turn over, and put his hand on my waist. If I don't move, he'll move his hand over to pull and knead my stomach. I still don't move, because I don't want him to stop. I want to pretend sleep […] I pretend to wake up, and turn to him, but not opening my legs. I want him to open them." (130). To what degree does Cholly participate in this scene? None. What we know of Cholly here is, "He used to come easing into bed, sometimes, not too drunk" (129), and "He asks me if I'm all right. I say yes. He gets off me and lies down to sleep" (131). In short, Cholly had "not too drunk" sex and fell asleep. Pauline is alone and this is more a masturbatory scene than a depiction of sexual engagements with a love interest. This is not to discredit masturbation, but it is to emphasize the nature of the alienated black woman. She is born of a necessity to be independent, completely self-reliant, even if that self-reliance must invoke fantasy and imagination to exist. If independence is not reflected in the image of Pauline, it is reflected in the representation of prostitution.

"Whores" and prostitutes in Morrison's novel play a central role in the image of the independent black woman. China, Poland, Miss Marie, and the Maginot Line were outcasts of the society, but Morrison's depiction of these women is sympathetic. Through the eyes of our narrator, Claudia, "These were the fancy women of the maroon nail polish Mama and Big Mama hated. […] China was not too terrible, at least not in our imaginations. She was thin, aging, absentminded, and unaggressive. But the Maginot

Line. […] That was the one who had killed people, set them on fire, poisoned them, cooked them in lye. Although I thought the Maginot Line's face, hidden under all that fat, was really sweet […]" (77). Claudia's singular ability to see past language is supposed to be the point here. She can tell that there was a great deal more than what she was told, and so the story is told through her eyes, as the eyes that can see the truth. She bears the eyes that bear witness to the misrepresentations of the figures in her community. With the Maginot Line she says, "I thought I saw a mild lonesomeness cross the face of the Maginot Line" (77). Thus, the reader gets beneath the layers of skin, beneath the façade of prostitution, and encounters the real nature of black women who are not mothers and wives: the loneliness, the "obscure longing." Nevertheless, they are represented as the most human, most sympathetic, especially in their treatment of Pecola. They are the ones with which black women are best served by identifying with their spirituality rather than their social roles. They are the independent, lonely survivors who can give to the other, though unreciprocated and scorned. So, by now, the various depictions of the black female congregate around being ostracized, alienated and displaced. It seems like Pecola is peppered throughout the novel, amongst all these representation of debauched love and desire, almost as an omen of things to come. Pecola is product, the final result of the death instinct; the final leg of a race towards annihilation.

If the sexual instinct represents the most basic element of connectedness, then Morrison imposes an obstacle at almost every possible road that could lead to such engagements. The characters suffer the trauma of disembodiment, weakness, and fractured bodies. Even our most perceptive narrator is engaged in this collective death drive, as she can only tell the reader what she witnesses in the Totality of her

environment. In *The Bluest Eye*, men are often depicted as sexual predators, as in Mr. Henry, Soaphead Church, and Cholly Bredlove, and women are depicted as sexual victims, as in Freida, China, Poland, Miss Marie, Pauline Bredlove, and Pecola. When women are not sexual victims - battered by years of abuse - they are or become sexually detached or dissociated; frigid or indifferent survivors of an otherwise violent and self-negating activity. Morrison gives verse to the honored women elders who endured the ravages of sexual debasement and all of its associations. "Then they had grown. Edging into life from the back door. Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, 'Do this.' White children said, 'Give me that.' White men said, 'Come here,' Black men said, 'Lay down" (138). In the end Morrison says, "Then they were old. Their bodies honed, their odor sour…they had carried a world on their hands…they had given over the lives of their own children and tendered their grandchildren. With relief they wrapped their heads in rags, and their breasts in flannel; eased their feet into felt. They were through with lust and lactation, beyond tears and terror" (139). So, the black heroine, the black feminine divine *survives* fertility. She becomes divine when she is free from her associations with sex and reproduction. Freedom is disentanglement from connectedness; she has sacrificed and has been sacrificed, but she has not been a part, a fully engaged part of the product of reproduction. She was not permitted to give; rather, what life instinct emanated within was taken, destroyed, and rehabilitated to suit the needs of her assailant. Her success is only that she did not submit entirely to the processes of zombification, but death is in her name. That is, she is life when she is no longer connected, when movement ceases; only then can we identify her as black woman. The scene with Freida is the exchange from

the sexual instinct, life instinct, into death. Pecola merely completes a ritualistic cycle that begins in the representation of Freida and ends with a dead fetus and insanity.

The fusion of sex, violence and death is potent in Morrison's novel. In no other literature is the figure of the Zombie so acutely defined. The most notable image would be that of the rape of Pecola. Cholly, the father, the Father, language, artificial god rapes his daughter to "love" her. First, there is the abstraction, the inability to see, the distorted view. While pointing out that Cholly cannot see, Morrison, simultaneously, silences Pecola, a very important move. "She was washing dishes. Her small back hunched over the sink. Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt" (161). Secondly, she isolates and alienates Cholly who is governed by the rise of feelings originating from his earlier castration, erecting the artificial phallus. "Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable; next he felt the discomfort dissolve into pleasure. The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love. His revulsion was a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence. Her back hunched that way; her head to one side as though crouching from a permanent and unrelieved blow. Why did she have to look so whipped? She was a child – unburdened – why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation. He wanted to break her neck – but tenderly" (161). As governed by language, Pecola can only be translated as a body in pain; Cholly, the hunter, is distorted into the kindhearted, benevolent, father. "Guilt and impotence rose in a bilious duet. What could he do for her – ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him – the love would move him to fury. How dare she

love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? What could his calloused hands produce to make her smile? What of his knowledge of the world and of life could be useful to her? What of his knowledge of the world and of life could be useful to her? What could his heavy arms and befuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love" (162)? All roads that lead to zombification begin with disconnectedness; when language is a god, it does not share. The following scene depicts the representation of death and substitution,

> The tenderness welled up in him, and he sank to his knees, his eyes on the foot of his daughter. Crawling on all fours toward her, he raised his hand and caught the foot in an upward stroke. Pecola lost her balance and was about to careen to the floor. Cholly raised his other hand to her hips to save her from falling. He put his head down and nibbled at the back of her leg. His mouth trembled at the firm sweetness of the flesh. He closed his eyes, letting his fingers dig into her waist. The rigidness of her shocked body, the silence of her stunned throat, was better than Pauline's easy laughter had been.
>
> The confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him, and a bolt of desire ran down his genitals, giving it length, and softening the lips of his anus. Surrounding all this lust was a border of politeness. He wanted to fuck her – tenderly.
>
> But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear. His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly out into her, and the gigantic thrust he made in to her provoked the only sound she made – a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon (162).

Norman O. Brown says, "…a person never owns his own person, but always represents another, by whom he is possessed. And the other that one is, is always ancestors; one's soul is not one's own, but Daddy's" (Love's Body, 98). Pecola's earlier silence crystallizes her physical response. The nature of this sort of violence is not taking a person's voice, but "stunning" it out of potential, "a hollow suck of air;" the gutting out

of a human for the purposes of replacement. "His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly into her" would have put Cholly at the center of Pecola's pain were it not for the 160 pages of sexual violence and fractured female bodies that preceded it. In Morrison's novel, Pecola mirrors every woman in the novel: Pauline, Freida, Claudia, China, Miss Marie, Geraldine, the Maginot Line, etc. She is at one and the same time a rite of passage, a sacrifice that is necessary to identity what she reflects. Cholly is language, accepted by Morrison, articulated in the merciless destruction of Pecola, who represents the culture of these female subjects. There is only death, and the women figures are not meant to generate a sense of continuity, but rather a sense of finality. With their deaths comes the death of so much pain and suffering. For Morrison, each individual death is a victory. "The Bluest Eye is meant to be a novel of failure; it is a portrait which depicts how a young black woman's idea of what constitutes a true self is de-centered by the implicitly ethnocentric tenets of the society into which she is born. Pecola Breedlove fails to discover a true self precisely because she allows her values to be dictated by the white mythology."[28]

Let me just say one more thing on this subject. *The Bluest Eye* is not a representation of black women so much as it is a representation of the characteristics of the death drive of any group. I cannot speak to Morrison's motivation on the subject of Freudian death drives and the African American identity, but I can recall that I found it difficult to swallow this text as a representation of my life, race and gender. It closed virtually every door of possibility, and if I were to accept it as a response to the absence of representations of black girls, I would have preferred the absence. That must sound

[28] See "Toni Morrison: The Struggle to Depict the Black Figure on the White Page" by Timothy B. Powell. *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Women Writers Issue. (Winter, 1990) 747 – 760.

like an admission of self-hate; on the contrary, I was never offended by the articulations made regarding my race or gender. In reality, every stereotype of every race reflects something or somebody within the group it tries to define. The offense was that members of one group had presumed to define, contain and capture in language the living, life properties of the members of another group. Morrison's text was useful. If Morrison had produced a fictional narrative that offered one-dimensional, positive images of black girls, I might have been less inclined to question the distortion between reality and language. Like Pauline, I would have inscribed the fictional images on the page on to my own reality. Rather, Morrison's novel was able to illustrate the artificial nature of representation only when I rejected the text. It was not a question of whether the experiences in my personal life reflected the kinds of things found in the novel, but rather the idea, the presumption, that those things which are beyond language, those life forces which cannot be articulated in language, could be captured, taken up as an aesthetic object, and represented as an accurate portrait, a mirror image, of lived experience.

III. Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* appear to be two radically different texts with different motivations. Sigmund Freud helps the reader and the viewer see the commonality in these cultural artifacts. In my analysis, rather than comparing genres or artists (apples to apples and oranges to oranges), I have tried to connect what one artist does with her text, Toni Morrison's portrayal of Black female bodies, with what Jonathan Demme does with the fictional characterizations of Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo Bill. Hannibal Lechter and Buffalo

Bill are representations of violent repetition of the death drive. Where Buffalo Bill might leave the viewer cold and empty, desiring a purgation of his presence, Hannibal Lechter reflects communication of that death drive. He represents ritualistic measures towards death, which the viewer might confuse for life-instincts because his focused, measured and direct articulations elicit responses that seem to connect him with his interlocutor. Dare we admit that Hannibal Lechter is a sympathetic character? Certainly not in any traditional sense, but in the sense that though we may be frightened of him, we secretly sanction his freedom. We want a sequel to Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*, or more precisely, we want to see a Hannibal Lechter "loose."[29]

Toni Morrison also writes her characters with a direction towards death drives. The characters are violent repetitions of one another – a collective drive towards death, though through her poetic verve and pointed narrative, much like Hannibal Lechter, the reader is likely to read affect as hope and life. Do we sympathize with everyone? Do we claim that though a father rapes his daughter, it is only because he has been violated and is confused in his figurative castration? Do we mourn for the mother, Pauline, victimized by the gaze of the cinematic screen? Do we cry for Pecola because she is victimized by an overwhelmingly unjust social structure that feeds on its own propensity towards violence and self-destruction? And when we are through, do we applaud Morrison, the author of these events, as though she herself is merely Claudia, the impartial and powerless witness of these atrocities? Is Toni Morrison as Hannibal Lechter, merely leading us to "Buffalo Bill?" In my experience teaching images of women in literature, we often read male authors as particularly violent and misogynistic towards the female

[29] I am purposely referencing the biblical passage wherein Jesus instructs his disciples to set Lazarus free after he has been raised from the dead.

body. We hold them accountable for poisoning the heroine with arsenic, as in *Madame Bovary*, or throwing her under a train, as in *Anna Karenina*. The creator is not separate from his creation. Are we to say that because it helps us understand racism, Morrison is exempt from these same considerations? If we say Toni Morrison creates her characters to elicit hope and the activation of life-instincts, then so, too, Hannibal Lechter. Thus, those who can communicate the sacrifice of the weak and consumes it become the hero in a narrative lacking any real motivations towards life.

Dionysus is never more present in the world, never does he affect it more than at this moment when, in contrast to Pentheus, exposed to all eyes, he escapes into invisibility. When present-absent Dionysus is here on earth, he is also in the heavens among the gods; and when he is up there in heaven, he is also on this earth. He is the one who unites the normally separate heaven and earth and introduces the supernatural into the heart of nature.

Jean-Pierre Vernant

As a living movement, that is to say a movement undergoing a constant process of becoming and what is more solidly relying on concrete facts, surrealism has brought together and is still bringing together diverse temperaments individually obeying or resisting a variety of bents.

André Breton

Chapter Four:
Taking Words Back in Magical Realist Literature

Whether discussing the Lazarus/Zombie problem, Jean Robert Cadet's *Restavecs*, Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*, or Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the point of this research has been to investigate the spaces between life, death, and resurrection. I have tried to illustrate how certain cultural narratives reveal a gap between two polarities, the "Self" and a language that speaks for the self, replacing the self and all elements of individuality. This project has tried to complicate the concept of resurrection and its symbolic representation. The Lazarus/Zombie narrative points out that resurrection, often perceived as a positive attribute and a representation of what it means to transcend the body, bears significant consequences for the individual. This analysis illustrates what the consequences are and what can be lost in the formation of a new being that replaces the old, as espoused in resurrection narratives. I have also tried to point out that

resurrection stands in for the development of language and identity, leaving a space between the language used by the transformed individual and any sign of personal agency.

The space between the words we use that define us and who we are is as unclear as the space occupied in death. Can we play with this space? Is this not the space where imagination emerges? Isn't it the unknownable and undefinable space where power dynamics take on more meaning than what has been defined and described in social and political contexts? This space is the playground of the Magical Realists. The power of the Magical Realist movement lies in the gaps it explores. It is the space between the body and words, life and death, that best describe what the Magical Realist writer sought to convey in his/her narratives. Magical Realists writers rejected resurrection. The living body and its death were enough. In other words, rather than consider Lazarus as a miracle after the resurrection, Magical Realism reflects the idea that his health, illness and death are the miracle. Transcendence of the body is not dependent on resurrection metaphors, but rather, relies on realizing the power of a living body. In Magical Realism, even the dead physical body retains life and mystery. For twentieth century writers, the Magical Realist did not find liberation from religion by arguing with theologians; liberation was born of a new interpretation, one that simply stated it does not need Jesus, let alone a *bokor*. Life did not need an alien hand; its mysterious and divine attributes existed in the object itself. The Magical Realists tried to put an end to the practice of sacrificing the essence of an object in exchange for discourse. They were not always successful, but their efforts are worthy of much consideration.

There is a scene in *Silence of the Lambs* in which Jonathan Demme has the Hannibal Lechter character strapped to a gurney, bound in a straightjacket, and muzzled by a metal contraption. It is a demonstration of the extreme measures taken to impede any possible movement, any possible freedom the character might have. And, by all accounts, the image is convincing: no one could move within such extreme measures of constraint. In this same scene, the psychologist taunts Lechter, secure in his imposed impotence, but he leaves a gold pen unattended while he responds to other demands. Later, Hannibal Lechter will use this gold pen as the means that secures his escape from prison. It is an interesting scene because, as all other aspects of the story appear plausible, this one just does not add up. There is no logical way that Hannibal Lechter could have gotten that pen, and yet, how did he get it? Since we have to rule out every logical or rational explanation, we are relegated to the fantastical, creative license of the director. Were I to define Magical Realism, I would define it as the space between Hannibal Lechter and the pen. This space is both exposed and hidden simultaneously. We can only guess how Lechter could have acquired the pen, but the space in between is neither about Hannibal nor the pen. Magical Realism focuses on the spaces between the material, physical world and the metaphysical world by aggressively and primarily inserting the role of space in the development of the imagination and the production of narratives. Thus, two objects which are widely separated by space can be joined if that space is narrated as active rather than passive. By that I mean to say that what is left unclear about how Lechter got to the pen is an emphasis on space, and this space is as much a part of the story as Lechter's characterization and the inaccessibility of the pen.

In terms of the movement named Magical Realism, credit for the term falls on Franz Roh, who articulated the emergence of a new way of constructing art. In his essay, "Magic Realism - Post Expressionism,"[1] Roh explains that magic realism is not a mystical art. Alongside the term "realism," the new art form would retain a different motivation from all historical or previous binaries. It would emphasis space, rather than merely the material object which occupies time. In this way, Magical Realism would leave behind a new image of reality. Space animates the objects in Magical Realism, leaving room to imagine new possibilities about how we interpret the world we live in. "Realism," it seems, depended primarily on the physical nature of things, while fantasy encouraged manipulation of the real. That "Magic Realism" affirmed both, simultaneously, does not mean it was oxymoronic or a trendy play on contradictions. "With the word 'magic' as opposed to 'mystic,' [Roh] indicates that the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (18). This initial definition of "magic" would draw out something integral to the movement and its appeal. Like Lechter and the pen, the attraction attributed to mystery would no longer reduce the value of the material world; it would no longer transcend the material world at the expense of the material. In other words, the end result of transcending the material world would include that world. All element, both body and spirit, would ascend towards the heavens. There is no new body. This new mode of writing would prove to be a challenge for many writers, because it would no longer require choosing one over the other.

[1] "Magic Realism: Post Expressionism" (1925), Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Roh claims that Magic Realism entered the world of high art right when that world that was growing stale and unimpressive. Transcendentalism was passé; realism was inadequate; the fantastic was boring; and expressionism was too oneiric. "The spirit cannot show itself in the open with such facility and speed as Expressionism thought it could; in the end, Expressionism aimed at disrupting the world as it existed in the structure of the Self, which in turn resisted such disruption" (20). "Post-Expressionism" he says, "sought to reintegrate reality into the heart of visibility. The elemental happiness of seeing again, of recognizing things, reenters…that is the reason to speak of New Realism without in any way alluding to the instinctive attitude that characterized previous Realism in European art" (19). Post-expressionism was an effort to return to something real without destroying its mystery in the dogmatic materialism that defined the previous era. It seems the movement sought to reconcile the gap between what could not be said, seen, or heard, with what could. Reality was the joining of the two elements in order to fully experience sight and sound. The senses were not awakened by physical properties, but the combination of physical properties and the muted pulse beneath them. Unfortunately, the matter of spirituality was under attack.

According to Roh, "…that roughshod and frenetic transcendentalism, that devilish detour, that flight from the world died and now an insatiable love for terrestrial things and a delight in their fragmented and limited nature has reawakened" (19). What Roh does is paint a picture of an art movement that was taking form without any particular shape assigned to it. We are no longer indebted to the previous forms, but neither are we to deny the past; we are no longer able to transcend the body, but neither are we to deny the mysterious haze within, beneath and surrounding the body. Magic realism was a *feeling*

art. It was to become the art that invoked visceral response. "Of course the new art does not restore objectivity by using all sensory potential in the same way; what it principally evokes is a most prolific and detailed tactile feeling" (20). This new art form was about movement; a radically different way of seeing things for Europe. Because the viewer was being made to feel the art, neither the art nor the viewer was still. To do this required a particular skill on the part of the artist that could only come from a connection to that movement. He/she had to see, not the stable form, but the moving form or the spaces between forms. "The way of seeing forgets that the sphere, expressive in and of itself, made of pure forms and colors, embodies a completely different meaning when it refers to object A and changes entirely if the same combination of forms refers to object B" (20).

Roh's best effort to describe this New Realism was refreshing. "The point is not to discover the spirit beginning with objects, but on the contrary, to discover objects beginning with the spirit; for that reason, one accords consummate value to the process in which spiritual form remains large, pure, and clear" (21). What is more, rather than see the world beginning with the stability determined by the object, material or physical structures, now we would read the world beginning with its ephemeral, ethereal element; that which comes and goes so quickly as to infuse the stable object with an indefatigable beauty. Alejo Carpentier says, "There are still too many 'adolescents who find pleasure in raping the fresh cadavers of beautiful dead women' (Lautréamont), who do not take into account that it would be more marvelous to rape them alive."[2] Although this is an offensive assertion against women, beneath the misogynistic contempt there is a point

[2] Carpentier, Alejo. "On the Marvelous Real in America" (1949), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community.* Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

worth evaluating. Carpentier points out that it is better to allow objects used in art to retain their vitality, rather than using them as tools, mere objects, bereft of their individual power.

Roh claimed, "To depict realistically is not to portray or copy but rather to build rigorously, to construct objects that exist in the world in their particular primordial shape" (20). But what were those primordial shapes? And how was one to "build" or "construct" what one could not see? After all, according to Roh, "It is true, says the New Realism, that Expressionism has broken with individualism in directing meditation toward the basic fundamentals of all human sensation; but it hasn't abandoned subjectivity (a collective subjectivity) at all, because the very consistency of the world has degenerated almost entirely into the special rhythms of the collective subject" (21). The human being had been reduced, through multiple means, to a collective language that does not have the ability to see or determine living properties imbued with "spirit." So completely substituted by language, magic realism was an attempt to offer a compromise between the spirit and language, thereby introducing a fresh new form to the artistic community.

It should have come as no surprise, then, that following the late nineteenth century Realist and Naturalist movements, the Modernists movement of early twentieth century, embracing such possibilities as Surrealism, adopted the Magical Realist movement. Carpentier would say, "I saw the possibility of bringing to our own latitudes certain European truths, reversing those who travel against the sun and would take our truths to a place where, just thirty years ago, there was no capacity to understand or measure those truths in their real dimensions" (84). Its predecessor, Surrealism, came

with a manifesto that outlined the motivation behind the art; it was part of a historical trajectory. As stated by Alejo Carpentier, in "Marvelous Real (lo real maravilloso) in America," magical realism could bear no such manifesto; in a sense, it was a form that resisted such gestures. Many theorists would try to pin a definition to the form often by stating what it was not. For Carpentier the problem lay with the fantastic. "The fantastic is not to be discovered by subverting or transcending reality with abstract forms and manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist…" (38). Eric S. Rabkin would say, "One of the key distinguishing marks of the fantastic is that the perspectives enforced by the ground rules of the narrative world must be diametrically contradicted. The reconfiguration of meanings must make an exact flip-flop, an opposition from up to down, from + to –" (8). Rabkin would go on to claim that those who generally fall under the category of magical realism are really producing the fantastic. The difference between Carpentier and Rabkin is obvious: for Carpentier, it is the spontaneity of the juxtaposition, for Rabkin it is the "exact opposite" of what was expected. One speaks from outside the governing language, the other from within.

Despite the difference between Carpentier and Rabkin's definitions of the fantastic, and, thereby, of magical realism, it is Carpentier who would be given the credit for naming Magical Realism within the literary movements that framed twentieth century Modernism. In his essay, "Marvelous Real in America," Carpentier claims to have discovered this new form when he visited Haiti, most specifically the Citadel, where Henri Christophe built a fort and ruled the south of the island, ironically with a cruel hand against the people he sought to defend. To Carpentier, Haiti's historical narrative could

not be expressed by a European using antiquated artistic and literary models; "when André Masson tried to draw the jungle of Martinique, with its incredible intertwining of plants and its obscene promiscuity of certain fruit, the marvelous truth of the matter devoured the painter, leaving him just short of impotence when faced with blank paper. It had to be an American painter – the Cuban, Wifredo Lam – who taught us the magic of tropical vegetation, the unbridled creativity of our natural forms with all their metamorphoses and symbioses on monumental canvases in an expressive mode that is unique in contemporary art" (85). Therefore, isolating the art to the Latin-American and Caribbean, Carpentier seemed to imply that some fundamental connection with time and space was necessary to produce this budding literary form. More specifically, that time and space could not substitute or imitate the Caribbean; it had to come from the object itself in order for its poetry to be tactile and sensuous.

"The marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit" (85). Such an assertion was bound to be confused with the notion that magical realism belonged to the postcolonial African subject. Brenda Cooper, in *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a third eye*, would say "magic realism strives, with greater or lesser success, to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the precolonial past versus the post-industrial present and life versus death. Capturing such boundaries between spaces is to exist in a third space, in the fertile interstices between these

extremes of time and space" (1). Her definition, then, remains particular to a specific group with a specific historical past; thus, magical realism barred Europeans at the very onset of the movement.

Still, Carpentier set the tone; with Europeans essentially barred from the literary movement, magical realist writing became almost exclusively associated with Latin America. Though many parts of Europe and Eastern Europe would certainly produce magical realist writers, as well as the United States in its production of new novelists, magical realism fell squarely in the domain of Latin Americans. Despite this, the movement was a paradox. On the one hand, it was associated with Latin America, on the other, it belonged to everyone; it was the hidden spiritual and intellectual voice of the Other. And it was a voice that cried so loud and more eloquently than literary predecessors that readers were at a loss as to whether the form was a genre, a style, or a mode. There was confusion as to whether the movement belonged to postcolonialism, philosophy, or "high art." With class and race temporarily suspended, magical realism spread throughout Europe, Africa, India, and, of course, America. In his essay, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction," Angel Flores would claim, "they all will subscribe to Chirico's dictum: 'what is most of all necessary is to rid art of everything of the known which it has held until now: every subject, idea, thought, and symbol must be put aside […] Thought must draw so far away from human fetters that things may appear to it under a new aspect, as though they are illuminated by a constellation now appearing for the first time'" (MR in Spanish America, 114). Though magical realism would be dominated by privilege and class, it was wide open; not bearing any imperative other than to throw the reader into a new space, entirely other. "The practitioners of magical

realism cling to reality as if to prevent "literature" from getting in their way […] as if to prevent their myth from flying off, as in fairy tales, to supernatural realms. The narrative proceeds in well-prepared, increasingly intense steps, which ultimately lead to one great ambiguity or confusion…to a confusion within clarity…"(Magical Realism, 114). Though this seemed possible using many means of literary art and style, the basis of magical realism was still undefined, and so many tried to reproduce this literary style, and many were credited as magical realist, but I believe there were few who were able to produce such a ambitious works.

Luis Leal was probably the most conscientious definer of magical realist literature. Like many before him who tried to define magical realism through a series of what it was not, Leal described the art form as follows:

> Unlike superrealism, magical realism does not use dream motifs; neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds, as writers of fantastic literature or science fiction do; nor does it emphasize psychological analysis of characters, since it doesn't try to find reasons for their actions or their inability to express themselves. Magical realism is not an aesthetic movement either, as was modernism, which was interested in creating works dominated by a refined style; neither is it interested in the creation of complex structures per se.
>
> Magic realism is not magic literature either. Its aim, unlike that of magic, is to express emotions, not to evoke them. Magic realism is, more than anything else, an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures. What is the attitude of the magical realist toward the reality? I have already said that he doesn't create imaginary worlds in which we can hide from everyday reality. In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts (MR in SAL, 121).
>
> In magic realism the key events have no logical or psychological explanation. The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as realists do) or to wound it (as the Surrealists did) but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things (MR in SAL, 120).

The only problem with Leal's description of magical realism lies in his insistence that the artist is "trying" to do things with reality. I do not believe the magical realist manipulates reality; rather, it is by accepting reality on its terms that the artist is able to abandon himself/herself to the imaginative. Leal assumed "in order to seize reality's mysteries, the magical realist writer heightens his senses until he reaches an extreme state that allows him to intuit the imperceptible subtleties of the external world, the multifarious world in which we live" (Magical Realism in SAL, 123). Such laborious acts are, in actuality, antithetical to the magical realist. It is only the individual, so sullied by language that he cannot perceive the subtleties of the external world, which has to labor so much to allow his senses to articulate what is there. Nevertheless, Leal's point is well taken; the magical realist must be able to transcend the body precisely by being in it, and so heightened awareness and senses are integral to the translation from experience to language. In addition, the contradiction that these theorists are referring to that, rather than man's subordination to language, language subordinates to man. Rather than man subordinating nature, man subordinates to nature; undoubtedly, a radically different relationship than the one that dominated western culture, and an obviously difficult habit to break. In magical realism, if man superseded language on the pages of his novel while simultaneously abandoning himself to the natural wonders he describes, then what sort of narrative does he produce?

I. Surrealist acts in Octavio Paz's *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Traps of Faith*

Though Magical Realism remains the object of this chapter, the Surrealist movement did a great deal to influence the writers that would fall under the magical

realist category. Most important in the surrealist movement was the desire to move between the words, the author emerging as an agent less inclined to imitate and more poised for a sort of organic part of the written word. Octavio Paz wrote his account of the biography of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a 17th century nun in Mexico, but through his narrative the reader gets a sense that time and space are fused together to become the biography of Mexico, Sor Juana, and Octavio Paz, simultaneously.

Even now, as I begin to discuss what Octavio Paz, in his biographical account and literary exegesis of the life and work of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, performs using language, the words fail, falling into an erratic and unorganized whole. The reason for this might be associated with my apprenticeship as a writer, but it is more likely that any attempt at capturing and holding a systemic and organized picture of Paz's contribution would prove too simplistic and rigidly antithetical to the purpose behind the literary exploration. In 1988, at the ripe age of 74, Octavio Paz contributed one of his greatest literary accomplishments in publishing *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith.* The book is the culmination of a career begun thirty years before with Paz's introduction to Surrealism and friendship with André Breton. With *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*, Paz demonstrates his literary prowess; his passion for Mexico, its people and history; his philosophy on the human body and the problem languages to it; and his religiously practiced penchant for poetic communion. What comes out of the text cannot, therefore, be summed up with multiple analyses and anecdotes. What Paz does is the result of a process of repeating histories, styles and theories; expanding and exploring language; and performing poetry. Using *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*, Paz overwhelms the reader with suggestions and conjectures about contemporary

Mexico, the history of Mexico, and Sor Juana, making his narrative an exercise in the use of language to talk about himself. The layers of the text (e.g. historical, political, sexual, literary treatment, personal) are pieces that, even addressed individually, cannot capture the whole. In other words, Paz's treatment of Sor Juana is an action, an evolution of surrealism and a demonstration on how the written word becomes flesh, his flesh, through the medium of poetry. According to André Breton, the act of writing in forms that reflect Surrealist ideology begins with Lautréamont. "At the hour in which I write, new tremors are running through the intellectual atmosphere; it is only a matter of having the courage to face them.'[3] "Courage" to face the unknown becomes the central focus in the philosophical outlook of the genre and its followers. The surrealists were an ambitious group with a desire to take language to new heights. Breton says, "…today, more than ever before, the liberation of the mind, demands as primary condition, in the opinion of the surrealists, the express aim of surrealism, the liberation of man, which implies that we must struggle with our fetters with all the energy of despair; that today more than ever before the surrealists entirely rely for the bringing about of the liberation of man upon the proletarian Revolution (Surrealism, 2)." Breton's surrealism, more than any other literary practice, influenced Paz and instilled in him a desire that, although abandoned in later years, would consistently appear in his works.

José Juan Tablada and Ramón López Velarde were the first known figures to introduce avant-garde poetry to Mexico; this dating back to the late 1800s, early 1900s. So, "in a melange of futurism, Dada, and political anarchy, the *estridentistas* noisily presented the first isms." This budding tradition gave rise to a group called the

[3] André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* Does not go into the actual origins of surrealism, but it gives a brief sketch of the movement pre-Breton.

C*ontemporaneos*, the first to experiment with surrealism. Although they came under attack by critics, including Paz[4], their contributions drew notice and Paz was intrigued. His problem with the Contemporaneos stemmed from dissatisfaction with the quality of the poetic treatment; he thought it inadequate and lacking in comprehension of the life force behind the composition. "Poetry had to be lived; it was a recuperation of man's lost half, his nostalgic wholeness" (Wilson, 8-11). Paz sought more from the poet: risk, passion, conviction, total abandonment.

By the time Paz left Mexico in 1944, a flurry of activities had already surrounded him, not the least of which were visits to Mexico by André Breton. Paz was interested in Breton and the surrealist movement. Breton's impression of Mexico would contribute to his mutual interest in Paz; he obsessed over Mexico. For him, "Mexico fascinated because it embodied those occult forces sterilized by an overrationalised, predictable (Western) civilization. Below the touristic surface view lay obscure areas of violence, surprise, weird contrasts – a dark anachronistic 'primitiveness' which made Mexico the 'other' or secret face of the "great Western tradition'" (Wilson, 20). So while Paz busily occupied himself with his writing and political activism, Breton had quietly entered and exited Mexico several times. No doubt, by the time the two men met each other in 1945, little could have prevented their alliance.

There is no rigid definition of surrealism; however, what Paz gains from his relationship with Breton can summarily be defined as a commitment to "poetry, eroticism and rebellion." Paz believed,

[4] Wilson says, "Paz thanked these Contemporaneos poets for discovering precursors such as Baudelaire, Nerval, and Blake, the poetics of dream, and the theory of correspondences and analogy; but he criticized them for their insensibility 'a la fascination de la noche de misticos y romanticos.'"

> Language or words are concrete and material signifiers of freedom; the freedom of language is the guarantee for all other kinds of freedom. The relationship between the two terms is particularly complex for Paz; art has its own rules, and poets must abandon their sense of law and consciousness in order to seek whatever it is that gives art its sense of structure. Because freedom is not the central item of this equation (*palabra*, "word," is), Paz warns that the rejection of form, the abandoning of words in (or to) liberty, does not necessarily entail a gain in freedom…words and liberty are joined together as being is to nonbeing (Quiroga, 13).

How Paz was able to bring form to theory arguably becomes evident in *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*. Paz was interested in the senses, eastern thought, and poetic expression; they represented liberty, freedom from the suffocating labyrinth that is life. In *Labyrinths of Solitude* and *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*, Paz engages the human body, mocking, teasing and complicating the sexes. Normally, we have representations of the sexes crossing the gender line; male bodies can be women and female bodies can be men. But Paz complicated this theory by establishing masculinity and the male body in the woman in literature. That is, men can exercise their masculinity while asserting themselves in the woman in their narratives. For the Mexican male, "The Mexican macho – the male – is a hermetic being, closed up in himself, capable of guarding both himself and whatever has been confided to him." For the female,

> Woman is another being who lives apart and is therefore an enigmatic figure. Or it would be better to say that she is the Enigma. She attracts and repels like men of an alien race or nationality. She is the image of both fecundity and death. In almost every culture the goddesses of creation are also goddesses of destruction. Woman is the living symbol of the strangeness of the universe and its radical heterogeneity. As such, does she hide life within herself, or death? What does she think, or does she think? Does she truly have feelings? Or is she the same as we are (Labyrinths, 66)?

On the one hand, Paz engages a politically charged criticism of the Mexican with these generalizations, but on the other hand (although not mutually exclusive from the former), this style of writing functions as a tool that affects the reader's the body by

tensing it against his gender biases and his philosophical outlook. In this sense, Paz's surrealist tactics are demonstrative of the relationship surrealism has to the Marquis de Sade.

Consider the tremendous impact the human body has for Paz. In Sor Juana's biography, there is an emphasis on the body: hers and his. That is, Sor Juana's sex is as much an important part of the narrative as her life's story. Paz's narrative emphasizes the fact that her sex was the main reason she was denied the contributions she was to make to Mexican history. But Paz is speaking of Mexico and himself as well. In this way, Sor Juana's sex is Mexico and Paz. The body is inescapable. Paz is his poetry and so the presence of the body, albeit it incorporeal, dominates. In *Labyrinths of Solitude*, Paz says, "the body exists and gives weight and shape to our existence. It causes us pain and it gives us pleasure; it is not a suit of clothes we are in the habit of wearing, not something apart from us: we are our body."[5] The emphasis on the body through surrealistic expressions coexists with a pre-occupation with eroticism, love, and liberty; and where eroticism and corruption can occur, Paz deftly applies the influence of Sade. That is to say, "the basis of Sade's philosophy is 'total egoism', with only one rule: that each one do what he wants to do, his only law being his own pleasure'. Total egoism goes with a despotic liberty, and Sade's liberty is the 'power to submit people to your wishes.'"[6] In *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*, complete liberty of the writer coexists with the voice's power to subject readers. For Paz, it is not that he writes for his reader's response, but rather he writes through his reader *and* the reader responds. "Paz

[5] Bloom, Harold. "Introduction" in *Octavio Paz*. Edited by Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishing, 2002. Page 5.

[6] Ibid.

is not afraid to reveal himself as both the passive bearer of desire and the sadistic torturer of words."[7] He is not passive or dependent on reader-response; the voice of the text *is* Paz. He lives and breathes through the composition, so the power of the text can confront the reader, just as if one were actually in the room with the individual. Given the possibility, Paz could then manipulate, invade, and dominate the reader's mind *and body*.

This very modest background information serves to give us only a glimpse of the influences operating for over 30 years before the publication of *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Traps of Faith*. Religious devotion to poetry and the body went hand in hand with Mexican history, life, and politics; the politics of love and liberty; Bretonian surrealism; Sade and eroticism; eastern philosophy and the body, etc. Even modest success would yield no less than a complex weaving of these theories and practices.

It should be noted that Paz eventually rejected surrealism, losing interest in Bretonian techniques, like automatic writing[8]. Surrealism wanted the ego subdued by instincts; Paz was not so accommodating; his ego permeates his texts. In *Sor Juana: Traps of Faith*, Paz skillfully asserts himself into the text in order to affect the reader directly. A panoramic view of Paz's technique begins with his use of poetic language juxtaposed with formal writing. The voice can go from sentences like, "evolution toward modernity divides into two parallel paths: that of countries in which modernity followed the triumph of the Reformation, and that of countries such as France…" (Traps, 46), to "a ballet of conceits and figures, a prodigious repertory of poetic rhythms and forms,

[7] Ibid.

[8] Breton defined Surrealism in 1924 as, "Pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations." For Breton, Freud inspired the idea that the subconscious houses fundamental expressions repressed by the ego or conscious mind; surrealism sought to excavate those expressions through means like automatic writing: writing exactly what comes to mind.

characters, ideas, and deities pirouette through Sor Juana's courtly poetry, all moved by a single gravitational force…" (101). In the latter sentence, Paz seems personally invested in his description of Sor Juana's work. Another technique involves shifting voices. The first chapter of the text opens with a "we" that immediately asserts a community, addressing an audience that includes himself. The non-Mexican is instantly aware of her state of exclusion: "he is not talking to me." Paz says, "A society is defined as much by how it comes to terms with its past as by its attitude toward the future: its memories are no less revealing than its aims. Although we Mexicans are preoccupied – or more accurately, obsessed – with our past, we lack a clear idea of who we have been" (3). This method of excluding the non-Mexican, or speaking directly to the Mexican reader personalizes the first contact with the text. By chapter two, Paz has shifted voices and opens with, "my sketch of New Spain is by no means a complete description. But my purpose is more modest: to draw a general picture of the world into which Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz lived and wrote" (84). This opening, unlike the first chapter, invokes a singular, first-person narrative that speaks to a general audience with which Paz maintains a degree of intimacy. The non-Mexican reader joins Paz and the Mexican reader loses his privileged space. By the third chapter, Paz's voice is the dispassionate historian. "Sixteenth-century religious policy with regard to the Indian civilization was a tabula rasa. The early missionaries wanted to save the Indians, not their idols or beliefs" (216). These shifts repeat throughout the text, entering and exiting, creating a tension that is the labyrinth Paz creates. Because the reader shifts with the voice, the voice becomes the dominant force: the active participant.

This form of writing allows Paz liberty; he can move, constantly building tensions, playing roles, distancing himself and embodying the subject. It is no wonder that Paz is the victim (identification with Sor Juana vis-à-vis Mexico), judge (the voice directed at Mexicans for their neglect), advocate (defense of Sor Juana), jury (beneficiary of history), and accused (identification with Sor Juana as an artist) intermittently throughout the text. His voice can be intimate or indifferent. Alternating this way is a tense high-rise of entrances and exits, all which serve to make Paz more apparent and more alive. With this form of writing, given the reader follows Paz to the end, what emerges is not only Sor Juana and New Spain, but Octavio Paz, history, and poetry.

Content complicates things further. Paz finds a subject matter in Sor Juana that best fits his need to demonstrate his theory and practice. The most valuable element in Sor Juana was her womanhood. For Sade, "woman, therefore, is a mere instrument, an object for the libertine selfish pleasure (Wilson, 40)." For Breton, woman was a medium that offered man access to his own personal truth and transcendence from the material world.

> Breton placed great redemptive value on love: but love must be erotic and concretely love of and with woman. Love, like poetry, is a means of self-transcendence. Breton fused love, poetry, and liberty. But his erotic love was not that of the libertine; for the core view was his recognition of woman as the 'other'. She is mediatrix, opening communication between man and himself and nature. Breton fought for 'free choice' and fidelity to this on the moral level, while extolling eroticism and woman as promise (40).

Octavio Paz felt woman could both provide pleasure and bridge the material, rational world with the metaphsycial world. "And this brings us back to the idea of passivity: woman is never herself, whether lying stretched out or standing up straight, whether naked or fully clothed. She is an undifferentiated manifestation of life, a channel for the

universal appetite (Labyrinth, 37)." Despite the differences in their view of women, all three share the fundamental belief that woman is a "portal." For Sade, the woman is the means to pleasure; Breton sees woman as a means to self-actualization; and Paz saw woman as all of the above plus the tunnel used to travel history. "She" is the object without whom man could not become. By using Sor Juana as a portal, Paz necessitates her gender. She is the mistress without whom he could not accomplish his goal.

The nun, virgin, and woman in Sor Juana juxtapose the anomaly, writer, and intellectual. Paz, while existing in multiple capacities – advocate, sympathizer, empathizer, judge, detached observer, critic, admirer, creator – introduces Sor Juana as a paradox. This is not to say that Paz does not believe women capable of Sor Juana's achievements, but he separates his treatment of her sex and the things that make her an exceptional historical figure. The two serve very different purposes. The anomaly, the exceptional mind, the curious mind, the hermetic, the misunderstood, the threat to the established order, the victim, are all characteristics that Paz passionately embodies. The voice sympathizes and reproaches Mexico for its destruction and neglect. In this, Paz and Sor Juana the same. The distance between Sor Juana and Paz can be virtually undetectable; he gets *very* close to her. This intimacy between the author and his subject can also be found in autobiographies like Alex Haley's *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In interpreting Sor Juana's *First Dream* he writes, "The space revealed by Sor Juana is an object not of contemplation but of knowledge; it is not a surface over which human bodies move but an abstraction we apprehend, not the celestial or infernal beyond but a reality that cannot be conceptualized. The soul is alone, not before God but before a

nameless and limitless space (Traps, 359)." This method of elongation of thought obscures difference between writer and subject.

This proximity shifts when Paz addresses Sor Juana's central problem: her sex. It is no coincidence that Paz sections off addressing Sor Juana's gender, her weaknesses, and her subjugation in "Traps of Faith". Earlier in the text, Paz explains Sor Juana's interest in knowledge by attributing it to the absent father. "Her bastard origins and her father's absence lead her to the library, and the library, to the convent…In turn, convent and library are compensation for the stepfather and substitute for the father (76)." This, introduced early in the text, plants a seed that will sprout 400 pages later. In the final section of the text, *Traps of Faith*, Sor Juana can no longer resist the need for a father figure; she surrenders to Father Nunez, her confessor. Paz implies that this psychological condition bears some responsibility for her compliance and abjuration (456). But this also implies that her desire to learn was an affliction brought on by the social difficulty of having no father. It strips her of her exceptional qualities.

Traps of Faith also serves to demonstrate Paz's ability to create a text within a text. On the surface lies Paz's account of the history of Sor Juana's decline and subjugation, but method serves to close the distance between the historian, writer, subject, and reader. Three hundred pages into the text, Paz opts to introduce the three main figures responsible for Sor Juana's demise. Fernando de Santa Cruz y Sahagun (Sor Juana's friend and peer who betrays her) and Francisco de Aguiar y Seijas (the archbishop who is strictest with and most threatened by women) are within pages of one another; Father Antonio Nunez de Miranda, the "hammer's head", is introduced fifteen pages before the end of the text. These proximities serve to intensify the attack on Sor

Juana and impact the reader. Within this framework, along with Sor Juana's feminist views and search for a father figure, Paz tends to Sor Juana's mental condition, contradicting himself by saying, "some have insisted that Sor Juana was neurotic in the extreme. I cannot agree. Naturally, she was not what we would call a "normal" person. Who is? But neither was she unstable, plagued and tormented by immoderate anguish, manias, and aberrations…I perceive not psychic instability but self-confidence, ability, and good sense. I do not see a neurotic; I see a woman lucid and whole" (447). Several lines later Paz says,

> She went through periods of inexplicable sadness and ill-defined anxieties. Something gnawed at her thoughts and consumed her hours, an invisible visitor that appeared at night to prevent her from sleeping or thinking…One of the recurrent themes of her best poems is the quest of that chimera, always resolved into solitude and hatred of her own image. Those poems reveal that, if it is true that she loved herself, it is also true that frequently that love turned to disgust. Furthermore, in the effort to speak with ghosts and to clasp phantoms in her arms, she herself became a ghost. Then she looked on her image with horror (447).

This method of refuting what "some say" about her unstable mental health, then stating all that made her unstable is another example of Paz's movement. She is his creation: to be lived, loved and destroyed by him. Weakened and trapped both historically and textually, Sor Juana and, by extension, the reader, suffer and submit to history and the present.

Although these observations serve to point out one way Paz manipulates the text, they fail to suffice to paint a picture of the harmonizing effect that disturbs [whom?]. What affects the reader is the periodic affirmation of Paz's presence. His descriptions both serve to uphold Mexican machismo and mock it. For Paz, Sor Juana is a figure that ultimately acts as a mask for him, much in the same way that Paz says Mexicans mask

their own sensuality. Her womanness is interwoven between the thread of a historically patriarchal, masculine disdain and a thread of the "sharing" of an identical space. If the Mexican is history, then Paz is Sor Juana and Sor Juana is Paz. The two are interchangeable.

Without the ability to explore, one cannot do justice to reading Sor Juana. Paz wants to engage non-identity through language. His movements within the text attempt something more organic – a participation in something whole. Technique can be traced, but only those engaged in exploration can *experience* the text. Exploration and experimentation are the activities of the affluent, or the affliction of the desperate. In order to read Paz, one has to engage upon exploration, not of techniques, styles, and/or literary pursuits, but, risking the self, one has to engage the Other. One cannot read the text without indulging the quest for self within the constructs of surrealism. In other words, nothing is activated until the reader dares herself to go the distance. Until you allow yourself to be corrupt, you cannot engage Paz's attempt to corrupt and pervert language.

> It is not that the reader cannot see what Paz is doing, but his voice seeks to do much more than engage sight and mind. Paz wants language to engage the body, so it is more important that one should *feel* the text rather than merely see it or understand it. Understanding Paz means risking the absurd. Activity takes place in the imagination, a grand effort to read more and excite passion into a physical and historical corpse. It is also an academic text. Engaging and entertaining. Informative and dramatic. Fictional and historical. It engages the reader on a single platform, following a singular tradition. But, and I do not mean to say Paz is entirely successful here, risking the absurd with Paz allows one to feel his entrances and exits. His voice is reflected in more than mere technique. The text is tight, albeit seemingly frantic and erratic. Paz controls his pen, so any accidental effect does not crack the surface. That may not necessarily be a "good" thing, but over time, Paz's writing seemed to have evolved, taking surrealism and poetry as its original model. What emerges is undefined.

II. Borges' "Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote" and Márquez's "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World"

Following the Surrealist movement, the term, magical realism, was introduced to the artistic and literary community through the works of Franz Roh and Alejo Carpentier, but it is Gabriel Garcia Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges who poignantly applied the elusive nature of the movement to their literary art. Short narratives, such as García Márquez' "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," and Borges' "Pierre Menard," illustrate the fusion of persons and places (experience and language) that disorient the reader to expose the pitfalls of language.

In 1972, Gabriel Garcia Márquez's short story, "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" was published. The Columbian born writer would receive worldwide critical acclaim for his masterpiece, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and would eventually become the recipient of the 1982 Noble Prize for literature. Much has been said about Márquez's writing style, his flair for the fantastic and his bent towards myth. Though there can be no denying that Márquez uses magical realism in the ways prescribed by Carpentier, Flores, and Leal, his ability to bring life to the dead still remains a subject worth exploring.

In "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" a dead man is found floating in a body of water in an unknown location. A group of village children finds the dead body and proceed to use it in play until the village men see them and take the body back to an unknown village. While searching for the dead man's possible provenance, the women begin to speak of the body until they come to name it and adorn it with characteristics

and charm. When the men return, unsuccessful, they first become jealous, then they come to admire the dead man, agreeing to call him Esteban, and eventually, joining the women in admiring the man and hoping that no village will come looking for the body and seeking to claim him/it. Finally, the body is given a burial at sea, but with the understanding that if ever it should desire to, it was welcome to return. "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" is a fascinating story - one that seems to be a development of myth and folktale. Though it has been used to expound on the human condition, Márquez's gift lies not in the story, but in the hidden connection between author and text. It is this quality that gives Esteban life, not the unknown village, nor the village men, women, and children.

The story has been defined as the way in which humans create myths. True. The reality of the situation, as it pertains to the story, is that the dead body that floats along the river is no more than debris. Without family members and friends, who can attest to the name, personality and life of the dead body? The body is a meaningless void; as useless as a floating trunk. This is demonstrated in the first few lines of the story when the children are found playing with the corpse. "They had been playing with him all afternoon, burying him in the sand and digging him up again, when someone chanced to see them and spread the alarm in the village" (Major Short Stories, 449). Márquez strips the dead body of meaning, but also, he strips the children of language. The children represent innocence and meaninglessness; a kind of awareness that without ceremony and ritual, the dead body is not more than a plaything. They represent the whole village at this moment, where what is unknown about the dead does not mean it cannot be known, rather it reflects a translatable space. For the children, first, the dead body is a toy. The

story then begins to fill the body with meaning. "When they laid him on the floor they said he'd been taller than all the other men because there was barely enough room for him in the house, but they thought that maybe the ability to keep on growing after death was part of the nature of certain drowned men" (MSS, 449). An indication that both interpretive and suggestive event reflect persuasive power. It is an odd scene; the dead body has already begun to acquire the characteristics of the villagers. The assumption that the dead body continues to grow is based on the assumption that his creation narrative matches their creation narrative. With this simple insertion, Márquez begins the villagers on the road to giving life to the dead. The narrator has already suggested that the dead body could in no way have belonged to the villagers; they knew each other quite well and intimately. "They did not even have to clean off his face to know that the dead man was a stranger" (MSS, 449). Nevertheless, they begin to impart attributes that are reminiscent of nature, setting off the development from natural being into one established in language. "He had the smell of the sea about him and only his shape gave one to suppose that it was the corpse of a human being, because the skin was covered with a crust of mud and scales" (MSS,449). Undeniably, this is the image of the womb, where the dead body, emerged from a body of water and encrusted with mud and scales, resembles the image of a child newly born into the world, blurred by blood and scales of placenta residue. The dead is a living infant. Personality is the mask that will adorn the child and endow it with humanity.

The ritual cleansing of the body becomes symbolic of the notions of reincarnation and rebirth. "They took the mud off with grass swabs, they removed the underwater stones entangled in his hair, and they scraped the crust off with tools used for scaling fish.

As they were doing that they noticed that the vegetation on him came from faraway oceans and deep water and that his clothes were in tatters, as if he had sailed through labyrinths of coral" (MSS, 449). Márquez allows the body what could be construed as a voice. This body is in no way meaningless. The idea that the body speaks its travels; that it wears its testimony on its "tattered" clothes, indicates Márquez's awareness that dead does not mean empty; thus, developing meaning is not entirely the fictions of the imagination. The mud, scales and "tattered" clothing represent the dead body's origin, and this meets with the children who are "playing" with him. In other words, the dead man's meaning encounters his meaninglessness for the villagers. The story becomes an attempt to join a meaningful object that is inanimate and voiceless, with the animate seeking meaning. Márquez joins two worlds, which of course, represent the worlds of all people. How do we make meaning out of encounters with bodies that do not look like ours? That do not share our creation narratives? That fail to engage our need for play? This, it seems, is an important element in Márquez's short story. What need is there to give meaning to a dead body? How do we make the dead, not merely meaningful, but "the living?"

Márquez also sets out to demonstrate the subjective tendencies of the village. "They noticed too that he bore his death with pride, for he did not have the lonely look of other drowned men who came out of the sea or that haggard, needy look of men who drowned in rivers. But only when they finished cleaning him off did they become aware of the kind of man he was and it left them breathless. Not only was he the tallest, strongest, most virile, and best built man they had ever seen, but even though they were looking at him there was no room for him in their imagination" (MSS,449). Like the

other scenes thus far, this scene is deceptively simple. It is not the subjective claim that he was the "tallest," "strongest," and "most virile," but rather, that "there was no room for him in their imagination." What Márquez demonstrates here is the limits of language. In the language of this unknown village group, the imagination is directly related to the parameters of language. Language determines a person's origin, normal weight, normal height, normal features, and normal libido. A being that exists outside of these parameters is not only outside of language, but as language determines creativity and imagination, the being is also outside of the imagination.

On the one hand the villagers are imagining the attributes of the dead body, but this gives the reader a certain satisfaction in distancing him/herself from the mindset of the "superstitious" and "uneducated" masses. Garcia Márquez challenges this posture; we can take comfort in objective observations of the dead body and the development of a narrative around an obviously "meaningless" object; but more, Márquez wants the reader to participate in this creative process. To experience the story, we believe the villagers; we are moved by their encomium. It is an altruistic act, to give the unknown meaningful attributes, praise and honor. But, of course, Márquez's quest is more complicated than that. The body is described as "virile." Virility demands something of the reader. It is a subtle imposition that insists we engage the object. This one adjective, I believe, does a great deal to draw the reader in closer. Without it, we can maintain our privileged position as objective observers, but with it, the body is in motion. Márquez's gift lies in knowing that to move the dead, one must acknowledge and imbue it with its own virility. Márquez does not contradict our notions of the dead; he redefines the body; the dead body is not dead; it is a still-life.

Mythology notwithstanding, the importance of movement in a magical realist work is paramount. Certainly, with phrases like, "as they sewed, sitting in a circle and gazing at the corpse between stitches, it seemed to them that the wind had never been so steady nor the sea so restless as on that night and they supposed that the change had something to do with the dead man" (SS, 449), Márquez seems to be raising the narrative to a place beyond the material world. The imagery of this passage implies a certain premonition, or billowing of ancient pagan gods. We are in the presence of a coalescence of superstition, tradition, ritual, and religious narrative: in a word, mythology. Still, while Márquez imposes these inscriptions onto the text, it is the movement of the text that bears the most significant qualities. It is not so much the dead body that is virile, but rather, it is the story, the villagers, the men, the women, and even the children. All are combined to create, not a mythology, but a rather overwhelming image of Eros. The women are fused with the thread, which is fused with the sea, which is fused with the dead man. The "gazing…between stitches" joins man to corpse, corpse to sea, and all to restlessness. Within such a lofty and ambitious endeavor, Márquez can finally give our hero a name – because we, as are the villagers, are invested in his presence. "They were wandering through the maze of fantasy when the oldest woman, who as the oldest had looked upon the drowned man with more compassion than passion, sighed: 'He has the face of someone called Esteban'" (MSS, 450). Márquez's strategy here is not to mask Esteban with an alien identity. Márquez gives the dead body a name to draw it into life, while simultaneously enjoining it to the villagers. It is a given name, but one that was acquired by age and compassion; by the very representations of what the body bears when it reaches the village. Esteban, then, is alive. "It was true. Most of them had only

to take another look at him to see that he could not have any other name" (MSS, 450). Such an examination of the body and collective agreement demonstrates penetration and communication. "He was Esteban." Márquez expounds on this absolute certainty by saying, "The more stubborn among them, who were the youngest, still lived for a few hours with the illusion that when they put his clothes on and he lay among the flowers in patent leather shoes his name might be Lautaro. But it was a vain illusion" (MSS, 450).

Alive, the dead body, now bearing the name Esteban, is imbued with more qualities of the living: "…the hidden strength of his heart popped the buttons on his shirt," or,

> They could see him in life, condemned to going through doors sideways, cracking his head on crossbeams, remaining on his feet during visits, not knowing what to do with his soft, pink, sea lion hands while the lady of the house looked for her most resistant chair and begged him, frightened to death, sit here, Esteban please, and he, leaning against the wall, smiling, don't bother ma'am, I'm fine where I am, just to avoid the embarrassment of breaking up the chair, and never knowing perhaps that the ones who said don't go, Esteban, at least wait till the coffee's ready, were the ones who later on would whisper the big boob finally left, how nice the handsome fool has gone.
>
> Later, when they covered his face with a handkerchief so that the light would not bother him, he looked so forever dead, so defenseless, so much like their men that the first furrows of tears opened in their hearts (MSS, 451).

Márquez is especially adept at speaking in the voice of the chorus, the audience "…the men finally exploded with, 'since when has there ever been such a fuss over a drifting corpse, a drowned nobody, a piece of cold Wednesday meat'" (MSS, 451); to counter the ambivalent and join the resistant into the ritual of bringing the dead to life. Really, the men represent the outsider who would see the dead body objectively, asking "what is reality, if we should choose to animate the inanimate?" Márquez responds to this by

merely stating, “they had only to take the handkerchief off his face to see that he was ashamed, that it was not his fault that he was so big or so heavy or so handsome, and if he had known that this was going to happen he would have looked for a more discreet place to drown in, seriously” (MSS, 451). Or better yet, “there was so much truth in his manner that even the most mistrustful men, the ones who felt the bitterness of endless nights at sea fearing that their women would tire of dreaming about them and begin to dream of drowned men, even they and others who were harder still shuddered in the marrow of their bones at Esteban’s sincerity” (MSS, 452). Is it the dead that have a conscience? The language here is ephemeral, light, barely discernable, as much as it is recognizable and effective.

At the heart of Márquez’s short narrative there lies the question, why would you give the dead a name, a spirit, a family - “at the final moment it pained them to return him to the waters as an orphan and they chose a father and mother from among the best people, and aunts and uncles and cousins, so that through him all the inhabitants of the village became kinsmen,” - or a home? What does it mean that this is done? What does it (or, does it) reveal about humanity and social conditions? What does it reflect back to the reader? Does it even aim to reflect anything? Finding the right question in the maze of the magical realist artist is still one of the many challenges posed in the development of the art. Psychoanalytically or allegorically, the narrative implies that we suffer from a lack of meaning. That in a meaningless existence, even a dead body can bring, not the body back to life, but the living. The paradox here is, of course, that the dead body becomes merely a tool; it reflects the deathlike slumber of the villagers; in their passionate embrace of the meaningless, they in turn embrace the reader’s

meaninglessness. In naming the dead they name the reader, and society; in reviving Esteban, they revive culture. The desperate void, no doubt an articulation of reality is made only visible and is viscerally felt when Esteban is laid out to be buried at sea: "…men and women became aware for the first time of the desolation of their streets, the dryness of their courtyards, the narrowness of their dreams as they faced the splendor and beauty of their drowned man" (MSS, 452). In a final reflection on the death of art and culture, Márquez ends his story by saying, "they let him go without an anchor so that he could come back if he wished and whenever he wished, and they held their breath for the fraction of centuries the body took to fall into the abyss…They did not need to look at one another to realize that they were no longer all present, that they would never be…that's Esteban's village (MSS, 452). Yet, despite all the ways that this narrative evokes metaphor, it is the underlying connection with the characters and the author that reflect the life that juxtaposes death.

Jorge Luis Borges is similar to Márquez in his ability to blur the lines between the reader, the author and the text; however, in his masterful short narrative, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," he sets up a dynamic that further complicates the dictates of literature and philosophical musings.

Pierre Menard sets out to accomplish the task of translating, word for word, certain parts of the Cervantes novel, *Don Quixote.* "He did not want to compose another Quixote – which is easy – but the Quixote itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel Cervantes" (Labyrinths, 39). The crux of the problem would

be in Pierre Menard's assertion that he could accomplish the task by claiming, "I am quite capable of imagining it without Quixote…The Quixote is a contingent book; the Quixote is unnecessary. I can premeditate writing it, I can write it, without falling into a tautology" (Labyrinths, 40). To that end, an example of Menard's work is demonstrated in the following lines of the short story:

> It is a revelation to compare Menard's Don Quixote with Cervantes'. The latter, for example, wrote (part one, chapter nine):
>
> …truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor.
>
> Written in the seventeenth century, written by the 'last genius' Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:
>
> …truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, exemplar and advisor to the present, and the future's counselor. (Labyrinths, 43)

Pierre Menard is, by far, one of the most enigmatic characters in twentieth-century literature. It is in the development of this character that we confront the steely, rational side of the Dionysian prophet in Borges. Through this figure Borges demonstrates that a cessation of the self juxtaposes the individual, invoking an integral element if one is to harbor any hope of comprehending the narrative. Though Pierre Menard is a name that is associated with a fixed identity, Borges illustrates an unidentifiable movement: the notion of self that is itself a ghostlike identity. In truth, Pierre Menard is attempting agency. Rosemary Arrojo, in "Translation, Transference and the Attraction to Otherness," says, "Menard's "methods" for reproducing Don Quixote, which seem absurd in Borges' story, could be viewed as an ironical criticism of the call for faithfulness and invisibility typically associated with traditional translation theories

and practices. The story is in fact a brilliant illustration of how absurd it is for a translator to claim (or even to try) to be absolutely faithful to someone else's text." Arrojo is right. The story does not seem to hold up a theory in translation, nor does in make any effort to demonstrate faithfulness to the art of translation. But Arrojo still misses the point Borges makes in invoking the idea that one writer can, precisely, produce a duplicate that is entirely unique from the original. It is not an effort in translation; it is a function of Cervantes, history, and Menard's present.

Magical realism in the literary arts has been called an exercise in "love," but no such definition ought to be ascribed to the events in Borges' short narrative. "Love" implies desire and sharing, but the character of Pierre Menard would represent a vehement rejection of such attributes. The ethereal element implied in the characterization of Pierre Menard would be a necessary element in a discourse on love, but the two would not be identical. Eros, as I seek to define it, is movement, such that replacement and substitution of the other exists, though not in the same artificial way language imposes itself. In the story of Pierre Menard, the narrator takes an inventory of Menard's past efforts and accomplishments. Along with an argument that attempts to redefine the game of chess and an example of "metric laws of French prose," the narrator finds, "two texts of unequal value (which) inspired (the) undertaking. One is that philological fragment by Novalis – the one numbered 2005 in the Dresden edition – which outlines the theme of a total identification with a given author" (39). This piece of evidence is the most important clue in Borges' theory of substitution and the perversion of identity. Once we accept that identity cannot only be reproduced or replaced, then we can garner some comprehension of the second text, "the other is one of those parasitic

books which situate Christ on a boulevard, Hamlet on La Canneniere or Don Quixote on Wall Street. Like all men of good taste, Menard abhorred these useless carnivals, fit only – as he would say – to produce the plebian pleasure of anachronism or (what is worse) to enthrall us with the elementary idea that all epochs are the same or are different" (MSS,39). Borges' writing style is a series of masks and camouflage images, but his point is well taken; without the stability of identity, what are we in time and space?

The problem with the story of Pierre Menard seems to be the determination the narrator has (and Menard has) to emerge as an individual and separate identity of Pierre Menard. "Those who have insinuated that Menard dedicated his life to writing a contemporary Quixote calumniate his illustrious memory" (MSS, 39). In this opening sequence, the narrator invokes a sympathetic and honorable cry in defense of the author; the reader is forced to wonder for what reasons this unknown character would pursue the recovery of Pierre Menard's reputation. It is this small element that, despite what the narrative points out to the contrary, we are compelled to imagine Pierre Menard's attempts and efforts at writing the few sections of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes' masterpiece, as a credible work of genuine art. In drawing the reader into the intimate folds of a fictitious couple, Menard and the narrator, the audience engages, what appear to be solid identities involved in a very serious project dealing with matters of philosophy and mysticism. "The final term in a theological or metaphysical demonstration – the objective world, God, causality, the forms of the universe – is no less previous and common than my famed novel. The only difference is that the philosophers publish the intermediary stages of their labor in pleasant volumes and I have resolved to do away with those stages" (MSS, 39). Doing away with the philosophers, as well as with

Cervantes, is a critical part of the project's success, if we are to believe that such a project is at all possible. What Pierre Menard wants to do is emerge as a singular identity by consuming the product of Cervantes' identity. "Doing away" with the intermediary is always necessary when identity is at stake. In the business of identity, no sharing can be possible, so we are forced to endure Menard's perspective on Cervantes:

> But why precisely the Quixote? our reader will ask. Such a preference, in a Spaniard, would not have been inexplicable; but it is, no doubt, in a Symbolist from Nîmes, essentially a devotee of Poe, who engendered Baudelaire, who engendered Mallarmé, who engendered Valéry, who engendered Edmond Teste. The aforementioned letter illuminates this point. "The Quixote," clarifies Menard, "interests me deeply, but it does not seem – how shall I say it? – inevitable. I cannot imagine the universe without Edgar Allen Poe's exclamation:
>
> Ah bear in mind this garden was enchanted!
>
> Or without the Bateau Ivre or the Ancient Mariner, but
>
> My general recollection of the Quixote, simplified by forgetfulness and indifference, can well equal the imprecise and prior image of a book not yet written. Once that image (which no one can legitimately deny me) is postulated, it is certain that my problem is a good bit more difficult that Cervantes' was. (Labyrinths, 40)

For Borges, the reader is told of Menard's intention through the third person gaze of the narrator, who recounts the words of Menard and his views of the intermediary. The invisibility of Menard is integral to the short story. Who is in the middle? In a sense, it is Menard, who is spoken for by the narrator, whose motivation is to respond and explain Pierre Menard and his unusual gift for translation. Then it is the audience, who acts as go-between for the narrator and Pierre Menard's critics. But then it is also the narrator, who must close the gap between the reader, Pierre Menard and the critics. In a sense, what Borges produces is not the work of any one identity, but the movement of all these identities around one another, as though each one plays a role in musical chairs, albeit

unbeknownst to them. By writing this short story, Borges knows that it is neither Menard, nor the narrator, nor the audience that makes the story move, but, rather, something of a different element. It is making the "dead" space come to life, so that, like Márquez's "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," a narrative develops around nothing; meaning is attributed to the void.

"My obliging predecessor did not refuse the collaboration of chance: he composed his immortal work somewhat à la diable, carried along by the inertias of language and invention" (41). As pointed out in my earlier chapters, language always requires a sacrifice. Creative outlets that are then translated into language must first undergo a purging. It is not that Pierre Menard must espouse a theory about translating Cervantes' text into a more contemporary or modern spiritual and psychological text, but rather, Menard must translate each moment into language; each engagement with Cervantes into symbols, which require some form of sacrifice. He says, "my solitary game is governed by two polar laws. The first permits me to essay variations of a formal or psychological type; the second obliges me to sacrifice these variations to the "original" text and reason out this annihilation in an irrefutable manner…" (41). In each case, Menard and the narrator engage in the laws of language where all living matter is dead matter, or must be made dead, if it is to have any real meaning.

In describing the element of movement, Borges invokes memory and history, as to be expected. If an identity is to occur, it must have an element of historical connectedness, but the narrator tells us that Menard believes "history, (to be) the mother of truth: the idea is astounding. Menard…does not define history as an inquiry into reality, but as its origin…historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we

have judged to have happened" (43). Menard here implies that there can never be any certainty that we exist, nor that we are secure in our historical time and space. To translate experience into language, one must be confronted with reality constantly, and then one can never do much but judge from that position. "We must be included in the historical, not as observers or removed, but as part of it. Our judgment of "what happened" is as much the historical as "what happened" (Labyrinths, 43). In other words, there is never a moment when those who speak history are not in the historical moment they are speaking of. The reasons, of course, go back to the meaninglessness of dead space; the obliteration of laws that govern identity. For Menard, "the contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Menard – quite foreign, after all – suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time" (Labyrinths, 43). One writer is rooted to his identity in Spain; the other disseminates his identity throughout all of time, space, and the historical Western European geographical map from the 17th century on to the present…perhaps beyond that.

Of course, Borges would have it that the reader be tossed a final hurdle, "There is no exercise of the intellect which is not, in the final analysis, useless" (Labyrinths,43). But this would, again, be in keeping with movement. Any attempt at "stilling" the reader, the narrator, or Pierre Menard, who undo the primacy of Eros. "The Quixote – Menard told me – was, above all, an entertaining book; now it is the occasion for patriotic toasts, grammatical insolence and obscene de luxe editions" (43). Infinitely translatable and yet uniquely "The Quixote," Borges demonstrates the impossibility of rooting experience and intention to form and language. On many levels, the end result of the

Quixote is both the honor and disgrace afforded the reader by the narrator. "I have reflected that it is permissible to see in this "final" Quixote a kind of palimpsest, through which the traces – tenuous but not indecipherable – of our friend's "previous" writing should be translucently visible. Unfortunately, only a second Pierre Menard, inverting the other's work, would be able to exhume those lost Troys…" (44).

Movement, in Borges' short story, is summed up, "Thinking, analyzing, inventing (he also wrote me) are not anomalous acts; they are the normal respiration of the intelligence. To glorify the occasional performance of that function, to hoard ancient and alien thoughts, to recall with incredulous stupor that the doctor universalis thought, is to confess our laziness or our barbarity. Every man should be capable of all ideas and I understand that in the future this will be the case (44). Despite the incredulous nature of Borges' story, such a statement reveals Borges' resistance to fixed identities. Thinking, analyzing, inventing and creating are all attributes of a moving Eros, a living being. A text is dead until it copulates with another being in another time and place, thereby breathing life into it. Language, then, for Borges and Márquez, is subordinate to the human, where stagnation would mean language has killed the subject rather than revived it. In both "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" and "Pierre Menard, the Author of the Quixote," Márquez and Borges illustrate the moving author, the moving word, the living juxtaposed with the dead.

Although Magical Realism is often associated with Latin American writers, it is a movement that affected people of all cultures. Africans, Indians, Europeans, and Americans also used this genre to tell their stories. The movement attempted to close the

gap between physical and metaphysical worlds by giving voice to the spaces that give those worlds character, personality and life.

Conclusion

The Lazarus/Zombie paradigm was set up to give the reader access to a condition. I used the two narratives because they are religious in nature. And despite the fact that they are both born of different cultures and traditions, they work well together. I purposefully combined them because religious narratives are treated with what I believe to be special conditions. So rooted in a culture's self-perceptions\, even as the members of each corresponding community resists, subverts, and transgress their own stories, they are not often open to the appropriation and reinterpretation of those narratives by another foreign and alien hand. It took a long time for me to convince several people that the interpretations I present are valid. For Haitians, the Zombie story was about lack and nothing more. I could talk extensively about what the Zombie lacked, but not about what it lost. And, for the Western or Christian, Lazarus could not have been a subject lacking any essential qualities. Lazarus may be interpreted as saddened by the experience, or disturbed by it, but not lacking. This gave me much reason to pause. In fact, I altered my viewpoint of the Lazarus/Zombie problem because I could see that neither participant from the corresponding cultures would relent. These stories are fixed. There was very little room for altering their intended meaning and interpretation. That only solidified my theory about language, the community and the identities that formed within this context. I felt I had to combine them in order to make clear that the Zombie was not a mere figment of the imagination. Nor was the Zombie to be regarded as an exception to the rules that govern human conditions. I had to also make it clear that despite Lazarus'

prominent position in Christian theology, the story about him reflected a possible condition worth exploring. I started with religious texts to emphasize the stakes.

My theory is not new. It has been addressed by many scholars throughout Western culture. My purpose was to illustrate the problem using texts from different places, cultures and traditions. I wanted to demonstrate the universality of the problem language poses, rather than try to demonstrate it using the narratives of one culture. I wanted Jean Robert Cadet's autobiography, *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle Class American*, to have larger stakes than those evident in his book. Sure, we can go to Haiti and try to put a stop to the human rights violations suffered by three hundred thousand children, but another form of subjugation will emerge and another group will define itself as subjects caught in the net of slavery and slave dynamics – and the corresponding social group will remain clueless until it is brought to light.. The ease in which these problems arise has much to do with language and its reflection on the members of a group who uses it to identify themselves and others. I do not believe it is of any use to anyone to have it appear as the problems suffered by one group in a particular historical place and time. As a result, my project attempts to locate the Lazarus/Zombie dynamic in as many genres as possible. I used religious text and folklore to ground the work; autobiography to offer it flesh; a documentary to blur the line (and reflect that blurring) between reality and the fiction developed in the use of language; cinema for visual effect; and a novel for literary expression. This project is a body of work that represents what is commonly known about the conflict and the conditions of identity formations, language, and the social apparatus.

Finally, I placed my reading of Morrison's novel last because, despite my serious reservations about her novel, *The Bluest Eye*, her depiction of Pecola is still the best illustration of the Lazarus/Zombie problem. In Pecola's case, there is no demonstration of loss. What we get is an illustration of pure lack. We can only infer what may have been lost in the development of her character. This is precisely why Pecola needs to be read alongside the other female characters; Pauline's bildungsroman is as much the story that speaks of Pecola's condition as it is the story that describes Pauline. Nevertheless, more than invoking pity for the Pecola, Morrison points out that each one of the female characters that counter Pecola represent what she is presumed to have lost: safe and positive childhood experiences, healthy representations of herself in a social setting, healthy sexuality, etc. In this way, Morrison joins many characters to reflect the singular conflict found in the Lazarus/Zombie paradigm.

This project was supposed to be relentlessly negative. The first three chapters were meant to convey the devastating consequences of acquiring the voice of the Other. I am not certain whether I succeeded, but I did not want to end the dissertation this way. I wanted to position the positive and refreshing contributions of Surrealists and Magical Realists against the backdrop of so much death and loss. Although Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Luís Borges and Gabriel Garcia Márquez hardly reflect a solution to the problem, they do resist the pitfalls of identity politics in their work. They can be Latino, Eurocentric men and emphasize their agency, precisely by leaving aspects of identification virtually out of their work or scattered. I see this as a positive step towards a resolution to the Lazarus/Zombie crisis in literary expressions.

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