



In conjunction with a symposium organized by Stan Woodard in September 2009, at Georgia Institute of Technology, Public Domain Inc.'s online journal PERFORATIONS announces the call for issue 32: ZOMBIE!

All types of material will be considered: video, text (.pdf format), sound, documentations of performance, installation art, and other formats/possibilities of which we aren't even aware possibly. Submissions can range from anthropological origins (music, ritual, colonialism, spiritualism, Maya Deren, etc), to contemporary implications and/or artistic enactments, even (especially) combining the inventive with the anthropological. Please see the end of this call for submissions for contact information. See material below to give you a shove.

...

'One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back'.

Jacques Derrida in **Specters of Marx**

Franco Moretti once claimed that the two seminal 'monsters' (from '*de-monstrare*', a showing forth, demonstration) for modernity – and the West -- were Frankenstein and Dracula; Frankenstein represented the monster of production turned loose on itself (made up, collaged together, bricoleur, odds and ends gathered and forced to articulate), all subjectivity being turned on a lathe, so to speak, constructed out of numerous parts and sources. The other side of that early industrial model of life and literature was Dracula, a monster who fed on desire and subsisted in the shadow of that other industrial monster, the one based on overweening scientific hubris.

If the Frankenstein monster maintains life at any cost, taking apart other bodies and lives to do it, so does Dracula sustain life at the cost of death—or vice versa. But the zombie sustains itself in the stroke between life/death, feeding on both death AND life...just as an 'apparatus' does in its most formal presentation; and also exist only as an infallible coming back. ('Zombie banks' anyone?) These living/dead structures inhabit us now; and in fact we are unable to separate ourselves from them. ('Debt' and the monetary system in particular forming quite dense apparatic nests). The zombie IS a sort of apparatus – or rather, is we wish to be less literal, forms the latest incarnation of monstrosity, or a showing forth of the inner –and autonomous -- workings of human articulations and their concatenation with the machinic networks which form the extended immensity of our lives now.

And another thing that points to the zombie being an apparatchik: the previous monstrations had their original in canonical texts by Mary Shelly and Bram Stoker, there is no text per se at all for the zombie, other than a few anthropological observations on *Vodoun* from the early 1800s in the West Indies and American South and the pantheon of *Loas*. First came the image and the concept via contact (colonialism and slavery) with some tribal cultures (i.e. Haiti) but in industrial cultures, contact made its way popularly through another apparatus, movies and later video, both being systems of image representation supported by a large apparatus of workmen (see, e.g., Walter Benjamin's *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*).

(Perhaps in some sense, we have never been alive, perhaps life has always had a zombified aspect to it: being inhabited/possessed by another system, our 'consciousness' (and what exactly IS that anyway?) a phenomenal result of the clash of those internalities.

Don't we already 'live' in this place of the resurrected dead, you and I? Sluggishly (or rapidly it could be we now think also) moving over the landscape waiting for the big break, the big event, or maybe just any event which would release us from the inhabitation of the stroke between life/death, the place of the neomort as Giorgio Agamben has it.

Perhaps we have always been zombies.)

It should be said from the outset (for those who might ask not, Where is the Text? But Where is the Image?) that the mere mention of 'zombie' entails an image first: the blood smeared mouth, vacant, if not etiolated, face and eyes. Drained of blood itself, and unlike the vampire, not seeming to require blood but still prone to some sort of ravenous hunger (perhaps for brains?) At the least hungry for something

that the living seem to have. The old style cultural zombie was featured hulking and shambling along, almost plant-like, dragging a foot perhaps, but easy to outrun due to some neuropathy ... well, hell they're supposed to be dead so there shouldn't be any neuro- at all!

Newer cultural images increase the zombies' speed a bit and implicate them in another neural network: the electronic soup that surrounds us, including the web. So it would seem that the zombie is undergoing an evolution: from a mere robotic husk, resurrected and commanded to move by a puppet master (e.g. the old 'White Zombie' from 1932); to a mysteriously appearing horde (zombies do not seem to appear singly) of resurrected dead drawn to the living, seemingly to bring them into the realm of the dead (maybe they miss their kin; the most recent 'artfilm' version of this is the French film 'They Came Back,' no blood at all, just a resurrected being which wants to come/go back 'home', a complicated notion as the film shows); to Romero's 'Diary of the Dead' where media figures prominently; perhaps the zombie now wishes to dissolve into the electronic soup which brought it forth. And of course to take the living with them.

The zombie is nothing less than the whiff which the human gets (and is unable to process by any normal mechanism other than allegory and mythologization) of the Outside, that arena on either side of Birth and Death, the thin line of contact that one assemblage – the living -- makes with some, totally indistinct, other ... but which science has put a phenomenological fence around, wherein all speculation is declared mute, void, fabled, of no consequence, nothing on either side but shambling hunks of de-racinated materiality trying to find the sweet spot. The image of the zombies like some form of macular degeneration –or like those floaters in the vitreous humour of the eye, accompanying us wherever we go: **THE ZOMBIE WILL NOT DIE!!** And in fact in its hunger wants us to accompany it....

The **MOST** readily 'visible' (we have to put this in quotes since it is a peculiar sort of visibility, one better limned by the term skototropic, an orientation to the dark) is the risible rearing of language, it being the primary vehicle of contact with the dead (and now there is a purely instrumental wing of zombieism, E.V.P. , using media to contact the dead, induce them to speak) ... but also contact with material, foaming spew of language meeting the obdurate obtuseness of 'stuff,' things themselves which only apparently do not participate in the life/death struggles...

So. It's easy to see where the zombie stands (or shambles) for the future, as the Modern falls back, beset with fatigue, exhaustion, straining against the force field which separates the human from all else by sprays of information/noise. Modernity/modernism seemed to be the furthest limit-case of contact with the/an

'outside,' the thinnest edge of contact inevitably decaying into noise, randomness, decay, absurdity, whatever the opposite of *parousia* would be (an absurdist *kenosis* perhaps, not the human emptying into god but a simple emptying out, to be refilled with a more tangible apparatus of control – or just refilled with nothing, except the idea of 'going/coming back', a memorialization centering on having gone nowhere and having done nothing; in just musical endeavor, think of the pinnacle of the modern: serialism, obliteration of everything 'inherently' vectored -- melody, rhythm, etc – and replaced by the dodecaphonic/noise apparatus to continue into a void of non-directionality). A sort to non-reproductive genealogy that the zombie best represents: reproduction by the apparatus. And like modernity, the zombie seems born of a catastrophic event, blown *back* into time's grind and in a continual rage because of it.

Monsters of revenge, commemoration, and return, the zombie moves best when there are no 'signposts up ahead,' as Rod Serling put it in the introduction to *The Twilight Zone*, only signage behind. The zombie *must* appear as long as there is memorialization --- and just as certainly must deny that it is such.

•

Submissions: Send queries and submissions to Robert Cheatham, zeug@pd.org
For info on the live events, contact Stan Woodard,
stan@stanwoodard.com

Deadline: September 30, 2009

•

Perforations *is an affiliate of Public Domain, Inc, a 501-c-3 organization unaffiliated with any other organization.*

Visit <http://www.pd.org> for other services.

Visit <http://www.pd.org/HTML/perforations-index.html> for Perforation *back issues*.