Jane Eyre and Zombies

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<1>"Forward," according to Richard Altick, is a word that summarizes "the typical Victorian mind" concerning the future of the Empire (Altick 107). Moving forward meant several different things for Victorians – ranging from technological and scientific advancement, to the establishment of democratic values and women's suffrage – but was uniformly aligned with Imperialist conquest. In his book *Russia and the Eastern Question* (1854) Richard Cobden, for example, clearly connects conquest to Empire in a way which reflects common mid-nineteenth-century discourse:

> England, with her steam-engine and spinning frame, has erected a standard improvement, around which every nation has already prepared to rally. […] England's industrious classes, through the energy of their commercial enterprise, are, at this moment, influencing the civilization of the whole world, by stimulating the labor, exciting the curiosity, and promoting the taste for refinement of barbarous communities, and above all, by acquiring and teaching to surrounding nations the beneficent attachment to peace. (Cobden 101)

Cobden's articulation of British conquest expresses a desire to align "the whole world" with English paradigms by fostering curiosity, "stimulating labor," and inspiring "peace." Moving forward came to mean something different in an age of conquest aided by technological and scientific advancement, than it had in the past. The effects of the Industrial Revolution, for example, filled London and Manchester with images of animate yet lifeless objects.(1) Steam plants, blast furnaces, and even electric light and photography served to give a lifelike vibrancy to inanimate materials: artifacts that were vital for England's definition of itself as a world power. A preoccupation with the reanimated dead body as a representation of progress, then, does not seem so far-fetched, considering that the body was the power behind the anthropomorphic appearance of industry anyway. Yet, the (re)mobilized body that was so central to the rhetoric of national progress took many – sometimes contradictory –forms. The body in motion, as it appears in sundry mid-to-late nineteenth-century texts, is not always salubrious although it may be strong. In fact, oftentimes the body that performs the most important actions for progress in literature is not only sick, disabled, or sometimes deformed,(2) but dead. Reanimated dead bodies, in particular, gained such a voice in Victorian texts as a signal of forward movement, that its lack of critical attention is surprising. Dead yet poignantly active (like the machinery that filled urban spaces) the Victorian zombie-body was macabre yet capable

of fueling the forward motion that was so pivotal for the Empire's discourse of progress, particularly in its influence on – and by – changing ideas about gender and racial difference.

<2> As a knell of progress, dead bodies appeared mobilized and zombie-like ("zombic") in an astonishing number of Victorian texts, such as *Jane Eyre*, which calls into question the recent trend of reading literary zombies as a twentieth-century sensation. While the written history of voodoo zombies in Western culture extends back at least as far as Robert Southey's *The History of Brazil* (1819) – in which the word "zombi" first surfaces(3) – the "zombie" in literature is commonly imagined as a particularly postmodern creation.(4) In some ways the association between postmodernity and zombies makes sense. As David Lyon explains in his book *Postmodernity* (2009), postmodernism is defined by its "new" form of fragmentation in which the "boundaries of 'high' and 'low' culture" are blurred, "hierarchies of knowledge" collapse, and "authority is dethroned" (Lyon 10). The postmodern idea of reality is created through subjectivity and reflexivity. In a word, the zombie is ostensibly "postmodern" because it veils the boundaries of conscious experience. Apparently unfeeling yet animated, a zombie is an apathetic being easily controlled by external forces (as in the classic voodoo prototype(5)) or a body dictated by the most carnal visceral desires (as in the George Romero breed(6)). The zombic body shows signs of exaggerated life despite – or perhaps because of – its deathly state. Like the Victorian double, it obfuscates self. But the Victorian double is notably not zombic since it tends to maintain consciousness once separated from the self.(7)

<3> The zombie, for Victorians, was not a manifestation only of the self and its other. Rather, it was an articulation of the vanishing of self entirely: a macabre dissolution of desire and awareness so deep that its body falls completely under the control of someone or something else. In his book *The Conscious Mind* (1996), David Chalmers argues that a zombie is "someone or something identical to me but lacking conscious experience all together" (Chalmers 94). Critics of zombic consciousness have extended Chalmers's theory to include two related issues: the zombie's position as an uncanny representative of human experience, and its role as a subaltern, postcolonial being. For example, robotics specialist Mashahiro Mori has placed zombies as the lowest point of what he terms the "uncanny valley:" they are considered less human than even a corpse despite – or perhaps because of – their ability to move. Kyle Bishop in his book *American Zombie Gothic* (2010) has asserted that:

> zombies represent the lowest level of the economic system: they are the ultimate slaves, or in industrial terms, the downtrodden, unrepresented proletariat labor force, what Marx calls the *Lumpenproletariat*. Because they have no will or mind of their own, the zombies are not only unrepresented but also unrepresentable. (Bishop 77)

Chalmers's definition of a zombie as a twin who "judges he is unconscious" with assessments that are "utterly and systematically false" (Chalmers 192), suggests that zombic consciousness is undeveloped because "I have experiences and he does not" (199). Bishop's work complicates Chalmers's hypothesis by connecting the zombie-experience to slavery: a cultural experience that is rich in consciousness.(8) According to Bishop, although slaves, proletariats, and "the downtrodden" have "no will or mind of their own," they nevertheless "are grounded in the need for realization and self-consciousness" ("Sub-Altern Monster" 145), which they can never

achieve. Lack of consciousness – its own awareness of self or society's cognizance of it – is the primary difference between a subject (or even a double) and a zombie. Despite the large body of nineteenth-century texts that present zombic characters, situations, gestures, or settings, critics mistakenly continue to analyze zombies as a uniquely twentieth-century construct.(9) Yet they were an integral part of the Victorian imagination, as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847)suggests. The zombie motif was used by many authors to question hegemonic doctrines concerning consequential issues of the time – such as gender, race, and conquest – which were bound up in questions of conscious experience and mobility.

<4> Like postmodernists, Victorians did not have one definition of consciousness, but rather a set of criteria that spanned a variety of different contexts. In fact, many mid-to-late nineteenth-century texts suggest that society-at-large had a new willingness to view consciousness – and conscious experience – in radical ways. As Walter Houghton has famously argued in his book *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957), Victorian consciousness was increasingly charged with loneliness, nostalgia, anxiety, fear, worry, guilt, and frustration alongside optimism. Such foreboding affected the social consciousness as citizens grew more likely to read consciousness as a kind of fiction: particularly of the gothic kind. In her book *How Novels Think* (2005) Nancy Armstrong observes that "the great tradition of Victorian fiction saw modern consciousness as the means to resolve the widening gap between self-fulfillment and what was socially acceptable" (Armstrong 146). The "widening gap" that Armstrong defines provided space for exploration of the consciousness in the nineteenth century. As George Eliot suggests in *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the Victorian consciousness was essentially unstable; "consciousness" was definable in the sense that almost every "individual" possessed one, but it was incredibly insecure in the sense that no one could clearly feel that her consciousness was stable or complete. (10) Jason B. Jones, who focuses on "historical consciousness" in his book *Lost Causes: Historical Consciousness in Victorian Literature* (2006), argues that Evans's use consciousness has "an ontological, as well as epistemological dimension." Her form of historical consciousness suggests that "there is an element of history that always exceeds our understanding." According to Jones, Evans strives "neither to represent the real transparently nor to argue for simple fables of progress" (Jones 2). She, like many of her contemporaries, understood consciousness as a tainted state of being. In some ways, Evans's sense of consciousness reflects "modern consciousness," which is characterized by "conflicts that often create a neurotic structure" (Kawai 438). Furthermore, the unstable nature of Victorian consciousness could even be termed "postmodern" as, according to Toshia Kawai, postmodern consciousness is "self-reflective without content" (447). Such consciousness is swept up in questions of pure being. The brand of consciousness that Victorians tended to display through the arts was defined by its indefiniteness. Identifying an "other" brought Victorians no closer to understanding the "self" as a unified state of being. An inability to define consciousness teased out the possibility that it was, perhaps, empty: that the nature of consciousness was that it could be lost or even controlled by others.

<5> In some ways, the Victorian consciousness is best described as a zombic state: or, what W.E.B. Du Bois defines as double consciousness at the turn of the century. Du Bois's definition of double consciousness refers expressly to Black Americans who feel their position as a subaltern: their "two-ness – [as] an American, [and] a Negro." Black Americans have "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose

dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois 8). From the onset of his theory, Du Bois is clear that his brand of double consciousness arises from a couple of definite situations; it occurs in a subaltern individual who feels allegiance to two sometimes disparate orientations, and it resists breaking a person into parts. The body that suffers a Du Boisian kind of double consciousness remains whole despite the fact that "this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals, has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people – has […] at times even seemed to make them ashamed of themselves" (10). Du Bois offers a genre of double consciousness that is vital to understanding the zombie in nineteenth-century fiction. Like the Black American in *The Souls of Black Folk* a Victorian zombie sees "his own soul r[i]se before him, and he s[ees] himself" as the marionette of another. Yet, eventually, "he beg[i]n[s] to have a dim feeling that, to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another" (11). While not all nineteenth-century literary British "zombies" are Black and even fewer are American, Du Bois's theory articulates an awareness of the racialized or physically-marked other which permeated many consciousnesses during the Victorian period. That some Victorians feared their potential to be zombic in this way – or imagined themselves as capable of making such zombies of others – is clear through their texts, which built on earlier literature of the zombie.(11) Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, in particular, iterates many of the trends of zombification that other Victorian authors utilized.

<6> Most characters in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* have an affinity with zombies. That *Jane Eyre* has been interpreted in the context of zombie-culture in such works as Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) makes sense because the theme of zombification is so prevalent in the novel. For example, Helen Burns displays such a high degree of emotional vacuity to contrast Eyre's abundance of affect that she seems deprived of the mortal ability to feel. After Burns is brutally punished by Miss Scatcherd at Lowood, Eyre describes her shock at Burns's propensity to suffer quietly (or not at all):

> I expected she would show signs of great distress and shame; but to my surprise she neither wept nor blushed: composed, though grave, she stood, the central mark of all eyes. "How can she bear it so quietly – so firmly?" I asked to myself. "Were I in her place, it seems to me I should wish the earth to open and swallow me up. She looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment." (Brontë 62)

She presumes that Burns will eventually display the basic markings of a human in pain or embarrassment by showing "great distress and shame," yet her "composed" and "grave" countenance reveals only a "silence" that produces "not a tear" from her eyes "to alter its ordinary expression" (63). Like a classic Vodou zombie,(12) Burns appears to have lost human characteristics while under the influence of a higher power. Her affinity to Christ (as a sacrificial figure) is a topic that many critics have addressed,(13) yet her parallelism with one of Christianity's founding principles – zombic reanimation – has not been analyzed. For fifteen years following Burns's death, Eyre notes that her plot "was only covered by a grassy mound;" but after she visits her friend in the graveyard as an adult, "now a gray marble tablet marks the spot, inscribed with her name, and the word 'Resurgam'" (91), which means "I shall rise again." Although Eyre does not admit that she is the one who inscribes such ostentatious meaning on her friend's grave, the resurgence of Burns in Eyre's life – after death – suggests that Burns's

symbolic resurrection is bound up in Eyre's experience. Immediately following Eyre's reflection on the inscription on her friend's tablet, she makes a very telling observation about her own manner: it has changed to mimic Burns's; "I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character" (92). For the first time in the novel, after Burns's death Eyre is "quiet," "disciplined," and "subdued:" attributes that had never before pertained to her fiery character. Burns seems, at least momentarily, to live again in Eyre.

<7> As a subject highly susceptible to the forces of "otherness" around her, Eyre progressively transforms into a figure of the walking dead in which the Vodou-like master is made apparent. Her absorption of Burns's personality signals that she not only has the propensity to fall under the influence of external forces, but that she wants to open herself to them. A Du Boisian consciousness emerges in Eyre as she becomes aware that her consciousness merges with others'. As she delights in her new Burns-esque attributes, she admits that "I altered" through "all changes" with Miss Temple's guidance (92). In fact, the influence of Temple is so strong that Eyre acknowledges: "I had undergone a transforming process." When Temple marries and leaves Lowood, Eyre "had to put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple," which leaves her back "in my natural element" in which she "begin[s] to feel the string of old emotions" (92). During her tenure as student and teacher at Lowood, Eyre falls into the habit of wearing others' personalities like garments, which she then is able to throw off as easily as she puts them on. As a manifold entity that can both absorb and cast off with equal power, Eyre's consciousness is primed for an exploration of the exact brand of zombic possibility that pervaded much Victorian discourse.

<8> Before St. John steps in as her Vodou-like master, Eyre undergoes several additional revelations about her conscious state which mark her desire to become zombic – to both herself and to readers. She is, firstly, a character who is uncanny enough to serve as site for such exploration. With her "large prominent teeth" (43), Eyre has "rather the look of another world" (128) with an "uncanny turn of countenance" (259). Her "unusual physiognomy" (333) renders her "a strange, almost unearthly thing" (253). Eyre's body evidences the capacity to become a zombie, as it is marked by its grotesque difference. Furthermore, she places herself at the center of the slave-master dialectic that was so crucial to Haitian zombie discourse by identifying as "a rebel-slave" (24) harassed by "a slave-driver" (23). Such rhetoric positions Eyre implicitly as the potential victim of Vodou in the context of conquest. Even when her ambition leads her away from the "prison" of Lowood or the Reeds's home, Eyre continues to pine for only "a new servitude" (93). Finally, she identifies her very ambition to move forward as zombie-like when she acknowledges that "I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing; they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive" (292). While her "stark" and "chill" wishes *do* eventually "revive" themselves once she reasserts her consciousness over St. John's control, Eyre tellingly interprets her basal desires as corpse-like as she becomes a kind of corpse herself. Her desires revive when she does, except the wishes that once were impossible – like a servant marrying her master – are now granted through her process of zombification.

<9> Although Rochester describes Eyre's mind as "one not liable to take infection" because it is "peculiar" and "unique" (149), Eyre's interaction with St. John proves that while her mind may

be strong enough not to "take" infection, it is not capable of – or willing to – resist it. St. John Eyre Rivers, who "lived only to aspire" (383) and describes himself as a "cold, hard, ambitious man" (367), asserts his will – which can best be characterized as carrying out the Empire's vision of conquest(14) – over Eyre to such lengths that "by degrees, he acquired a certain influence over me that took away my liberty of mind" (388). In this zombic state of mental domination, even her emotional markings, which had heretofore been so prominent, begin to blur: "I could no longer talk or laugh freely" (388). Moreover, St. John's influence as a Vodou-like master extends to Eyre's mobility: "I fell under a freezing spell. When he said 'go," I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it. But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me" (389). Eyre here displays a unique form of consciousness; the control over her mind, feelings, and body by a clearly identified Vodou-master is apparent, yet she maintains a certain degree of self-consciousness by continuing to "wish" and by judging her position ("I did not love my servitude"). Her awareness echoes Du Bois's theory of double consciousness, particularly when she observes that "I daily wished more to please him: but to do so, I felt daily more and more that I must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent, force myself o the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation" (389). She is a slave, yet is still a master of herself to some degree, in competition with the Vodou-like master. St. John observes that Eyre is "docile, diligent, disinterested" (394), yet at the same time she has the presence of mind to know that "if I were his wife, this good man, pure as the deep sunless source, could soon kill me – without drawing from my veins a single drop of blood, or receiving on his own crystal conscious the faintest stain of crime" (401). Despite her knowledge of this eminent death, Eyre lacks the power – or will – to divorce herself from St. John until Rochester interferes by calling her back to him, asserting himself as her master, instead.

<10> Eyre is called out of her zombic stupor by Rochester, who needs her in order to break his own, similar zombification at the hands of Bertha Mason. Like a vodou doll, the "cursed" (142) Rochester is "thrust on a track" when he visits his father's West Indian plantation and marries Mason, and "has never recovered the right track since" (141). Mason's affinity with Creole lineage – and the corresponding Creole history of Vodou – positions her as Vodou-like master who dominates Rochester despite her imprisonment in the attic of Thornfield. Her "demonic" and "goblin laughter" (153), "discolored […] and savage face," "red" and "blood-shot" eyes, "purple" lips, and "blackened inflation of the lineaments" remind Eyre of the Vampire (281), which connects Mason to the undead. Additionally, Dick Mason, her brother, intuitively observes that Rochester "think[s] of her as dead and buried" (214). Mason is clearly not zombic herself – as she is rather like "some strange wild animal" (290) than a docile, controlled zombie – she nevertheless has purchase in the discourse of the undead that pervades *Jane Eyre*. She is physically strong and represents both the Creole form of Vodouism as well as colonial fear of the "other." Brontë presents Mason's – and the Empire's – master-like influence over Rochester through a telling description of Dick Mason who, like Rochester, has become zombified through the power that Bertha Mason represents:

> On closer examination, you detected something in his [Dick Mason's] face that displeased; or rather, that failed to please. His features were regular, but too relaxed: his eye was large and well cut, but the life looking out of it was a tame, vacant life – at least so I thought. […] I liked his physiognomy even less than before: it struck me as being, at the same time,

unsettled and inanimate. His eye wandered, and had no meaning in its wandering: this give him an odd look, such as I never remembered to have seen. For a handsome and not an unamiable-looking man, he repelled me exceedingly: there was no power in that smooth-skinned face of a full oval shape; no firmness in that aqualine nose, and small, cherry mouth; there was no thought on the low, even forehead; no command in that blank, brown eye. [… He] keep shrinking nearer [to the fire], as if he were cold. (192)

Dick symbolizes the same zombification to which Rochester is a victim; they are both men who have fallen under the influence of the monstrous, feminized power of the West Indies and British conquest. He, like Rochester, is a quintessential zombie with features that are "too relaxed," eyes that are "large" but "vacant" and "wander" but have "no meaning," and a body that is "inanimate" yet "unsettled." Dick's "odd look" has "no power" and, if these characteristics are not enough to suggest his zombic nature, his corpse-like state is emphasized by his "shrinking nearer [to the fire], as if her were cold." The relationship between Dick's and Rochester's position is highlighted when Mason reacts with similar violence toward her brother as she does to her husband, suggesting that they share a common bond. That Rochester relates to Dick's zombification is clear when, in an early conversation with Eyre, he articulates a desire to break free from his zombification. He observes that before travelling to the West Indies he "was a feeling fellow enough" and "once had a rude tenderness of heart" but fortune has "kneaded me with her knuckles," manipulating Rochester into a "hard and tough" ball of Indian-rubber. He then beseeches Eyre, "Does that leave hope for me?" Eyre asks, "Hope of what, sir?" to which he responds: for a "final re-transformation from Indian-rubber back to flesh" (138). Rochester displays a desire to break free from his Vodou-master but appears wholly unable to accomplish freedom on his own.

<11> Eyre needs Rochester to break her zombification by St. John and Rochester needs Eyre to aide his transformation from zombie back to human. After a period of separation in which Rochester has continued to lose several innate functions such as his sight, and has become "no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard" (433), he howls to Eyre's heart as if across an abyss. Eyre, who senses her lover's need for her, finally finds the power which she requires in order to "br[ea]k from St. John; who had followed and would have detained me. It was *my* time to assume ascendancy. *My* powers were in play, and in force" (410). When she discovers Rochester in his progressively de-humanized state, Eyre asserts that "'It is time someone undertook to rehumanize you'" (425). Eyre, who has been able to reassert her consciousness at the crucial moment and reclaim sovereignty, is the only hope for Rochester reestablishing his humanity. Their marriage is made possible through a leveling of the playing field in which Eyre and Rochester are reanimated zombies whose humanity rests upon the aide of the other. Eyre realizes their congruity: "He is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine: -- I am sure he is, -- I feel akin to him, -- I understand the language of his countenance and movements: though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him" (178). The "something" that Eyre possesses in her brain and heart, blood and nerves, is the stamp of her susceptibility to zombic consciousness, which she recognizes finally in Rochester when she is able to "love [him] as [her] own flesh" (253) and become "my husband's life as fully as he is mine" (439).

<12> Eyre and Rochester actualize a love that would otherwise be impossible due to their

unequal class by taking on the macabre markings of reanimation. The end result is not only marriage between master and servant, but an exploration of the possibility of corporeal transformation during time of exploration for the Empire. Such transformation operates through the social transgression powered by racial and gendered difference. In her book *Imperialism at Home* (1996), Susan Meyer observes that Brontë's use of racial metaphors "reveal[s] a conflict between sympathy for the oppressed and a hostile sense of racial supremacy" (Meyer 63) in which Brontë makes "gender oppression the overt significance of these other races" to the point at which she appropriates the image of slavery to some degree (64). Meyer asserts – like Gayatri Spivak – that Mason is the "fiction's incarnation of the desire for revenge on the part of colonized people:" an incarnation which Brontë suggests is "not unwarranted" (69). Nevertheless, Meyer argues that liberation is circumscribed in the novel as it is only intended for "a limited group," – the lower-classes – suggesting only a "partial" revolution (87). Bertha Mason epitomizes the historical crime of British colonization, to which Eyre is related through her affinity to the slave-master dialectic. Yet, Rochester is not unlike Eyre in his relationship to/ with Mason. He may have been intended for the role of master but he succumbs to a slave-like existence in which he, like Eyre, evidences signs of zombic consciousness.

<13> What makes Rochester vulnerable to the forces of "otherness" that Mason projects is akin to the aspects of Eyre's personality that engenders her susceptibility to St. John's influence. Rochester, like Eyre, does not conform to the English definition of his prescribed gender or racial role. As Cyndy Hendershott observes in her book *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic* (1998), Rochester exudes a "masculine sexuality with a desirability that English manliness does not possess" (Hendershott 175). The "asexual Englishness" (177) that *Jane Eyre* presents as the standard of sexuality is undone through Eyre's and Rochester's exposure to the colonized other. Yet, Rochester's failure to meet the English ideal of masculinity appears well before readers and Eyre are made aware of his experience in the West Indies. In their first meeting, Rochester falls from his horse onto the ice and, in his moment of weakness, Eyre comes to his aide. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have observed that in this moment, "clearly the master's mastery is not universal" (Gilbert 328). Rochester appears "struggling" and makes "vigorous" efforts (Brontë 119) to free himself; he swears and then "began a heaving, stamping, clattering process" which results finally in "an involuntary 'Ugh!'" (120). His childish tantrum hardly seems to suit his person, which is otherwise manly with its "considerable breadth of chest," "dark face," "stern features and a heavy brow" (120).(15) Rochester's unmanning in Eyre's presence suggests that he has failed in one of man's primary roles as the "doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender" (Ruskin 59). In his 1864 lecture "Of Queen's Gardens," John Ruskin argues that a man's role is to "encounter all peril and trial […] often he must be wounded or subdued […] but he guards the woman from all this" (59). Rather than guarding Eyre from his weakness, he exposes a nature that appears less formidable than the "patient" (Newman 189) masculine ideal.

<14> Rochester resists the Victorian masculine ideal in other ways, as well. In his book *The Idea of a University* (1852) John Henry Newman posits that the definitive man is "patient" and "seldom prominent in conversation." He "never speak[s] of himself except when compelled" and moreover, he should have "no ears for slander or gossip" and be "too well-employed to remember injuries" (Newman 189-90). In addition to the numerous dialogues between Rochester and Eyre in which he cuts a dominating figure, a famous scene in *Jane Eyre* positions Rochester as a Sybil who engages the ladies of the house, particularly Eyre, in gossipy and even slanderous

discourse, as he tries to ascertain their true feelings concerning him. He speaks of himself excessively during these interviews and even reveals his identity to Eyre when he describes himself as a man who raves "in a kind of exquisite delirium" (Brontë 203). Furthermore, as he uncloaks himself he beseeches Eyre for aide: "the string [of my red cloak] is a knot – help me" (204). Eyre admits that she guessed all along that the Sybil was really her master when she observes that "you did not act the character of a gypsy with me." Rochester presses her: "What character did I act? My own?" As the Sybil, he does not seem to Eyre like her master but rather "some unaccountable" character (204). The unaccountable nature of Rochester as the Sybil highlights his frangible position not only as a Victorian "man" but as a gentleman, as James Eli Adams posits that "the true gentleman […] is distinguished by his lack of self-consciousness" (Adams 42). Because the "true" Victorian gentleman was increasingly defined by the "new moral agency" to distinguish "between sincerity and performance" (53), behavior free of pretense marked this type of man. The gentleman appeared as "a work of art" (152) that accentuated "the properly ordered male body functions as a ground of authority" (153). Yet, immediately after Rochester throws off his drag costume as Sybil and learns that Dick Mason has come to Thornfield for a visit, his bodily functions seize and even degenerate. He takes Eyre's wrist in "a convulsive grip" as "the smile on his lips froze" and evidences "a spasm" in which he "grows whiter than ashes." Rochester goes on to communicate "in the tone one might fancy a speaking automaton to enounce [sic] its single words." In this moment that reflects the first meeting between him and Eyre, Rochester "hardly seemed to know what he was doing," and requests the Eyre's support again; "'Jane, you offered me your shoulder once before; let me have it now'" (Brontë 205). Not only is Rochester associated with performativity and a penchant for gossip -- "'Sit down! – Let me hear what they said about me'" (205) – but his body is portrayed in various colors of deterioration throughout the novel, suggesting that despite his "firm and stern" (206) demeanor he is a far cry from the Victorian ideal of both masculinity and gentlemanliness.

<15> Rochester's vulnerability, like Eyre's, calls into question his position as a representation of the forward momentum that was so important in much Victorian discourse. Nevertheless, despite the wayward characteristics of its protagonists – or maybe because of them – *Jane Eyre* is a progressive novel and more than merely partially revolutionary. Rochester and Eyre are "impassioned" (349) to a degree that catalyzes major change in the novel, however in order to actualize their transgressive desires they must surrender their consciousnesses to another – and other – and lose their sense of self, as a zombie would. Only as zombies, then, can such desire gain license. Rochester and Eyre emerge at the other end of their deathly experience less refractory than they began, yet moderate enough to symbolize the position of the Empire in the face of conquest. Propelled forward but no longer running ahead aimlessly, aware of their gendered and racial singularities but no longer held back by them, the zombification process of both Eyre and Rochester signify that the reanimated body was a crucial symbol of progress: at least, for the citizens of the British Empire.(16)

<16> What is most progressive about *Jane Eyre* is that despite violent tugs in opposing directions, the protagonists of Brontë's novel maintain wholeness due to their zombic double-consciousness. Victorians were enamored with this possibility, especially amidst the Empire's colonialist itinerary. To apply Du Bois's theory of double consciousness – which is clearly intended to express the unique position of Black Americans in the early twentieth century – to

the predominantly white, male, and English experience of conquest which in many ways catalyzed the very problem that Du Bois stresses, has its obvious limitations. Nevertheless, this very point is a primary reason why Du Bois's theory is so relevant. A social fear of difference – racial, gendered, cultural, etc. – is the foundation of Du Bois's theory of double consciousness. Such fears certainly fueled – and were fueled by – the Empire's designs. Nineteenth-century texts with the gothic stamp such as *Jane Eyre* have been most open to an exploration of the social fears of difference through interrogating of the boundaries of consciousness.(17) In particular, the gothic genre evidences a fascination with zombic consciousnesses, as it positions the dead body (and its afterlife) as the fulcrum of fear. Just as the "Negro problem" that Du Bois defines is ostensibly solved by asserting unity even in the face of the most disorienting forces, the goal of the Victorian zombie is to remain whole despite the mind's or body's sudden loss of sovereignty. What Du Bois's subject must overcome is racial prejudice, which is not a too-far cry from the hurdles that many protagonists in Victorian texts must confront. Fears concerning racial difference were often posed in the discourse of gender debates in which certain racial characteristics would be feminized or masculinized, and hence labeled inappropriate or unnatural. In some ways, debates about race were also about gender, and vice versa.(18) A conversation about race and gender cannot be conducted in isolation, which is a point that Black feminist scholars such as bell hooks and Paula Giddings have argued. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's assertion that today race is frequently the language used to speak for hierarchies of difference such as gender, translates also to Victorian discourse – most notably, during the nineteenth century, in texts which utilize the zombie motif.

Endnotes

(1)*The Victorian City* (1973), edited by Jim Dyos and Michael Wolff, includes a number of essays that focus on various industrial developments in the Victorian period and how they affected culture.(^)

(2)Several texts in which consequential bodies appear sick, disabled, or deformed include Dinah Craik's *Olive* (1850), Charlotte Younge's *The Heir of Redcylffe* (1854), and *The Pillars of the House* (1873), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Charles Dickens's "Doctor Marigold" (1865), Marion Evans's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878), and Marie Corelli's *Ardath* (1889).(^)

(3)Southey describes the zombi as a kind of god in Brazilian culture in which the chief of Palmares Negros is called "Zombi:" "the name for the Diety" (Southey 24).(^)

(4)Reanimated corpses, although they were not called "zombies," appear in non-fiction, historical literature as far back is the 12 century. See William of Newburgh's *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (12th century), Geoffrey of Burton's *Life and Miracles of Virgin Saint Modwenn* (12th century), *Eyrbyggia Saga*(13th century, anonymous), Sir Maxwell Herbert's *Chronicle of Lanercost* (13th century), Richard Baxter's *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*(1691), Richard Burton's *Kingdom of Darkness* (1688), Henry More's *Antidote Against Atheism* (1658), Joseph Pitton's *A Voyage into the Levant* (1718), and Dom Calmet's *Treatise on Vampires and Revenants* (1746).(^)

(5)In her book *Tell my Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938), Nora Zeale Hurston describes that zombies, according to Vodou practice, are "bodies without souls […] called back to life again" (Hurston 179) through the use of "the drop of liquid that will make him a zombie" (189). Hurston claims that zombies are used primarily for labor (182-183).(^)

(6)Kim Paffenroth explains in her book *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth* (2006) that George Romero birthed a cinematic zombie that has numerous characteristics. These zombies are corpses that have been reanimated from "mysterious radiation" or a disease or virus. They are autonomous beings, "not under the control of someone else" (Paffenroth 3). They are "killing machines" (3) rather than laborers. Zombies increase their numbers, eat the living, and are generally slow-moving.(^)

(7)For example, when the unnamed narrator of Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) doubles herself into the sacred spiritual realm, her consciousness is heightened. Doubling allows her to actualize her situation. When Kate Ede doubles herself as Serpolette in George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), she achieves (like Hyde from Stevenson's tale) a stronger, more violent consciousness: one that is hardly submissive or apathetic.(^)

(8)According to Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), part of the Negro slave consciousness is his need to become like his Master.(^)

(9)Critics who have recently examined the zombie trope, such as Kyle William Bishop, Jacque Lynn Fotlyn, and Edna Aizenberg, tend to focus on twentieth-century literature.(^)

(10)*Daniel Deronda* exemplifies the period's emphasis on sentient experience, as the protagonists' actions revolve almost entirely upon the word "consciousness." See my article "A Harleth's Progress: Toward a Definition of Victorian Consciousness" (*More than Thought* 2010) for an in-depth discussion of Evans's use of consciousness.(^)

(11)There a large number of texts that may have inspired the Victorian trend of using zombies. However, the three which seem most relevant are *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (7BC), Lazarus' resurrection in the New Testament (2 AD) – and Robert Browning's analysis of it in "An Epistle" (1855) – and Phlegon of Tralles's tale of Philinnon (2 AD) – particularly Goethe's reworking of this tale as "The Bride of Corinth" (1797).(^)

(12)In many ways, Queen Victoria's England was steeped in the discourse of zombification: in the position of both Vodou master and puppet. In its earliest Western incarnation, the "zombi" referred to the Vodouism which English imperialists apprehended during Europe's conquest of the Republic of Haiti in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. According to Ina Johanna Fandrich, Vodou – which exists in three distinct locations, including Benin, West Africa on the Caribbean island of Haiti, and Southern Louisiana – is "one of the oldest religions on the planet," which "emerged under the trauma of slavery as an assertion of resistance;" it is a "religion 'from below'" (Fandrich 10). As a result of oppression, the Vodou zombie – which is "silent, enslaved, and unable to connect with the dominant culture through any luminal space of discourse" (Bishop 141) – is a clear articulation of what Gyatri Spivak has termed "the subaltern," according to Bishop. Like women who "cannot be heard or read" (Spivak 104) zombies are victims of epistemic violence due to their lowly position in the hierarchical structure of power. A zombie "sits on the cusp of death, and beliefs that mediate the phenomenon are rooted in the very heart of the peasant's being" (Davis 57-8). While zombification is not a defining characteristic of Vodou, it is the orientation which burrowed itself most deeply in the Western imagination – particularly during the Victorian period – and continues to do so today. The motivation behind such overstatement arises from many sources. However, the lasting impression of the Haitian zombie materialized predominantly from its ability to couch the echoes of conquest and to symbolize the Empire's position following the abolition of slavery. Haiti, and especially its zombies, represented a suppression of identity during the nineteenth century, unveiling a pernicious portrait of the type of subjects that Victorians, in particular, both feared and desired. A certain degree of zombification was necessary to fulfill England's colonial vision: to become increasingly "civilized" as compared to other countries. For example, British government demanded docile and epigonic citizens who unquestionably complied with the national dogma. On the other hand, such zombification held dire consequences which threatened to undermine the superiority of such a government, as "Vodou was commonly represented as the ultimate antithesis of 'civilization'" (Dubois 92) due to its affinity with the subaltern other.(^)

(13)See Joshua Essaka's "'Almost my Hope of Heaven:" Idolatry and Messianic Symbolism in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*" (*Philology Quarterly* 81.1) and Alison Searle's "An Idolatrous Imagination? Biblical Theology and Romanticism in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*" (*Christianity and Literature* 56.1).(^)

(14)In her essay "A Stranger Within the Gates: Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Irishness" (*Victorian Studies* 44.3), Sara Maurer explains that St. John "is transformed in India into the promise of the second coming," suggesting a "colonial reconfiguration of faith" (Maurer 532) which bolsters British colonization.(^)

(15)A similar idiosyncratic depiction of a heroic man being thrown from his horse before a woman occurs in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) when a Knight comes to seize Alice as his prisoner, causing her anxiety and fright from the fall rather than the mission to capture her.(^)

(16)In Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, for example, the reanimated body of the Egyptian and androgynous "Beetle" does not meet the same criteria as Eyre and Rochester due to its non-British roots. The same can be said of Bram Stoker's Dracula.(**^**)

(17)As Marshall Brown argues in his book *The Gothic Text* (2005), traits of the Gothic genre are defined most succinctly by examining Kant's treatment of a consciousness as inarticulate (and unarticulated). In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant locates at least two kinds of consciousness of the self, named "empirical self-consciousness" and "transcendental apperception," that have various levels of intricacy. The predominant characteristic of both forms of consciousness, and the one that Brown relates to the Gothic most, is that these two forms of consciousness are fully realized when "nothing manifold is given" (*Critique* 135). As Phillip Neujahr has convincingly argued, Kant's forms of consciousness lack compatibility across his works. Nevertheless, for Brown this manifold nature and the abstraction in representations of Kant's consciousness is a defining characteristic of Gothic tales.(**^**)

(18)The intersectionalities between race, gender, and nationality have been a topic of discussion for many postcolonial theorists, such as Anne McClintock in her book *Imperial Leather* (1995). (**^**)

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