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New Vampire Lectures

Zombie Wars

Following the success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Gertrude Stein suffered a bout of writer’s block. Over and again, she recorded that “It has not happened,” until she was visited instead by W.B. Seabrook.¹ We don’t know what exactly they talked about for three days. Seabrook was also only recently a famous author. His 1929 *The Magic Island*, about the occult practices he encountered on Haiti, introduced the zombie to American popular culture. *White Zombie* (1932), which was in part an adaptation of his book, had just joined the new Hollywood franchise of occult horror in talking pictures. Bela Lugosi, already famous for his leading role in Browning’s *Dracula* (1930), played the zombie master, whose given name was Murder. Stein knew that she would be going back soon to tour in the train of the success of her novel and would surely have been curious about America today.

Both Stein and Seabrook were known for the frank intensity of what they were willing to talk about. The topics in Seabrook’s repertoire of great interest to Stein as well counted sadistic sex practices (binding and hanging) and cannibalism. But the author of *The Magic Island* was also hurting from his earlier success, scrambling to hitch his subsequent efforts to his 1929 star. After

the exchange, Seabrook went directly to the States, entered a psychiatric hospital for treatment of his acute alcoholism, and documented the sojourn in his ethnographic journalism style a year later in *Asylum* (1935), which enjoyed the self-fulfilling success of the celebrity memoir. Following Seabrook’s departure, Stein wrote her one and only murder mystery, *Blood on the Dining-Room Floor*, which, though she never saw it through to publication, was the “block-buster” that allowed her to compose a series of celebrity-memoir novels in which she rewrote history as the killing off of undead centuries.

Stein reckons in *Wars I Have Seen* that it took Napoleon to kill off the eighteenth century he epitomized. Then came the Big One, the nineteenth century, kept going by the theory of evolution it spread across the globe: “The nineteenth century is taking from 1914 to 1943 to kill” (9). Evolution can also mean that it takes but one advance in machine technology to redraw the map of adaptation, ultimately to war.

Although Hitler was the quintessential avatar of the nineteenth century who destroyed it and himself in the setting of Europe, Stein also argued that the Civil War already ended the nineteenth century in the US, which was why for quite some time to come it was the oldest nation of the twentieth century: “The American civil war was the prototype of all the wars the two big wars that I have completely lived” (4). Stein’s contrast between the World War One doughboys hanging out bashfully or dully post-victory in Europe and the self-possessed GIs at the end of World War Two, who owned their every setting in which they were conversant, suggests that the vault into the new century left the denizens of its new world behind to catch up with the overturning of the old century, which happened when it replayed in Europe. When a European author delivered the first bona fide science fiction of rocket flight in 1865 (Jules Verne’s *From the Earth to the Moon*), he was on target in ascribing its

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3 What also animates the GIs for Stein is that they know who she is. It is by the light of the fame of her unblocked writing that Stein reads the zombie wars carrying out the old and ushering in the new.
invention to the Baltimore Gun Club, which applied the technobenefits picked up in the testing grounds of the Civil War. At the opening of Gone with the Wind (1939), as parchment pages of medievalist fantasy turn, we are introduced to an era long gone, in which representatives of European tradition still held court down South. With the borders opposed during the Civil War, modern spiritualism, which was the afterlife adapted to science fiction, went directly from the Northern States to Europe. Once the last ties to Europe in the New World were liquidated with the Confederacy, the import of globalization reached the South, too, which yielded its occult stores to science fiction.

In the Professor Challenger novels by Arthur Conan Doyle, the protagonist, more a detective than an adventurer, passes tests posed by fantasy and science fiction before meeting his greatest challenge of all, belief in spiritualism. In The Lost World (1912), the professor visits a surviving pocket of prehistoric nature and wildlife. In The Poison Belt (1913), he is one in a locked-room circle of witnesses to the world’s engulfment by a poison cloud. In The Land of Mist (1926), the figments of fantasy and science fiction give way before the contemporary phenomenon of spiri-

5 In Mille Plateaux, Deleuze and Guattari drew out of a couple of Professor Challenger science-fiction short stories an assembly line for their body without organs. In “When the World Screamed” (1928), the professor exacts from the earth a Schreberesque bellowing miracle by skinning one part of the Earth like an animal and piercing its nerve. The professor, who wants to be the first and only human the earth recognizes, journeys, in effect, to the animist view of the world as a single organic being. In “The Disintegration Machine” (1929), another scientist has tapped a secret power he can aim through a machine. He can disintegrate organic beings and then, by putting the machine in reverse, reassemble them. That a destroyed being returns as the same, in spite of the molecular flow released in the breakdown, prompts the inventor to analogize the power he wields with teleportation in Western occultism. Professor Challenger is a bystander whose acceptance in the end does not enroll him in the company of the committed. But then he checks out the machine and makes the inventor disappear forever.
tualism. Professor Challenger is its most celebrated antagonist, but his resistance to reports and demonstrations of ghost-seeing gives them the traction of testable hypothesis and his acceptance follows suit. Here we see the work of detection characteristic of Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes mysteries already at work in the receiving and conceiving area of modern spiritualism. In French letters, too, for example the novels by Gaston Leroux and Maurice Renard, we observe the affinity between the new detection plot and modern spiritualism.6

In *Ubik* (1969), P.K. Dick projected a techno-realization and refinement of the historical artifact of modern spiritualism. Unlike the philosophical “spiritualism” that Kant, Schopenhauer, and Freud rejected, the cult of modern spiritualism, even if certain adherents sought to reconcile it with Christianity, was constitutively a secular-mediatic enterprise that kept to a span of extended finitude, lodged between the recent past and the near future. The admittedly fantastic summoning of spirit guides from all the eras and places in history wasn’t really a contradiction. It testified to the renewal of the planetary scope of animism, which regional civilizations had consigned to the border as superstition.

Ghost-seeing has undergone many updates, but what draws it onward since the Enlightenment is that it hypothetically explores what counts in the main as unseen communication that never really materializes as proof. Creaturely occult relations pose a different challenge. When the epidemic outbreak of vampirism occurred in eighteenth-century Central Europe, all the stations of recording and transmission available under the newly secular aegis of the Enlightenment turned this iteration of a recurring prospect of too much life in death into a primal scene. Over the ages, in settings of rapid burial in sites already used and now reused, like during cholera epidemics, those who witnessed the metabolic changes in a corpse early on in the course of decomposition – including the freeze-frame of somebody struggling against the frequent mistake of burial alive – could not rely on

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religion or science for an explanation. They turned instead to superstition, the warping reverb of repressed animism.

At the so-called vampire courts set up during the eighteenth-century outbreak of undeath, corpses were examined for evidence of the charges brought against the recently deceased. If the skin seemed too ruddy, too fresh, the body too bloated like after a feeding, or the hair and nails still growing, the dead body was sentenced to death. These court proceedings were recorded and their gist thus circulated in news reports. In no time, the documented event of the epidemic entered the scholarly apparatus in Germany and France, resulting in a number of dissertations and treatises. The corpses to be tried and examined for undeath, however, were in short supply and could not support the fascination with something as close to home as mourning the dead. In other words, unlike the prayerful contact with the departed in ghost-seeing, vampirism could not continue as a hypothetical construct. The relationship to vampirism became, instead, psychic, at first by entering literature. It started with a couple of German poems in which the beloved returns from the grave to consummate the relationship in undeath. They made such an impression throughout the language cultures into which they were quickly translated, that as late as in *Jane Eyre* (1847), the surprise co-tenant is taken to be the “German vampire.”

7 These special effects would in time be known to belong to the natural process in the early phase of decomposition. The skin tightens, dries out, sloughs off leaving “fresh” skin and showing the apparent growth of hair and nails. The build-up of gas and its displacements plumped up bodies, even making a corpse jolt upright like Nosferatu rising up from his coffin. The freeze frame of the struggles of those buried alive presented the most memorable portrait of the vampire. In *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988) and *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), I argued that the Enlightenment replacement of the skeletal representation of death by a more natural, even beautiful figuration borrowed from Antiquity (the twin brother of sleep) was just waiting for its co-optation within the new secular scenario of an uncanny doubling between sleep and waking up buried alive.
English authors were able to turn the relationship to the vampire into narrative. There is one early German vampire story, E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “Der Vampir” (1821), which is a docu-fictionalization of an episode that refers to (and looks like it’s on the record of) the vampirism epidemic. That it concludes, however, with a full body shot of cannibalism, rather than the more discrete drips and pricks of blood lust, reflects the pull of the German inclination to make book out of doubling. The double was the sole occult figure to transfer intact into the environs of the science-fiction genre, which explains the German head-start so spectacularly illustrated in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*. The psychic and the hypothetical trajectories conjoin in the double. Its material immateriality is as close or far away as are mirror and media. In treatises on ghost-seeing, seeing double becomes a form of communication with the yet living that comes as close to contact with the dead as their authors can allow. And yet it is the un-provability of ghostly communication with the departed that draws all psychic research onward.

In “The Confidences of a ‘Psychical Researcher’,” William James, philosophy’s representative in the experimental setting of spiritualism, applied a self-help exercise to organize his own undecided stance with regard to occult phenomena that are “inwardly as incoherent as they are outwardly wayward and fitful,” like the “stray vestiges of that primordial irrationality, from which all our rationalities have been evolved”:

Try, reader, yourself, to invent an unprecedented kind of “physical phenomenon of spiritualism.” When *I* try, I find myself mentally turning over the regular medium-stock, and thinking how I might improve some item. This being the dramatically probable human way, I think differently of the whole type, taken collectively, from the way in which I may think of the single instance. I find myself believing that there is “something in” these never ending reports of physical phenomena, although I haven’t yet the least positive notion of

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the something. It becomes to my mind simply a very worthy problem for investigation.9

In *Telepathy and Medical Psychology*, Jan Ehrenwald, an author P.K. Dick read closely, reflects on the paradox that during the Cold War era of modern spiritualism the new discipline of parapsychology adopted the statistical method not to document the reliability of experimental results, but to demonstrate the very existence of extra-sensory perception.10 It was the only reliable standard for determining the extra-chance nature of the scores. In countless experiments, in which images were transferred by thought alone, the percipient being tested rarely reproduced the whole of the testing agent’s mental content but tended to score “near misses” scattered around the target idea (69). While a “near miss” is “certainly less convincing than a fully correct guess,” it proves of “even greater psychological interest” (29). It is what the agent does not think of transmitting which is most successfully transmitted to the test subject (31). And there is a tendency for the percipient’s guess to slip from the essential to the accidental (ibid.). There is nothing to prevent thoughts, ideas, or expectations that are not immediately concerned with the proposed test from entering the subject’s mind. That’s what telepathy is all about: “telepathic leakage” (32).

The spatio-temporal dislocation in the telepathic reception of thought processes in another person’s mind – reflecting them either after the event of presumed contact or ahead of time – can give the transmission a semblance of prophecy (197). Only by setting a period of time in the course of an experiment could the operation of hetero-psychic experiences be tracked. Otherwise, Ehrenwald concludes, “there would be no limit set to the range of telepathic scatter” (139). The science fiction of a psychophysical grid, according to Williamson according to Günther, completes the technologization of the opposition which Ehrenwald’s telepathic scatter begins to breach.

9 Ibid., 1261. Emphasis in the original.
10 Jan Ehrenwald, *Telepathy and Medical Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1948), 34. Further page references are given in the text.
In *The American Apocalypse*, Günther argues that the thought of the regional civilizations opened and entered the exceptional series of causality to secure the highest degree of probability. The eventuality of the next step was thus practically certain. To this end, so-called degrees of freedom had to be kept out. Günther ascribes “the serial theory of magic” to the animism of primitive culture. It groups together events under one specific perspective, which is all that they have in common, yielding a “virtual significance.” Logically, the components are causally independent of one another. The shorter the magic series, the more degrees of freedom are involved. One omen doesn’t mean much; two omens are way more meaningful; but too many omens no longer give the forecast since it is already happening (128). The exclusivity of causality conceals that cause reflects only one tendency in universal processes, one world-series. In addition to the general progression from improbable to more probable world conditions, there is also the “individualizing progression from probable chaos to improbable Gestalt and order” (159). Günther puts it evocatively: Freedom is the “third” between true and false (130). “Series with a random measure of degrees of freedom are theoretically as controllable and calculable as simple causality series” (153).

Ehrenwald’s study proposes a telepathy connection fomenting the outbreak of schizophrenia in adolescence, which fits Dick’s construction in *The Martian Time-Slip* (1964) of the rapport between Jack Bohlen, the recovering adult schizophrenic, and the autistic-schizophrenic teen Martin, who wields paranormal powers. Adolescence, according to Ehrenwald, is the season for the onset of the psychotic illness, because it is the period when, for the sake of group bonding and couplification, the teen is challenged to renounce the isolation enjoyed in latency, the independence won toward the end of childhood proper from merger with the minds of the parents (193). Paranoia and megalomania are last stands of coherence before the full disintegration into schizophrenia sets in. It marks the end of the subject’s struggle to

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maintain their personality against the impact of sadistic aggression conveyed through the hetero-psychic crossover of thoughts and wishes (147).

Dick’s half-life system in *Ubik* is violated, when a teen delinquent among the ghosts starts consuming, depleting, and liquidating all ghostly others. But the life suck brings up the arrears in testing, and carries out the sentencing of finitude in the afterlife: the second death, which is murder. Modern spiritualism turned absence of proof into a promo for testing, which by testing for it confers more and more hypothetical reality. That’s its science-fiction aspect. But spiritualism also faces toward horror fantasy. The planetary animism that spiritualism updates to allow for the hypothetical reality of ghostly correspondents via media gets subsumed, according to Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, by the psychic reality of the living dead moving against us.

The Psychopathy Test

One turning point in my longstanding reception of horror between occult and technical media, which my 2016 book *The Psycho Records* documents,\(^\text{12}\) was my 2009 invitation by *Artforum International* to interpret the updating of vampirism. A new integration of the vampire seemed to be offering a stay against the thrill-a-kill consumerism of the unidentified dying zombie that had been in the ascendancy since 9/11.

I concluded, however, that what was left lurking in the divide between undeath and living death was the psycho, our most uncanny double at close quarters: there, but for the grace of the good object, go I. Since psycho violence, which was carried forward, but without agency as zombieism, upon the termination phase of slasher film therapy, could be renewed intact in the Saw franchise through a compact with the Devil, I also concluded that what we were watching in mourning’s light was more a shake-up than a succession. Psycho murder, infernal instruction, zombie killing, and vampiric replication are split-off phases of the mourning process awaiting integration.

\(^{12}\) See Record One of *The Psycho Records*. 
A close look at the argument of Freud’s essay “Mourning and Melancholia” shows over and again how elimination loops through preservation. The mourner tests for the reality of the loved one’s absence in every port of recall. Rerecording erases, but reality testing’s eviction notice extends the afterlife of the departed. In the android test for the human ability to mourn, which P.K. Dick introduced in his 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the parameters of the text — I mean test — are empathy and psychopathy. These positive and negative outcomes of Dick’s version of reality testing also served in the novel that he published the year before, *The Zap Gun*, as reversible manipulations going into the invention of ultimate weapons.

In his contribution to philosophical ethics, Schopenhauer argued that empathic identification, which can only gain traction in response to the other’s suffering, must somehow get past the complete difference between the self and every other on which basic egoism rests.13 The will can be moved by the well-being or being-in-pain of self or others, to which, therefore, the motive for every action must relate. The address of every action is anyone who can benefit from the experience: the one who acts, the recipient, or even a passive bystander.

What counts high on the scale of morals is compassion — *Mitleid* in German, literally “suffering with,” which is real and not dreamed up. Happiness is nice, but who cares? To sympathize with the other directly, the requisite is the other’s suffering, because *Mitleid* cannot be extended to the other’s well-being. We might care if the happiness followed a sorry state. At the same time, we never confuse ourselves with the object of our empathic identification. We feel the other’s pain, but it is his or her pain, not our own. Schopenhauer gives us the grid that Dick turns into a game in which the standoff between empathy and psychopathy is manipulated unto the player’s self derangement.

According to the 1974 interview with Arthur Cover, Dick set his compass to the alternate realities of science fiction by turning

up the contrast with fantasy, the genre in which he first tested his
decision to write. Dick explained: “In fantasy, you never go back
to believing there are trolls, unicorns [...] and so on. But in sci-
ence fiction, you read it, and it’s not true now but there are things
which are not true now which are going to be someday. [...] It’s
like all science fiction occurs in alternate future universes.”14 Five
years later, Dick took up the contrast again in his afterword to Dr
Adder, the first novel by K.W. Jeter, at the time one of his So-Cal
acolytes. Writing about Jeter’s novel, which was completed in
1972 but not published until 1984, Dick defended bona fide
science fiction against the fantasy hybrid: “Endless novels about
sword fights and figures in cloaks who perform magic – in other
words clones of the Hobbit books – have been cranked out, pub-
ished, sold, and the field of science fiction has been transmuted
into a joke field.”15 And then, making the pitch for Dr Adder:
 “[A]ren’t you tired of reading about magic and wizards and
little people with turned-up fuzzy feet?”16 What had intervened
between the interview with Arthur Cover and the afterword was
Star Wars. Just the same Dr Jeter like Dick’s The Zap Gun mixes
with fantasy to stage a postmodern heroic saga. The Zap Gun,
which counts as a James Bond spoof, cites from the German
Wagnerian and Anglo-American traditions of superheroism.17

The Cold War opposition between Wes-Dem and Peep-
East is a front for what’s really a division of labor in one media
operation. The protagonist, Lars Powdery, works for Wes-Dem’s
weapons fashions design industry, which stretches “subsurface

14 Philip K. Dick, The Last Interview and Other Conversations, ed. David
15 K.W. Jeter, Dr Adder (London: Grafton Books, 1987), 248. For a more
complete account of the figuration of psychopathy and its integration
in Jeter’s complex novel, see my Germany: A Science Fiction (Fort
16 Jeter, Dr Adder, 249.
17 In I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 2010), 30ff, I read the novel through the protago-
nist’s desire to be with the dead. This time my emphasis shifts to
address its conclusion, which tests for the psychopathy in successful
mourning.
from San Francisco to Los Angeles.” The weapons are props in demo films that simulate their efficacy in staged tactical operations against localized threats, like criminality in one’s own society. Many designs are then turned into toys or adult gizmos, for example Ol’Orville, a talking head that answers questions, like a party game or an oracle.

The gadget Ol’Orville, which consists of all the parts that were to go into the original weapon that Lars once designed, gives therapeutic forecast and counsel. First, it diagnoses Lars’s castration anxiety, namely, his dread that after going under in a mediumistic trance he could bring nothing back. The prospect of being, even in fantasy, waffenlos (without weapons) like Parsifal, says Ol’Orville, brings to a crisis point the lack of real weapons in his line of work. Lars’s partner, Maren Faine, hovers over this exchange punctuating the counsel with jabs of her own that bring the castration home.

Alternating between the lingo of Wagnerian heroism and the plain text of successful mourning, Ol’Orville steers Lars clear of suicide and picks up what the Cold War opposition holds in store for Lars: the way out of his impasse by substituting for ol’Maren Lilo Topchev, the Peep-East main medium. Although Lars has only glimpsed his rival in blurred surveillance photos, she in fact already occupies the foreground of his wish fantasying (something Maren, a telepath, picks up).

Lilo and Lars are brought together by an actual threat from outer space. Rockets from Sirius are targeting whole territories and beaming their populations into slavery. Together Lilo and Lars work to project a real weapon to be used in Earth’s defense. But their trance states prove capable of communicating and picking up only fantasy constructs. It turns out that the weapon designs that Lars and Lilo were fashioning all these years on their different shores of the faux Cold War opposition originated in the same fantasy space to which a certain Oral Giacomini, the author and artist of the ongoing adventures of “The Blue Cephalopod Man from Titan,” had equal access. Their weapons were featured at the same time on the pages of the comic-book

superhero series, whose creator, an ex-inventor, would be but for electroshocks and thalamic-suppressors in complete autistic schizophrenic withdrawal. Telepathically, without knowing it, the designers were party to a superhero space fantasy comprised of “worthless, grandiose, schizophrenic delusions of world-power” (135).

The saving device that is delivered after all proves to be a toy prototype that one of Lars’s colleagues at the design plant, Vincent Klug, considered a teaching tool. By telepathy-enriched identification with the little critter in the maze, a child playing the game of torment and escape would understand the significance of empathy. Klug’s toy, however, was never produced. When Klug returns from a roundtrip to the future that he took to get his invention noticed, he’s an ancient veteran from a world that survived the outer space attack. He finally attracts attention, but he can’t by dint of an abstruse fiat of time travel impart anything from the future. All he can do is point to something already in the present environment. Only by guessing games can Klug show Lars the way to the toy prototype existing now, which contains the kernel of the future weapon.

Upon abandoning a project with androids that were “really human-like,” Klug developed the game of critter identification within the labyrinth of animal testing. “The psychiatric theory is that this toy teaches the child to care about other living organisms. [...] He wants to help the creature, and that stud on the right permits him to do so” (168). Lars points out, however, that there is the stud on the left, too. Although the game can’t foster sadistic tendencies, because the telepathic empathy circuit makes the player the victim who must win against all odds, “to keep the game going, you stop pressing the decrease stud and activate the increase, and the maze-circuitry responds by stepping up the difficulty which the trapped creature faces” (ibid.). By increasing the output of the telepathic empathy circuit and altering the controls so that both studs augment the difficulty the maze victim undergoes, the modified toy cannot but induce “a rapid, thorough mental disintegration” in “any life form that was intelligent enough to receive the emanations” (169).

The happy outcome of Lars and Lilo’s search for the best defense against the invaders from outer space is followed by
Lars’s second consultation of Ol’Orville, this time in the setting of substitution. The success of substitution and mourning would appear to have wrecked Lars. Because Lilo and Lars were coupled while working on a functioning weapon, Maren, the odd woman out, killed herself on or off purpose. It looked like she was gunning for Lilo or for Lars, but then blew herself up by accident. It is up to Ol’Orville to remind Lars that already prior to her exitus he had substituted Lilo for his ex. The close quarters of empathy and psychopathy, in which the game that is a lethal weapon is played, match the tight spot in which Lars, to keep his game going, must apply psychopathy to secure the prospect of living on in substitution.

Lars wants to harness time travel to remembrance: “I just don’t understand where the past goes when it goes. […] Where is she? Where’s she gone?” (173). He would come right back to Lilo following the visit with Maren in alternate reality. It is an itinerary within the mediatic mortuary circuit often booked in Dick’s novels. This sci-fi death cult is the mediatic application of the ambivalence toward the dead staggered through a letting go that keeps the ghost going, which Freud elaborated in *Mourning and Melancholia*. When Lilo responds that if he goes, he should stay gone she pronounces the paralyzing injunction that Freud attributed to the onset of mourning. The survivor must choose either to let the dead go or to join them.

Lilo heads Lars off at the impasse of his underlying funereal fantasy of waiting around until time travel becomes available in forty years, so he can go back to visit her in the past. She considers Lars’s unmourning fixation – the question, where do the goners go – a hysterical symptom, a faux incorporation that must yield precedence to the substitute or go one-way like the goner. Lars at first resists the intervention, the death-wish scenario and its psychic quality, which he aptly identifies, thus coming closer, however, to the substitute’s truth: “That simple. That simple, anyhow, to the easy scene-fabrication faculty available within the psychopathically-glib human mind” (175). Although psychopathy is the logical counterpart to the empathy for which Dick ceaselessly tested, the term is almost never used in Dick’s fiction. This is the spectacular exception.
The oracle supports Lilo’s paradoxical intervention – her encouragement of his suicidality – and then prescribes that Lars go have sex with her. If this devaluation of melancholia in Dick’s oeuvre seems unique, it is so in tandem with the perspective of the substitute, which is brought to bear outside the melancholic atmosphere of suspicion of murder. The parameters of psychopathy and empathy working together in *The Zap Gun* describe the close quarters in which the mourner must follow out and surpass the death wish to secure the innovation of living on.

All You Vampires

The innovation of survival follows a new line on the geopolitical map. According to Günther in *The American Apocalypse*, it is the departure fundamental to science fiction and it draws us onward: “one lived in a world dimension that had no fixed proportions organizing a unitary, physiognomically familiar landscape, but rather one that by a natural process kept expanding westward and in which the dominant psychic category was the new.”\(^\text{19}\) While in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*, 1918), Oswald Spengler forecast that the final “Faustian” phase of regional civilization was phasing out without the prospect of succession, Günther counters that the future was already upon us of a new civilization that would be planetary, the launching pad for an intergalactic civilization that would no longer be earth-bound. While so-called primitive culture has always been a planetary phenomenon, the high cultures that hailed from the East were tied to specific geographically circumscribed areas, which they required, according to Spengler, as their *Mutterboden* or “mother earth.” The visions of outer space presuppose a universal planetary civilization – and condition or determine a new non-classical conception of reality.

The relay of frontiers leading up to the final Terran frontier, Günther agrees with Stein, was guaranteed by the outcome of the American Civil War. In the south, Günther writes, “the cultural tradition of European history was always incomparably

\(^{19}\) Günther, *Die amerikanische Apokalypse*, 108. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
stronger than in the north,” a connaisseurship of European cultural traditions without “any creative spark to carry it forward” (193). The belief that European history and culture were to be continued on the American continent was dominant prior to the Civil War. “The outcome of the civil war […] is one of the most powerful factors in the psychic isolation of the American individual and the atomization of the continent’s population” (194). Waiting around for outer space following the separation from Europe with no other end or purpose in sight can be lonely and empty. “Everyone looks around and sees only larvae and talking automata” (193).

The metaphysical hierarchy of landscapes no longer holds: every landscape has the same historical value (117). Once he too had followed out the westward trek to the final frontier up against the Pacific, Günther saw that the switch of the frontier to a vertical axis was already underway. The wide-open layout of neighborhoods in Southern California, which relied on and reflected the car as sole means of transport, comprised the address rehearsal for life on foreign planets (184–85).

In his Haitian memoir The Magic Island, W.B. Seabrook responds to his interlocutor’s occult etiology of zombieism: “[I]t is a fixed rule of reasoning in America that we will never accept the possibility of a thing’s being ‘supernatural’ so long as any natural explanation, even far-fetched, seems adequate.” 20 In his 1942 reflections on the occult, Witchcraft: Its Power in the World Today, Seabrook considers supernatural figures, such as the vampire or the werewolf, to be “hallucinated” within a three-way subjective reality, in which the creature, the victim, and the witness participate simultaneously.21 When his study extends to academic parapsychology, in particular research into clairvoyance and retrocognition, Seabrook, impatient with the plodding neutrality of the experiments underway in his day, switches to the possibilities of outer space:

If you were somewhere out there, and could see light carried there from here, bringing you visual images, what you would see in the light-waves would be our ancient stone age with its cave men, Pharaoh building the first pyramid, Caesar’s legions marching – depending on how many light-years distant you stopped off – all occurring as images in the present nick of time. (170)

And: “[I]f you could travel through space with a speed greater than light, you [...] could likewise go scooting into the future” (171). In sum, “telepathy and clairvoyance, including the reading of the future, would become as simple as television and the radio” (ibid.).

While Seabrook splits off such psy-fi prospects from vampiric undeath, his own introduction of the zombie entertained the reality-tested prospect of capitalization of PTSD victims as automated unremunerated labor. The TV extravaganza The Walking Dead that took off in 2010 triggered recognition in critics that the zombieism set in Atlanta disclosed its voodoo significance as slavery, the European history of the New World. But its twentieth-century significance was also already legible in the first episode. The outbreak of living death led to a reprisal of the hospital yard scene in Gone with the Wind. Identification with lost causes enlivens the south. But what rises again can be killed off again. The rise and the fall can be played out with zombies and with vampires. In Quentin Tarantino’s Django Unchained (2012), the antebellum South makes a good last resort for undead “European” aristocrats. That Tarantino selected for the role of his white hero an actor hailing from another shore of crimes against humanity fits a cinema of integration, in which time-traveling interventions skewering together traumatic histories go

22 See the section of Germany: A Science Fiction, “The Identification with Lost Causes,” in which the reversal with losses is developed in the setting of Freud’s study of those wrecked by success. The reading of this popular encryptment, which the placement of the Trojan War at Rome’s origin exemplifies, also inflects Stein’s insight that through the civil war the United States became the oldest country of the twentieth century.
to the future of wish fulfillment and, for the present, change the past.

In the sci-fi setting of alternate history, vampires can come out of hiding to rule over mankind. In one scenario, their control is history following the inadvertent invention of the first lenses of magnification, by-products of the official task assigned human mechanicians to design interesting playthings for their rulers. Vampires don’t need a break from primary narcissism, the break you get with machines, which separate the body from itself to avert the crisis in uncanniness that the zombie embodies. In Jim Jarmusch’s *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), the vampires judge inventiveness by standards of collectibility, and contain the uncanny by calling humans zombies. And because vampires inhabit a relay of museum exhibits secured against death or loss, as Freud argued was the European condition prior to World War One, they lack the innovation enzyme. Once undeath can be conceived of as a germ viewed under a microscope, either the undead die or the living contract undeath *en masse*, a.k.a. living death. Either way, what the undead are good for in a science fiction setting is the dress rehearsal for what Stein understood to be history: killing the century that has overstayed its welcome.

In American letters, beginning with A.E. van Vogt’s 1941 story “Asylum,” vampirism underwent a remake. Upon coming to the New World, vampirism traveled through outer space. In “Asylum,” earthlings have known space travel for about one hundred years. But humanity on Earth is one of several intergalactic races and the human vampires were created by an accidental sun blast one million years ago. The Galactic Observer, who alone has powers greater than the couple of vampires that suck blood

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23 I am recalling Brian Stableford’s “The Man Who Loved the Vampire Lady,” which I discuss in *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 108-10.

and life force, splits off the majority of his powers to assume the guise of a mild-mannered reporter. When he rises to the occasion of defending earth against the thoroughly modern or American high-IQ-boasting vampires it turns out that he holds a far higher score.

Thirteen years later, in Richard Matheson’s novel *I Am Legend*, the science-fictionalized vampires in van Vogt’s story could be readdressed as terrestrial masses of the living dead. These then are the opening tracks of vampirism in the New World: either European refugees lost in space or zombies. According to Matheson’s 1954 novel, the main text behind George Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), it was an epidemic spread of undeath that massified the object relations of vampirism unto zombie-like consumerism. When there’s just not enough blood to go around, retrograde mutation promotes fracking of what’s left of life. In *Daybreakers* (2009), the running out of blood reserves causes vampires to mutate, a process accelerated by self-feeding. The first mutants we encounter are leathery, winged creatures with long tails, demonic gargoyles from the edifice of Christianity (or the props department of fantasy). But after the German blood substitute fails and the crisis goes viral, the former vampires are the decaying living dead.

The paradoxical intervention in vampirism that spawned the living dead, first identified by Romero as zombies in the sequel *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), undergoes its reversal in the stronghold of the sole survivor in *I Am Legend*, where the recent past is recycled melancholically. Through the science fiction of an apocalyptic war’s transmission of infectious undeath, vampirism in fact replaces the bulk rate of humanity. The traditional vampire is at home, however, in sole survivorship.

The vampire served Freud in *Totem and Taboo* as model for the transformation that the deceased loved one undergoes through the projective realignment of mixed feelings during mourning’s opening season. But it is Freud’s turn to the taboo restrictions placed upon contact with the dead, all the dead, which corresponds to the first group portrait of the vampire. According to Matheson’s origin story, his undead masses supply the missing link between the occult creatures of the night and
the secular prospect of what is announced in Night of the Living Dead to be an “epidemic of mass murder.”

In I Am Legend, the protagonist Robert Neville pitches his last stand against his own destruction, but in the first place against the siren wailing of the undead babes in the front yard, which he puts on mute by turning up the volume on the orchestral music his mother taught him to appreciate. Secured against the taboo bust of happy-hour substitution, the basic needs and supplies in Robert’s household and psychic economy reserve places for absence. His fortress home is the columbarium of his recent past, conserved between the closet of cans (and cannots) and the canned music of his habitat.

Robert doesn’t want to be like his scientist father, who died denying the existence of the vampire. His recollection of the father’s denial is the first reference to “the vampire” in the novel.25 The vampire that Robert believes in is not that of “the B-film factories” (29). His belief is rather the precondition for fighting the vampire for real. He doesn’t let sleeping vampires lie, but tests them by driving the point home. Then a no longer human survivor discloses to Robert that she belongs to a new group of living vampires who have learned to regulate and defer the course of the infection by taking pills that combine blood with a drug preventing multiplication of the vampire germ. Robert recognizes that the metabolic regulation really means that a mutation has already taken place. At the end, Robert doesn’t recognize in the clean-up elimination of the non-mutated vampires by vigilantes of the new order his own testing of subjects. His identification instead is now with the vampires, who are as vulnerable as only the dead can be: “With a sense of inward shock he could not analyze in the rush of the moment, he realized that he felt more deeply toward the vampires than he did toward their executioners” (158). Before the mass prospect of living, dead, dead dead, and mutating revenants human mourning becomes the vampire.

The post-apocalyptic science-fiction setting in I Am Legend drives a split in undeath between one side that will come to be identified as zombieism and the side of survival that is allied to

Subsequent page references are given in the text.
mutation. Sometimes a human survivor identifies his dead in a 
zombie that is still trying to come home. This trace element is 
what mutates into the new object relation embodied by Bub in 
Romero’s *Day of the Dead* (1985). On a feeding schedule and 
plugged into the earphones of the maternal Sensurround of 
music, Bub contains his violent tendencies. He also recognizes 
his research lab mentor as his father, whose death at the end of 
the film he will mourn.

The corporeality of mutation, its dependency upon a constant 
milieu consisting of reproduction and death, is secondary to its 
acceleration in time, the sudden changes that bypass a cumula-
tive prehistory of evolutionary adjustment. Mutation, the fast 
track in the theory of evolution, sponsored among the earliest 
psy-fi conceits the prospect of any species, natural or artificial, 
fast-forwarding into survival of the fittest. Already in Samuel 
Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872), the ultimate fit was seen to be with 
technology, which reverses the prosthetic relationship and does 
the evolving for us. The first historical scheme that could address 
the impact of machine technology was, therefore, a byproduct of 
evolution. Time travel is the corollary in narrative form and the 
psychic pendant to this techno-history.

As fantasy, time travel spins the denial of irretrievable loss 
by rendering generational time trans-parent (like in the *Back to 
the Future* franchise, 1985–1990). I underscored in *Germany: A 
Science Fiction* that in P.K. Dick’s *The Simulacra* the technique 
of time transport forever falls short of changing traumatic his-
tory and provides, instead, training in the reality of loss. But not 
only fantasy is stowaway in time travel; evolutionary prehistory 
also hitches a ride. That the science fiction of travel in time can 
overtake and remake the evolutionary machine history that turns 
on mutation and breach its controlling interest in the future is 
conveyed by Robert Heinlein’s short story “All You Zombies...” 
(1959). The alternate realities and histories branching off from 
each stopover in double time inscribe time travel’s other legibility 
within its staging area – addressing both the expansion of the 
recording surface of finite remembrance and the innovation of 
survival.

In “All You Zombies...,” a time-travel device dated 1992 secures 
the future of the species by multiplying sole survival.. The
unnamed protagonist is an agent in a secret service that travels in time to reverse damages at their onset. However, the “Mistake of ’72,” which belongs to the near future that Matheson’s 1954 novel also inhabits, can’t be undone. It “either is, or it isn’t.” And “there won’t be another like it.” At the bar that the secret agent protagonist is tending in 1970, a customer tells his story, a shaggy dog that the 2014 film adaptation *Predestination* couldn’t leave lie. But boring, like Doubting Thomas’s finger, enters and exits a wound.

On a dare, then, the customer tells the bartender his history, which will be unlike any story he has ever heard. He is an intersex unwed mother, Jane, who was turned upon giving birth into a man. Next their daughter was snatched from the hospital. The storyteller assumes it was the baby’s father who betrayed Jane and then ruined her thoroughly. After awarding the prize to the storyteller, whose day job is authorship of romance fantasies under the name “the unwed mother,” the bartender offers an alternate ending to the sorry story. They can travel into the past to get back at the man who abandoned them. Their stopovers in the past, in 1945, 1963, and 1964, reenact Jane’s story. But in truth the bartender-protagonist is following out through alternate histories his own story.

By rewinding the historical or mythic past around him – he is father, mother, and child – he skips the Mistake of ’72 in the near future and delivers instead another version of himself as new recruit for time service in 1985. When he gives his report (in 1993), he counts forty recruitments in the course of this stint of his time service. “Then I glanced at the ring on my finger. The Snake That Eats Its Own Tail, Forever and Ever [...] I know where I came from – but where did all you zombies come from?” (46). In real time, he, like Robert Neville, is sole survivor of a plague of living death. Heinlein’s protagonist doesn’t cede the future of survival to mutation. But by the time paradox, or, as Count Dracula characterizes his advantage, the time that is on

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his side, he populates multiple alternate realities with matching versions of himself.

In *Predestination*, the protagonist’s loop, which fits Heinlein’s story, has an added significance. It is the prize agency of the temporal bureau, which aims to prevent crime before it takes place. What singles out the bartender-agent (who keeps recreating himself out of John and Jane) is that he is devoid of external ties to time and history. But his agency proves most successful when he becomes psychotic from obsessive unauthorized use of his time traveling device and ends up adding the Fizzle-Bomber to his loopy retinue of multiple personalities. Rather than the single traumatic event that in Heinlein’s story can only be time-trip circumvented through the multiplication of sole survival, there is the terrorist in *Predestination* who over a span of decades detonates bombs. It turns out that the bombings prevented worse or more crime. The perfect temporal agent projected himself into the utilitarian terrorist, giving supernatural assist to the temporal agency. Each act of terrorism can be accounted a lesser loss than what would have transpired if the Fizzle-Bomber hadn’t acted.

**Countdown**

“All You Zombies...” was a remake of Heinlein’s 1941 novella “By His Bootstraps,” a backstory of horror fantasy that Heinlein reduced to the 1959 title’s clue or MacGuffin. Together with the protagonist Bob Wilson (and his time-travel doubles), the reader of “By His Bootstraps” returns over and again to what began with one person (in a locked room) who was completing his thesis titled “An Investigation into Certain Mathematical Aspects of a Rigor of Metaphysics.”

We attend as Wilson types up reflections on time travel, its plausibility and impossibility: “Duration is an attribute of consciousness and not of the plenum. It has no *Ding an Sicht*” (40). This typo, which is internally shored up in the edition I read by its intact repetition (51), spells out the “in itself” of the *Ding* as a metaphysical “thing” about “seeing” or

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“viewing,” which does not hold for consciousness. An encysted sight or Sicht interrupts the assurance that nothing is unmediated by and unknowable to the duration of consciousness.

It is possible to assign the Ding an Sicht to a realm between literature and film, which the conceit of time travel occupies and cathects. Fredric Jameson identified the requirement of what he terms a “transcendental hyperspace” for the narrative rendering of time. It serves as the descriptive normality of space-time, which can be occupied like any other narrative scenery, as well as allowing the positing of this space-time as the real milieu of the reader. Jameson makes the camera pivotal to modernism’s invention of a hyperspace “from which to observe the observer,” which both film and time travel thematize.28

As byproduct of temporality’s fictionalization in terms of travel in a machine, which begs the update of cinema, the Ding an Sicht raises the philosophical question of the status of the special effect. H.G. Wells first inscribed in The Time Machine the proto-cinematic effect of the ununderstood:

Night followed day like the flapping of a black wing [...] I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky [...] as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight, the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space.29

For every temporal paradox that literature gestures toward, film can supply the approximation via visual and special effects, the specialized department of filmmaking that subsumes the medium when fantasy is in the ascendant.

In Heinlein’s story, what can’t be seen or recognized frames the mounting recognition of the double in the first stranger’s

appearance in the room. He says he entered through the circle over there, which looks to Wilson like “a great disk of nothing” (41). The stranger has “something familiar about the face” (ibid.), which is all that Wilson musters upon first contact with his double. The stranger urges Wilson to step through the disk, identified as “Time Gate,” whereupon a third man arrives to dissuade Wilson from following the lead of the first stranger. “The two looked a good bit alike, he thought, enough alike to be brothers. Or maybe he was seeing double” (43). I argued in Germany: A Science Fiction that time-travel fantasy can be seen, although it’s a struggle for Wilson, to be a subgenre of Doppelgänger fiction. The double, according to Freud and Günther, starts out a resounding confirmation that the self stands in interchangeable relation with its own content. If you meet your double, unique like the golem, you meet yourself. Forever. But then for Freud the double crosses the dividing line and becomes the harbinger of death. A multitude of doubles, however, fits a broader picture of humanity, which accords, says Günther, with a new planetary going on intergalactic civilization.30

The ensuing altercation among the three men knocks Wilson through the disk portal. The invitation to enter willingly was his chance “for high adventure” (43). Upon regaining consciousness following his knocked-out arrival in the future, Wilson finds himself in fantasy, I mean in primal time, that is, in the “Hall of the Gate in the High Palace of Norkaal” (46). Time tripping in “By His Bootstraps” mixes up B-genres according to the early recipe or tendency of American heroic fantasy/science fiction to decorate the future and remote planets in the style of timelessness with bric-a-brac from the Medievalist-to-Renaissance fairgrounds.

The light show that first attended Wells’s evocation of transport by machine across eons of time returns in Heinlein’s second description of the disk, again leading up to the typing of the sentence that there is “no Ding an Sicht”: “a simple locus hanging in the air, its flat depth filled with the amorphous colors and shapes of no-vision” (51). At this point Wilson begins to recog-

30 On time travel as a subgenre of Doppelgänger fiction see the section “Double Time” in Germany: A Science Fiction.
nize the strangers as his doubles (ibid.). What’s more, the return to the scene of writing sparks Wilson’s recognition of another level of doubling: “[T]his was not simply a similar scene, but the same scene he had lived through before – save that he was living through it from a different viewpoint” (52). This could be, then, the Ding an Sicht: a pov unavailable to consciousness (of time and causality).

Diktor, the ruler in primal time, appears to be the only outsider who manipulates Wilson and his doubles. Wilson tries to displace Diktor by traveling to the time before his regency to establish an alternative government. He arrives ahead of time with the knowledge Diktor entrusted to him, including a reading list of four books, Machiavelli’s The Prince and three alleged self-help books (including Mein Kampf). Because it didn’t fit inside the focus of the disk at takeoff, Hitler’s tome arrives cut in half (73). Not such a loss, Wilson reflects; but this was the first time he became aware of the bodily risk involved in time tripping. He also comes equipped with Diktor’s vocabulary sheet for communicating with the indigenous people of the future. They are the “Forsaken Ones,” who are on a line of descent from the extinct “High Ones.” They comprise another introjection of Wells’s The Time Machine. What they share with the Eloi is the lack of “the competitive spirit,” in other words, “the will-to-power” (78).

Wilson seeks to shore up his preemptive ploy by going back in primal time to encounter the “High Ones.” When he sees “it,” he flees: “It had not been fear of physical menace that had shaken his reason, nor the appearance of the creature – he could recall nothing of how it looked. It had been a feeling of sadness infinitely compounded which had flooded through him at the instant, a sense of tragedy, of grief insupportable and unescapable, of infinite weariness” (81). He awaits Diktor’s arrival – until

31 The unseen gives way before doubling, in which the unnamed inheres. There’s always a homoerotic rub in Heinlein. This time around Bob Wilson is miffed that he was forced by his double to participate in the scenario of doubling: “[Y]ou butted me in and tried to queer the pitch” (56). And again: “[W]hat was the idea of shoving me into that [...] that daisy chain without warning me?” (58).
he must recognize that he himself has grown into Diktor, his older double, his older self.

Between “By His Bootstraps” and “All You Zombies...” Heinlein updated his doubling fantasy via Matheson’s science fiction of a global vampire epidemic. In “By His Bootstraps,” Bob Wilson and his doubles try to reroute or improve upon what they in the end nevertheless inherit: evolutionary and colonial rule over a collective my “Man Friday” (77). “All You Zombies...” integrates a post-war world rather than double back to govern the nineteenth century. Heinlein goes further inside the new era than does Matheson at the close of I Am Legend. Sole survival in “All You Zombies...” does not end with the missing link, the legend to the map of evolutionary mutation, but deploys the quintessential science fictions, travel in time and alternate reality, to orbit the moment of irreversible catastrophe.

The blank checkout lane that is the American way of life or death cannot pick up the lack of metaphysics, as Günther argues in The American Apocalypse:

For the time being the experience that man isn’t capable in the long term of living without a metaphysics of his own – and that he therefore cannot produce history – has not yet been made or registered in the new world. The local carriers of the history to come have not yet suffered metaphysically. The epoch of this suffering, however, lies ahead. It is the inescapable consequence of human aloneness.32

The aloneness and emptiness belonging to the period of transition, the waiting around for the conquest of space, is the negative historical aspect of the decline of traditional supports, which also has positive implications: “This ambivalence of the spiritual situation is a necessary precondition for a positive historical future of the new world. Mere suffering drains, reduces, and makes sterile as long as it isn’t able to transcend itself into something Other” (200). Günther registers the zombie as the identifiable

32 Günther, Die amerikanische Apokalypse, 199–200. Subsequent page references are given in the text.
symptom of the onset of a suffering that could supply a restart of consciousness to match the prospect of outer space.

A starting point for an American metaphysics of death, the idea of the zombie, as it stands, is nothing other than “a mythologization of the tendency to separate out all elements of death from the life of the soul or psyche” (251). Any content of the psyche, however, can be objectified and attributed to what is factual or dead. The consequence of the tendency for which the zombie is a mascot, therefore, is that all phenomenal life can be assigned to the realm of death. Perceived life, then, isn’t life but a walking corpse.

Günther identified the mechanical brains already being designed and built in the United States in the 1950s as the technological version of the idea of the zombie (251). The equation, although it was never part of any text he saw through to publication, illuminates by its twilight his commentary on The Humanoids. Günther underscores in The American Apocalypse that so much that earlier epochs considered spiritual was really only matter of fact (sachlich) – in fact mechanical (249) – and that the mechanical brain is the technologization of what the zombie mythologizes: the overcoming of finitude by getting it over with already, by excluding it until that’s all there is. The American way of death follows by breaking with the old view of death as intervention from some transcendental realm and guidance out of this world. The American has unlearned dying a personal death; its eventuality is at most an unfortunate work-related accident (218). The Old-Testament life spans that Günther sees already arriving from the future will render death truly free, accepted and self-administered by the more tired than tried (ibid.).

Günther sees the zombie rebound from a logical impasse into aftermath that doesn’t sound like it computes: “A zombie is a walking corpse in possession of a second and dead life and, because he has already died and thus left death behind, is immortal. But death is absolutely unique. You cannot die twice” (250–51). The zombie, however, updates the commandment or conundrum by its function of walking target. Knock it over and the truth of the unique death, that is, second death, shines through. Target practice with zombies is assigned in the American spirit of demolition, which, according to Günther, necessarily comes
before the world religions can begin to become one and cosmic (251–52). The split between personal and impersonal versions of the absolute can only be negotiated by someone “who for himself has undergone a heretofore unknown process of separation from subject and object, in which every trace of what belongs to objectivity’s realm of the dead, the realm controlled through thought, is removed from the realm of the subject” (252).

In The Humanoids, as we saw, the service plan sets each robot apart from human agency and thus from the vicissitudes of willing and wishing. The “real perfection” of the humanoids is that they are “protected from human manipulation.” Günther follows Hegel to a point where cybernetics shall overcome the impasse between will and reason by reconsidering them as energy and information, allowing them to be but different perspectives on the same activity of the spirit for which each is just another expression. The brain is the organ of subjective consciousness and repeats in itself the relationship between I and You, which has been mediated through the physical environment (240). The subjectivity of the You can be grasped and observed by us as an event of willing – the expression of a subjective will, which isn’t our own and remains for us completely out of reach (239). Günther decides to bracket out the You, therefore, and reenter solipsism, but including the life or death of the observer (240). To remain within the near future of reading and address planetary mourning within the onset of a new metaphysics of science fiction, I follow the You that Günther was ready to leave behind.

Aligned with I Am Legend, Heinlein’s “All You Zombies...” showed that human sole survival worked through the melancholic profile of the vampire, while the inheritance of the Earth is split between zombieism, science-fictionalized vampirism in a mass consumer setting, and a new form of immunity to the fatal course of the epidemic, either by time travel or mutation. Time travel in Heinlein’s story keeps looping through, around, but

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Subsequent page references are given in the text.
never past the countdown to the second death (the accident or loss that cannot be undone).

Since the Age of Discovery, mourning has required running up against Günther’s summary dictum: you cannot die twice. But if the “you” is conjugated between you there, the other, and double you, the psycho, then we can count two deaths. This countdown is the secular world’s afterlife in finitude. During World War One, Freud argued that primal man had no problem killing off enemies, rivals, anyone who was in the way, but that this killing spree was pulled up short before the loss of a loved one, a good object.35 Primal man lives on in psychic reality as the death wish. In the course of mourning a loved one, the untenable admixture of murderous feelings, which underwent emergency projection, must be integrated, which doesn’t mean neutralized. In the end, the mourning process requires that the double you, the psycho in you, attend the prospect of the deceased’s second death. This does not necessarily entail a sentencing by your agency or acknowledgment. Alone the mourner’s entry upon substitution suffices to curtail, displace, or subsume the extended scenarios of identification.

That outer space is big enough to admit indeterminacy in clocking the finitude between two deaths is the underlying conceit of the 2014 film Interstellar. The astronaut-protagonist Cooper recalls his deceased wife’s words in contemplation of their young children: “Now we’re just here to be memories for our kids.” But there isn’t enough room in generational time to avert the disaster of loss that afflicts the near future of Earth. Cooper risks a mission impossible to secure more time and resources for the dying planet or a double of Earth for starting over. After a succession of failures there are two survivors, Cooper and Amelia, the daughter of Cooper’s former professor and father figure, who designed the two-pronged rescue attempt. Amelia is jettisoned off to a habitable planet, the backup goal of the original mission, while Cooper struggles to transmit to his daughter Murphy, now an established scientist, the saving message, the formula for restoration of life on Earth via integration within the multiverse.

35 Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” 298–99.
The father-and-daughter bond, an Enlightenment introject, was all along outside linear time. A child when her father departed, Murphy was already attuned to Poltergeist-like aberrations imparting themselves in her bedroom. This communication from the other side held the place for the paternal transmission of rescue from outer space, which she later receives and carries out. Cooper, who like his co-survivor Amelia has remained unchanged inside the bubble of relativity, arrives at last in the multiverse in time for his aged daughter’s dying. She sends him away, however, to join Amelia on her lost planet and enter upon the substitution that can reabsorb the mother of memories, like the multiverse Earth. Cooper departs once again, this time to traverse the span between the beloved daughter’s first death, which she won’t let him witness, and a second death that is at once certain, given, but equally far away on a compass that’s cosmic.

In a flashback, Robert Neville breaches among the cans of sole survivorship the “cannot” in Günther’s death sentence. In rehearsal since the onset of secularization, together with its byproducts haunting and mourning, the suffering that alone, according to Günther, can give a new history and a new metaphysics to the planetary civilization to come percolates through *I Am Legend*. After his dead daughter Kathy was taken away and consigned to mass cremation, he is determined to provide proper burial for his wife Virginia, who goes next. But then it is two in the morning, two days after he buried her: “Two eyes looking at the clock, two ears picking up the hum of its electric chronology, two lips pressed together, two hands lying on the bed. He tried to rid himself of the concept, but everything in the world seemed suddenly to have dropped into a pit of duality.”

And then he discovered, upon Virginia’s return from the grave, that there are two deaths. The objective of mourning straddles the pit of duality – not only semantically through the injunction organizing mourning’s opening season to join or let the dead go, a decision that in the time of mourning’s altering alternations between projection and identification can in turn be let go, but

36 Matheson, *I Am Legend*, 75–76.
also syntactically and more effectively through the sentencing of two deaths.

In *I Am Legend*, the sole survivor derives a legible legend to the experimental mapping of his impasse from two texts, *Dracula* and *Hamlet*, in which mourning is on a schedule of two deaths. Between the evidence of elimination and the pages of *Dracula*, the reality of vampirism’s mortality can be addressed. It is the symptom picture of an infectious disease to which he applies himself as experimental scientist, like father like son. He obtains thus a greater containment of the scream memories from his recent traumatic past. The treatment is second death.

Vampires unacknowledge the second death because they are masters. Already the idea of the second death liberates ghosts from the magic book of endless slave time. In *Interstellar*, we saw the resolution to count down buffered by the temporal paradox of outer space transport. From the vantage of *I Am Legend*, the first science fiction to extract the happy end of zombie second death from the vampire’s deferral position, the emphasis falls far more resolutely. Early in the movie *Last Action Hero* (1993), we attend school with the fanboy who watches, in place of Laurence Olivier as Hamlet, his superhero Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger). Hamlet in the role of action figure chooses “not to be,” which is now the transitive sentencing of the rot, the lot he eliminates in the fortress he detonates. Only thus can the malingering on of the lapse into lifelessness give way to innovation.37

What crosses Robert’s mind when he visits the grave of his wife is on the same page with Hamlet’s paternal ghost: “I’m here, he thought. I’m back. Remember me” (37). Although he speaks the injunction of a father’s ghost, he’s not commanding or asking, but, rather, he remembers a line that resonates differently inside him.38 He’s not a ghost nor is his wife (he saw to that).

37 I have been revisiting and at times reprising my extensive reading of *I Am Legend* in *The Psycho Records*, but the focus is shifted away from the attempt to track the underlying psychopathic violence, while at this juncture I reverse the sense of my *Hamlet* reading in *SPECTRE* (Fort Wayne: Anti-Oedipus Press, 2013) to resituate psychopathy within the success and succession of mourning and substitution.

38 In *Hamlet*, as I argued in *SPECTRE*, the father’s ghost is double occu-
And he is not another Hamlet. Since his wife brought home the realization that there are two deaths, Robert has not hesitated to carry out the unfinished business of putting the already dead to rest. Robert Neville’s sole survivorship becomes the legend for a new planetary civilization, which, fully theorized by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, has been in preparation since the Age of Discovery in the occult margins of mourning’s compass between life and death.

pancy and “Remember me” can be reread with the quavering lilt of the child Hamnet asking if he is remembered. Robert’s citation resonates more with this stowaway question than with the paternal command.