

Haitian Zombie, Myth, and Modern Identity

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**Abstract:** In her article "Haitian Zombie, Myth, and Modern Identity" Kette Thomas analyzes texts by Zora Neale Hurston, Alfred Metraux, and Wade Davis. In these narratives we are re-introduced to the zombie not as a metaphor for lost consciousness, but, rather, as a common system that replaces personal subjectivity with an influence alien to our natural development. The discourse on subjectivity has become a central focus in the modern era but attention to fiction in "third world" cultures is neglected because they are studied almost exclusively through historical, political, sociological, or anthropological lenses or because their collective identities leads scholars to assume they had not developed consciousness of individual subjectivity. "Third world" cultures, however, are addressing the subject and Thomas discusses the zombie as one expression that focuses on the validity of subjectivity. Further, although zombies have been part of the Western imagination for nearly a century, scholars have not studied the zombie in terms of its mythological components. The myth of the zombie reveals a process that combines the dynamic power of a leader, the community, and the individual or victim. Thomas's analysis emphasizes how zombification challenges the notion that there exists an invulnerable, continuous, self-possessed subjectivity in humans.

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**Kette THOMAS****Haitian Zombie, Myth, and Modern Identity**

The origin of the discourse on subjectivity in Western culture is difficult to trace, but the idea gained momentum during the Enlightenment and became a central focus of the modern era. Concurrently, "third-world" countries were branded as collective units, researched anthropologically, with the primary focus being on their primitive beliefs and ritual ceremonies, and were perceived in terms of their exotic, isolated locales. Believed to be less scientific, less technological, and less civilized than modern cultures, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and psychoanalysts treated the study of these communities as "preserved" reflections of our primitive ancestors (Freud 4). "Third world" cultures were rarely associated with the discourse on personal subjectivity, but they made both formal and informal contributions to the field. Haitians, for example, used one mythical ritual known as "zombification" to address the subject.

Zombies gained popularity in Western culture, especially during the twentieth century, becoming a metaphor for individuals who lacked consciousness and threatened social structures. Most cultures, therefore, recognize the zombie in these conventional terms; however, treatment of the figure often neglects the rituals associated with zombification and the broader implications to subjectivity inherent in the practice. Although studied in varying disciplines, scholars have not studied the zombie in terms of their mythological contributions. The vast majority of mythological research centered on texts from ancient Greece among other cultures that influenced Western ideology, which why the examination of Haiti's zombie myth would have been unlikely. Once anthropologists discovered the practice in the twentieth century, the contentious relationship between the United States and Haiti obstructed exchanges between scholars and practitioners that might have illuminated the allegorical expressions behind zombification.

The focus on a self-reflexive "I" in Western culture can be traced to the Sumerian tale of Gilgamesh, Sophocles's *Oedipus*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, or Descartes's principle *cogito ergo sum*. Teasing out what constituted a self-possessed individual versus what defines the members of a collective group was an important discourse throughout modernity and no less important to members of industrially less developed nations. Additionally, given historical developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that pitted nation against nation, threatening collective identities on a scale previously unseen, the need for self definition became urgent and, with it, consciousness of individuality relative to the group. The zombie surfaced on the small island of Haiti early in its independent formation in the nineteenth century and, while the figure originated in West Africa, zombification practices would find expression in discourse associated with compromised subjectivities that resulted from imperialism and slavery. Zombies transcended the argument between the individual and the collective as the post-slave subject bore little reference to an individual relative to a naturally developed group dynamic. The figure suggested that without reference to a corresponding group, no individuality existed and subjectivity and consciousness would fail to emerge. Thus, zombies were figures that wandered the earth, lacking figurative foundations like homes or resting places, and, therefore, unable to generate consciousness of a self. Zombies were simply the point of articulation for the ex-slave subject. The deceptively simple Haitian myth of the zombie, however, does more than address imperialism: it questions the validity of the discourse on subjectivity.

The "living dead" was not a new idea. Western culture had versions of the representation from a variety of literary sources, such as the goddess Ishtar's threat that she would terrorize the living with the dead in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and medieval figures, like "revenants," ghostly figures that rise from the dead to execute justice (Caciola 3). Such tales are considered folklore; they are popular fictions with metaphorical elements useful for moral or ethical direction and they are rarely associated with the discourse on subjectivity. Scholars regard the Haitian zombie, however, as a mournful expression of loss born out of a people's transition from Africa to slavery in the New World (Fay 81). Conflation of the two — the entertaining folk version and the historical expression — attributed to the figure by Western theorists was inevitable under circumstances that studied "third world" as symbols of the subconscious of the "first world." In addition, historical data lacking or scarce, early accounts of the

zombie phenomenon were based on travel writings and anthropological expeditions, mainly in the early twentieth century, particularly during the U.S. occupation of the island (Fay 81). Kyle Bishop suggests that "although creatures such as vampires and reanimated corpses often have been realized by literary means, the traditional zombie story has no direct antecedent in novels or short fiction. In fact, zombies did not really see the light of day until filmmakers began to dig them out of their graves in the 1930s. The 'classic' zombie horror film ... was pioneered by George A. Romero in the late 1960s and features a veritable plague of reanimated corpses that attack and slaughter the living" (197). So, with virtually no known literary articulations that traced its origin, the zombie was condemned to limited Western imaginations and interpretations. As Bishop points out, the zombie became a phenomenon, an intriguing part of US-American intellectual, political, and social debate. Most notably, in March 1975, Wade Davis, an ethnobotanist, who affixed his impressions of the ritual of zombification in *Passage of Darkness* among other texts, traveled to Haiti under *The Zombie Project* (funded by the Botanical Museum at Harvard) to retrieve the drugs used to create the victims of zombification. His findings produced *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, which became the subject of Wes Craven's Hollywood film, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988). Yet, even before Davis, Hollywood's fascination with the subject gave rise to films like *White Zombies* (1932), *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). But the fascination with zombies far exceeded the pop-culture interest; it was susceptible to research and observation by other ethnobotanists, anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists.

Because myths are multi-dimensional cultural artifacts, the Haitian zombie is better understood within the context of mythology. The Oxford English Dictionary defines myths as follows: "1a. A traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces or creatures, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon. 2a. A widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief. 2c. A popular conception of a person or thing which exaggerates or idealizes the truth" (1132). Indeed, the stories in most religious texts, like the New Testament Bible, are considered myths because they are esteemed for containing fundamental truths while, simultaneously, suspected to be little more than popular fictions. Understanding zombification through mythological lenses lends greater expansion and use of the imagination; it is less insistent that the zombie and its corresponding rituals fit neatly into culture-specific narratives. The zombie myth is a projection of questions on subjectivity that scholars in "first world" countries often fail to explore, but the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead can help clarify how the zombie myth fits into the discourse. Does the zombie reflect an absolute truth for Haitians insofar as we view slavery as their primary truth, the myth of their origin, the eternal implications of the past, and the redundancy of struggles specific to that one identity? Recognizing the difficulty of separating this reading of the figure relative to Haiti's history, in order to broaden the perspective on our approach to the zombie and its rituals, I incorporated the Christian story of Lazarus' resurrection. This myth also serves to underscore the problems with subjectivity reflected in zombies and zombification rituals.

Resurrecting the dead is a familiar story in Western culture, especially in regards to the New Testament Biblical stories of Jesus and Lazarus. In terms of the Bible, it is Lazarus's resurrection — which bears similarity to the zombie myth — that this particular type of resurrection illuminates the processes of enslavement. As both the zombie and Lazarus's resurrection involve rituals, understanding the myths begins with an analysis of Vodou's conceptualization of the soul, its function in developing subjectivity, and why it is relevant in zombie mythology. In *Passage of Darkness*, Davis writes that

The two aspects of the Vodou soul, the *ti bon ange* and the *gros bon ange*, are best explained with a metaphor commonly used by the Haitian themselves. Sometimes when one stands by the late afternoon light the body casts a double shadow, a dark core and then a lighter penumbra, faint like the halo that sometimes surrounds the full moon. This ephemeral fringe is the *ti bon ange*, the "little good angel," while the image at the center is the *gros bon ange*, the "big good angel." The latter is the life force that all sentient beings share; it enters the individual at conception and functions only to keep the body alive. At clinical death, it returns immediately to God and once again becomes part of the great reservoir of energy that supports all life. But if the *gros bon ange* is undifferentiated energy, the *ti bon ange* is that part of the soul directly associated with the individual. As the *gros bon ange* pro-

vides each person with the power to act, it is the *ti bon ange* that molds the individual sentiments within each act. It is one's aura, and the source of all personality, character and willpower. (187)

The *gros bon ange* is simply law. According to Leslie G. Desmangles, it is "a life-force and internal dynamism planted within the body that serves as its shell" (66). This "life-force" is not alterable and you either have it or you do not: "It derives its substance from, and is an offshoot particle of [God]" (Desmangles 66). For Desmangles, the *gros bon ange* represents "the root of being, consciousness, the source of physical motion, the inherent principle within the body that ensures life; it is identified with the flow of the blood through the body, and movements of inhalation and exhalation of the thoracic cavity. Breathing and the throbbing of the heart are vital signs of life, but the *gros bon ange* is not breath or palpitation itself; rather, it is believed to be the life-source from which these motions originate" (67). This element of the soul cradles all life; once it has left the body, nothing exists and one can speak plainly of the finality of death. The *ti bon ange* is another matter, entirely. It is hard to pin a single definition to this element as it is the element most vulnerable and elusive. It is said to "govern thought, memory, and sentiments, the essence of human personality; it leaves the body during sleep, is displaced during possession by loa [lesser gods in the Vodou pantheon], or Vodou gods, is the target of magic and sorcery, and can be captured and sold" (Davis 181). This fluidity or instability associated with the *ti bon ange* is not meant to suggest that it should be regarded as inessential. On the contrary, this element is responsible for our notions of subjectivity: our belief in a unique self, agency, and free will. Without it we personify redundancy and lack, especially of desire, hope or self-preserving needs. Our notion of subjectivity is not only dependent on this quality, but also fully defined by it. The notion of the *gros bon ange* and *ti bon ange* is only meant to suggest that, according to Vodou doctrine, the human is made of multiple dimensions, each with its own functions that govern the primacy of life and death. The loss of any one of the elements that define life compromises the definitions afforded agents of existence. The importance of the loss of an element like the *ti bon ange* is vital to any discourse concerning subjectivity. In fact, not only notions of the self, but time and space are redefined without the *ti bon ange*. An individual can exist without a *ti bon ange* because the laws that govern the *gros bon ange* are unrelated to subjectivity. The *gros bon ange* governs biology, for example, and basic biological functions are not affected by a loss of identity. The *ti bon ange*, however, is determined by the ability to order its use of time and space around desire and will; thus, this innate activity is vulnerable to others. Without it, desire and communication are impossible. More importantly, no hope exists to re-activate the element because it is the element itself that is necessary for active re-animation of the self. However we choose to define the zombie, the altered state of the creature reflects the loss of "the essence of one's individuality" (Davis 187).

What is relevant in my analysis of the myth of the zombie is that it is a compromised being because one of two separate forms of energy necessary for existence is severed from the body: one form allows it to exist in the world and the other animates it, constructs the boundaries and parameters, and gives it definition. The *ti bon ange* would be the blueprint of the soul. Both elements are essential to be an agent in the natural order of things, but the zombie lacks the portion that animates life, offers personal choice, and governs control over identity construct. More importantly, however, the zombie *is* animated, though by a source alien to it. Philosophical speculations that a quality called *qualia*, a term coined by Clarence Irving Lewis in *Mind and the World Order*, is analogous to the *ti bon ange* absent in the zombie. The theory, however, is controversial and focuses almost exclusively on consciousness and empirical values. Its utility lies in the possibilities of self reflexive capabilities, but it has yet to yield enough evidence to add to this mythological inquiry. Defining the zombie might appear simple enough, but scholars on the subject indicate that finding language that best reflects the figure is, itself, the subject of debate. Zora Neale Hurston writes that "This is the way zombies are spoken of: they are the bodies without souls; the living dead" (189) and the anthropologist Alfred Metraux writes that "Zombi are people whose decease has been duly recorded, and whose burial has been witnessed, but who are found a few years later living with a *bokor* (sorcerer) in a state verging on idiocy" (281). In *Passage of Darkness*, Davis's definition allows for better understanding of the figure: "The ... victim of zombification suffers a fate worse than death — the loss of individual freedom implied by enslavement, and the sacrifice of individual identity and autonomy implied by the loss of the *ti bon ange*" (9). The slight differences in each definition are as follows: Hurston claims that no soul, as such, exists in the zombie, the zombie is dead. The implication here is that humans are made up of a single soul, not two, as inscribed in Vodou doctrine; thus, the zombie is strictly the product of magic. It is a miraculous concoction and completely unnatural. Metraux is more pragmatic. He does not address matters of the soul, but merely concludes that the zombie suffers from severe psychologi-

cal impairment. Davis's claim that the zombie is a figure of "enslavement" and of the loss of "individual identity," invites inquiry. The point here is, in defining the zombie the ritual involved in making the figure is as important as what it produces. Zombification is the ritual responsible for compromised subjectivities and the overall process bears scrutiny. Zombification does not produce zombies, but rather a three tiered system: the *bokor* or sorcerer, the community, and the remains of what was once an individual. The ritual that develops this system dispels the illusion of subjectivity and underscores the processes that lead to the production of zombies.

As stated earlier, in reading the myth of the zombie, the process is best understood alongside other myths related to "raising the dead," especially the one illustrated in the story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead" from the New Testament Bible. Although the stories share similar attributes, their place of origin, cultural value, and interpretation differ. Nevertheless, what happens to the protagonist (the dead person) and his/her body throughout the process are similar. Scholars regard the relationship between the Haitian peasant practicing Vodou and the Western Christian as hostile and antagonistic towards one another: "As a religion that developed in the context of slavery and colonialism, Vodou marks a fluid boundary between domination and resistance and defines a zone of struggle between public and private discourses of dominant and subordinate groups" (Trefzer 301). Thus, the slave/ex-slave that practiced Vodou used creative means to "voice subversive ideas" through metaphorical and linguistic performance (Trefzer 301). In fact, imperialism instigated the development of religious expressions that could respond to its excessive abuses. In this case, Vodou remains a form of cultural resistance and we can read the processes of making a zombie as a subversion of Christian ideals. I would caution, however, to not read the myth in this narrowly focused fashion. Although seemingly obvious and inevitable, this one-dimensional reading of Vodou and its mythology implies that either no other pressing concerns occupied the minds of Africans prior to the Middle Passage or that imperialism was such a cataclysmic event, no prior philosophical perspectives survived the onslaught. An understanding of the zombie needs broader perspectives if we are to gain an understanding of the enigmatic figure. We must read beyond Europe and the Middle Passage. The zombie is not focused exclusively on the historical relationship between Western cultures and Africa, but it does represent the slave in cosmic terms.

In the story of "Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead," Lazarus emerges from the grave following a procedure that restores him to life. Christians consider him free from the torments of death, but zombification implies that Lazarus's new reflection is the figure of the zombie voiced from the other side of a mirror. Rather than the affirmation of life postulated by a straightforward Christian reading, the zombie suggests that resurrections are degrading and humiliating acts against the individual, against Lazarus. "Raising the dead" infects society through irreversible alteration of the essential qualities that allow us to exist and to die peacefully. Comparing Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and the *bokor* raising the zombie leads us to illustrations of how individuals become reflections of vacant or circumscribed subjectivities. Worse, the processes involved are natural and perhaps inevitable in all human societies. The New Testament of the Bible tells the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11:1-44. The story positions Jesus en route when word is sent that Lazarus, a personal friend, is gravely ill. At this point in the narrative, Jesus, who now performs miracles with some regularity, has already demonstrated his peculiar ability to "heal the sick." However, Jesus rejects the proposition to rush to the sick bed of the dying man; rather, he postpones his trip pronouncing "it (as) for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it." Several days later, Jesus appears at the site where Lazarus' body has been buried for four days. Conversations between Mary and Martha, the dead man's sisters and prominent figures in the narrative, and Jesus indicate that the women grieve more out of regret that Jesus delayed his visit than over the deceased, Lazarus. More exchanges between the local Jews and the two women reveal a motivation to support and comfort the grieving family, which lends itself to further exchanges between the locals and Jesus, who at the sight of the weeping women will wonder why the one who "opened the eyes of the blind ... could not prevent this man's death." Finally, the narrative articulates another interaction between Jesus and his disciples, who neither want nor care to have Jesus in such a politically precarious location, especially given the certainty that Jesus's talents are wasted under the current circumstance of death. After much exchange between the living, Jesus proceeds to have the tomb unsealed by assistants. He calls out Lazarus by name and the "dead man comes forth," as summoned (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11:1-44).

I clarify the direction of the Biblical chapter because so little of it actually concerns Lazarus. C.K. Barrett writes that "The meaning of this narrative for John is as simple as the narrative itself. Jesus in his obedience to and dependence upon the Father has the authority to give life to whom he will. The incident is a dramatic truth already declared in 5:21" (322). But, the narrative is not simple. The first verse tells the reader that, "there was a man named Lazarus who had fallen ill" (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11.1). Rather than bypass this first line, the articulation deserves further analysis. The difference between Lazarus and what will be known as the zombie rests on a name: "To have a name is to have a means of locating, extending, and preserving oneself in the human community, so as to be able to answer the question 'who?' with reference to ancestry, current status, and particular bearing, with reference to the full panoply of time" (Cooke 167). In the African American community, for example, "naming has always been an important issue ... because of its link to the exercise of power ... A consequence of slavery, African Americans regard the abandonment of their African identity, and the renaming of those captured with their masters' identities as a profound form of subjugation and powerlessness" (King 687). In China, "naming marks important social transitions: the more names a man has the more 'socialized' and also, in a sense, the more 'individuated' he becomes" (Watson 622). These examples indicate that subjectivity is often transferred, reflected, and recognized in words. Names are sacred in most cultures and are intricately woven into the fabric of rituals and ceremonies. For example, many brides take the surname of their husbands or adolescents may adopt a new name during certain religious rituals. When the biblical story tells us "a certain man was sick, named Lazarus" (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11.1), it immediately performs an act of locating and representing a subject. Whoever Lazarus is, we assume subjectivity. In short, a name is the *ti bon ange* and if zombies are nihilistic of the *ti bon ange*, so, too, the name. Names play an important role in these resurrection narratives and we should keep an eye as much on this element as on the body.

If names correspond with the body, then Lazarus's body is equally important. Of Lazarus's body what we know is limited to his illness. Illness is often considered an impurity and dangerous to the community. In *Totem and Taboo*, Sigmund Freud asserts that our fear of death leads to collective hypochondria and the urgent desire to eliminate the contaminated subject from our surroundings (65). We share a primal fear of death and illnesses give us the warning signs of its approach. Edvard Westermarck states that "According to primitive ideas a person only dies if he is killed — by magic if not by force — and such a death naturally tends to make the soul revengeful and ill-tempered. It is envious of the living and is longing for the company of its old friends; no wonder, then, that it sends them diseases to cause their death" (534). From this viewpoint, Lazarus's illness reflects personal contamination, but it also becomes dangerous to the collective. The ailing individual threatens to contaminate the community with death. Freud says we avoid illness and war against death because, "it acts like a contagion" (44). The death of one implies the impending death of all. In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas analyzes cultures that are obsessed with hygiene, cleanliness and avoidance of dirt. She proposes that we incorporate cleansing rituals that point towards a terrifying fear of losing control and being the subject of death's violent blows. Thus, the concern for the ailing individual is less a fear of losing a loved one and more trepidation over death (74). Lazarus's illness may be a contagion that threatens the entire community. He is a critical concern in the pending crisis he represents. Further, perceiving death and illness as violent assaults against the living, René Girard writes that "Each time an oral or written testament mentions an act of violence that is directly or indirectly collective we question whether it includes the description of a social and cultural crisis" (284). With illness represented as a central threat, Girard adds, "violence itself ... convinces us that (1) the acts of violence are real; (2) the crisis is real; (3) the victims are chosen not for the crimes they are accused of but for the victim's sign that they bear, for everything that suggests their guilty relationship with the crisis" (284). In both the Haitian and Christian narrative the ailing body reflects the individual and the individual is not mutually exclusive of the collective. Family members are obligated to seek help for the sick, not only to cleanse the individual of the impurity, but the community as well. Douglas says, "A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone" (113).

In Christianity, the symbolic representation of illness "is to be seen in connection with the state of the natural man. "Sick" announces the condition of the sinner's soul, for sin is a disease which has robbed man of his original health" (Pink 1). Lazarus is also from the "House of Bethany," translated "House of Affliction" (Pink 1). Thus, Lazarus did not cause his own illness, but he remains guilty because he cannot avoid his humanity and the error of defilement. This reading of Lazarus as an alienated subject who suffers from illness juxtaposed with his representation of all of mankind's guilt and impurity is crucial to an analysis of the resurrection story. As previously noted, our first and most primal war is waged against death, so when Lazarus dies, the stage is set to treat his death as the impurity that offends and violates everyone. How should we observe Lazarus in death? If the state of his physical body corresponds with subjectivity and we can no longer observe the signposts of life in the body, then where is Lazarus? In Haiti, the idea that death can only imply guilt or contamination is not entirely accurate; contrary to the theories above, death purifies the community because, in its natural transitional state, it removes the illnesses that defile the group (Desmangles 65). Rather than cleansing man of death, Vodou practice expresses the belief that death itself is the astringent for the impurities garnered in life. Unlike the Christian story, which tries to offset death via Jesus' miracle, the Vodou practitioner believes the task is not to avoid death, but to protect the loved one as he/she transitions from the living world to the afterlife: "After death, the harmonious relationship between the twin compartments of the self is fractured and each follows its separate destiny. The expiration of the last breath is the expulsion of the [*gros bon ange*] from the body. Liberated, the [*gros bon ange*] is believed to enter into heaven" (Desmangles 68). The *ti bon ange*, reflected in the name of the deceased, is now free to enter its new phase of existence. We can say, "Lazarus has passed on": "The Vodou death rituals move a community toward the future; they celebrate the birth of the [*ti bon ange*] into a new dimension of life. The death rituals restore the [*ti bon ange*] to its primordial state before it assumed form — a condition of freedom from the limitations and struggles of human existence" (Desmangles 73).

The zombie myth suggests that in both sickness and death, Lazarus's community should have guarded and secured his natural and peaceful transition through death's chambers. Being made to resurrect, from this perspective, is a frightening illustration of personal powerlessness relative to the power others have over our bodies and soul. One way of reading the myth interprets Lazarus' resurrection as a positive event while the other regards it as an egregious disruption of natural processes. The latter point of view is not unique: Lucretius says that "Death is nothing to us and no concern of ours ... When we shall be no more, when the union of body and spirit that engenders us has been disrupted — to us, who shall then be nothing, nothing by any hazard will happen any more at all. Nothing will have power to stir our senses, not though earth be fused with sea and sea with sky. Rest assured that we have nothing to fear in death. One who no longer is cannot suffer, or differ in any way from one who has never been born" (46). Using Lazarus and the zombie as examples on the subject of death, Vodou contrasts Christian theology, but by way of discourse circulated and familiar to modern scholars. The perspective on death reopens the doors of interpretation for Lazarus and the zombie, alongside all resurrection myths. The rituals, for example, bear more striking resemblances to one another. The ritual of "raising the dead" performed by Jesus and the *bokor* share certain curious procedures. For one, Jesus tells the locals to "take away the stone" (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11.39); he does not do it himself. The *bokor* also does not remove the opening of the grave himself; he has it "opened by [his] associates" (Hurston 192). This gesture imports the role of the community members and their complicity in the event. Secondly, the deceased can only respond to its name: "Then Jesus raised his voice in a great cry: 'Lazarus, come forth'" (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11.43). Similarly, Hurston says, the *bokor* "calls the name of the victim. He must answer because the *bokor* has the soul there in his hand" (192). Metraux points out that "a corpse can only be raised if it answers its name" (56). And "In the view of primitive man, one of the most important parts of a person is his name. So that if one knows the name of a man or of a spirit, one has obtained a certain amount of power over the owner of the name" (Freud 102). Finally, E.M. Corian warns us that "to bear a name is to claim an exact mode of collapse" (5). This focus on the name is a reference to subjectivity. In the history of language, the name of a person is equivalent to the name used to define a social group.



Lose governance over the use of your name, lose subjectivity. This problem reveals itself at the climactic moment when the deceased is restored to the world of the living.

We cannot know why the deceased can only respond to its name, as mentioned in the zombie narrative, but in the Christian narrative we know that Jesus calling forth Lazarus is the last time Lazarus' name is mentioned in the book of John. After Jesus cries out, "Lazarus come forth," the biblical story does not say "Lazarus came forth," but rather, "The dead man came out" (*Oxford New English Bible*, John 11.43). This is a crucial point. As the zombie is a nameless "dead" that has come forth at the behest of another, so, too, Lazarus no longer governs his name and is now the "dead," which has returned to the living. Based on the Vodou narrative, the zombie is subordinated by the *bokor* because the *bokor* has his *ti bon ange*, which is reflected in the utterance of his name. When Jesus calls Lazarus forth, he is communicating to the person whose soul he now possesses; he uses the name to bring forth a living body now unrecognizable because it is no longer Lazarus as we knew him. In using the name, any meaning associated with it changed. Lazarus's name no longer corresponds to the figure emerging from the grave; it corresponds to Jesus. So, in John 11:44 of the *New Oxford English Bible*, when Jesus says, "loose him and let him go," what, in fact, is loosened? Thus we have no further need to refer to Lazarus; his name will forever be inscribed in history, Christian history, as the "dead man" Jesus raised from the dead. Lazarus's creation story begins with the one who called him out of the tomb and the memories associated with him will serve Jesus. The added detail in the Haitian story, "the *bokor* has the soul there in his hand," is symbolic of the power of the person who speaks your name. The narrative suggests that the danger of a name is in the qualities bestowed upon it. Thus, the vulnerability of the contents of the *ti bon ange* is located in the name; the vulnerability of subjectivity is made apparent in the zombie, and the power to seize another person needs neither chain nor dungeon. In the zombie, the metaphor is not in the active dead body. The metaphor is the name that no longer refers to the corresponding body. If Lazarus's name belongs to Jesus (Jesus masters the name and the name is the soul), then what is reflected in the correlative body? Logically, if we were to give Lazarus a voice, he would say, "I mirror Jesus" and, by extension, Jesus would have to say, "I mirror Lazarus." Thus, subjectivity is marked by the physical reflection of the one who possesses the meaning of his/her own name. But, of course, this would be an incorrect reading of the situation. We are given names precisely so that we can be possessed by the other. The issue here is not whether Lazarus ever held possession of his subjectivity. He never did. The issue here is whether or not the one who uses his name is desirable or undesirable. The zombie mythology suggests that resurrection is the absence of any authentic "I am." And every time someone calls out your name, you are resurrected, returned to be among the living. Symbolically, Lazarus is not alive as a social subject, but he appears alive through a correlative that is Jesus. Jesus, as "life," is extended through the restoration of Lazarus's body and the seizure of his name (*ti bon ange*).

Each step of resurrection rituals reflect inevitable, sometimes constant human conditions of temporary weakness or illness, followed by mental or emotional absences. We are often in-between states, as post-resurrected Lazarus and the zombie were also in-between natural states before disruption. We project ourselves on to our names, whether first name, surname, or the names which correspond to our social identities. We regard treatment of those names with more ritual, caution and interest than treatment of the bodies they reference. Language is a tool that allows us to possess each other, as the *bokor* possesses his zombie, as Jesus possesses Lazarus, as child possesses the mother, spouse possesses spouse: from body to mind, from mind to the soul. Thus, both myths instruct the reader or the listener that such phenomenon is not only possible, but common and perhaps inevitable. The myths warn against the illusion of stable, self-possessed subjectivities and the belief that our reflection in the mirror projects an undisturbed, continuous, natural process called "I." If the biblical story is a mythological tale that represents all of mankind, and Haiti gathers its symbol of resurrection in the image of the zombie, is it not imperative that we re-read the zombie specifically as part of the Western mythological canon and the modern era? The zombie reflects loss of human dynamism for static and dogmatic structures. Cult members or fundamentalist followers of organized religion fall into this category, easily. But what makes the members of these communities different from the rest of society? Are we as vigilant of these processes in science, multiculturalism, or nationalism? Whose voice speaks? Who has your soul in their hands? The studies surrounding zombification isolate the

condition around the body in question, but note that the Haitian narrative suggests that a zombie is not plausible without the *bokor's* influence, and the support of the adjoining social structure. To that end, the zombie mythology invokes the idea that the very nature of establishing and using language serves the singular purpose of producing zombies. We disrupt another's subjectivity the moment we speak. Accordingly, all social institutions doom its members to zombification: a paradoxical state of illusory subjectivity and apparent death.

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