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# Integration: Understanding New Mediation via Innovations in Horror Cinema

Laurence A. Rickels
*Staatliche Akademie bildender Künste Karlsruhe*, laurence.rickels@kunstakademie-karlsruhe.de

## Abstract

If television inherited the democratization tendencies of mass media, then digital media circumvented the impasse of politics and psychosis by a momentum that is more closely allied to integration. Beginning with the word "integration" it proves possible to go deeper than the term's current associations in the headlines and revalorize the newly mediatized prospect of political change. It is an upgrade that becomes uniquely legible – as "alle-gory" – in recent alterations and alternations in media representation of occult and psycho horror.

## Keywords

media theory, psychoanalysis, occult, television, McLuhan

If television inherited the democratization tendencies of mass media, then digital media circumvented the impasse of politics and psychosis by a momentum that is more closely allied to integration. Beginning with the word "integration" it proves possible to go deeper than the term's current associations in the headlines and revalorize the newly mediatized prospect of political change. It is an upgrade that becomes uniquely legible – as "alle-gory" – in recent alterations and alternations in media representation of occult and psycho horror. Although "integration" encompasses the sense or direction of making whole but out of included parts, which can make its ideology suspect at the same time as its political aspiration must be affirmed, the loaded term took its departure, as is still recognizable in the parallel words around "intact," from a root word signifying "touch." To be "integrated" would mean, then, to be "in touch," in other words, to be "connected." That our digital connectivity responds to touch is, surprisingly, new. The earlier gadget connections, whether pulled or pressed, were prosthetic doubles of the touch itself, which only now alone activates the sensorium. If according to Paul de Man the literal is the allegory of the literary,[1] then, switching media, literal digits proved the allegory of digitalization. At the literal end, the touch was identified by Elias Canetti as the individual's greatest fear.[2] Only as member of a crowd can one reclaim the uncanny touch and carry it forward as binding pleasure. McLuhan absorbed Canetti's understanding of touch as the taboo that dissolves in the crowd within the haptic relationship to number. "The pleasure of being among the masses is the sense of the joy in the multiplication of numbers."[3] A crowded feeling inclusive of touch approximates, in the psychoanalytic lexicon, the experience of narcissism for which group psychology is the externalizing syndication and even the outside chance for specialized instances of identified or projected narcissism. By knowing that its number was up the touch taboo could be separated upon its crowd dissolve from mere "skin contact with things" and reclaimed as, McLuhan also writes, "the very life of things in the mind."[4] While Theodor Adorno found a dangerous immediacy in numbers themselves, McLuhan was doing the math or aftermath of new mediation, for which he projected TV reception as model. The "glass teat" Adorno considered as enforcing adaptation to a delusional system, that of the culture industry, which found its completion in or on TV, was for McLuhan a mosaic mode of keeping in touch that went deeper than the post-Titanic injunction to stay tuned: "The TV image requires each instant that we 'close' the spaces in the mesh by a convulsive sensuous participation that is profoundly kinetic and tactile, because tactility is the interplay of the senses, rather than the isolated contact of skin and object."[5]

McLuhan's reading of TV, which determined his genealogy of media, dates *Understanding Media* as another exhibit in wonder rooms dedicated to projections of a future that never happened – alongside LA's layout of endless automobility, for example, which as found footage recycles through early science fiction films as the setting prior to the end of the world. The centrality of TV in McLuhan's reading reflected the synthesis he claimed for the latest mass mediation unto globalization between Anglo-American literacy and Continental European tribalism or between democracy and totalitarianism. Because of the denial of TV-Führer psychology, which was fundamental to the alternating

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[1] Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 206-7.
[2] The opening section of Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar Straus, Giroux: 1984), is titled "The Fear of being Touched."
[3] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994), 104.
[4] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 105.
[5] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 273.

opposition of McLuhan's argument, *Understanding Media* can't simply be reclaimed and realigned for consideration of what was new in digital media.

The allegory of changes brought about by digitalization can be found in the recent past of horror entertainment as the returns to the big and small screen of zombie, vampire, and Devil, among ever more figures of occult and psycho horror. These returns on our investment in projection emerged out of the shakeup of all the horror genres and subgenres, which, since the end of the 1980s, we watched in succession and cross section as they hustled each other (and us) for a place in the foreground of film culture. The deregulation and all-inclusion of horror entertainment in all its pre-existing parts issued from the closing phase of what can be called the Psycho Effect, the metabolization of the traumatic impact of Hitchcock's shower scene, which commenced in the 1960s and lost its momentum as Slasher cinema by the late 1980s or, at the latest, in the course of the 1990s. Even the most recent developments on the screen of horror entertainment, around the new millennium, which have ultimately brought back vampirism as template for the return of every figuration of horror, reflect on the outcome of the inoculation crisis – the achieved dismantling of opposition at the close of the era of the Psycho Effect. The film that first raised to consciousness the ending of the Effect but as its last and lasting understanding inside new media was *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

The concomitant pressures of mass mediatization had occupied the foreground of horror films of fragmentation, disfigurement, masking, unmasking, and doubling. In 1984 the rebound from the projected digital acme of mass or global dominance of live media as interactive surrealism became the premise of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. We entered the borderland of dream and psychosis in our encounter with violence under all-pervasive conditions of live surveillance, which the horror film was already well equipped to stage and reformat as the self-reflexivity of its own medium nature between film proper and its hybrid predicament with TV. In the course of the reception of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, to which *A Nightmare on Elm Street* still belonged, albeit at the tail end of trying to wag the already sleeping dog, film was becoming more and more like television – just as film reception was becoming continuous with TV reception. Acting out or group therapy in front of the set or screen was in the 1980s as important as watching the visuals.

What was also fundamentally different about the frame of reference of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, however, was that it penetrated a new space of privacy, no longer the bathroom as in *Psycho*, the first film to show a toilet flush, but now the sleeping, dreaming mind. Skipping the private space where the victim faced the look of trauma at close quarters, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* slashed the boundaries between dreaming and waking to open up, ultimately, hallucinatory, psychosis-like, dream states or cyberspaces of loss and torment. The parents wanted to sleep or pass out – wanted to forget – while the kids tried to stay awake because they couldn't sleep on it: the parental repressed was too dangerous.

*A Nightmare on Elm Street* was the summit or summation of the Psycho Effect, which already was in the decline of its containment, but which as ultimate nightmare backfired for one last hurrah. Jacques Derrida pointed out on several occasions, but in the mode of a sustained reading in *Rogues*, that the problems of auto-immunity that came to our attention via the AIDS crisis (during the span of time *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and its sequels occupied, even cathected in the first sequel in terms of a new homosexual panic) can also apply to any system that relies on immunity or immunization to protect itself against external dangers, such as violence, as spectacularly represented in scenes of psycho killing. Such a system runs the risk of turning against itself, containing the violence, for example, to the point of containing or neutralizing the vitality to be protected, and turning even the survivor body into its own anti-body. That is the significance of the

destabilization of the boundaries of reality, sanity, or health in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. At the conclusion of the Psycho Effect Freddy Krueger offered last call for the shower that, as its German cognate reminds us, disclosed an essence of horror or *Schauer*. It took its last stand and understanding within the props department of the contained effect but now in your dreams, and drew on the contained trauma to dismantle psychic reality as safely grounded in the certain boundary between dreaming and the waking state.

Freddy Krueger's knife hand tore tracks through cloth, which was continuous with the movie screen itself. The glove, which also bore the date mark of its own history as cyber glove, was the key in the legend to the surreal special effects that kept the audience coming back for more. But this phantasmagoria was also what soon dated the franchise. The analogical mapping in anticipation of the prospect of digital mediation and its special effects, conducted in the *Nightmare* franchise as boundary blending between dream and reality, under the aegis, however, of surveillance, is another exhibit for the wonder room of projected futures.

At the border to the digital media the reality shock of the new was staged as virtual reality with Freddy Krueger's glove leading as navigation device into so-called cyber space. In conversation with Paul Virillio, Friedrich Kittler pointed out that virtual reality would only then commence when one monitor was portal to all mediatic transmissions. In the early 1980s TV was still in the way, overstaying its welcome on the mat of the new, overdetermining the imagining of the digital change as narcissism of chaos at a border that could still be projected as cutting edge inside the frame of self-reflexivity. In the 1960s McLuhan saw through the phantasmagoria of the new but his futural reading was premature, another collectible condemned site of projection. What was "new" about the digital medium was the total synthetic access it afforded both synchronically as sensorium and diachronically as medium of return of every name, era, and category in history. The novelty item in the genealogy of media since the early nineteenth century is and remains live transmission, as phantasm and ever growing approximation. The digital relation is the closest fulfilment of our fantastic preoccupation with supplemented simultaneity. What it redelivered as immediately accessible in a space of extended simultaneity was not so much a flow of information as the total archive complete with its demarcations for renewed access, its internal returns.

The less said in identification of what's new in mediation the more attention can be given its allegorization, which, as Walter Benjamin advised, commences as topical application on contact with current events and politics in the news. If the trauma of psycho violence in the slasher movies reached the vanishing point of immunization out of which a final afterimage could be projected in deep psychic space in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the splatter genre of living death came back during the Reagan and Bush years to symptomatize a kind of posttraumatic retraumatization. The most recent showdown with zombie projections took place in the setting of occult horror, the place of origin of splatter zombies. George Romero's turn to the living dead, his invention of the splatter zombies, was influenced by Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, in which a mass culture of ghouls developed out of an epidemic spread of vampirism that thus came to be group-psychologized, a predicament against which the melancholic dyad of traditional undeath was no longer proof. In fact Matheson's protagonist, the last man who would survive the daily happy hour of zombie assault upon his fortress home, which doubles as the crypt of his recent past, is also arguably the last vampire.

In occult horror the relationship to living death is the topical application – the zombies are us – which vampiric undeath came to restore to the exigency of melancholic reading. Vampirism made a comeback in the breakup of the

monopolization of the culture industry by zombie projections. It also marked a shift in the reception of psychopathic violence. As a thrill-a-kill enterprise the consumerism of zombie films carried the violence forward in the absence of empathy for the dead, which as the living dead are free game for second death or murder. The violence surrounding the zombies in splatter movies was nevertheless, in alternation with the psycho violence of slasher films, a metabolic option for the tracking or derailment of the Psycho Effect. *Night of the Living Dead* packed inside its cellar of thwarted survival the first therapeutically altered or heightened citation of the shower scene. Typically and topically by dint of the politics of the mishap of the black survivor's extermination as another zombie, Romero's film was also the first instance of a backfiring intervention that required its own containing sequelization. In the zombie films that followed, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Day of the Dead* (1985), Romero mounted in each case a decade-specific socio-political allegory.

It was the return of vampirism however that was open to all aspects of integration. It is hard to imagine how zombies could not be more of the same. In time for the new millennium it was indeed the vampires who were changing. Whereas bloodsucking was routinely interpreted in the era before as metaphor for genital sexuality, the vampire fictions themselves began to flesh or flush out the pre-Oedipal blood bond with the fully sexual bodies of our undead neighbors (for example, in the film *Blade* and the TV series *True Blood*). The plot points of *Blade* and its sequels – including deregulation of the bloodline (and even of the lust for blood) within vampirism (and, as always, in humankind's relationship to undeath) – were symptomatically in sync with the development of genital sexuality against a backdrop of race relations. Though there were several short-lived entries in the past, it was with *Blade* that the African-American body was integrated in the mainstream of vampirism reception and fabulation. Before the racist phantasm of purity could be addressed or redressed within this reception, vampirism had to undergo the kind of development that admitted full frontal genital sexuality for the undead. That vampiric existence would become integrated as sexually embodied in close association with the political integrations of the African-American body condenses histories of the touch taboo and its mass psychological dissolution that are legend to the mapping of integration not only in the United States.

In *Dead Until Dark*, the novel by Charlaine Harris on which the first season of *True Blood* was largely based, the narrative seemed to lose the momentum of first contact once mortal Sookie and her vampire boyfriend Bill started having regular sex. By the second novel, when Harris borrowed elements from the fantasy genre (maenads and dragons), she appeared to be already at the last resort of reader stimulation. But these appearances were deceiving. Now that vampires were real all other fictional figures pressed for realization. And yet the occult and fantasy genres had been historically as opposed as necromancy and Christianity. Whenever the genres were brought together Christianity would guide necromancy into the light (the unbearable outcome of most ghost movies, from *Poltergeist* and *Ghost* all the way to *The Sixth Sense*). We found ourselves headed off at this impasse watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. When in season six, Buffy was in deep despair over her return to life from Heaven, even wearing shades couldn't save the show from its own apocalypse. But in the muddle of the new genre deregulation in *True Blood* the entry of the maenad did not bring down the house that all-out integration had built.

In *True Blood* the mortals know that once you go with a vampire there's no going back. "Fang banging" proves as addictive as ingestion of vampire blood (marketed as the drug V). For the vampires it was "out of the coffin" into the desire. What the TV series added to Harris's novels was a far greater development of the African American contingent, beginning with Sookie's BFF Tara, whose cousin Lafayette occupied or cathected the hub where black, gay, and vampire

rights met and crossed over. Coming out applies for all vampires, who are more often than not "straight." The greatest contribution of the African American figures was their resistance to the fictional world suspended between occult and fantasy genres, which, paradoxically perhaps, gave that world traction and reality effect. Immunity to complete vampirism, which was the big idea behind *Blade*, was revalorized in *True Blood* as a fact of everyday life.

The vampire's return displaced from the screen the dominance of zombie films we watched throughout the Bush years. The turn to vampires demonstrated a renewed capacity for affirmation of life as undeath rather than as zombie murder. Identification with the dead or undead had again become possible. (That one doesn't identify with your average zombie is the flash point of our consumption of those films).

In 2007 *Thirty Days of Night* supplied a transitional objective in the course of switching over from zombies to vampires. It peeled vampirism off the back of the zombie invasion, beginning with the title, which smuggled quality time for vampires into the generic countdown to mass contagion. Though they resembled zombies, the vampires were linguistic creatures and thus took their understanding, like the members of the original massification of vampirism in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, between zombies and vampires. The film title's published schedule counted down to survival. With the first new dawn the vampire invasion was out of there. The transitional state of these vampires was underscored on the human side. The mortal leader of the group of survivors injected himself with vampire blood so he could combat the undead chieftain on a level dying field. After he triumphed he stayed put for the sunrise. He turned to ashes while in the grieving embrace of the one he died for. What takes us out of the zombie equation between surviving and killing is this prospect of our dead loved ones living and dying for our survival.

In *True Blood*, vampires, now lodged in sexual bodies, could be openly integrated as minority members within a socius comprised of countless special interests, including those of every occult figuration imaginable across genres. Integration described neither a happy harmony nor did it admit inimical interests as equal and opposing. The Christian Right was also admitted as dedicated to the destruction of undead integration but its dialectical opposition had lost its footing in the ever expanding crowd of minority interests. The melting pot model was left behind, together with its paranoid variation as melting plot. Instead there was integration of parts held or brought together without opposition.

The phenomenon of integration would appear to have replaced the "democratic" process between politics and psychosis. Nietzsche treated the process diagnostically, as did Freud.[6] The literalization of equality represented a kind of psychotic breakdown of distinction itself, and thus of thought or language. Although it hasn't been addressed in a word or buzzword as was democratization, integration has come to represent the breaking new in relation to difference. The relationship to democracy never withdrew from opposition. But opposition has been dislodged from integration. While philosophers were for or against democratization, when integration emerged in the Soviet Union during glasnost (the admission or return of democracy alongside communism, which was also re-turning in its many historical parts) Derrida was flown in to co-sign the event as deconstruction. In the prehistory of integration lies deconstruction.

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[6] Rejections by the famous of democratization as symptomatic group psychology inimical to standards of thinking are well known. Indeed this tendency is internal to the first treatises on crowd psychology. It is moreover possible to align the tendency, which had an earlier start, with the growing apprehension following WWI that borderline psychotic states, like dissociation, were preparing the way for a new norm.

The remetabolization on the screen of horror of all aspects of its representation and history, bringing back the zombie, the vampire, the Devil, and the psycho killer, among other figurations, crowded the project of integration like the pack of teenagers in the fifties shoved inside a telephone booth. But the digital relation can accept all entries, but as returns. Whatever was back was recognizable, to be sure, but now, in sync with the total synthetic accessibility of the digital archive, it was no longer immersed in the aura of the old oppositions, like the opposition between film's final cut and video editing.

A TV show like *True Blood*, therefore, was a syndication of the United States in the news with an African American president and an insurgent Christian Right, for example, among the many parts that seemed together again in a crowd of return engagements. Barack Obama's election was not so much the realization of the Civil Rights struggle, the resolution at the end of the opposition for and against integration, as the return of that era in the midst of all the other returns. The new developments in our return engagement with vampirism demonstrated that the medium of the turn or return to integration was the sexual embodiment of the psyche, conceived, however, as achievement.

When D. W. Winnicott expanded on the significance of integration in his unfinished summary work *Human Nature*, he underscored that integration was one out of two developmental moments interrelated as "achievements." For the first, integration itself, Winnicott liked to turn to Humpty-Dumpty as illustration ever since his psychotic child patient "Bob" made it his Dasein-rhyme: "it is useful to think of the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty and the reasons for its universal appeal. Evidently there is a general feeling, not available to consciousness, that integration is a precarious state. The nursery rhyme perhaps appeals because it acknowledges personal integration as an achievement." [7] The lodging of the psyche in the body is the other achievement.

When we jump out of our skin we reflect a disturbance unsettling integration itself. Achieved integration carries forward the internalization of respite that the transitional object introduced. The disturbance associated with paranoia, which has its integrative moment in attack as best defense, by and large exemplifies an oppositional momentum of integration from which essential rest has been withdrawn or mutated as arrest. The disturbance is as basic as the reaction or overreaction to environmental changes which do not originate in personal impulsive experience: "there is an interruption of being, and the place of being is taken by reaction to impingement." [8] Or again: "The gathering together of the self constitutes an act of hostility to the NOT-ME, and a return to rest is not a return to a resting place, because the place has been altered, and has become dangerous." [9] At the other end of the transitional obstacle course there is the double achievement of integration and – or as – the lodging of the psyche in the body. "The idea of a ghost, a disembodied spirit, derives from this lack of essential anchoring of the psyche in the soma, and the value of the ghost story lies in its drawing attention to the precariousness of psyche-soma coexistence." [10]

To understand why Winnicott in his day says that psyche-soma coexistence or integration is so precarious we would have to go directly to Klein's final unfinished essay "On the Sense of Loneliness" where she argues that the sense or direction of loneliness, of irretrievable loss, must come at the end of the inevitable falling short of integration. Klein introduced integration into the lexicon of psychoanalytic theory in her 1940 essay "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States." Given the silent partnership of integration in her

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[7] D. W. Winnicott, *Human Nature*. (London: Free Association Books, 1999), 117-18.
[8] Winnicott, *Human Nature*, 127.
[9] Winnicott, *Human Nature*, 124.
[10] Winnicott, *Human Nature*, 122.

mourning work, it is hardly surprising that integration would prove imperfectible. But loneliness, according to Klein's posthumously published essay, is also the new frontier of relationality. The fraying at the edges of psyche-soma coexistence breaks us up among our parts which however share the sense of loneliness. As Klein concludes: "The lost parts too, are felt to be lonely."[11] Given time I would want to argue that this relational loneliness that arises in the shortfall of integration can be reclaimed as the revaluation and return of melancholia as lonely parts club within the modalities of digitalization and integration. It would then be possible to read between the lines of the express disappointment of an oppositional diehard like Slavoi Žižek that the occupy movement was not politically recognizable or responsible, a disappointment he blamed on the contemporary condition of so-called melancholia. To be sure, whatever 99% occupy can only be considered, in the range of its literal equivalency in psychoanalytic theory, as *Besetzung* or cathexis, which brings the words of the Californian adherent of the movement on its pleasure principle, Žižek's ridicule notwithstanding, closer to the basis.

One of the contemporary pageants of big name theory was convened at this time on the politics of mourning: Judith Butler's latecomer revalorization of aberrant mourning met Žižek's straight talk on behalf of successful mourning. As I tried to show in my best text-side manner as philologist,[12] the essay by Freud that advanced the distinction in its title does not address melancholia on the same turf and terms of object relationship as mourning. This was the gap that Klein sought to redress through her rereading of Freud's threefold turn to reality testing in that essay. Otherwise melancholia is endless mourning but without the object relation, clinical depression by another name. To track Freud's distinction between successful and aberrant mourning over the loss of an object we must consider, in the place of the Standard Edition's report of the missingness of the theory of projection that Freud announced at the end of his Schreber study as coming soon, Freud's exploration of unmourning in *Totem and Taboo* in terms of haunting projection, a foregone conclusion in Lacanian theory, but which was stowaway in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's introduction of cryptonymy, the return of Freud.

The ghost Winnicott summoned to figure the precariousness of the double achievement of both integration and the psyche's sexual embodiment cannot of course be given up once and for all. Indeed the returns of integration book passage as haunting, but without the spooking of conflict. No longer an outsider specialization, a scratch in the record of the media, ghostly return is now all pervasive and like the human microphone in the occupy movement integrates the very stance of opposition as another return or echo.

Žižek was right to underscore that the occupy movement undoes outsourcing, which, as the syndication of what Klein understood as projective identification, belongs to emergency lines of defense in opposition. What the psychic economy ultimately defends against is fear of integration, often, as Klein advises, through increase of "omnipotent and even megalomanic phantasies."[13] But what would thus be protected from repressed impulses is a good object, which reflects a split not an opposition. The increase in 1% megalomania would not, then, reflect or call for a reinstatement of political opposition. That opposition already returned as echo among all the other returned and returning names, eras, aspects, and features of history.

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[11]  Melanie Klein, „On the Sense of Loneliness," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 302.

[12]  See my *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 17-18.

[13]  Melanie Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 224.

Beginning with *Psycho* we entered the close quarters of direct or first contact with trauma, with the look of trauma. We occupied for the duration of the Psycho Effect – the two to three decade long phase of our working through it – the staging area of our immunization against the annihilation of the shock of disconnection. With *A Nightmare on Elm Street* we entered the inoculation itself lodged on the border to psychosis. Other words for the subsequent advent of integration, as heralded by psyche-soma coexistence for the undead, but this would be the topic for another, much longer essay, would be that the onset of the capacity for mourning, no longer up to individual development alone, where it could be left, hit or miss, in the mode of outsourcing, was now fully upon the socius.

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