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**DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SACRED, ONTOLOGIES OF
MONSTROSITY: APOPHATIC APPROACHES IN LATE
MODERNIST CINEMA**

A Dissertation Presented

By

SCOTT VANGEL

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2016

Comparative Literature

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SCOTT VANGEL

Approved as to Style and Content by:

Catherine Portuges, Chair

Donald Maddox, Member

Barton Byg, Member

David Lenson, Member

William Moebius, Director
Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Edwin Gentzler, Program Director
Comparative Literature

ABSTRACT

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SACRED, ONTOLOGIES OF MONSTROSITY: APOPHATIC APPROACHES IN LATE MODERNIST CINEMA

MAY 2016

SCOTT VANGEL, B.A., FRAMINGHAM STAT UNIVERSITY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Catherine Portugues

In this dissertation I compare apophatic[i] approaches including those associated with Christian mysticism, early postmodern thought and the literature of Gothic monstrosity through their collective emergence in late-twentieth century modernist cinema. I identify confluences between these and related theoretical strains with regard to metaphysics, ontology, ethics and mimesis. The dissertation is structured around concepts relative to limit-experience including death's impossibility, the gift and phenomenological excess culled from texts such as Jacques Derrida's *Donner la mort* (1999), Emmanuel Levinas' *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* (1961), Maurice Blanchot's *L'écriture du désastre* (1980), and Jean-Luc Marion's *De Surcroît: Études sur les phénomènes saturés* (2001). After establishing connections between these texts and earlier works, including Denys' [ii] "Mystical Theology" (circa Fifth Century) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818, revised in 1831), I provide close readings of late modernist films illustrative of this inheritance. I compare the

manner in which films such as Georges Franju's *Les yeux sans visage* (1959), Roberto Rossellini's *Europa '51* (1952), Carl Dreyer's *Ordet* (1956), Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962), Robert Bresson's *Le diable, probablement* (1978) and R.W. Fassbinder's *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (1982) utilize singular formal strategies influenced by or reminiscent of those of the aforementioned sources to flout reductive tendencies inherent in representation, semiotics and visual reception.

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INTRODUCTION

“REFUSING TO READ IN ORDER TO BE BETTER ABLE TO SEE”¹

“To show the world and its reality as they are prior to our gaze, and therefore outside of it, is to desire another relationship with the visual than that which leads to understanding it. At this point in the history of the visual arts, the desire to see without reading is not a regression toward the absence of meaning but, on the contrary, an advance to the very heart of things, and often the setting aside of the subject and its consciousness, which have become burdensome”

Jacques Aumont (128).

“It’s the bad combination, it’s the wrong synthesis, made by the eye as it looks around, that keeps us from seeing everything as strange”

Georges Franju (Durgnat, 2).

In this dissertation I analyze cinematic strategies reliant upon negative or apophatic means. In *Philosophy of the Unsayable* (2014), William Franke describes apophatic and negative theology as “a kind of perennial counter-philosophy to the philosophy of Logos,” emphasizing “that what is not and even cannot be said is actually the basis for all that is said” (Franke, 1). “Negative theology is not so much a theology or a philosophy as a dimension inherent to thought – precisely what escapes it in all its forms, hence its formless, unformulatable ground” (296). Thus, this dissertation focalizes cinematic formal treatments that, often paradoxically, call attention to that which cannot be visualized or conceptualized.

I compare apophatic approaches associated with Christian mysticism, early postmodern thought and the literature of Gothic monstrosity through their collective emergence in late-twentieth century modernist cinema. I identify confluences and related theoretical strains with regard to metaphysics, ontology, ethics and mimesis. The

dissertation is structured around concepts relative to limit-experience including “*l'impossibilité de la mort*,” “*le non pensé*” as well as “*les phénomènes saturés*” culled from texts such as Emmanuel Levinas’ *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'extériorité* (1961), Maurice Blanchot’s *L'écriture du désastre* (1980), Gilles Deleuze’s *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement* (1983) and Jean-Luc Marion’s *De Surcroît: Études sur les phénomènes saturés* (2001). After establishing connections between these texts and earlier works, including Denys’² *Mystical Theology* (circa sixth century) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818, revised in 1831), I provide close readings of late modernist films illustrative of this inheritance. I compare the manner in which films such as Georges Franju’s *Les yeux sans visage* (*Eyes without a Face*, 1959), Roberto Rossellini’s *Europa '51* (1952), Carl Theodore Dreyer’s *Ordet* (*The Word*, 1956), Jean-Luc Godard’s *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962), Robert Bresson’s *Le diable, probablement* (*The Devil, Probably*, 1978) and R.W. Fassbinder’s *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (*Veronika Voss*, 1982) utilize formal strategies influenced by or reminiscent of these approaches to flout reductive tendencies inherent in representation, semiotics and visual reception.

I analyze the manner in which filmic strategies, as much as diegetic content, introduce ontological and ethical concerns through approaches that test and exceed the limits of conception and representation. Through strategies predicated upon moments or sequences resistant to ‘reading’ and cognitive apprehension, I suggest that directors such as Franju and Bresson frustrate scopophilia and epistophilia - the drives to see and to comprehend - intrinsic to spectatorship.³ These films, I go on to argue, belie expectations developed through a legacy conditioned by the distantiated, monocular viewpoint

inherent in Cartesian perspectivalism, the proliferation of spectacle emergent in the nineteenth century and the privileging of vision over other senses.⁴

Efforts to foster “another relationship with the visual than that which leads to understanding it” (Aumont, 128) proceed through affective methods manifested as bodily shock and cognitive strain, sensory disorientation or beguilement. I will thus utilize the term affect as it is applied in Gilles Deleuze’s work on cinema. In *Cinéma I: L’image mouvement* (1983), Deleuze’s use of the term is derived directly from Bergson’s thoughts on attentive recollection, a concept that is integral to the former’s theories on art and cinema. Affect is sensible data that is not organized into meaning. Derived from the senses, as opposed to the intellect, affect is in many ways the opposite of a concept. Concepts provide order, allow us “to think a form or connection without sensibility” (Herzog, 64) thus giving shape to one’s thought, whereas affect interrupts synthesis and order. Art often functions by taking us back from composites of experience to the affects from which those synthesized wholes emerge. Affect is thus “a state of possibility prior to any linkage in a system of signification, or to a sequence of action/reaction,” a form of pre-personal perception which results in “a marked indeterminacy between perception and action” (Herzog, 64).

The sophisticated formal systems found in the aforementioned films maximize means typical of the seventh art that are conducive to affect. Through its ability to ‘make present’ without imbuing with decisive meaning or eliciting interpretation, cinema can estrange familiar entities, separate them from their use value and normative function.⁵ Film scenarios can be constructed so as to connect visible entities, both within a single shot and through editorial juxtaposition, in ways that complicate cultivated sensibility.

Offscreen space and diegetic sound can be utilized to alienate cause from effect or suggest presence in absence. Such attributes, then, allow these films to realize artistic and theological aims that may exceed and escape cognitive and visual apprehension or incorporation.⁶

Each film addressed is predicated upon allusions to that which lies beyond the frame, gesturing toward the proposition that there is significantly more and other than what might be conceived of or apprehended visually. Each chapter aims to illustrate the self-reflexive manner of these approaches, interpellating Dudley Andrew's reference to André Bazin's evocation of "the emptiness at the core of cinema" (Andrew 2010, 10). In this way, the visible is conditioned and saturated by absence, the 'presence of absence' made palpable evoking the radically alterior, God, the unsayable, or impossible.⁷ Beyond contemporary influences including the theories of Bertolt Brecht, Paul Cézanne and the Surrealists, films such as *Ordet* and *Le diable, probablement* restore an experiential emphasis linked to strategies deployed by earlier seekers of an unmediated relation to God.

Utilizing postmodern theories of the impossible, apophatic theologies and negative anthropologies,⁸ these films are subjected to examination of the individual in relation to radical alterity and mortality. Negative theological and post-Heideggerian thanatological concerns regarding the inscrutability of both God and the human subject are contrasted with the reduction of God to a function of human subjectivity, placing death in an intelligible, dialectical relation to life.

By comparing literary, theoretical and filmic examples of the encounter with death, God and/or the radically alterior, I draw upon appropriations of Biblical, Classical and modern literary figures from these texts, including interdictions against gazing directly upon God, gods or monsters.

Juxtaposing Christ and Faust, Narcissus and Medusa, with modern figures such as Dorian Gray and Carmilla Karnstein, I hope to elucidate the limits of language and vision when reductive rhetorical, scopic and technological structures are applied to the unknowable. The descent of Orpheus to gaze upon his beloved Eurydice, Moses' ascent and God's interdiction of the impertinent gaze, will serve as paradigms. I will deploy Blanchot's and Shelley's variations on the relation between language, art and death through a visualized, life-altering encounter with the origins and secrets of creation sequestered within the tomb.⁹ Conversely, Moses implores God to reveal his face, only to be told: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). This scenario will be examined through Denys' "Mystical Theology," a brief treatise in which the story of Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai is the model for the initiate's path toward God.

These stories of mortality and transcendence, scopic impertinence and the face of the other as radically other are reliant upon apophatic critiques of representation that manifest conceptual and experiential limits. That which is radically alterior to existence provides, as Thomas Carlson states, for "the possibility of all experience (of all language, all thought) even as, or precisely because, it remains in a fundamental sense beyond such experience" (Carlson 246). The face of Eurydice, God or the Gorgon is representative of the privileged place wherein radical alterity emerges in all its

prohibitive, annihilating power. The trials experienced by Bresson's thief Michel (of *Pickpocket*, 1959) and the suspected witch Anne of *Vredens dag* (*Day of Wrath*, 1943) upend the foundations of subjectivity by calling into question all we are able to say, see and know. Apophatic strategies and the limit experience toward which their practitioners are drawn thus "force a confrontation with the aporias of 'unknowing,' a confrontation with the multiple, irreducible and...finally promising uncertainties that befall us when, in our experience, we no longer know quite who we are, or what we desire" (Carlson, 239).

When "We No Longer Believe in this World:" Postwar Cinema and Estranged Perspective

Trauma, upheaval and loss of faith intrinsic to the experience of war and its aftermath deeply mark films of the postwar era, impelling practitioners to examine the tenuous relation between the individual and a seemingly alien, alienating world. A liminal existence is reflected in figures such as Bresson's tormented priest, in *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*, 1951), Dreyer's mad Kierkegaard scholar Johannes in *Ordet* and Rossellini's modern-day Joan of Arc figure, Irene, in *Europa '51*.

With estrangement the predominant condition, these films focus on identity and isolation, excessive, alienated consciousness and humans mired between perception and action, with a tentative grasp on their own motivations. In postwar cinema, as Deleuze has noted, characters look out upon a modern (reconstructed, highly commercialized, increasingly technologized) scenario in which they are incapable of participating:

“Le fait moderne, c’est que nous ne croyons plus en ce monde. Nous ne croyons même pas aux événements qui nous arrivent, l’amour, la mort, comme s’ils ne nous concernaient qu’à moitié. Ce n’est pas nous qui faisons du cinéma, c’est le monde qui nous apparaît comme un mauvais film...C’est le lien de l’homme et du monde qui se trouve rompu” (Deleuze 1985, 224).

The directors I explore here devise novel approaches through which to address cultures mired in such a sense of malaise, meaninglessness, incoherence and the exhaustion of individual and collective energies.

In the aftermath of World War II, Rossellini, Franju and other filmmakers countered the codified methods of classical Hollywood narrative cinema, built upon continuity and seemingly realistic representation.¹⁰ Instead, they embraced the potential mined by earlier directors such as Georges Méliès, F.W. Murnau, Cecil Hepworth, and Louis Feuillade to create new opportunities through which to interrogate subjectivity, in the process seeking to affect new modes of cognition, perception and perhaps even alternate modes of being. In doing so, Bresson, Dreyer and Rossellini devised formal strategies that drew upon apophatic methods. Paucity of expression and automatism freed characters from the nuances of persona, upending facile means of viewer identification while leaving character motivation and agency uncertain, rendering humans slightly inhuman.¹¹ The undoing of a relation between action and agency, and between cause and effect, diminishes logical connections and confounds viewer expectations.

Action, event or entity could thus be rendered in and of itself, these elements losing predicative relation as they are separated or taken apart. A more fragmented, often elliptical presentation divides not only the body but aspects of the surrounding world, problematizing interconnections while breaking down coherent spatial and temporal boundaries.¹²

In diminishing correlation to normative cinematic as well as everyday experience, these directors could distance the viewer's relation to a protagonist in ways similar to that between the protagonist and a postwar diegetic scenario. While navigation of the postwar landscape holds both the threat of dissolution and potential escape, modernist formal strategies often leave the spectator to draw his or her own conclusions with regard to a character's ultimate fate.

The remainder of this dissertation is composed of four chapters. In Chapter 1, "Where Language and Gaze Fail: The Face of the Other as Radically Other in Philosophy and Theology, Literature and Film," I examine the work of seminal theological, postmodern and Gothic writers working at the limits of language, utilizing scenarios illustrative of the limits of vision. Each of the three works - Denys' *The Mystical Theology*, Blanchot's "Le regard d'Orphée" (1953) and Shelley's *Frankenstein* - focalizes a life-altering encounter between a gaze and a face illustrative of what cannot be seen, spoken of or processed. Each piece utilizes a unique linguistic strategy to evoke its hidden source or Cause, that which allows for the operation of language but can never be encompassed within it. Reading André Bazin's "L'ontologie de l'image photographique" (1945), I go on to explore similar approaches to visual and representational limits, faciality and alterity, as they emerge in early cinema. Utilizing the work of Bazin, Gilles Deleuze and others, I briefly discuss their representation in the horror and spiritual genres of the postwar period, and how they will be focalized in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 2, "Giving Face, De-Facing, Figuration and Disfigurement:¹³ A Poetics of Flesh and Blood in Franju's *Les yeux sans visage*," I turn to Maurice Blanchot and Giorgio Agamben to address subjectivity, representation and ethics fundamental to

Gothic horror. Having established, in Chapter 1, the centrality of the Orpheus myth, with its constellation of writing and death, responsibility and “l’interdiction de voir” (Blanchot 1980, 195) to the work of both Blanchot and Shelley, I go on to relate the tales to Franju’s film. *Les yeux sans visage* focalizes Dr. Génessier’s experiments in rejuvenation and his efforts to restore the face of his daughter after his reckless driving results in a crash that leaves her severely disfigured. I examine Franju’s focus on blindness and reductive visual orientation, emblemized by a doctor whose quest entails removing the faces and taking the lives of other young girls.

Génessier evokes Victor Frankenstein, the obsessive, totalizing autobiographer who goes on to ‘write’ utilizing a technology, the raw materials of which, are real “flesh and blood,”¹⁴ and whose efforts toward complete control betray his inability to define or control his radically alterior ‘creation’/daughter. A claustrophobic, intensified distillation of the dynamics of fascism and the horrors of *l’univers concentrationnaire* echoing in everyday bourgeois life, the film thus exacerbates Shelley’s trepidation toward totalizing artistic and technological aspirations. Manifestation of disaster appears through the eroding of binaries including those separating the horrors of the recent past and present-day events, the historical and fictive.

While the classic early Weimar and 1930s Hollywood horror films that inspired the director registered a dire world-view emerging in the wake of WWI and The Great Depression, Franju creates one of the earliest post-Mengele ‘mad science’ films. Without direct reference to events surrounding WW II, Franju proceeds through allusion and allegorical fragments that avoid representation in favor of generating a troubling resonance.¹⁵ Franju evokes the representational lacuna that is the Gorgon and other

myths that enjoin against an impudent, incorporating gaze. I discuss formal similarities between Franju's depiction of Christiane and that of the Gorgon in Greek art in order to establish a link with Agamben's evocation of the Gorgon¹⁶ in relation to the "impossibility of seeing" (72) as the impossibility of death, experienced by prisoners of the concentration camps.

Chapter 3, "...Si On Ne Veut Pas Tomber dans la Représentation:"¹⁷ Escaping a Prisonhouse of Language, Gaze and Technology in Bresson's *Le diable, probablement*," discusses the influence of the apophatic linguistic and behavioral strategies of Pascal on Bresson, with particular focus on the evolution of the critical role of automatism in Bresson. I begin with Pascal's view of the capacity of fastidious, habit-related behavior to undermine inherited signifying structures and rid the individual of affectation as well as a falsely inflated sense of self. Realizing that those lacking faith and humility cannot come to believe merely through force of will, Pascal encourages his readers to immerse themselves in the daily rituals of the believer with the understanding that, through increasingly automatic, internalized behavior, sympathies will increasingly align with habit.¹⁸

In Bresson's enigmatic *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951) behavioral patterns that come to mark his protagonists are established. The estranged Priest's self-indulgent, obsessive journal-keeping, indicative of a grandiose desire to control others by ridding his small parish of sin, inadvertently leads him to reign in his misdirected energies, suspend his crusade and accept his apparent martyrdom. In Bresson's films of the 1950s, praxis initiated as a means to mastery paradoxically leads to the effacement of self-will as well as a univocal conception of experience, while engendering humility

before the forces of external circumstance and chance. This pattern is best illustrated in *Pickpocket* (1959), wherein the skilled handiwork of thief Michel leads not to intended sovereignty but, through a chain of coincidence that he calls “des chemins étranges” to incarceration, humiliation, and finally to love and freedom from estrangement.

The chapter culminates in an analysis of *Le diable, probablement* from which diegetic emphasis on automatism is conspicuously absent, as the “strange paths” give way to “new paths,” born of intended pure freedom of will and desire that impede human capacity to accept what is beyond the merely given. The emphasis on automatic behavior is belied by the depiction of an automated world overrun by machines of environmental destruction, the uniformly pumping pistons and swinging hoses displaying a (hideous) vitality all-but-absent from the rigid, expressionless beings that aimlessly traverse the film’s cold, ultra-modern mise-en-scène.

In a meditation on the horrors of pollution and the vapidness of modern commercial society that focalizes Charles’s search for meaning, eventually all institutions and ideologies are dispatched as Charles’ inability to compromise drives him to take his own life. Ultimately I address the seeming incongruity between the dire thematic focus and the film’s formal strategy. Bresson’s most comprehensive use of ellipses, fragmentation, and sound to present effect without cause characterizes this film as one dedicated to the eliciting of reception outside of cognition, what Marion calls intuition of excess.¹⁹

Chapter 4, “All that I Have Left to Give You Is My Death: The Passionless Christ and the Longing of R.W. Fassbinder in *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss*,” returns to representations of liminal existence and living death, including the Gothic and filmic

monsters and vampires discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, in order to consider Fassbinder's deconstruction of representation and identity in his self-reflexive penultimate film, *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* (*Veronika Voss*, 1982).

Influenced by both Gothic and modern spiritual films, *Veronika Voss* is set during Germany's postwar "Wirtschaftswunder" and concerns a drug-addicted former starlet of the Goebbels-run UFA film studios who desperately clings to her once-illustrious image. Mirroring both its title character and its representation of Germany, the film is composed of a dense pastiche of opposites and contradictions wherein life and death, past and present, official history and memory, as well as biography and autobiography, are inextricably buried within representation and simulacra.

Identity emerges as a series of performances conditioned by power dictated by wealth and social circumstance. This relation recalls previously discussed deconstructive treatments of subjectivity reflected in Bazin's seminal essay, "L'ontologie de l'image photographique," (1945), Robert Wiene's *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* (1919), and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871). In the latter novella, a series of similar middle-and lower-class female victims are consumed and incorporated, each providing additional dimension to the deceptive, multifaceted incarnation of the vampire. I go on to analyze *Veronika Voss*, wherein Voss' drug-dealer, Dr. Katz, represents the exploitative, aristocratic undead. As in 1950s European horror films such as *Les yeux sans visage*, Fassbinder refashions the relation between sovereign vampire and exploited lower-class women while offering a microcosm of Germany suggestive of links between the prosperous 1950s and emergent revenants of the Nazi past.

Finally, in order to foreground the film's paradoxical central dichotomy that figures Voss' desperate attempts to fuse matter and spirit, ideal and real life as both Faustian and Christ-like, I trace the origin of themes and motifs of the vampire and mad science tales that influence *Veronika Voss* to the original Faust myth. In dialogue with David Hawkes, Inez Hedges and Paul Coates, I relate the Faust myth's critique of the relation between the rise of autonomous representation and the demise of the human subject or soul to Fassbinder's treatment of fragmented identity in the face of the unrestrained forces of capitalism and the mass media. This approach encourages a more pessimistic reading of the film than traditionally accepted, one that contextualizes reference to Gabriel, the angel of the apocalypse, as well as then-contemporary nuclear experiments, alongside the murder-suicide of the film's dénouement. Through these and other subtle allusions, including those that evoke dire events depicted in his previous films, Fassbinder hints at much darker events on the immediate horizon.

In a conclusion entitled "An Art Representative of Nothing:²⁰ An Ethics of Absence in Postwar Cinema," I return to issues raised in comparing the sacrificial nature of the quest of Moses with that of the unremittingly self-serving Victor Frankenstein, and Blanchot's Orpheus tale, the latter occupying an interpretive middle ground. I return to the postmodern Orpheus and the myth's potential liminal terrain between seeming absolutes, including those of freedom versus entrapment, human versus inhuman, immortality and living death associated with the respective protagonists of Denys's and Shelley's work. In addition to Moses and Frankenstein, figures integral to each chapter, including the Biblical Abraham, as depicted in *Donner la mort*, Nikolai Stavrogin, the anti-hero of Dostoevsky's *Demons* (1872) and the title character of Poe's "William

Wilson” (1839) are analyzed in relation to the protagonists of the postwar films addressed in each chapter.

CHAPTER 1

WHERE LANGUAGE AND GAZE FAIL: THE FACE OF THE OTHER AS RADICALLY OTHER IN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY, LITERATURE AND FILM

The emptiness and distance preserved in Denys' approach to God is best distilled in his most celebrated passage of Moses' yearning to see God's face, pushing "ahead to the summit of the divine ascents. And yet, he does not meet God himself, but contemplates, not him who is invisible, but where he dwells" (Luibheid, 137).²¹ Turning away, God hides its full presence, Moses sees only the back of God. A similar logic accompanies relics such the Shroud of Turin, the Veil of Veronica, as well as the early iconographic paintings of the Eastern church referred to as 'not made by hands'²² – one can only hope to know the sacred or radically exterior by meager traces or shadows left behind.

Even this, however, is enough to leave its permanent mark upon the pursuant. In Denys' *The Mystical Theology*, as well as Blanchot's "Le regard d'Orphée" an encounter with God, monster or other embodiment of the radically exterior, precipitated through apophatic means, is intrinsic to an apophasis of self. The closer the human comes to sacred, hidden secrets of God, death or nature, the closer one comes to transformation through self-dissolution. As Denys describes, the closest one comes to experiencing God is through 'unknowing' or a profound breakdown of cognitive and sensory relation. This notion also permeates Blanchot's text. The freedom described in an apophatic 'emptying of self,' the effacing of self-serving intention and instrumental relation represents the closest humans can come to partaking in the sacred. It also represents a means wherein

the sacred can imbue the text, to be transmitted to varying degrees to an impassioned reader.

Conversely, what leads Victor Frankenstein to a life-shattering encounter with his newly-born creature as it returns his gaze is an obsessive fidelity to maintaining an instrumental, sovereign relation to his world. Even after the birth of this monstrous offspring or double and its ensuing decimation of Victor's life and destruction of his friends and family, Frankenstein refuses responsibility and continues 'playing God.'²³ Even as he remains locked into a battle with the creature, with no choice but to see it through to the end and their mutual demise, Victor remains steadfast in his narcissistic, all-powerful understanding of self. Assertions that Victor's actions are dictated from without begin early in the novel. As opposed to a modicum of accountability he blames fate for his past failings, and suggests that chance - described as "the angel of destruction" (38) - has upended his pursuit of autonomy. Like the Dostoevskian characters that will be discussed presently with regard to Robert Bresson's adaptations of the Russian author's work, a quest for absolute freedom manifests entrapment, desire to see and know all results in (and often from) figurative blindness, as well as a loss of self and sense.

There is much overlap in these renditions of the tales of Victor Frankenstein, Moses and Orpheus, and the stories resonate in unexpected ways. Even while, like Frankenstein, Blanchot's Orpheus flouts the interdiction against gazing, and Blanchot never entirely privileges the sacred, anonymous aspect of writing over the instrumental, he is still described as having been liberated by his proximity to the radically alterior. In this respect he appears to be part Frankenstein, part Moses or, in light of Blanchot's

emphasis on responsibility, passivity and anonymity, Derrida's absolutely faithful Abraham avant la lettre. Throughout this dissertation I focus on the medial state of the postmodern Orpheus in relation to his radically alterior counterparts Eurydice and Medusa, in efforts to exceed dialectical comparison between saint and monster, ethical and unjust, life-affirming and denying, anonymous and vainglorious. I will do so through an analysis of wayward, even monstrous 'saints' and tragic monster-victims such as Charles and Christiane of *Le diable, probablement* and *Les yeux sans visage*, respectively.

In the final section I return to the grave in search of the origins of creation and representation with a discussion of the popular early twentieth century association of cinema with Egyptian religious and burial rites, primarily focusing on André Bazin's influential "L'ontologie de l'image photographique" (1945).²⁴ Perhaps the most significant critical essay addressing the nature of cinematic ontology, as well as epistemology and ethics,²⁵ Bazin's text has long been universally interpreted as proclaiming film's triumph over absence and death. Following recent re-readings by theorists including Dudley Andrew and Louis-Georges Schwartz, I revisit Bazin's essay and its description of cinema as the last word in realism, its impetus akin to Egyptian religion's preservation of life through representation and mummification.

Unlike Victor Frankenstein's totalizing misreading of death's restoration of life within the tomb, Schwartz in particular re-reads the relationship between original being, mummified corpse and statuary - the latter placed within the sarcophagus as potential replacements in case of theft - in Derridean fashion. Schwartz finds in this relation a potential signifying chain capable of engendering *différance*, as binaries including

presence and absence, being and nonbeing are put aside in favor of terms such as trace that do justice to the liminal status of filmic signifiers. Within both the space of the crypt and that of the theater screen, Bazin observes a literal, material iteration of figures inextricably linked to other figures that collectively efface the preeminence of the original as well as traditional assertions of ontology. I go on to discuss influential films by, among others, Robert Wiene, James Whale and Carl Dreyer, in relation to Bazin's text. I do so in order to illustrate the manner in which shock-horror and spiritually-centered films, like the texts under consideration, construct complex formal systems that paradoxically foreground the failings and duplicity inherent in filmic representation and its relation to the gaze of characters within the diegesis as well as that of the spectator.

I begin the process in the ensuing segments of this chapter by illuminating some of the boundaries and similarities between figures, such as Orpheus, that descend to the realm of death in order to return with earthly secrets and those that, like Moses, aspire to ascend to God and leave behind the constraints of quotidian reality and their former subjectivity. Below I outline key elements of mystical philosophy and theology, postmodern theory and literature and the late-Gothic novels of monstrosity that will prove integral to an ongoing examination of the filmic offspring of the aforementioned protean, archetypal characters.

“The Theologians Praise It by Every Name...and as The Nameless One:” The Hierarchies and Endless Aporia of Dionysian Mystical Theology

“If only we lacked sight and knowledge so as to see, so as to know, unseeing and unknowing, that which lies beyond all vision and knowledge.” (*The Mystical Theology*, Luibheid, 138).

Negative or apophatic approaches to God appear in the earlier work of Plotinus, Proclus, Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, yet are generally considered to have reached their highest expression in the mystical theology of Denys in the 6th century. The latter's work would influence that of, among others, John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa and Blaise Pascal.

Denys' theological approach appends to traditional kataphatic means of affirming divine existence and attributes an emphasis upon God's hidden, inscrutable aspect. Akin to Heidegger's notion of metaphysics as ontotheology (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927), a purely kataphatic approach depicts God as supreme being, as the cause and foundation of all that exists. A God understood in the manner of worldly phenomena is thus reduced to something appropriable by conception and representation. As a function of human subjectivity, the God of kataphasis may be regarded as "a product of the will to power [that] leads to the crisis of science and technology and the 'death of God'" (Min, 14). Such an understanding contrasts with that of an ineffable, transcendent God, approachable only through apophatic means and designations of what God is not. A purely absent, apophatic God can be conceived of as entirely beyond being, as having no relation to the world, thus as irrelevant to daily life as God would be for a nonbeliever.

While he is best known as a proponent of apophatic approaches, there exists, in the third way of Denys, a complex play between kataphatic phraseology and the apophatic. Characterized by a network of both vertical and horizontal hierarchies, circularity and double negations, as well as a language of hyper-realism, Denys' indirect approach points in the direction of a God believed to exceed essential binaries such as being and nonbeing, speaking and silence. Denys continually risks yet avoids both

nihilism and totalization, in order to direct the initiate toward the manner in which God is at once revealed and concealed through creation. The complex means by which both positive and negative are negated as God emerges as, for example, infinite yet beyond both infinite and finite leads finally to an exhaustion of reference, a “verbal profusion at which we encounter the collapse of language as such” (Turner, 25). Thus, as Kevin Hart claims, the apophatic or mystical theology of Denys “is the only theological discourse which resists deconstruction” (Ingraffia, 225).

Using the singular experience of Moses on Mt. Sinai as a paradigm, ultimately union with God may be achieved after significant trials that result in the falling away of the very symbolic hierarchies utilized initially with the onset of an ecstatic, primordial state characterized by meaninglessness and “unknowing.” As Charles Stang notes, while Dionysian theology is often “figured as a speculative and rarefied theory regarding the transcendence of God,” it is “in fact best understood as a kind of asceticism, a devotional practice aiming for the total transformation of the Christian subject” (Stang, 4). A continued focus on an unknowable God thus proves intrinsic to uncovering inscrutable, paradoxical dimensions of subjectivity.

In order to flesh out these aspects of Dionysian thought, we begin with Chapter Three of *The Mystical Theology*. Entitled “What are the affirmative theologies and what are the negative?” here Denys succinctly demonstrates the intrinsic workings of his kataphatic and apophatic approaches while proceeding to outline the complex nature of God’s relation to and distinction from creation. He does so in part by revisiting *The Divine Names*, as well as integral yet no-longer-extant works *The Symbolic Theology* and *The Theological Representations* (all circa 6th century). In the former earlier and much

longer text, a kataphatic, symbolic theology is constructed utilizing names and concepts considered most properly associated with God. Denys establishes that while God exceeds human comprehension, in the earliest stages of pursuit of mystical union it is fruitful for the initiate to contemplate the divinely-inspired names applied in the Scriptures.

First and foremost Denys cites the “good” which is regarded as the most universally held notion of perfection, continuing on with “extant, life, wisdom” and “power” (139) and eventually progressing to more particular names such as “Holy of Holies...King of Kings...God of Gods” (126). The descent from the most general and universal to the more particular and disparate is said to mirror the manner in which creation pours forth from the Godhead - from “divine unity” to the “divine differentiation” and multiplicity that is God in the aspect revealed in creation and accessible to human faculties. As the author states, in *The Divine Names*, “...we know him from his arraignment of everything, because everything is, in a sense, projected out from him, and this order possesses certain images and semblances of his divine paradigms” (Luibheid, 108). Denys’ kataphatic approach thus celebrates the manner in which, through the outpouring of a vast hierarchy, a portion of divine perfection inheres and is reflected in all-things-earthly. While *The Divine Names* treats the aspect of God graspable through the symbolic and conceptual, his theology is also reinforced and substantiated by a similar trajectory described in the two no-longer-extant works. After *The Theological Representations*, a treatise which treats God in its Triune aspect (as Father-Son-Holy Spirit), *The Divine Names* and *The Symbolic Theology* descend further into multiplicity, the latter addressing the sensual aspect of God.²⁶

After revisiting the hierarchical projections described in the aforementioned earlier texts, in *The Mystical Theology* Denys begins to instruct the initiate in the ways of unlearning and unknowing by contradicting and negating the descending hierarchy. The theologian goes on to demonstrate the way in which the apophatic emerges from and reverses the kataphatic descent, as the procession of “divine differentiation” ascends back toward “divine unity.” Starting from the highest category of symbols when making his assertions, Denys proceeds “from the lowest category when it involves denial” (Luibheid, 139). With regard to commencing even with the most far-reaching of things terrestrial, Denys explains:

“When we assert what is beyond every assertion, we must then proceed from what is most akin to it, and as we do so we make the affirmation on which everything else depends. But when we deny that which is beyond every denial, we have to start by denying those qualities which differ most from the goal we hope to attain. Is it not closer to reality to say that God is life and goodness rather than that he is air and stone? Is it not more accurate to deny that drunkenness and rage can be attributed to him than to deny that we can apply to him the terms of speech and thought?” (Luibheid, 140).

In other words, apophatic theology here will track backwards denying every assertion made previously, ultimately negating even those deemed most proper to God. First, sensual as well as conceptual understandings of God are abandoned. Eventually, even the Trinitarian identity of God is denied, as are concepts such as being and goodness. The initiate gradually begins leaving behind “all those images we have of him, images shaped by the workings of the symbolic representations of God” (Luibheid, 139-140).

In chapters four and five – entitled, respectively, “That the supreme Cause of every perceptible thing is not itself perceptible” and “That the supreme Cause of every

conceptual thing is not itself conceptual” - Denys illustrates the process of negation. Denials in chapter four include “the cause of all is above all and is not inexistent, speechless, mindless...powerless,” nor is it “a material body” (Luibheid, 141), it possesses no qualities that can be perceived or measured and is without (celestial or terrestrial) place. In chapter five Denys states: “It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding... It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light.” In proceeding to negate even Trinitarian attributes, Denys goes on: “Nor is it a spirit in the sense that we understand that term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of being or nonbeing” (Luibheid, 141). Most importantly, while all affirmations are negated, Denys here denies every denial, as a God “not inexistent” but beyond being and nonbeing is not only denied mind, power and speech but initially the conceivably less fitting conceptions of mindlessness, powerlessness and speechlessness. The last lines of *The Mystical Theology* reinforce the non-relation between God and language:

“There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth – it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial” (Luibheid, 141).

The reflection of God in the procession of differentiation while remaining transcendent in no way diminishes the divine oneness, as the defining characteristic of “divine unity” is reflected in its remaining intact despite divine plurality.²⁷ While the multiplicity of creation is manifest through “the divine unions,” the term refers to that

aspect of God that escapes all language, speech and thought, the supernal God to be addressed, not merely through a negative theology. Denys' speaks of God "superessentially," in terms of hyper-realism, as a (non)entity which presides beyond existence and non-existence, a radical alterity that transcends both unity and plurality, one without limit yet beyond any earthly notion of limited and limitless:

"[W]hen God is named by means of 'intelligibles,' such as one, good, and so forth, he is indeed named from a created perfection, but there must be an accompanying denial understood: God is intelligent, and he is thereby named from what we know as intelligence, created and therefore limited intelligence, but the limitation must be denied of God. We end then with the assertion that God is superintelligent, that is, intelligent wholly above our ability to understand. That he escapes our ken is even more clear when we consider that he is superlife and supergood as well, and that in him these are but one perfection" (McInerney, 123).

Denys also emphasizes that, while unity is closer to God than multiplicity, as are negations as opposed to affirmations in the ascent of the hierarchy, "incongruities are more suitable for lifting our minds up into the domain of the spiritual" (150). While reminding the initiate that all things, even the most questionable symbols, share in divine goodness, "incongruous dissimilarities" or "dissimilar similarities" undermine the inclination toward attachment to symbols and imagery that make up the hierarchical order:

"It was to avoid this kind of misunderstanding among those incapable of rising above visible beauty that the pious theologians so wisely and upliftingly stooped to incongruous dissimilarities, for by doing this they took account of our inherent tendency toward the material and our willingness to be lazily satisfied by base images. At the same time they enabled that part of the soul which longs for the things above actually to rise up. Indeed the sheer crassness of the signs is a goad so that even the materially inclined cannot accept that it could be permitted or true that the celestial and divine sights could be conveyed by such shameful things. And remember too that there is nothing which lacks its own share of beauty, for as scripture says, 'Everything is good'" (Luibheid, 150).

Here Denys demonstrates that dissimilar similarities are often better served by less appropriate symbols, which best illustrate the impassable distance between God and human.²⁸ Through contemplation, the mind can be shaped to accept paradox, contradiction, notions of hyperreality and the workings of hypernegation as attachment to the symbolic diminishes.

In describing the passage from symbols of similarity to notions of God as beyond similarity and difference, Denys emphasizes the radical distance between the ultimate Cause and its effects in word, image and thought. All things are similar to God as “they share what cannot be shared,” yet are also “dissimilar to him in that as effects they fall so very short of their Cause and are infinitely and incomparably subordinate to him” (Luibheid, 118). Denys elaborates on this complex relation in *The Divine Names*, while emphasizing that it is, above all, the experience that comes from the internalizing of this process that is the ultimate goal:

“We...approach that which is beyond all as far as our capacities allow us and we pass by way of the denial and the transcendence of all things and by way of the cause of all things. God is therefore known in all things and as distinct from all things. He is known through knowledge and through unknowing. Of him there is conception, reason, understanding, touch, perception, opinion, imagination, name and many other things. On the other hand, he cannot be understood, words cannot contain him, and no name can lay hold of him. He is not one of the things that are, and he cannot be known in any of them. He is all things in all things and he is no thing among things. He is known to all from all things and he is known to no one from anything. This is the sort of language we must use about God, for he is praised from all things according to their proportion to him as their Cause. But again, the most divine knowledge of God, that which comes through unknowing, is achieved in a union far beyond mind, when mind turns away from all things, even from itself, and when it is made one with the dazzling rays, being then and there enlightened by the inscrutable depth of Wisdom” (*The Divine Names*, Luibheid, 108-109).

Through further analysis of such passages one can discern that, despite the accusations by Derrida and others – of final restoration of a kataphatic affirmative – the principles of

hyper-negation in Dionysian theology serve only to direct one toward an unknowable that exceeds binaries of similarity and dissimilarity. The aporia evident in the relation between the similar and dissimilar inheres throughout the apophatic hierarchy. At every step of the ascension the aporias intrinsic to hyper-negation leave no place for predication with regard to God, as the path to unknowing entails the contemplation of God as representational lacuna. Addressing the purpose of the Dionysian principle of hyper-negation and the ways in which it highlights the inadequacy of predicative language, particularly when speaking of the one Cause, Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington write:

“The godhead is no more ‘spirit,’ ‘sonship,’ and ‘fatherhood’ than it is ‘intellect’ or ‘asleep.’” However: “These negations must be distinguished from privations. A privation is simply the absence of a given predicate that could just as easily be present. The absence of the predicate is opposed to its presence: ‘lifeless’ is opposed to ‘living.’ But when we say that the godhead is not ‘living,’ we do not mean that it is ‘lifeless.’ The godhead is beyond the lifeless as well as beyond the living. For this reason, Dionysius says that our affirmations of the godhead are not opposed to our negations, but that both must be transcended: even the negations must be negated” (Corrigan, Harrington, 1).

All things remain both similar and dissimilar to God, all signs simultaneously signify and do not signify God. In other words, signs are paradoxically put into service of the notion that what they aim to signify is beyond signification.

In describing the hierarchies and the processes of mystical theology, Denys also remains vigilant in balancing kataphatic and apophatic approaches. In the passage from *The Divine Names*, for example, Denys appends to the explanation of the negative workings of “dissimilar similarities” a final affirmation in the reminder that scripture tells us “Everything is Good.” Proclaiming Dionysian apophasis “virtually unparalleled in its

radicality,” Jeffery Fisher - in “The Theology of Dis/similarity: Negation in Pseudo-Dionysius” (2001) - builds a convincing case against those that insist upon Denys’ ultimate restoration of the Logos. Fisher details the ways in which nihilism and totalization are risked yet avoided by Denys’ inversion of the relation between affirmation and denial. The theorist contends that, while negativity can be regarded as relative to affirmation, “affirmation is now seen to rest on a hypernegation, which indeed provides the very possibility of affirmation while simultaneously undercutting any final authority it might have” (Fisher, 545). Fisher goes on to evoke, first the undermining of a purely negative theology with the affirmative assertion regarding divine goodness before addressing “the final denial, of denial itself,” in the last lines of *The Mystical Theology*. In doing so he makes it quite clear that Dionysian negativity does not simply become its own totality:

“...negative theology succumbs to (affirmative) theology precisely when it allows itself to take affirmative theology's place. A positive negativity, in other words a negativity that never succumbs to its own negativity, ultimately yields to the affirmative. A positive negativity is not a negativity; it is the positive under the guise of the negative. In order for the negative to be negative, it must disappear into itself. On the other hand, negation demands a return to affirmation in order to indefinitely defer an affirmative victory. Only in losing does the negative win, because it is in/by losing that it indicates its own vulnerability, its own risk of affirmation, and in that indication, indicates a beyond which is beyond its ability to indicate. Moreover, in its willingness to negate itself, it risks absolute negation - a fall into nothingness. Thus, the hypernegation at the end of *The Mystical Theology* is a negation not only of negation but also of affirmation: ‘For it is both beyond every assertion [according to its perfection, simplicity and infinity, and] it is also beyond every denial.’ This final denial, of denial itself along with affirmation, leads us nowhere but into the silence at the end of *The Mystical Theology*. At this point, Dionysius simply will brook no speech, because that of which we were attempting to speak is outside any possibility of speech” (Fisher, 545).

In statements such as “The Theologians Praise It by Every Name...and as The Nameless One” (Luibheid, 54), God can be represented by an infinite number of designations in spite of the fact that --or perhaps *because*-- God remains un-

representable. “In any symbol of God, God is merely a trace, a hole in its semantic field in any given syntactical arrangement. The semantics of divine anominability goes hand in hand with the syntax of divine omninominability” (Fisher, 538). In this sense, Dionysian theological language is constructed precisely to bring about its own failure:

“Interpretation consequently involves a certain sort of purification of polysemia. Language is monosemous in so far as it all ‘refers’ to God; yet polysemous in so far as it cannot refer to God either properly or metaphorically. On the other hand, language might more accurately be called ‘asemous’ in so far as that to which it nominally refers is, in the jargon of negative theology, a mystery. The ‘mystery’ of Dionysius’s God is utter impenetrability; it is that which cannot be made sense of, that which cannot be ordered: ‘Language is what it is, language, only insofar as it can then master and analyze polysemia. Each time that polysemia is irreducible, when no unity of meaning is even promised to it, one is outside language. And consequently, outside humanity.’ Theological language works neither in the cataphatic nor the apophatic, nor even in the conjunction of the two, but in the transcendence of the conjunction. We step outside the syntactic/semantic dichotomy in the aseмия of language. Each symbol is in reality less a symbol of God than it is a symbol of its own inability to symbolize God” (Fisher, 548).

Internalized by the initiate, the result of this failure is the eventual falling away of the hierarchies upon which the quest for union is built.²⁹ While the cognitive path through the hierarchies is highly specific, modeled after Moses in his ascent to the top of the mountain, union with God signifies Moses’ entering into the darkness and unknowing above the mountain. Thereafter what he ‘sees’ or ‘experiences’ is left vague, as Denys speaks of it mainly in terms of the indescribable.³⁰ In other words, the initiate is delivered, through rigorous praxis involving the contemplation of the failure of language and prevailing meaninglessness, to the brink of an experiential crisis precipitating what is described as union with God. If successful, the initiate will experience the dissolution of boundaries and foundations of the quotidian world, leaving behind normative cognitive and sensory relation, “hors du langage. Par conséquent hors de l’humanité” (Derrida, 1972, 296).

Just as the experience of Moses on Sinai is characterized by the interdiction against seeing God's face, experiencing God's full presence, union with God, even if successful, never entirely manifests perfect unmediated oneness. Yet the radical linguistic theory constructed upon linguistic failure, as well as the failure of understanding, of both God and self becomes, according to Denys, a means for radical self-transformation. Allusions to what lies 'beyond the mountain' for the initiate who endures the extremes of the path, to a dissolution of subjectivity in the absence of the efficacy of speech, sight and thought, point to a taking apart and rebuilding of the initiate more perfectly in the image of Christ.

As Charles Stang writes regarding the radical state that is the goal of Dionysian mysticism, one continually sheds long-held notions of not only God but one's own identity: "truly to consent to Christ...we must sacrifice God and self on the altar...we strip ourselves as bare as we strip God, shedding our most cherished faculties and identities" (Stang, 194). "The apophasis of the self, which is the contemplative practice that compliments the apophasis of the divine names" is driven by a longing for an impossible unmediated relation to God. "This unrelenting love eventually carries us outside ourselves such that we suffer ecstasy, responding to the ecstasy that God continually enjoys in calling creation back to its source" (Stang, 195). As Stang suggests of the longing that fuels the initiate along the hierarchical paths, eros finally "stretches the self to the point that it splits and so renders it open to divine possession... Eros is the engine of apophasis, a yearning that stretches language to the point that it breaks, stretches the lover to the point that he splits" (169-70).³¹

Ensuing practitioners of apophatic theology undertake similar approaches to God, human subjectivity and language, including Blaise Pascal, whose work will be integral to an examination of the films of Bresson in Chapter 3. Pascal, like Denys, pursues a strategy that simultaneously reveals the delimiting nature and the limits of representation, shattering fundamental concepts centered upon notions of being through allusion to what is beyond correlation and incorporation. Illuminating tenuous aspects of subjectivity, both authors detail the complexities and adverse effects of the creation of a false self, depicting humans as creatures defined by imitation, self-serving contrivance and incoherence. In the process, the authors figuratively dismantle and remake human beings, in order to extend possibility and effect reevaluation of self, as well as reorientation with regard to others.

According to Pascal, logic and reason are limited in their potential to aid in accessing God or truth, particularly as he sees humans as mired in fallen, post-Babelian language.³² Since the Fall, language has lost its capacity for absolute referentiality, instead stating something more or less than what is truly meant. Pascal, however, posits that “the otherness suggested within language itself figures God’s otherness, which is outside language” (Melzer, 4). Like Denys, Pascal believes God to be neither completely absent nor completely present but hidden. The play of absence and presence that allows for the functioning of a representational system offers a potential means of approaching divine truth. Pascal seeks to persuade one to wager or choose to believe in a God that is beyond conceptualization and signification by repeatedly referencing and exploiting the absent, elusive aspect of language.

Pascal highlights reductive cognitive tendencies by manipulating the more obscure aspects of signification. Beginning with deceptively simple questions, including “Qu’est-ce que le moi?” (Pascal, 48), Pascal interrogates all aspects of subjectivity. An attack on traditional ontological concepts is evident in statements such as “l’homme est à lui même le plus prodigieux objet de la nature:”

“car il ne peut concevoir ce que c’est que corps, et encore moins ce que c’est qu’esprit, et moins qu’aucune chose comment un corps peutêtre uni avec un esprit. C’est le comble de ses difficultés, et cependant c’est son propre être,” (Pensées, 61).

Thus, through paradox, hyperbole and contradiction,³³ Pascal forces the initiate to encounter the limits of concept and language while ceaselessly pointing out the inexplicable.

Pensées contains hyperbolic lists, including Fragment 181 which notes innumerable entities that cannot fill the void caused by separation from God.³⁴ The words of hyperbolic discourse are rendered meaningless, collapsing into themselves “like a balloon suddenly depleted of air” (Ludwin, 127). *Pensées*’ fragment 41 further exemplifies how concepts, in this case the term for country, contain an inconceivable number of other terms.³⁵ Pascal’s clearest statement as to his desire to confound the individual in an effort to force a more acute manner of self-examination is somewhat unsettling: “s’il se vante, je l’abaisse; s’il s’abaisse, je le vante; et le contredis toujours, jusqu’à ce qu’il comprenne qu’il est un monstre incompréhensible” (279). Chapter 3 will elaborate further upon the negative theological tradition in relation to Denys, Pascal and Bresson.

Blanchot's Nouveau Orpheus: The Living-Dead and the Language of Resurrection

The early work of Maurice Blanchot -- that which bears relation not only to Nietzsche and Heidegger but to Pascal and Denys as well -- laid a significant amount of the groundwork for much of what would follow in the realm of postmodern thought. Blanchot shares with Denys a conception of writing as spiritual exercise and potentially ecstatic experience. In Kevin Hart's *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (2005), Hart illustrates Blanchot's emphasis on experience, including the experience of the writer in relation to that of earlier Christian mystics. Nouveau mystics such as Blanchot and Georges Bataille sought to distinguish their experiences from that of Christian mysticism, which they wrongly regarded as contingent upon a prescribed experience. In insisting that inner experience is meaningless, with only the unknown as its object, Bataille was inadvertently echoing Denys.

Much of the work of both Blanchot and his associate Emmanuel Levinas is grounded in a shared understanding of impersonal being first detailed in the latter's *De l'existence à l'existant* (1947). In a segment entitled "Existence sans existant," Levinas describes the ultimate horror as "l'impossibilité de la mort" (Levinas 1947, 100), a notion predicated upon affects produced by the pre-conceptual singularity referred to as the *il y a*. The *il y a* designates that which undermines instrumental relation and dialectical reasoning, including triumphal notions of death, while coloring the space of the writer with "désœuvrement," or aimlessness, inertia. The *il y a* is central to Blanchot's notion of the literary endeavor as an essentially ecstatic pursuit predicated upon the loss of self and sense to meaninglessness and incoherence, thus imbuing the work with the non-intentional.

The non-experience of the *il y a* effects the overtaking of subjectivity by what is radically unfamiliar, that which both precedes and exceeds consciousness and is ordinarily masked by daily activity and diversion. As the conceptual and sensory elements that structure the notion of the '*I*' dissipate, what remains is absolute vulnerability in the face of enduring, ineradicable *being*, the existence of which calls for no particular existents. A falling out with both the day and the mundane aspect of restful night that is its dialectical opposite, Lévinas' example par excellence of exposure to the *il y a* is manifest in the dispossession characteristic of a night of ineradicable insomnia. The horror of this disjointed nocturnal space is primarily recognized in its harboring, rather than emptiness, the 'presence' of "an invading and persistent nothingness which cannot be negated" (Vasseleu, 84). The radically exterior *il y a* manifests neither threat of danger nor fear of pain or death - instead, one experiences "peur d'être et non point pour l'être."

A notion of this horror as a "condamnation à la réalité perpétuelle...le 'sans-issues' de l'existence" (Levinas, 1949, 102) underlies Blanchot's numerous references to "l'impossibilité de la mort" as an anterior death that precedes the actual death event and which drains existence of possibility, pressing upon one as the dissolution of individuality. Blanchot's fictional work, including *Thomas l'obscur* (1941) and *L'instant de ma mort* (1994), as well as the philosophical works contain numerous examples of mutual contamination exemplified by death's weight encroaching upon life, of life's somehow resisting the terminal effects of death and of life lived in the shadow of death's impossibility.

In *De l'existence à l'existent*, Lévinas sees this notion exemplified in the return of Banquo's ghost in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (circa 1603), as well as Phaedra's condemnation to perpetual responsibility by the ever-present burden of an unbreakable commitment.³⁶ Lévinas also cites the work of Durkheim and Levi-Bruhl regarding early religions and the relation of the *il y a* to the dissolution of subjectivity innate to experience of the sacred and mysticism:

“L'impersonnalité du sacré dans les religions primitives qui pour Durkheim est le Dieu 'encore' impersonnel, d'où sortira un jour le Dieu des religions évoluées, décrit, tout au contraire, un monde où rien ne prépare l'apparition d'un Dieu. Plutôt qu'à Dieu, la notion de l'il y a nous ramène à l'absence de Dieu, à l'absence de tout étant. Les primitifs sont absolument avant la Révélation, avant la lumière” (Levinas 1947, 99).

In *Thomas l'obscur* (1941) and *L'instant de ma mort* (1994), however, Blanchot's examples of living death often appear closer to Gothic works such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, particularly the latter's tales which feature premature burials and/or similarly tormented narrators whose lives continue beyond and in spite of the self's utter desolation and annihilation. As Lévinas surmises,

“L'horreur d'être enterré vivant, c'est-à-dire le soupçon persistant que la mort n'est pas assez morte, que dans la mort on est le personnage qui se trouve enfermé dans un tombeau, anéanti; mais dans cet anéantissement, aux prises avec l'existence. Situation que le personnage transpose dans la mort elle-même, comme si mourir était encore être au sein du néant” (Levinas, 1994, 107-108).

Tales such as “The Black Cat” (1843) “Berenice” (1835) and “William Wilson” (1839) feature similar, acutely sensitive narrators for whom the horror of the impossibility of death is a more or less permanent condition.³⁷

Blanchot utilizes the notion of the radically exterior *il y a* to undermine aspects of the thought of Hegel, particularly those that would later constitute Derrida's notion of incorporation and Heidegger's ontotheology, the dialectical reasoning that situates even the inevitable loss of life within the domain of human mastery.³⁸ With the mind made up of sets of binaries that can be integrated without the elimination of either pole, the progressive dynamic of the Hegelian process of *Aufhebung* (sublation) both transforms and preserves antithetical concepts, thus creating new totalities.³⁹ This mediation through the dialectical confrontation of concepts is part of a progression toward Wissen (absolute knowledge, the whole). As the dynamic aspect that enables sublation within Hegelian dialectic, *Verneinung* (negativity) constitutes the field against which human action is possible and from which the 'I' comes into existence. As the source of negation, death thus opens the door to possibility and progress, while functioning as the limit within which human desiring, action, accomplishment and individuality take shape. Death provides meaning and a sense of continuity and coherence to existence.⁴⁰

A notion of the radically alterior, what Blanchot and Levinas alike refer to as the *il y a*, allows Blanchot to restore to death what *concepts* of death necessarily reduce and deny. As that which precedes and exceeds the realm of consciousness and the dialectical field, the *il y a* cannot be reduced or negated, subsumed or incorporated within the transformative process of sublation.⁴¹ Thus, while Hegel's understanding of death rests upon faith in the all-but-unlimited power of reason, Blanchot manifests an *other* death, one which counters authentic self-fulfillment with that which can only be experienced in terms of ill-defined intuitions of dread, anonymity, meaninglessness and loss of agency. In its withdrawal from possibility and the dialectical workings of negativity, the other

death does not mark a definitive break with life, as nothingness or afterlife, but exposes one to “an endless dying that cannot be experienced but that no experience ever quite eludes” (Hart, 172).

In Blanchot’s thought, the non-experience of death’s impossibility also marks the space of the artist and particularly that of the writer. The call to writing, which may begin with the belief in writing as a path to the realization of self-presence, through the crafting of materials into an entity fixed and complete, for Blanchot gives rise to a similar annihilation of the author. The more one writes, the closer one advances upon the nocturnal space, “l’espace littéraire,”⁴² as the resolute, intentional self evaporates in the nature of the work, which at times becomes more akin to passive receptivity and thoughtless registration.⁴³ “La littérature se passe maintenant de l’écrivain” (Blanchot, 1949, 317) thereby betraying an aspect that remains elusive of writer and reader alike, one which ‘speaks’ beyond the ordering power of reason and intent.⁴⁴

Blanchot understands the workings of literary language as distinct from that of everyday linguistic usage and its assumed instrumentality.⁴⁵ Recognizing words as univocal transmitters, we continually repress an understanding of their often ill-fitting relation to intention, and the means through which the actual designated entity, object or being referred to is eradicated by the name and/or the concept.⁴⁶ Relative to the workings of literary language, however, numerous elements - including rhythm, cadence, a rhyming scheme or even its appearance (ornamental, plain or otherwise) as ink on paper – conspire to interrupt or dissimulate univocal reception. Further, literature not only resists everyday language’s transformation of its negative aspect into a positive, universal concept, but effects and preserves a double absencing not only of the referent itself in its

singularity, but of the concept that replaces it. The relation between words within a signifying system, their linkage to other words, resists transparent interpretation through continuous deferral that fades into the radical alterity that drives the eternal play of language. To assign a particular meaning to a text thus occludes elements that consistently take precedence over the instrumental, intentional aspect of writing.

For Blanchot, this aspect of writing is illustrated in the dual sacrifice of Orpheus. Blanchot rewrites the myth as an allegory of language and the impossible quest to retrieve or resurrect the materiality of the vanished referent, the double absencing not only of referent by concept, but the concept itself, as it fades into an ongoing iteration of words that trace back toward the original inaccessible material entity. Thus in Blanchot's revision, the poet abandons the responsibility of retrieving the living Eurydice, or heroically preserving the dead Eurydice to live eternally in the hymn, to heed the greater responsibility of glimpsing the face of Eurydice as the impossibility or radical alterity which all art strives to attain, but can never grasp. Blanchot therein describes the *il y a* and the self-annihilation of Orpheus in a manner which resonates with both the living death described by Poe and Shelley, as well as the shattering encounter with God sought by earlier mystics.

**Don't Look Now, but She's Dead Again: The Janus Face of Orpheus and the Mask
of Eurydice in the Work of Maurice Blanchot**

The descent of Blanchot's nouveau Orpheus illustrates the double-absenting, of first referent then instrumental concept attributable to language in the dual sacrifice of the mythical singer-poet. In one respect, the story of Orpheus and Eurydice can be read with regard to the sacrifice of the familiar and the possibility of happiness associated with home and hearth. The tale can also be read in restorative terms with respect to the poet's sacrifice as a victory over death and mourning, in the preservation of an essential likeness, a representation of the beloved that also preserves the poet to posterity. Orpheus, like all poets, is already intimately acquainted with death. He makes his descent into nocturnal space for the purpose of the work, the inspiration for the ode that transforms his mourning into exemplary art.

This victory over Hades and darkness is, however, inextricably linked to a far less reconciliatory notion of the poet's descent. Here the quest to retrieve Eurydice is in no way attributable to the *work* of poetry. The purpose of the journey to the underworld is to glimpse Eurydice, not as she was in her earthly guise, but Eurydice in death, the invisible, unattainable part of Eurydice that is radical alterity. Although he may have agreed to forego gazing at the face of Eurydice, Orpheus' impatience and irresponsibility cause her to be lost for a second time. Yet, in his absolute irresponsibility to Eurydice and to the work, Orpheus responds to a more pressing responsibility, one which demands that he "travel to the limit of the visible in order to see what precisely cannot be seen" (Hill 2005, 64).

Orpheus sacrifices the work to the nocturnal, non-dialectical element that provides for the emergence of the work but is in no way strictly contained within it. Orpheus privileges the demand of the work above all else, *except* the gaze which is

impelled toward the unattainable depths of the work's origin.⁴⁷ Blanchot claims that Orpheus' abiding the demand to ignore the injunction and sacrifice everything to gaze represents not only absolute responsibility but, paradoxically, - "le moment extrême de la liberté, moment où il se rend libre de lui-même, et événement plus important, libère l'oeuvre de son souci, libère le sacré contenu dans l'oeuvre..." (Blanchot, 1955, 184).

The two paths, one instrumental, the other ultimately impossible, represent deviation and duplicity at the heart of literature itself. Between these irreconcilable yet absolute demands, the artist must privilege the gaze that represents freedom in sacrifice and self-abandonment. Writing thus truly commences with the gaze of Orpheus, in the look that frees the work to exceed the limits of the human, of agency and intent, reason and imagination, thereby allowing the work to become infused with the sacred. "With a gaze turned toward impossibility," a gaze "dispossessed of its objects," a transformation occurs that "preserves invisibility from the dialectic of conceptual clarity" (Bruns, 161). Elsewhere Blanchot has stated that, as opposed to the tidy resurrection of conceptual thought, it is the inaccessible, dead and rotting Lazarus, "celui qui déjà sent mauvais, qui est le Mal" (316), that gives life to language and art.

Blanchot's reading of Orpheus' impossible descent thus highlights his claim that to be a writer is to believe in the materiality of language, to proceed as if the miraculous retrieval of an absented material entity can be achieved. The writer's quest for what precedes literature and is negated by the concept means that to write always entails failure. Yet this failure is what prepares the way for the obscure power of language to play its game "sans l'homme qui l'a formé" (317).⁴⁸

An Aesthetic of Flesh and Blood, a “Technology of Subjectivity”: Mary Shelley and the Birth of a Monster

Beyond the more dialectical relation - of face and mask, good and evil – associated with popular conceptions as well as classic tales of the double such as Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson” and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Double* (1846), Shelley’s treatment of the patchwork nature of identity establishes and exceeds a negative ontology through human interrelation with a textual and technological monster. With the monster an unfathomable composite of human, animal and *other* parts functioning to simultaneously mirror, contradict and exceed Victor Frankenstein’s attributes, Shelley’s novel is “not about the making of a monster, its subject is the construction of humanness” (Halberstam, 43). Like subsequent phantoms and vampires that complicate the otherness of race, class, sexuality and gender in novels such those of Wilde and Le Fanu, relations between human and monster illustrate the inhumanity and monstrosity within the former while evoking the radically alterior hidden behind the otherwise familiar.

A Gothic precursor to Blanchot’s notion of life as the impossibility of death, Victor acutely experiences the limits of the human, as he is visited by the radically alterior incarnate, whereafter all fixities dissolve in a world previously fixed nearly to the point of stasis. Shelley thus exposes the inhuman aspect of human enterprise at the outset of both the early industrial and Romantic periods. Victor’s creature is a product of the more precarious aspects of modern technology that mirror the more obscure workings of language, including semiological structures founded upon language’s relation to absence

and death – in particular Wordsworth’s reworking of epitaph and extensive use of metaphor.

Like a Romantic Poet or Enlightenment Industrial era scientist-turned-Orpheus, following the death of his mother, Victor Frankenstein takes as his obsessive aim the restoration of the dead to life.⁴⁹ As there exists a similar constellation of artistic creation and death, impossibility and responsibility in relation to looking in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, it is fruitful to read Shelley’s tale in relation to Blanchot’s interpretation of Orpheus. While still mourning his mother’s death, Victor, intent upon the restoration of life, makes his descent, immersing himself in the world of the dead. Victor’s “fervent longing” to unveil the true “face of nature” to pursue *her* “to her hiding places” (Shelley, 55), in order to usurp and ‘perfect’ her means of creation leads him to the tomb. Ultimately, as Sara Guyer notes, in *Romanticism after Auschwitz* (2004), ‘the truth’ arrives with the trope of light that enables him to read the secret of life in the relation between the natural world and human mortality. At the limits of the visible, he discovers what he believes to be the secret of life and death while fixedly gazing into the teeming, maggot-infested face of a corpse as it lay in its grave. Victor reads eternal life into the cyclical, consuming process wherein the worm “inherit[s] the wonders of eye and brain” (Shelley, 56), as the fleshly matter that constituted the human body (its life once sustained by the ingesting of other organic entities) lives on in death. Shelley’s prototypical mad scientist betrays a reductive, scopocentric orientation that collapses the invisible and intangible (the cerebral, ocular) intact within the visible and material, in a process that incorporates dialectical elements (matter and the immaterial, human and inhuman, origin and end) while intrinsically denying the possibility of radical alterity.

As opposed to Orpheus' sacrificial self-annihilation, Victor denies responsibility, clinging to the heroic nature of the work, the notion of pure self-presence through engineered resurrection, and/or a temporary death followed by everlasting life. The purpose of Orpheus' journey to the underworld is to glimpse, not the accessible Eurydice in her earthly beauty, but his beloved in her absent, unattainable aspect. Yet when Victor proceeds toward the limits of the visible, his processing gaze is already blind to radical alterity as he remains steadfast in the conception that nothing exceeds his reach. When he gazes impudently at that which the injunction versus looking forbids, he 'sees' only that which can be consumed and subsumed within self-sameness, discovering a 'secret' harbored at the very heart of an early industrial society described by Shelley as equally averse to difference and alterity.

This 'secret' is deeply rooted not only in the inheritance of the Enlightenment but in that of Romantic literature and linguistic theory as well, as I demonstrate in this Chapter through an examination of the work of Wordsworth, as well as in Chapter 2 wherein I trace elements of Wordsworth's approach to poetry to the earliest Romantic theory, of Johan Georg Hamman and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The work of these theorists emphasizes the revival and, in many cases, the equation of linguistic and natural elements conceived of as dead.⁵⁰

The Impossibility of Death or Life Interrupted but Not Ended by Death: Shelley's Evil, Stinking Lazarus and Wordsworth's Flesh and Blood Resurrection

“An Orpheus! an Orpheus! yes, Faith may grow bold,
And take to herself all the wonders of old;--
Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same
In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.”

William Wordsworth “Power of Music” (1806)

From 1788 to 1789, Wordsworth translated much of Virgil’s *Georgics* (29 B.C.), of which only drafts remain. Among them is a lengthy attempt to transcribe Virgil’s account of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. As Stephen Gill writes, this segment of the project took on significant weight due to Wordsworth’s mourning the deaths of his parents. In the final lyrics of Wordsworth’s translation, the decapitated Orpheus, still singing, remains true both to his work and his love who remains in the underworld: “Ah, poor Eurydice it feebly cried, All round Eurydice the [moaning banks reply’d], from [s]till small voices heard on every side.” (644). As Gill states, while Wordsworth remains for-the-most-part faithful,

“the last line has no equivalent in Virgil, and is pure Wordsworth. Just as it seems that the hero is defeated, the still small voices tell us that, like the spirit of Wordsworth’s father in “The Vale of Esthwaite”, Orpheus has been absorbed into the natural world that has in some way partaken of his suffering. His song is not silenced, but preserved by nature” (Gill, 25).

Like the immaterial aspects of the decedent’s “eye and brain” (Shelley, 56) that, when their material repositories are partaken of by the worm, become part of all-consuming nature, the deceased Orpheus’ voice and essence endure as the inheritance of the natural world, to be integrated into its silent, prelapsarian song. Thus, Victor’s ‘discovery’ of the secret of immortality, his identification of origin and end as constituted in the interrelation between human mortality and enduring nature figures William Wordsworth’s epitaphic roots and his own concerns with natural and eternal life. In

“Essays upon Epitaphs,” his singular treatise on the proper construction of epitaph that itself becomes an epitaph, one perfused with autobiographical elements,⁵¹ Wordsworth lauds John Weever⁵² for correctly identifying the origins and chief concern of epitaph, not merely in contemplation of death but in “the presage or fore-feeling of Immortality, implanted in all men naturally” (701).

Under the abiding principle that “origin and tendency are notions inseparably co-relative” (703), analogous moral and compositional concerns for harmony and proportion are manifest in the interrelation of opposites. Wordsworth negotiates between cultural and natural, urban and rural, literal and figural entities in order to transform binary relation. Of utmost importance, however, is the counterbalancing of feelings and evocations relative to death and those that resonate with a sense of immortality.

Wordsworth characterizes a life lived without such harmony and hope for eternal life as a veritable living death:

“if the impression and the sense of death were not thus counterbalanced, such a hollowness would pervade the system of things, such a want of correspondence and consistency, a disproportion so astounding betwixt means and end, that there could be no repose, no joy. Were we to grow up unfostered by this genial warmth, a frost would chill the spirit, so penetrating and powerful, that there could be no motions of the life of love; and infinitely less could we have any wish to be remembered after we had passed away from a world in which each man had moved about like a shadow” (704).

In “Essays upon Epitaphs,” intimations of immortality appear in examples of the subtle process through which, in both the material and immaterial, “the natural and the moral world...qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other” (703).

In the key passage that identifies “origin and tendency,” immortality is discovered by a child who observes a running stream and wonders as to the infinite and contingent nature of both source and receptacle. A notion of eternal life is imagined by Wordsworth to be a most intimate relation - either “co-existent and twin birth” or “earliest...Offspring” (700) - of reason. Subsequently, in a tale of two philosophers, Simonides comes upon a dead body and honors it with burial, while an unnamed ancient is said, in encountering a corpse, to contemptuously have uttered “see the shell of the flown bird!” while presumably leaving it unburied. For Wordsworth, however, feelings seemingly “opposite to each other, have another and a finer relation than that of contrast” (701). Antithetical attitudes here converge in the belief that each has hope of immortality, with Wordsworth again advancing a vision of eternal recurrence.

In the influential “Autobiography as De-Facement,” Paul de Man examines the intricacies of the autobiographical essays’ pervading tropological system, integral to which is that of prosopopoeia, the figure par excellence with regard to reconciliation, able to neutralize either/or opposition while still harboring an original antithetical relationship. Moving without compromise from death as opposed to life to death appropriated and integrated into life’s never-ending cycle, the system is exemplified in “the lively and affecting analogies of Life as a Journey’ interrupted, but not ended, by Death” (de Man, 74, Wordsworth 1810, 701), with the encompassing metaphor of the journey that of the continual rising and setting of the Sun. The sun’s gradual movements from East to West demonstrate the manner in which “the contemplative Soul, travelling in the direction of mortality, advances to the country of everlasting life” and then, enriched by having

explored “those cheerful tracts,” back again to the “land of transitory things” (Wordsworth 1810, 702).

Wordsworth’s loosening of the binary relation between the natural and figurative, East and West, and the sun’s rising and setting as birth and death is reflected in the transformative process in which tropes function as “gliding displacements” (de Man, 75), to constitute the epitaph proper. Presiding over a chain of metaphors, the powerful sun, “a figure of nature as well as knowledge” (de Man, 76), “looks down upon the stone” (Wordsworth 1810, 703),⁵³ its powerful gaze setting the process in motion. The sun’s exhibiting the powers of mind and vision suggests the ability to apprehend language. Relation is thereby established between the sun and the monument’s text. With the language of the Poet functioning as the “parousia of light” (75), the sun is able to read the epitaph - that which distills a life’s essential significance (in the case of the Poet or great man the mere “naked name” is sufficient) - as it is written upon the “senseless stone.” The monument thus acquires a voice, in the cyclical illumination of the sun’s becoming eye to engender the speaking stone. The rhetorical chain “passes from sun to eye to language as name and as voice” (74). “Voice assumes mouth, eye and finally face” (de Man, 76) in the newly animated stone. Here prosopopoeia “completes the central metaphor of the sun and thus completes the tropological spectrum that the sun engenders” (de Man, 75) by facilitating the counterbalancing and interrelation of qualities within the solar spectrum.

Possessed of “the wonders of eye and brain” (Shelley, 56), in a manner presaging the natural, material figures ‘read’ and thus animated by Victor, the central figure of the sun manifests from the stone a face, as well as a voice to represent its naked name.

Likewise, epitaphs such as those cited by Wordsworth, including the many examples which commence with the apostrophe “‘Pause, Traveller!’”(703), would give face and voice to the dead through the living passerby’s gaze and a contemplative reading of the inscription, the antithetical relation of “death *or* life” becoming “life *and* death” (de Man, 74) with death thus “disarmed of its sting, and affliction unsubstantialized” (702). Engineered by the Poet through the prodigious powers of prosopopoeia, the grave, as “all-uniting and equalizing Receptacle of the Dead” (705) and eternal monument, becomes the site par excellence wherein antithetical qualities, of humans and nature, life and death, are gradually subsumed within pre-Babelian correspondence.

Wordsworth continues his discussion of epitaphs, stressing the need to counterbalance the dispensing of facts relevant to the life of the deceased with the sincere emotional involvement of the author. For Wordsworth, “truth...of the highest order” is realized in the work of the Poet guided not merely by knowledge as to the actual particulars of the life of the deceased, but care and contemplation, genuine feeling and inspiration. Wordsworth warns against cold, overly analytical detachment, stating, “the writer of an epitaph is not an anatomist, who dissects the internal frame of the mind; he is not even a painter, who executes a portrait at leisure and in entire tranquility” (706). Continuing his constant use of metaphor, Wordsworth describes the all-important manner in which the Poet respectfully yet artfully abstracts and eliminates some qualities in order to bring others to the fore. The process renders the deceased

as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualises and beautifies it; that takes away, indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear more dignified and lovely; may impress and affect the more” (704).

Thus guided by feeling as much as or more so than incident, fact or reason, epitaph not only “forbids...all form of fiction,” but lack of feeling, “insincerity of emotion” (704) is regarded as the most dire of faults. Here Wordsworth repeatedly criticizes the virtuosic word portraits of Alexander Pope and his reliance upon antithesis. Pope’s epitaphs are regarded as complete in their lofty yet formulaic technical prowess and fidelity to factual and empirical detail,⁵⁴ yet without depth of fellow feeling for the subject of the work, without the integration of illumination and shade that would flesh out the more subtle yet essential dimensions of a living character. Wordsworth’s contention suggests that such characteristics can hardly be encompassed within fact, much less in what is repeatedly described as dogged formalism resulting in lifeless verisimilitude. In a series of vehement pronouncements rife with terms evoking coldness, superficiality and lifeless imitation, Wordsworth makes claims such as “the Author forgets that it is a living creature that interests us and not an intellectual existence, which a mere character is” (706).

In epitaphs including “On Mrs. Corbet Who Died of a Cancer in Her Breast,”⁵⁵ Wordsworth picks out such antithetical phrases as “so firm yet soft, so strong yet so refined” as particularly hackneyed and mechanically rendered, substantially engaging neither emotional nor rational faculties. Advocating for a more natural form of writing closer to common speech, Wordsworth points to the final couplet, “the saints sustained it, but the woman died” as actually harboring substantial correspondence which Pope however fails to elucidate:

“The saint, that is her soul strengthened by religion, supported the anguish of her disease with patience and resignation; but the woman, that is her body ...was overcome. Why was not this simply expressed; without playing with the Reader's fancy, to the delusion and dishonour of his understanding, by a trifling epigramatic point?” (706).

As interpreted by Wordsworth, the couplet recalls those that make up the exemplary segment (taken from the *Excursion* [1814]) memorializing the death of the Dalesman that closes out the last of the three essays,⁵⁶ wherein the Dalesman's deafness is counterbalanced by the silence of nature's prelapsarian language,⁵⁷ his death by renewed birth. The tall pine tree whose murmuring he failed to hear in life is given "a peculiar sanctity" by the eternal presence of his monument beneath it, his death thereby counterbalanced by nature's (thus his own) endurance.⁵⁸ In contrast, in the seemingly deliberate obscurity of Pope's epitaph, the finality of the dominant either/or relation remains for the reader.

As opposed to manifesting the "composition and quality of the mind" of the revered deceased as "something midway between what he was on earth...and what he may be presumed to be as a Spirit in heaven" (704), for Wordsworth, Pope's antithetical structures locate the reader in a deathly, joyless world wherein men move about in perpetual shadow. According to the tenets of the essays, the neoclassical pretense and excessive literality of Pope's evocations of death, lacking the necessary counterbalancing sense of immortality, evoke only the stark reality of the recesses of the crypt. Like the anatomist, Pope offers the image of the "mouldering corpse" (705) from which the reader would be shielded in proper epitaph glossed by Wordsworth's fellow feeling and emotion, intimating immortality and harmony.

With escalating indignity and vitriol, Wordsworth attacks his adversary's specular recreation of reality as lacking substantial internal dimensions of character, thus parasitically draining away vitality from the authentic Mrs. Corbet and her memory.⁵⁹ Wordsworth eventually issues a decree of utmost seriousness:

“Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve” (Wordsworth, 706).

In language strikingly antithetical to the tranquility and repose previously prescribed, Wordsworth references the inescapable fate represented by the tunic of Nessus that killed Hercules to illustrate the effects of the substantial replaced by the superficial, the antithetical as opposed to the harmonious, absolute evil over pure goodness.

Of the superficial, too-exacting portrait, Wordsworth goes on to make an even more startling analogy, applying the signature epithet "Evil be thou my Good!" (706) to identify the work of Pope with the mission ascribed to Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Michelle Sharp fleshes out the implications in this analogy, elucidating Wordsworth's belief that the cold, precise application of Pope's genius effaces and eventually replaces otherness with sameness, thereby giving way to a loss of distinction, a conflation of representation and original. The sin of both Pope and Satan is thus one of adequation:

Satan's transgression can be formulated in terms of an unfaithful, uncircumspect, and hence false mimesis that attempts to reproduce, to reflect as in a mirror, every detail of its original. Indeed, the satanic perversion aims to create itself as a mirror image indistinguishable from the form it images and thus to usurp or acquire the powers of that original, thereby leveling the hierarchical differences between the imaged and the image, and instituting a state of radical equality or indifference...In terms that Wordsworth will echo in his attack on Pope, Milton describes Satan's argument as 'blasphemious, false and proud' (PL v.809), and his discourse as lacking 'control' (PL v.803). As Satan resists the imposition of Law and Edict, refuses to bend the "supple knee" to God's decree and to his newly proclaimed heir, he confuses, and hence refuses to honor the order of origination, the ontological, causal, and temporal priority of God over its creation and to posit the image as the imaged, the creation as a self-created being owing no debt to anyone or anything. Satan's mimicry aims thus to cancel, to erase, the difference between the two

poles in the mimetic project, to collapse them into one and to recast mimesis in a form that slips inevitably into narcissism. The allegorical interpretation of Satan's infinitely frustrating, but also infinitely fascinating project is, as we know too well, his begetting of Sin and his initiation of an incestuous genealogy of radical indifference whose meaning is death" (Sharp, 283).

Here, refusal to "pay the debt to the other," to "bend the 'supple knee'" on behalf of the deceased otherwise given no means to speak for him or herself results in a portrait as mirror, reflecting back the self's genius and power. According to Wordsworth's forceful claims, Pope's portraits are Satanic in that the other is eclipsed in an assertion of self-presence, with the artist's tactfully restrained emotion and necessary receptivity to the external and other replaced by imposition and dictation, as the imaged is given full priority over the image.⁶⁰

Perhaps it is not surprising that, in "Essays upon Epitaphs" Wordsworth's demonization of Alexander Pope also involves the subtle denigration of his own text's primary figural element, the figure par excellence with regard to the neutralizing of antithesis. Wordsworth first refers to prosopopoeia as "a tender fiction" (706) as well as a "shadowy interposition" (707), one which "harmoniously unites the two worlds of the living and the dead" (de Man, 77). As de Man notes, Wordsworth appears to criticize prosopopoeia for achieving the very aim he had originally set out to achieve.

To explain Wordsworth's trepidation with regard to prosopopoeia, de Man turns to the poet's quotation from Milton's "On Shakespeare" (1630) in which a number of lines are omitted. De Man's focus on the absented lines ("Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving / Dost make us marble with too much conceiving") reveals them to be more relevant, for his purposes, than those actually included in the essays. De Man cites Isabel

MacCaffrey's reading of the line as "our imaginations are rapt 'out of ourselves' leaving behind our soulless bodies like statues" (de Man, 76).

In the omitted lines, de Man identifies Wordsworth's recognition that the inherent workings of prosopopoeia and the symmetrical structure of his means of reconciliation require that, when the dead receive the gift of speech, the living are deprived of voice, "imitating in their muteness death" (Liman, 16). Just as the "specular language of autobiography" reveals the autobiographer to be suspended between authorial and textual 'I,' with the reading of the epitaph the living traveler enters into the "frozen world of the dead" (de Man, 78). In the cyclical illumination representing the recurring rising and setting, birth and death of the sun, just as the sun, as eye and mind, gives voice and face to the naked name on the monument, the animation inherent in the reading of the epitaph demands that the reader do the same, effacing his own identity.⁶¹ Prosopopoeia's destabilization signifies that the preeminence of the sun (human, living) is levelled in the appropriation of the stone (worm, death) in Wordsworth's never-ending (un)natural cycle.

With the intent of Wordsworth's Pope and Shelley's Frankenstein thus undone, prosopopoeia proves that sun, author and reader, far from wielding language as Wordsworth intended, are entirely susceptible to its unwieldy power. Far from vanquishing death, a neat resurrection and everlasting life, the prosopopoeia that activates the epitaph represents an unsettling encounter with death as the loss of self and sense. The trauma for the reader initiated into the realm of prosopopoeia and its destabilizing of binaries that separate presence and absence, the living and the dead, is activated through this disturbance of identity. By incorporating the reader into a realm of figure, the reader

cannot recognize him or herself otherwise than *as* an element of figure. Since, however, the deceased no longer exists, is “no longer strictly speaking a perceptual presence,

the remembering of it is not a substitution of terms, or a trope, but a prosopopoeia, the lending of figure to an absence, giving face to the death” (Sharp 284).

The use of prosopopoeia entails (a textual) corruption, in creating an entity with no real object or corollary, a thought or image of something that does not exist or no longer exists, that cannot be incorporated into any actual experience or perception. Prosopopoeia, which literally translates to both face and mask, becomes a phantom that destabilizes the relation between life and death and, in recognizing this, the attentive reader identifies him or herself in relation to this presence of absence. Mirroring his literal disruption and contamination of the homogenous patriarchal world of early industrial Europe, Frankenstein’s monster represents a contamination of the semiological field, a representational, technological lacuna.

Likewise, As Mark Hansen notes⁶² in a discussion of Shelley’s critique of Romantic rhetoric, whenever Victor apostrophizes the natural elements, he evokes not the Wind, for example, but the monster. Rhetorical figure is repeatedly connected with the unnatural and the living dead in the novel. Like Wordsworth’s epitaphic structure and the poet enlivening the sun which attributes identity and life to the senseless stone, Victor’s gaze brings to life not merely a corpse but an impossibility constructed of human, animal and *other* parts, echoing a signifying chain that provides for the reading of life in a face that masks the conflation and degradation of death and life.

“The Flower at the Edge of the Grave...is Not Quite a Perennial”:⁶³ Cinema and Différance

Theories that approach the creative endeavor as an attempt to arrest the flow of time and the corruption of death take on particular dimensions with relation to photography and film. The uncertain ontological status of the cinematic image, particularly that which gives face and voice to the absent and dead, who appear ‘present’ and moving about as in life, makes for a medium seemingly well-suited to memorialization, mourning and the treatment of topics related to mortality.

The association of film with the realm of the dead, including comparisons between “mummification as preservation for a life beyond life and the ghostliness of cinematic images” (Lant, 59) has a long history.⁶⁴ In “The Curse of the Pharaohs, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania” (1992), Antonia Lant tracks the genealogy of Bazin’s essay “from a plethora of earlier printed, painted, architectural, and filmic texts that infuse the cinema with a pharaonic past or that associate it with an exotic though distant Arabian present:

The alliance between optically novel and illusory forms of representation and ideas about Egypt precedes even the invention of cinema. It is detectable at least since the French Revolution and persists throughout the nineteenth century-across lantern shows, panoramas, dioramas, photographs, and photographic criticism, and on into the emerging sphere of cinema itself” (Lant, 58).

Such interpretations of the seventh art stretch at least as far back as 1896 and Maxim Gorky’s description of the cinematic world as a “kingdom of shadows.” In a description of a world of living death worthy of Edgar Allan Poe, Gorky circumvents

thoughts of cinema as a preeminent example of human technological achievement, relating instead an experience of anxiety and dread, in the medium's "not only failing at the simulation of the fullness of life but actively producing half-life, a kind of death" (Donaldson, 67).⁶⁵ In the dark, anonymous space of the theater, "an Egyptian tomb" wherein, as Vachal Lindsey has stated, "we see the new hieroglyphs" (Lindsey, 27), a machine fills a blank screen with people and things not really there, simultaneously elsewhere or no longer in existence.

While film theorists including Rudolf Arnheim, Stanley Cavell and Siegfried Kracauer, as well as artists and philosophers such as Maxim Gorky and Walter Benjamin,⁶⁶ have examined the uncanny relation to reality characteristic of cinematic representation, perhaps no work has remained more influential in this respect than André Bazin's "Ontologie de l'image photographique" (1945). Claiming that the history of the plastic arts "est essentiellement [une histoire] de la ressemblance ou, si l'on veut, du réalisme," (12), photography and subsequently moving pictures are described as the final word wherein, for the first time in history, a precise image is formed automatically, without human creative intervention. Bazin states that both photography and cinema benefit from "un transfert de réalité de la chose sur sa reproduction" and, most famously, that the image, "peut être floue, déformée, décolorée, sans valeur documentaire, elle procède par sa genèse de l'ontologie du modèle; elle *est* la modèle" (16).

Thus, Bazin's text - written in the conditional to address what in then-contemporary language would constitute "a radical impossibility" (Schwartz, 99) - has long been universally interpreted as proclaiming film's totalizing triumph over absence and death. Upon reexamination, however, Bazin's fastidious efforts - in his most famous

essay as well as other works - to describe a medial state between presence and absence problematize such a reading. As Dudley Andrew has stated, in “Théâtre et cinéma” (1951) Bazin describes the difficulty of defining the word presence in the age of modern media. Claiming that it is untrue to state that the screen cannot put the viewer in the presence of the actor, Bazin writes that “l’écran restitue la présence à la manière d’un miroir au reflet différé dont le tain retient l’image” (Bazin, 112). Andrew closely examines Bazin’s copiously annotated original copy of Sartre’s *L’imaginaire* (1940), finding that “Bazin’s bold assertion” regarding a transfer of reality

“...echoes Sartre, who begins a section of his book this way: “Through the photo of Pierre I envision Pierre... [the photo] acts upon us – almost – like Pierre in person. I say, ‘This is a portrait of Pierre’ or, more briefly, ‘this is Pierre’” (Andrew 2010, 12).

While for Sartre the photo evokes his friend strictly in his absence, for Bazin, who would forego Sartre’s “almost,” binaries including presence and absence, being and nonbeing “give way to intermediate concepts with names like ‘trace,’ ‘fissure’ and ‘deferral’” (Andrew, 9). In “Ontologie de l’image photographique” Bazin also mentions the cinematic image in relation to the Veil of Veronica, the cloth said to have been used to wipe the sweat from Christ’s face before his death. The cloth is believed to bear the image of Christ’s face, in a transference of reality similar to that of a vernicle. Bazin also cites the Shroud of Turin upon which the face of Christ is said to be transubstantiated, resulting in a singular image of that which cannot be imaged. Both of these relics are seen as examples of *Acheiropoieta*, images not made by human hands.⁶⁷ In another example of images believed to exceed the limits of representation, Bazin also cites magico-religious beliefs including cave paintings, with their depictions of animal stand-ins ‘killed’ to insure the efficacy of an upcoming hunt.

In *What Cinema Is!* (2010) and “Deconstruction *Avant La Lettre*: Jacques Derrida before André Bazin” (*Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and Its Afterlife*, ed. D. Andrew, 2011) respectively, both Andrew and Louis-Georges Schwartz revisit Bazin’s essay and its most celebrated description of cinema - in yet another tale of the birth of art and creation within the tomb - as the last word in realism, its impetus akin to Egyptian religion’s preservation of life through representation and/as mummification. In these mutually referential texts, Schwartz in particular re-reads the relation of mummified corpse and statuary - the latter placed within the sarcophagus as potential replacements in case of theft - in a Derridean manner, as a potential signifying chain capable of engendering *différance*.

Relative to Bazin’s phrase “la pérennité matérielle du corps” (15) Schwartz cites the dictionary definition of “pérennité,” as “‘durability,’ ‘permanence,’ or ‘perpetuity’” to describe a phylogenetic endurance that is not contingent upon the survival of the individual existent as original model. As simulacra, the mummy is the deceased subject “in flesh and bone,” the two remain “ontologically connected entities without a simple origin” (99). Like his contemporaries Blanchot and Levinas, Bazin’s study of photography and film thus leads him to focus upon being qua being, in “the flowering of a corpse that endures through generations of human individuals” (Schwartz, 98) contingent upon no particular existent. While the mummy thus “figures the possibility of spatial difference” from its vacated source or ‘soul,’⁶⁸ the terracotta statues offer “temporal deferral,” there in reserve as “a potential or conditional signifying chain” (98). We find within the tomb “a staging of *différance*, an origin of *différance*” (99). Thus upending the classical concept of being, the grave referred to by both Derrida (in

“Différance” [1968]) and Bazin would “bury the proper by haunting us with an ontology in which being can be attenuated and shared” (Schwartz, 99).⁶⁹

Following Andre Breton and the Surrealists, Bazin goes on to describe the intermediary status of the filmed object, not as representation but as a genuinely extant, waking hallucination. Perhaps it is fitting that - like Blanchot’s theory that is also founded upon a living dead condition and manifestations most liminal and spectral - the interpretation of the most celebrated work on film ontology continues to inspire diametrically opposed readings. Bazin’s essay is alternately seen as concerning the supra-ontological as well as the logocentric, as coursing a singular path between that celebrating the artistic conquest of death and another prevailing notion figuring the experience of the medium as evoking an unsettling “encounter with death.” Like the two absolute paths described by Blanchot, one reading features a shoring up of identity and a sense of mastery, while in another the spectator comes face to face with his or her own limits, with finality and absence. The divergent possibilities of interpreting “*Ontologie de l’image photographique*” illustrate the manner in which the cinema continues to present a novel ontological problematic, perhaps explaining the enduring influence of the essay upon modern and postmodern characterizations of the nature of the medium. The liminal status of the filmed individual would also prove to lend itself well to subject matter featuring the interrogation of identity, including that of the self-reflexive experiments of Weimar and 1930s American horror cinema.

Bazin avant la lettre: A Technology of Living Death, A Language of Resurrection

The Gothic-influenced, *mad science*-centered horror films of the 1930s inscribe within their diegetic approaches allegories of the genesis of life from death as the birth of cinema from the tomb, highlighting the cinema's ambiguity of ontology, as the divergent possibilities of interpreting Bazin's ontological assertions resonate with those put forth therein. Such films focalize totalizing obsessions with reference to embalming, restoration, revivification and mummification, "le corps intact des insectes...dans l'ambre" (Bazin, 15) and the bringing to life of Galatea, in relation to properties innate to the seventh art.⁷⁰ The divergence and duplicity with respect to the nature of film imaging is often illustrated through a double relation between two ostensibly disparate figures, both 'creations' of the mad doctor as well as embodiments of, respectively, resurrection and living death - the beautiful woman perfectly preserved or saved from death and the malformed or mechanical double or 'monster.'⁷¹ Additional unsettling resonance emerges through parallels between the one-sided controlling relation between the mad scientist and love interest and that of director and actress.

In Karl Freund's *Mad Love*, (1935), Peter Lorre's warped Dr. Gogol houses a wax statue he calls Galatea, until it is replaced with his horrified love obsession, the Grand Guignol actress the statue was modeled after. In Louis Friedlander's *The Raven* (1933), Dr. Vollin (Bela Lugosi) miraculously restores a young dancer to life in order to possess and imprison her (meanwhile holding the friends and family who stand in his way hostage), intent on indulging his appetite for Sadism. In Michael Curtiz's *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933), Ivan Igor's (Lionel Atwell) life-like statues of notable figures such as Joan of Arc and Cleopatra are molded from wax poured over the bodies of poor,

anonymous murder victims. Like other 1930s horror films, the novel relation between original and replica is ceaselessly exploited, as when Charlotte Duncan (Fay Wray) enters the museum to meet Igor for the first time to find that his Marie Antoinette is her exact double - no wax facsimile, shots of the 'statue' are exceptionally life-like as they are obviously shots of the living Duncan/Wray herself. With his stating "I wanted to have her beauty, always," one finds that, in Edgar Ulmer's *The Black Cat* (1932), Satanist-necrophiliac Hjalmar Poelzig (Boris Karloff) preserves his wife, among other women he's murdered, encased in glass while keeping her look-alike daughter (both mother and daughter are played by Lucille Lund and both are named Karen) as a sexual slave. In *The Mummy* (Karl Freund, 1932), Boris Karloff's Imhotep returns to life seeking the reincarnation of his dead lover after being embalmed alive two-thousand years prior, when he was caught trying to resurrect her. Imhotep intends to kill his reincarnated lover in order that they can marry and share a living dead state for eternity.

1930s horror films harbor and often foreground the disparate notions of film ontology inherent in Bazin's revelations regarding the cinema's "'complexe' de la momie" (Bazin, 1). The classic American horror films undermine the totalizing, scopocentric orientation of a charismatic, seemingly all-powerful mad scientist, as well as the possibility of sovereign spectatorship, by establishing a figural economy of death and destabilizing visibility by repeatedly calling attention to cinema's more illusory aspects. While horror films rely upon the dramatic framework of the classic Hollywood model, they also disturb the seamless presentation or demystification of 'reality,' largely by employing methods established in the earliest films, including those Tom Gunning references collectively as "the cinema of attractions" (Gunning 1986, 18). Such films

eschew narrative and story to foreground the testing of the novel attributes of the medium and often the exploitation of the ontological inscrutability of persons onscreen.

In chapter two I introduce the manner in which the classic American horror films of the 1930s that influenced Franju, Ferroni and Fassbinder, including James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1931), Michael Curtiz' *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1932) and Karl Freund's *The Mummy* (1932), elaborate upon Gothic tropes. These films illustrate, in a more encompassing, immersive manner, the unsettling encounter with death, in part by playing upon cinema's ontological uncertainties, including how the medium reflects Shelley's concerns with regard to creativity and/as adequation. I go on to focus on the manner in which the purveyors of Gothic horror films self-reflexive illustrations of the camera's indifference to its human referents, whether living or dead, facilitates apophatic strategies.

I argue that early horror films appropriate the classical Hollywood style, only to undermine emphases on easily palatable verisimilitude with means that feature shock, interruption and dissimulation relative to the gaze inherent in some of the cinema's earliest experiments. I discuss how 1930s horror films harbor and often foreground disparate notions of film ontology inherent in Bazin's revelations regarding the cinema's "'complexe' de la *momie*" (Bazin, 1). The classic American horror films undermine the totalizing, scopocentric orientation of a charismatic, seemingly all-powerful mad scientist, as well as the possibility of sovereign spectatorship, by establishing a figural economy of death and destabilizing visibility that calls attention to cinema's more illusory aspects. Specifically, by making it clear, usually in the opening credits, that

nothing is as it appears,⁷² horror films undermine their own means of visual and aural representation.

The American horror films I address commence with both demonstrations of the unstable nature of representation – examples of which recur throughout the film - as well as the notion of technology as threat. Inverting the status of the train, from emblem of progress emergent, like the movie camera, from the momentous discovery of the steam engine,⁷³ these films also commence with vehicular accidents. Through such methods that call attention to film as uncanny, even ominous new technology, Whale, Freud and other early horror purveyors magnify the trepidation exhibited toward modern industrial production inherent in Shelley's novel, while generating subtle but unmistakable resonances with the events and fallout from both World War I and The Great Depression. Subsequently I discuss the appropriation of the horror tradition of the 1930s by Victor Trivas, Riccardo Freda, Giorgio Ferroni and Georges Franju, including the way in which the films resonate with disturbing elements of WWII, including the evocation of the experiments of Josef Mengele. Steeped in a knowledge of early film, horror and expressionism, as well as a most extreme variation of surrealism, Georges Franju in particular would combine these disparate elements with unsettling allusions to events of WWII to create *Les yeux sans visage*. The film would come to define modern horror by restoring the shock factor and uncanny or marvelous elements lost in the inevitable attrition of novelty as the filmic experience became naturalized.

Les yeux sans visage and the films that both influenced and were influenced by it also prominently feature scenes of birth and rebirth, problematizing notions of ontology as in Bazin's essay, often mirroring the function of prosopopoeia and apostrophe in

Victor Frankenstein's visual encounters with his monster. The frontal orientation and movement toward the viewer that characterizes both mad scientist and locomotive, respectively gazing and careening in the direction of the audience, signifies their respective roles in engendering the artificially created screen monster. From what is often regarded as the first horror film, Robert Wiene's *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*, the monster's roots in the radically alterior technology represented by its mad scientist-double and the out-of-control train are emphasized through similar formal treatment, including the use of apostrophe. The introduction of the monstrous Cesare emphasizes the somnambulist-murderer's mutant ontology and problematizes the nature of filmic reality. Before glimpsing Cesare *in the flesh*, the spectator is introduced to the somnambulist via a life-sized drawing presented by Caligari in order to entice a fairground audience. Later, when the Doctor must provide an alibi for his murderous double, he places a straw-filled dummy version of Cesare in the coffin-like cabinet, while the *real* Cesare embarks on another murderous errand.

Wiene calls attention to the notion that, as in any signifying system, both what is referenced as real and representation are equally possessing or lacking in substance and reality. Alternately, the director flaunts the notion that these figures embody what was previously regarded as an ontological impossibility, that of attenuated being shared by man and/as machine-man. With Cesare *in flesh and blood* a substitute for the evacuated subjectivity or soul - that which is other than the purely material body objectified by the power of director stand-in Caligari; the paper advertisement standing in for the somnambulist as centerpiece of Caligari's act; as well as the straw substitute that preserves Cesare and allows Caligari's 'show' to go on; Wiene echoes the potential

signifying chain of Bazin and Derrida - the *différance* inherent in the dynamic relation of soul-mummy-statuary in time and space - *avant la lettre*. With the spectator's descent into the "Egyptian tomb," a reading of the "new hieroglyphs" would thus make clear her relation of film to the dead, as the upending of difference and the embodiment of the dead undermines the substance of the living.

The problematizing of identity is extended if one takes into account the proposal advanced by narrator Alan, that Caligari and Cesare are doubles, reincarnations or living dead manifestations of a pair of legendary medieval murderers. In addition, multiple interpretations of Cesare include the somnambulist as a manifestation of the Doctor's unconscious desires, his double or id, as zombie-like Fascist soldier and as mirror of the film actor or the spectator, with Caligari the asylum director regarded as double of the film director. The multiple visual renderings of Cesare can also be seen as reflective of the permutation of boundaries with respect to the proliferation of filmic images and mass-production. Following Bazin, Rey Chow details the strange relation between cinema and identity as the reproducibility and transferability of being:

"The modes of identity construction offered by film were modes of relativity and relations, rather than essence and fixities...With film, people's identification of who they are can no longer be regarded as a mere ontological or phenomenological event. Such identification is now profoundly enmeshed with technological intervention. What does it mean for a person to 'appear' when he is physically absent? From an anthropocentric perspective we would probably say that the person...was the 'origin,' the 'reality' that gave rise to the film, which then became a document, a record of him. From the perspective of filmic images, however, this assumption of 'origin' is no longer essential for [the person] is now a movie which has taken on an independent mechanically reproducible existence of its own...With the passage of time, more and more reprints can be made and every one of them will be the same. The 'original'...will no longer be of relevance. Film, precisely because it signifies the thorough permeation of reality by the mechanical apparatus and thus the production of a seamless resemblance to reality itself, displaces once and for all the sovereignty of the so-called original, which is now often an imperfect and less permanent copy of itself" (Chow, 168-71).

In examining the black and white human referents of early film by way of postmodern notions of the unknowability of the subject, Robert Smith asks,⁷⁴ “if those figures already fell short of their own self-identity, were they already ghosts?...What sort of multiple haunting must then be at play in the experience of the screen?” (123).⁷⁵

Regarding Wiene’s film in particular, Dietrich Schuenemann states, “it is the specific notion of cinema as a ghostly machine creating shadows and doubles of absent people that is at the heart of the filmic realization of the story” (Scheunemann, 87). Anton Kaes reiterates,

“by leaving open what might be hallucination and what reality,⁷⁶ [*Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*] mirrors properties of a medium that in spite of suggesting the greatest possible proximity to nature is essentially based upon illusion and a trick of the senses. Caligari’s spectators are sitting in a tent just like the spectators in a movie theater. The cabinet is nothing else than the cinema itself,” (Kaes, 150).

Finally, with much fanfare and repeated disturbingly sexual emphasis on visual exhibition, Caligari directs the eyes of spectators both onscreen inside his tent, and those beyond the fourth wall, to a standing coffin, the cabinet of the title. As it opens, the spectator observes the rigid figure of Cesare, eyes closed as if sleeping or dead. When Caligari commands that he awaken, full shots give way to an extreme close up. Cesare’s eyes flutter sleepily, then instantly come alive, looking back at the spectator with an intense glare. With the spectator’s perspective manipulated to identify her with those within Caligari’s tent, if the relation between the raising of the dead and the effacing of the subjectivity of the living were not clear enough, it becomes explicit with Cesare’s first utterance, pronouncing the impending death of the young protagonist as representative audience member, whom he will murder shortly thereafter.

In the first of dozens of such scenes of birth and rebirth in early horror cinema, Wiene recreates the most memorable scenario from Shelley's novel, the genesis of the monster that also signifies that of a new genre of literature. With the opening of the cabinet that is "the cinema itself," the appearance of the living-dead creature gives to the new machine-powered medium a terrifying face, malevolent eyes and the uncanny ability to return the gaze of the spectator. James Whale would recreate this scenario with the more disturbing, distorted face and gaze of Karloff, opening the floodgates for the similar introductions of technological monsters throughout the films of the 1930s including *The Raven* and *Island of Lost Souls*. With Frankenstein or Boris Karloff's face⁷⁷ a terrifying death mask, the apostrophe of the machine-monster come to life represents a contamination of the visual field analogous to that of his literary incarnation with regard to the semiological field.

The Close Up versus the Face that Can't Be Seen: Ethics and Absence in Bresson, Rossellini, Dreyer

After completing an overview of relevant theoretical writings on the face and the close-up, in Chapter three I analyze approaches to faciality in postwar films influenced by Dreyer's *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), the first film to extensively mine the potential for film as rigorous spiritual exercise. I go on to discuss affects relative to, first emotional, spiritual expression and the close-up as exemplified in *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and, subsequently, those relative to the non-expressive, non-signifying face in postwar cinema.

Like *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc*, the early postwar films of Dreyer, Bresson and Rossellini are heavily reliant upon close-ups of the face and an intrinsic obscuring of spatio-temporal relations. Within Dreyer’s template, the lack of spatio-temporal particularity, exacerbated by the use of ellipses, false-cutting and a flat, one-dimensional look serves to intensify focus on continuous shots of the face as primary means of preserving continuity. Further, According to Balázs and Deleuze, Dreyer’s film is the example par excellence of the manner in which, extracted from its environs and thereby removed from the visually established hierarchy (and what Deleuze refers to as “l’état de choses”) that otherwise defines social relations in the film, a human face can lose its ordinary functionality as it is pared down to the status of vehicle. Balázs describes a dissolution of individuation as, abstracted from time and space and subjected to the camera’s microscope-like scrutiny, micro-movements of expression reveal heretofore closed off, interior dimensions of character, at the expense of traits that ordinarily define an individual. In the diminishing of personality, the face one presents to the world, prolonged close ups are capable of presenting for analysis what the individual would normally, consciously or unconsciously, keep hidden.

With the face as screen or photographic plate becoming a conduit for abstracted expression, in *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* and subsequent films, “we see, not a figure of flesh and bone, but... moods, intentions and thoughts, things which, although our eyes can see them, are not in space” (Balázs, 109). Through the emergence of these indicators, Dreyer’s film could “dive us into the depths” in presenting a “life or death struggle” wherein “fierce passions, thoughts, emotions, convictions battle ... in the spiritual dimension of facial expression alone” (Balázs, 114).⁷⁸

While retaining affects attributable to Dreyer's utilization of this newly-discovered "language of physiognomy" (Balázs, 13), a number of postwar spiritually-centered films that rely heavily on close ups and/or medium-close shots also severely suppress expressivity and emoting. Dreyer, Rossellini and particularly Bresson go beyond focus on the face as reflective of normally hidden, interior dimensions to the face as emblem, used to identify without essential properties, neither 'speaking' of nor speaking for the subject or her interiority. Divorced from use value or truth value, face and being are estranged in a manner that brings to the fore properties described by Blanchot when he writes of the image relative to a cadaver.⁷⁹ I will explore this notion, along with Marion's applying of Levinas' theories of the face as irreducible otherness to the face as artistic image, in subsequent chapters.⁸⁰

Along with the obscuring of causal relations, lack of character development as well as a paucity of psychological explication and expository dialog, the close up of the blank face renders the individual largely 'illegible' and irreducible. The films combine linear, straight-forward, readily recognizable stories of intense spiritual struggle -- including Biblical tales and stories saints, as well as those culled from the classics of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy -- with the preempting of traditional means of identifying with or relating to characters beyond their function within a tried-and-true story. Such means allow its director to harbor emptiness and inscrutability, "the mystery that is human action and the human heart" (Sontag, 7) at the core of the film.

Largely closed off and impenetrable, its capacity to signify minimized, the face in these films *can* indicate. Expression is, however, reduced to a few variations relative to an overall attitude. The haughty contempt and intermittent paranoia of the otherwise

expressionless pickpocket when mentally sparring with a crafty police inspector and the fixed, disturbed rapture of Johannes the mad Christ figure in *Ordet* emerge to mark resistance against and/or the yet-to-be-complete nature of a transformation that ends with the virtual elimination of affectation or self-consciousness. A singular individual's movement toward escape from dire, spiritually stultifying isolation and estranged consciousness is illustrated by a struggle between fastidious willfulness and an emergent more open, selfless orientation less adorned by what is impelled by the ego.

While chance and perhaps other indiscernible factors appear to influence the individual gradually yet continually from beyond his or her remote perspective - the pickpocket becomes especially attuned to the tremendous sway of coincidence in his life - the ultimate transformation is an invisible one. As Bazin describes, with regard to the protagonist of *Journal d'un curé de campagne*, like so many stations of the cross, we are presented with a procession of the most significant events that define a life. Just as Bresson elides the dramatic essence of scenarios and encounters, showing just enough for the spectator to get an idea of what has occurred,⁸¹ we see nothing but the end result of transformation. The transformation betrays no logic and appears through no gradation. The final stages of the process, such as the shocking return to sanity of Johannes of *Ordet*, seemingly emerge 'out of nowhere'.⁸² The protagonist appears to learn little, to adapt, compromise or change sparingly in successive situations, yet a comprehensive change of character occurs, without our having witnessed or grasped it. An apophysis of self is evoked largely through negative means, not limited to the celebrated formal approach contingent upon absence, fragmentation and ellipses. In chapter three I discuss *Journal d'un curé de campagne* and *Le diable, probablement* with regard to faciality and

apophatic transformation of character in conjunction with an examination of the transformation of image Bresson regards as integral to his work.⁸³

Referring to Denys' representational approach, including the concept of "dissimilar similarities," I elaborate upon comparisons by Keith Reader and Brian Price between Bresson's separation of word and image in *Journal d'un cure de campagne* and Derrida's deconstruction. As opposed to readings including that of Dudley Andrew⁸⁴ that regard the Priest's writing as a means to self-realization and finding his way to God, I examine the Priest's obsessive journal-keeping as expressive of both self-indulgence⁸⁵ and highly impractical instrumental intent,⁸⁶ thus initially an impediment to salvation. Expressive of lurid manifestations of both pride and despair intrinsic to self-consciousness and estrangement, the Priest's simultaneously written and spoken interpretation of events time and again clashes with visualized reenactments. I address the complex role of writing in manifesting the final realization which prompts the Priest to drop the pen and surrender to his fate, in relation to interpretive difficulties emergent from the Priest's alternately Christ-like and neurotic, disturbed and disturbing behavior. I go on to examine the role of writing in *Journal d'un curé de campagne* with regard to character transformation vis à vis the transformation that occurs in Bresson's deconstructive means of imaging, utilizing examples from *Le diable, probablement* to illustrate the latter.

CHAPTER 2

“GIVING FACE, DE-FACING, FIGURATION AND DISFIGUREMENT”:⁸⁷ A POETICS OF FLESH AND BLOOD IN SHELLEY’S FRANKENSTEIN AND FRANJU’S LES YEUX SANS VISAGE

“If most of the metamorphoses in the *Metamorphoses* go from human to inhuman, life to death, animate to inanimate, the coming alive of Galatea goes the other way. The name for the figure of speech of which this metamorphosis is the literalizing allegory is prosopopoeia. (J.H. Miller, 3-4)

The proliferation of Classical myths that feature an injunction against impertinent looking -- including that of Actaeon and Artemis, Perseus and the Gorgon, as well as Tiresias -- warn of the dangers of the possessing, incorporating gaze fixing upon what cannot be incorporated. The look alone-- or, perhaps more unsettling, the gaze reciprocated-- more often than not results in the decimation of the subject. In a world wherein the gods are actually visible, “c’est la vision qui expose au péril du sacré, chaque fois que le regard, par son arrogance prompt à dévisager et à posséder, ne regarde pas sur le mode de la retenue et du retrait” (Blanchot 1980, 196).

The lack of responsibility and proper restraint with regard to the unknowable at the center of these Classical tales is also an integral aspect of Mary Shelley’s epistolary novel *Frankenstein*, one of the foundational myths of modernity set in a burgeoning industrial scenario wherein all things, including those once relegated to the realm of the gods, appear accessible. Victor Frankenstein’s scopocentric orientation -- that which recognizes or seeks to ‘discover’ and validate only sameness -- emblemizes a patriarchal

culture that places absolute value in relation to likeness. Through Victor, Shelley critiques not only the impetus to remake and overtake the natural world regarded as inherent in much of early industrial culture, but also fixed, narrow attitudes toward others with regard to class, race and particularly gender. In *Frankenstein* as well as subsequent mad scientist tales, this tendency incorporates a most extreme version of the emergent instrumental, clinical gaze.⁸⁸ For Victor, the practice of examining, diagnosing and removing the diseased to sustain purity and life is perverted by a craft honed while gradually turning away from life in favor of the world of the dead, with the study of corporeal corruption giving way to grave-robbing and other unspeakable violations. Victor's narration details how such practices gradually steel him against disgust when working with "objects the most insupportable to the delicacy of human feelings" (53). Victor's obsession and concomitant estrangement precipitate his eventual loss of "all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit" (53), while fueling an all-powerful self-image predicated on the denigration of otherness. Shelley's quintessential mad scientist eventually suffers the fate of earlier legendary figures whose scopic impertinence and presumptuous breaching of boundaries lead to entrapment and spiritual annihilation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, as both author/narrator and scientist, Victor betrays a variety of methods for both figuratively and literally bringing dead things to life. From his self-assigned Godlike station, he describes a chilling form of adequation when he 'reads' no qualitative difference between human and inhuman, between the flesh that clothes the living body of the other and that which is incorporated in giving life to the death worm. Evoking the biological reductionism⁸⁹ of early scientific theory, the

inaccessible reaches of the interior and immaterial (mental, scopic) are thus regarded as sufficiently accessible as to be part and parcel to the acquisition of their fleshly aspect.

By way of classic German and American horror films, *Les yeux sans visage* revisits many of the central concerns of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, linking the Classical scopic motif warning against human encroachment to illustrations of the dissimulation and duplicity at the heart of language and technology. Franju pushes to extremes Shelley's trepidation toward totalizing artistic and technological aspirations resulting in instrumental science giving way to radically anterior aspects of technology. His meditation on 'mad science' thus facilitates a self-reflexive play on the uncanny technological capabilities and ontological uncertainties of cinema discussed in Chapter 1, with regard to the reanimation and re-presentation of the absent and the dead.

In its illustration of the violence inherent in self-definition through the 'fixing' or neutralizing of others, *Les yeux sans visage* (Franju, 1959) focuses upon Dr. Génessier's experiments in rejuvenation and immortality, including his efforts to restore the face of his daughter after his reckless driving results in a crash that leaves her severely disfigured. Restoration is predicated upon removing the faces and taking the lives of numerous other young girls, lured to his secret basement laboratory by his assistant-lover, Louise. Like the pieced-together amalgam that is Frankenstein's creature as well as Shelley's text and subsequent horror films, *Les yeux sans visage* mirrors the nature of the monstrous palimpsest of faces produced by Génessier, as it contains innumerable traces of other monsters, other films and stories. Here Génessier evokes Victor Frankenstein as totalizing autobiographer, in pursuit of the lost material object, going on to 'write' in real "flesh and blood."⁹⁰ Echoing Victor's stripping of identity to 'create' others as absent,

dead and devoid of agency, the violent aspect inherent in representation is evident, the singular face becoming universal, as it is taken off, stripped of individuality to become a mask of an original absented 'Eurydice.' As in Shelley's novel, as well as Blanchot's theory of language, ultimately all are in effect rendered faceless.

In analyzing *Les yeux sans visage* by way of the darker aspects of literary and technological creation illustrated in *Frankenstein*, I discuss historical and legendary creators of living beings or life-like machines. Beginning with a brief discussion of the pursuit of the secrets of life, from mythical figures such as Prometheus and Pygmalion to the eighteenth century makers of automata, I discuss theories linking writing and reading practices to the animation of the inanimate in early Romantic theory, from Johan Georg Hamman to William Wordsworth and his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Utilizing Wordsworth's notion of a "flesh and blood" common language that would not only replace classical tropes but restore the estrangement of sign and referent, fusing matter and spirit, I go on to discuss Shelley's monster as the revivification of Romantic rhetoric, as both literary and literal manifestation of prosopopoeia, the trope wherein the difference between face and mask is effaced.

Victor's (re)creation of others utilizing masks devised to mirror his own perceived perfection and inflated self-image – a trait that also defines patriarchal culture as a whole in the novel – is also apparent in Dr. Génessier and the male protagonists in power in Franju's film. *Les yeux sans visage*, like *Frankenstein*, plays on early Romantic notions regarding the purpose of art and science as bringing the inanimate to life, seeing death as a source of life and designating nature itself as in need of revivification. Franju appropriates Shelley's ambivalence and trepidation toward notions of modernity as a time

of progress and increasing perfection through the proliferation of human creative power to depict the failure of such notions.

Emblemized by the dubious, failed work of Dr. Génessier, the world of Franju's film exceeds that of Shelley's novel in its descent into meaninglessness, madness and loss of agency with the emergence of the long shadows of the darkest events surrounding WWII. In his claustrophobic, intensified distillation of the dynamics of fascism and the horrors at the heart of Auschwitz echoing in everyday bourgeois life, Franju creates a microcosm of the *univers concentrationnaire* in the nightmarish father-daughter relationship of Génessier and Christiane. Disaster is manifested through the eroding of binaries separating the horrors of the recent past and then-present day events, the societal and familial as well as the historical and fictive. Thus, while early Weimar and 1930s Hollywood horror films registered a dire world-view emerging in the wake of WWI and the Great Depression, Franju creates one of the earliest post-Mengele mad science films. Without reference to WWII, Franju's fragmentary allegory avoids representation in favor of an allusive, troubling resonance. Through formal tropes that undermine the film's own representational strategies within the diegesis and with regard to the spectator, the monster suggests disruption and contamination. Génessier's literalizing of the dynamics of prosopopoeia, giving face to what is absent, engineers an unsettling encounter with death, alluding to the impudent gaze of Orpheus and Akteon⁹¹ apostrophizing the Gorgon. I conclude by discussing formal similarities between Franju's depiction of Christiane and that of the Gorgon in Greek art in order to establish a link with Giorgio Agamben's evocation of this monstrous Classical figure⁹² in relation to the "impossibility of seeing" (72) as the impossibility of death experienced in concentration camps.

Imitatio Dei: The Word made Flesh, Death brought to Life in Early Romanticism

Beyond Icarus, Orpheus, Acteon and myths that warn of scopic infringement upon the realm of the gods, the attempted usurpation of the creative powers of God or nature has been a recurring concern in the realms of science, philosophy and literature. Early mythologies regarding Pygmalion and Prometheus as well as legendary medieval occultists and alchemists have sought to discern the essence of life, including those Shelley cites as having greatly influenced young Victor's pursuits, such as Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus and Cornelius Agrippa. Early modern theories such as the biological reductionism of Descartes – the idea that the principles of the life of animals such as birds can be compared to the principles that animate machines - depict the human body as “essentially a mechanism,” suggesting that the inaccessible interior and immaterial reaches of the human are regarded as accessible to the acquisition of their material and fleshly properties. Mladen Dolar states that the universe has been envisioned as akin to a great clockwork:

“The Galilean revolution in physics opened the perspective of cosmos as mechanism...and put into question the autonomy of the spiritual...what was at stake was the link between matter and spirit, nature and culture...the subject of the enlightenment was all along an attempt to provide this link” (Dolar, 17).

A century later, Julien La Mettrie, in *L'homme machine* (1748), sought to erase this difference altogether, claiming humans to be nothing more than automatons in body as well as spirit, and thus available for mechanical replication. Shelley takes the after-title of her novel, *The Modern Prometheus*, from La Mettrie, who applied the term to creators

of automata such as Jacques de Vaucanson and Wolfgang Von Kempelen. The production of extremely lifelike machines in the eighteenth century included Vaucanson's "The Flute Player," "The Digesting Duck," and Von Kempelen's card-playing "The Turk," as well as novel creations by Pierre Jaquet-Droz, Henri Maillardet and others. While not altogether removed from the work of Paracelsus, Faustus and the Illuminati, scientific developments at the height of the industrial revolution in the early eighteenth century suggested miraculous possibilities. Frankenstein's scientific pursuits mirror those of Shelley's contemporaries, including Hermann von Helmholtz's experiments in thermodynamics.

As discussed in Chapter 1, with the advent of the steam engine and, shortly thereafter, the first passenger train in 1800, large segments of the population attained access to previously inaccessible locations and novel experiences, as train travel revolutionized notions of distance, speed and mobility. The production of goods and services multiplied exponentially, "with double-edged consequences," increasing "the burden on those whose lot it was to operate the 'dark satanic mills'" (Knellworth, 8), thus precipitating a succession of protests, riots and general unease. At this point in time, the dystopian "allegory of society as overpowering 'megamachine' is not far away" (Hoffmeister, 290), including the perceived threat that expanding industrialization could make humans expendable, replaceable by machines or automata. "In this context, the metaphor 'machine' or automaton is used now as a means of direct social criticism" (Hoffmeister, 291). P.B. Shelley was to criticize "industrialization as reducing laborers to worthless machines" (Hoffmeister, 289). Like her husband and Wordsworth, Shelley was

torn between admiration and abhorrence for the human power exercised in these accelerated transformations.

It is not hard to see the imagination of authors sparked by these seemingly infinite discoveries, and the findings of scientists and early industrialists eventually came to pervade the work of poets and writers. The fascination with automata and the pursuit of the secrets of life and death provided the impetus for later tales such as Hoffmann's "The Sandman" (1816) and Poe's "Von Kempelen and his Discovery" (1849). It was the dawn of the Gothic double tale, often constructed along lines later defined as an ego's disturbed relation to the external world, resulting in a severely repressed id manifested as an *other* self, as in tales such as Poe's "William Wilson." Victor Frankenstein represents a seminal fictional figure in a long line of alchemist-scientists, from the early twentieth century and earlier still, including Stephenson's Victorian-era Dr. Jekyll, Symbolist novelist Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's fictionalized Thomas Edison in *L'Ève future* (1886), to modern science fiction and Grand Guignol-influenced medico-horrors such as Maurice Renard's *Les mains d'Orlac* (1920)⁹³ and Jean Redon's *Les yeux sans visage*.

Perhaps in fear of their potential obsolescence, purveyors of art, literature and philosophy began to mirror those of science in their growing obsession to both metaphorically and at times literally animate the inanimate. Largely by way of their scientific contemporaries, artists and writers studied the relation between life and death and the processes that rob human bodies of their essence. In *The Revivifying Word* (2008), Clayton Koelb discusses the emergence of novel notions among early German Romantics such as Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder regarding the bringing of dead matter to life as akin to the act of reading.

In *Aesthetica in Nuce*, 1762, Hamann describes God as a great Poet, conceiver of two great symbiotic poetical works - the physical universe itself as well as the Divine Scriptures – both of which are seen as texts capable of being read, their mysteries unraveled. Hamann believed the meaning of both creation and scripture to be lost, its fragments scattered in a manner belying facile means of deciphering. Like that of scripture, the language in which nature was written had become obsolete. Thus, like the ‘dead’ Near Eastern language of *The Torah*, that of nature would demand complex processes of reconstruction in order for humans who have become estranged from both to fathom their secrets. Like Biblical scholars, poets and philosophers must in effect raise the antiquated, obsolete languages of Nature and Scripture from the dead.

Hamann was vehemently opposed to the Enlightenment-derived rationalism of the likes of Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Johann David Michaelis and the literal manner of reading even scripture in straightforward semiotic terms with little regard for less accessible spiritual content. For Hamann, the coldly rational excesses of Enlightenment thinkers, the too exacting preoccupation with letter as opposed to spirit had rendered the whole of creation a mass of dead letters. The key to revivifying the Scriptures was to be found in a very different manner of reading.

In a move that would rank as among the most important in the early history of Romanticism, Hamann appropriates Paul’s second letter to the *Corinthians* and the cryptic discussion of the manner in which “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life” - one undertaken initially to establish Paul’s own authority by linking it directly to that of the Divine - to found a complex theory of reading, writing and the revival of dead things.⁹⁴ In the second letter, Paul revisits arguments from the works of the Ancients

regarding the nature of the animate and inanimate, including Plato's illustration of Socrates' claim that the written word, as merely an image, is inanimate. Paul, on the other hand, sees written texts as both living and dead, acquiring the former state, however, only if animated by the living Spirit. Paul's purpose was, in large part, to establish the notion that the old Covenant, written upon the stone tablets delivered by Moses, while still of great import due to its divine origin, had become obsolete, to be superseded by the (as yet unwritten) living Word, that of the New Covenant of Jesus. In one of many instances of his rereading passages from *The Torah*, Paul cites Exodus 34:29, wherein Moses descends from the Mount and must wear a veil to shield the people of Israel from the divine glory that shone in his face as they were as yet unready to receive it, a veil he eventually removes when in the presence of the Lord. In Paul's interpretation, the presence of the Spirit, the Lord, could still enliven the dead letters of the older, written Covenant. Despite the difficulties inherent in reading the ancient texts, the veil could eventually be removed and they would again 'speak' plainly.

According to Koelb, Hamann would devise a similar rereading of the miracle at Cana, in which the Lord turned water to wine, as Christ's raising of the dead language of the Old Testament to life. For Hamann, the purpose of creative and scholarly work thus becomes the endless reviving and re-appropriating of dead language facilitated by the spirit that is the mystery of God and Christ.

As Koelb asserts, much of Hamann's faith in the workings of the artist and philosopher as divine creation and revivification of death would make its way into the work of Romantic artists and thinkers who nevertheless did not share Hamann's Christian beliefs. Despite the troubling aspects of the appropriation of Paul and attendant notions of

death as a source of life, ascribing the purpose of art and science as bringing to life things inanimate and the designation of the natural world as that of death, similar conceptions would become popular throughout Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Theories that transfer the power of revivification from God and Christ in the Scriptures to humans vis à vis the natural world would be adapted by influential thinkers including Kant, Fichte and Coleridge.

Koelb discusses the preference of Herder for the Classical, ‘living’ poetry of Ossian and Homer over the dry, ‘dead’ offerings of his eighteenth century contemporaries. In the former Herder identifies a living (oral) presence, born out of and returning to enliven the natural world, untainted by the dead letter and what he sees as the demands and strictures that developed around writing, in the wake of the language of the natural world’s obsolescence and humans’ estrangement. Herder’s ambivalence toward writing betrays the implicit notion that language is always dead and even the ‘living’ words of the ancients are in need of revivification. Koelb later quotes Kant’s discussion (in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790) of the vast powers of animation inherent in the poetic imagination, which was seen as “‘a powerful agent for creating ...a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature.’ Art thus acts by ‘animating (beleben, that is ‘bringing life to’) something’” (15). Koelb sees Kant, much like Hamann, referring to the non-poetic language to be animated as both words and actual natural elements. Thus the Spirit or animating principle inherent in the artist allows him to create by way of ideas and inspiration provided through experience vis à vis nature. The ideas and inspiration that in turn both transcend and transform nature thus bring to poetic language a quality that cannot be grasped or defined through language.

A contemporary of Kant, Fichte also easily slides from the artist's reading and reanimating words to doing so with components of the natural world by way of Spirit and contemplation. In his epistolary *On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy* (1785), Fichte takes a friend uncomfortable with the usage of Spirit and letter on a circuitous journey through its derivation and history, a discussion which also addresses what compels and repels a reader toward or away from certain books. The difference is said to lie in whether or not the book is imbued with what is again called spirit. Discussing the manner in which the poet infuses vitalizing spirit into the work, through contemplating again equated to 'reading,' Fichte moves rapidly "from 'books' to 'other works of art' to 'nature' (17), as if all are imbued with spirit by way of human poetic power and discernible as aesthetic phenomena.

As Koelb states, Fichte makes an assertion that would carry great weight in the realm of Romantic aesthetics, claiming that "art comes into being when the living spirit of the artist passes through a dead medium to make contact with another living soul." Thus it is not merely the pouring out of spirit from the artist into the work, but the work must also encounter a worthy, sensitive and creative receptor. Reading becomes another vital creative act in the process of restoration. The artist described by Fichte is thus "not so much a creator ex nihilo, not so much a version of God the Father, as a figure of God the Son" (as in the episode with Lazarus) bringing life out of death, imbuing flesh with spirit:

"The artist 'lent his soul to dead matter so that it could communicate itself with us'" (Fichte 90, Koelb 19). Just as only divinity could bring the dead flesh of the crucified body back to life, so can only the 'vital mood' (Stimmung) of the artistic genius bring to life the dead medium through which soul communicates with soul" (Koelb, 19).

Art thus occurs when the limitations and ultimate failure of language are transcended by the real power, that which inheres in the poet or artist.

In refiguring the tale of Pygmalion's constructing and enlivening of Galatea, Fichte states that the latter should have been created in a manner wherein she would only be known to live by those endowed with spirit, whereas the common observer should perceive Galatea as lifeless. For Fichte this is the case with great art in general - the average reader or spectator could often fail to perceive and respond to the living spirit at work in a transcendent piece of art. Thus, the singular 'work' that is Galatea would 'live' only for those with superior gifts of perception and spirit. When Koelb asks the question as to whether Fichte's Galatea is alive or dead, like Shelley's living-dead monster the answer must be that it is both and neither, or "it must be both at once," for it is alive for those whose eyes are imbued with spirit...but dead to everyone else." Like the spectator, "the artist is himself such a beholder, for the sculptor uses his spiritual eye to discover in the dead rock the living shape that his imagination (and his trained hand) will release." Thus, prefiguring Wordsworth's subsequent description of the role of writer and reader of epitaph, as well as Hoffmann's Nathaniel, the troubled young man who 'animates' the automaton Olympia in "Der Sandman," with regard to Fichte's Galatea and his notion of both creator and proper receiver of a work of art, "it is not just beauty then that is in the eye of the beholder: it is life itself" (Koelb, 21).⁹⁵ Both the animating qualities addressed in the epitaphic and autobiographical writing of Wordsworth and satirized in the strange tale of "Der Sandman" would greatly influence Shelley's novel, including Victor's discovery of the secret of life in the face of an exhumed corpse.

“Another Name for Absolute Power”: Imagination, Inspiration, Threat and the Revivification of the Dead Letter

Imagination, which in truth
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason, in her most exalted mood.

Wordsworth's "The Prelude"; XIV. Conclusion (l. 189–192)

One of the most influential works to receive the influence of the early German Romantics would be Wordsworth's revered Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. One can clearly see the relation between the work of the earlier German writers and Wordsworth's own theories on the prelapsarian language of nature and its role in the restoration of the dead to life. The Preface features a discussion regarding the devising of a living language, unadorned and fresh, of real, true common speech versus antiquated, exhausted and lifeless tropes, to be brought to life through a rhetoric of engendering. Both Wordsworth's ambivalence toward and reliance upon prosopopoeia, as well as the importance of feeling and inspiration in animating the dead letter are most strikingly illustrated in the *Preface*. Therein Wordsworth initiates the campaign against the lifeless, abstract work of Alexander Pope and other predecessors, as well as the championing of his own idea of sincerity of emotion and feeling enlivened by the powers of imagination and inspiration.

Here Wordsworth sums up as his purpose to adhere to a more authentic, "naked language" of "flesh and blood" (Wordsworth 1802, 433). In a continued critique of Pope and others, standard poetic phraseology, including prosopopoeia, is again denounced as an artificially-employed classical inheritance, for its tendency to elevate poetry above

everyday language, its adherents described as thoughtless automatons. With feeling, emotion and subsequent inspiration regarded as governing everything from choice of language and trope to that of subject matter, however, there are exceptions. Insofar as poetry is described as both inspired and incarnated by “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” (433), prosopopoeia is acceptable as “a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion” (435).

Further, in a move that evokes the refusal “to bend supple knee” as well as the theories of his German predecessors, Wordsworth prioritizes the Poet’s perception and imagination over the external incident to be appropriated for the work. Here fact and incident are subordinated to reception and the emotion that valorizes and enlivens them. Meaning and value are in nowise inherent and are imposed from without. With regard to his work, Wordsworth states: “the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling” (432).

With its rhetoric of engendering, the *Preface* describes a new style, more accessible than that espoused by Fichte, in which words “are impregnated with passion [and] should likewise convey passion to Readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner or using such language” (434). Thus, paralleling the *Lyrical Ballads* inclusion of numerous examples of men usurping roles then typically performed by women, the Poet is described as trading in feelings he himself regards as traditionally feminine.⁹⁶ The Poet, like Shelley’s Victor, is to be both engenderer as well as bearer and nurturer of immortal ‘flesh and blood’ offspring, in a perfect interrelation wherein spirit inheres in the letter.

As Sara Guyer explains in *Romanticism after Auschwitz* (2007), Wordsworth's continued reference to the production of flesh and blood language is most intriguing when he turns to poetry's future, and the possibility that science exceed poetry, in one miraculous discovery making the Poet's Godlike means of creation appear quaint and all-but-obsolete. In a lofty description of the Poet's powers of "animation and social unification," Wordsworth describes the Poet as "the rock defence for human nature," one who not only keeps the "the Reader in the company of flesh and blood," but whose song "binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time." "Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man" (436).⁹⁷ Just as the Poet's memorial fosters nature's incorporation of humans into its prelapsarian song, Wordsworth anticipates poetry's incorporation of science (the reconciling of its theretofore antithetical relation), with the engendering power of poetry bringing to life the scientist's machines.

Wordsworth writes:

If the labors of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or the Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relation under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man" (436).

The prosopopoeia that is manifest through Wordsworth's desire to keep the reader "in the company of flesh and blood" (434) initially describes, as Guyer notes, an

authentic, living poetic language that would directly share in the materiality of its referents. When technological production threatens to undermine and supersede the imagined unlimited reach of literary production, however, a flesh and blood creation comes to denote artificial life, an automaton or life-replicating machine. Mirroring his own construction of a coldly rational Pope, Wordsworth's notion of imagination as "absolute power" and his prioritizing of feeling and inspiration manifests a similarly disturbing product. Although he continually denigrates antithesis in favor of his unique means of fostering correspondence, in Wordsworth's insular dialectical system, ineffable concepts relative to inspiration represent a false life and depth to reason's lifelessness and superficiality. The flesh and blood intended to engender Wordsworth's ideal poetic offspring thus becomes, not only that which gives birth to Romantic poetry, but that with which Shelley will later fashion her living-dead, 'evil, stinking' creature.

Wordsworth's anxiety with regard to the nature of prosopopoeia relative to its aim to dissimulate lack inevitably betrays the inaccessibility of pure self-presence and the possibility of transubstantiation between imitation and original. Paradoxically, as Wordsworth's encompassing system of tropes demonstrates, both here and in Chapter 1, the literary quest to manifest the authentic continually underscores its own proliferation of representation and imitation. Regarded in relation to the scopocentric perspective of Shelley's Victor, Wordsworth's use of the trope to incorporate one binary within another -- with death as interruption to ongoing life, and difference neutralized, "disarmed of its sting" and absorbed as part of the self-same -- as opposed to the prelapsarian or immortal, facilitates the arrival of death-in-life and corruption.

Eyes that would “Reply to Mine”: The Self as Product of Masks and Mirrors

As discussed in Chapter 1, the trope of Greek tragedy and Romantic epitaph that functions not so much to give life but to suspend all in a sort of half-life is also the trope of autobiography. Through the reproduction of names and faces the author attempts to recreate his or her past life and in so doing speak not only for herself or, more appropriately for a distanced, former self, but for others both living and dead. Reflecting the ambiguity embedded in its proper definition, the ostensibly authentic face that appears through prosopopoeia may here be more properly identified as a mask. In a description that infers that the principles of autobiography are inherent to some degree in all texts (a claim de Man himself had previously made), while evoking Victor's transformation from reader, to writer, to literal (re)creator of others as doubles or mirrors of the self, Leigh Gilmore states:

In any performance of the autobiographical voice, one speaks across a gulf to address an inanimate face, one's own, and to urge it to speak. Such an attrition of face and voice leads inexorably to a 'de-facement' for de Man, for the thing itself is neither 'there' in the past nor in the text just waiting to speak. The autobiographical 'I' is not the self in any simple way, it is necessarily its rhetorical surrogate. In other words the autobiographical 'I' is no more your possession than are the other persons you compel to speak in your autobiography or their biographies...Such performances are fated and even fatalistic encounters with the impossibility of their fulfillment. Persons in the past, including you as you were, can only be bidden like disincarnate spirits, and de Man's scrupulously deconstructive reading ends with the self writing the text staring across an abyss toward the self in the text... In its effort to represent life, autobiography comes inevitably upon its own impossibility (Gilmore, 88).

Citing prosopopoeia's roots in the masked theater of Greek tragedy in order to address the trope's continued liminality, Ned Lukacher states, “with each utterance [the] voice announces that it is neither properly dead nor alive but somewhere between the two” (Lukacher, 90). In “giving voice to the dead, the dead are memorialized in a kind of

resurrection that makes them undead but yet not alive.” The space of the writer, as well as of the reader or “traveler,” and that of the grave, the living and the dead collapse “so that the dead cannot yet be finally dead” (Smythe, 123). Thus, as I have suggested in relation to Wordsworthian epitaph, the blurring of binaries that problematizes the status of the dead inherently undermines the subjectivity of the living reader.

Throughout the novel, Victor remains blind to the duplicitous aspects of the principles of rhetorical figuration upon which his technological means of figuration are built, recognizing no limit to mimetic practice, poetic license or technological creative power. Beyond his appropriating the artificial inversion that paints (here feminized) natural elements as dead and in need of revivification, as writer he must sever himself from contact with others, from “context and reference, [and] renounce reality for the symbolic” (Bronfen, 132). Isolating himself, he thus removes all possible checks and strictures in order to refashion a world in his own image. Victor thus reflects the more troubling, marginal aspects of autobiography and writing in general, as well as specifically Romantic notions of creation. Here the artist creates him or herself as a separate, self-contained subject, in efforts to establish a “totalized autonomy of the simulated over the natural world” (Bronfen, 134). As Marie Hélène Huet states, the unnatural products, including phantoms, machine-men and vampires, that are engendered in myriad tales of Gothic monstrosity are born of Romanticism’s “dark desire to reproduce without the other” (171), as reflected in works such as the *Preface*.

In Shelley’s tale, that which culminates in the artificial creation of a potential “*genuine* inmate of the household of man,” Victor Frankenstein is both man of science and of letters, writer of both autobiography and epitaph (all the other principles have died

prior to the start of his narration) and creator of humans as an assembly line of similar technological products. Throughout his subjective, often suspect narration, Victor creates others as characterized by their absence, by their vulnerable, incomplete and mortal nature, in need of perfecting and for-the-most-part as pliable as automatons. As both author and scientist, Victor fashions a number of scenarios in which he is, implicitly or otherwise, pure self-presence, controlling, autonomous creator god, God as the Son who gives life to dead things.

The dynamics of self-creation through the fixing and incorporating of others is of primary interest in Shelley's epistolary novel, as the reader is introduced to the nature of Victor's means of creating, first as author, and only later in his identically self-obsessed workings in the science lab. For just as the autobiographer or Poet aspires or claims to create an authentic textual self and others that nevertheless remain productions and functions of the self – to give face and voice to a name, posit a reply, as well as opportunity for apostrophe – Shelley's scientist aspires to create the external world as mirror of his own will and seemingly limitless powers. The means of self-creation are thereby given added resonance through the text's identification of the technologies inherent in creating a monster with those of literary production.

Presaging the efforts to 'perfect' an originary Adam as his own image, to engender an immortal yet wholly subsidiary creation, Victor as narrator 'creates' or 'resurrects' others in vivid yet homogenous word portraits that abound in the multivalent autobiographical novel. With his static, sovereign orientation, however, Victor proves to be a particularly unreliable narrator, a trait evident in his superficial, idealized account of his formative years. In one of numerous examples of the antithetical being subsumed

within correspondence, other into self, Victor claims, regarding his childhood relationship to Elizabeth, that “Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the diversity and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together” (38). Although all that is contrary to perceived harmony and interrelation is glossed over, his family is, in fact, composed largely by circumstance as well as the incorporation of difference and death. Like mother Caroline, both Elizabeth, his adopted sister and soon to be fiancée as well as Justine, enter into the family as a result of the death of or desertion by their birth parents. His early life, presented as nothing less than a continuous state of utopian perfection, is untroubled by the many misfortunes that surround him until sometime later, when he is directly affected and his own mother – a main source of perpetual reinforcement - is abruptly taken away by scarlet fever.⁹⁸

Stating that “no human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself” (39), Victor commences to describe his earliest years in a manner that establishes continuity, in terms of narcissistic sovereignty, between Victor as haunted Romantic poet/narrator (he is repeatedly compared to Coleridge’s ancient mariner), as youthful Enlightenment-inspired inventor and as indulged and pampered child. Women and nature equated with the feminine and mortal - emblemize difference; hence Elizabeth and Caroline are depicted, circumventing the actual and earthly in favor the celestial, as angelic, “saintly” of soul and embodying “the living spirit of love” (39-40). One soon realizes that such objectification is pervasive among men, as Victor’s father is said to treat Caroline like an idol, a “fair exotic” (36). In turn Victor, as child and again as narrator, (re)creates Caroline, Elizabeth and other loved ones, in all their perfection, as objects and subsidiaries, as so many precursors to his creature. His perspective relative to

these creations is concisely revealed in Victor's description of Elizabeth's fine attributes reflecting glory directly upon himself. Dubbing her "my pretty present" (35), he states that "all praises bestowed on her, I received as made to a possession of my own" (36).

Victor's instrumental gaze, that recognizes or seeks to 'discover' only sameness, embodies a patriarchal culture characterized by a kind of collective Narcissus gaze, one that places absolute value in relation to likeness. While women are thus objectified, Victor's form of self-mirroring characterizes masculine relations, particularly in the early episodes of the novel. In a segment that will later be paralleled in Victor's relationship to Henry Clerval (particularly when Henry nurses Victor back to health after the birth of the monster), in Robert Walton's second letter to his sister, he writes of his estrangement at sea, of his loneliness and longing for a companion. He expresses the desire for not female companionship, but that of "a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine...one whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans" (19). In the eyes that would reply to his own, that would, upon his address, (like Nathaniel's Olimpia) come to life with a desired reply, Walton seeks an other within whose gaze his 'self' would be completed and perfected, in a relation of pure affirmation and reinforcement.

Stephen Vane describes "the construction of a specular self-image" (Vane, 248) within the text, and the need for others as merely intrinsic to self-relation.

"Without the supplement of the other, humanity lacks the figure of humanity itself... the self acquires face and form only by way of figures which reside beyond it. The self must be given face and figure from elsewhere in order to be itself" (Vane, 246-247)...But Walton's desire, his wish for self-restoration is indistinguishable from his narcissism, for he covets a friend who will image back to him the form of his desire, who will be the specular reflection of himself, confirming and completing his heroic self-image" (Vane, VANE? 246).

The contours of Walton's persona are thus negotiated in relation to Victor, while Victor obsessively proceeds toward realizing his own ideal self in a specular relation to his intended immortal creation. The process of engendering his authorial creations mirrors the technological means in which Victor incarnates his actual creature, as both the literary and the literal, concrete and abstract or "the natural and the moral" (Wordsworth, 703) are to comprise an external world as pure reflection of the self's glory.

After his mother's passing, Victor's proposed solution to the encroachment of death - borne out already in his means of narration - entails the creation or resurrection of a Caroline or Eurydice cleansed of difference. With his radical new technologies, Victor aims to remake being itself, to beget life to an *other* that would paradoxically remain an object, one perpetually between life and death, human and inhuman. In the Godlike patriarchal relation he would assume before his creatures - one that would harbor the maternal role, less the threat of natural creations subject to mortality and corruption - Victor would spawn an assembly line of homogenous, self-mirroring, larger-than-life immortals.

Along with his proposed factory of masculine products, Victor as narrator begets a societal assembly line of like men (including Henry and eventually Walton) seeking to make their "naked names" immortal. The aggregate of near-identical males is paralleled by a procession of strangely similar, nonthreatening *Galateas*, including Caroline, Justine and particularly Elizabeth, who (like Justine) is described as the spitting image of mother Caroline, and who will serve as the latter's direct replacement.⁹⁹ The women merely reinforce masculine self-image, as functions or extensions, instruments or

appendages of men. Meanwhile the irreconcilably different, in terms of race, class and gender, if not absorbed and incorporated, are eliminated.

Before Victor introduces the mechanism that will bring to life a new race, he creates a machinic text, a powerful engine of self-imaging that, born in large part of his estrangement, builds a false world in which otherness is simultaneously masked and made mirror of the self. Creating himself as God and Savior both through literary and physical means thus entails doing violence to and deforming others as well as the natural world, including the dead who can no longer speak for themselves. With the literary (re)creation of his loved ones, who reflect back his outsized self-image, Victor glosses over human imperfection, vulnerability, unpredictability and mortality with homogeneity and harmony. The perfection and vivacity he sees as inherent in his homogenized, sterilized creations is cold and dead, a condition he elides as he does the fact that his harmonious family is in fact composed through numerous deaths. Therefore when he applies his powerful engine to the mass of body (and other) parts assembled, his creature, like his literary creations, embodies the liminal state described in relation to *prosopopoeia* as well as Fichte's *Galatea*, that of living death.

As Victor's world becomes an imaginative passion play of the pure good and angelic versus evil and demonic, he finds new ways to maintain a God-like relation to the exterior world. After his mother's death his intended immortal, angelic race is to be a restoration of that originally described in his idyllic letters regarding his childhood. Caroline's death, however, also begins the process of his associating death, coincidence, circumstance, unpredictability and all else that belies his control, as external and feminine. When his initial creation reveals itself to be monstrous, the creature's radical

alterity is thus strongly identified with femininity.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the death of fiancée Elizabeth who, in representing domesticity, responsibility, the maternal and normative parenthood, poses a threat to his pursuit of God-like achievement, Victor devises another means of creating himself as all-powerful in his pursuit of the elimination of an imperfect, uncontrollable race now designated as demonic: “once Elizabeth is out of the way Frankenstein and the monster can begin their real relationship, the one in which Frankenstein destroys the creature and saves the future, thereby reproducing his role as god” (Hall, 220). In Victor’s continued obsession with playing God by eliminating qualities he regards as abject and threatening, the greatest threat inherent in the imagined demonic race becomes the promised mate that Victor is forced to build after being blackmailed by the creature. The half-finished female monster, with its assumed ability to produce monstrous offspring of its own, thus represents the possibility of her usurping Victor’s singular procreative powers.

In another demonstration of the logic of prosopopoeia, autobiography and epitaph, Victor’s absenting and objectifying is inverted toward the end of the novel, when Walton writes that Victor is exclusively engaged in communing with his dead loved ones, thus completing a transformation from extreme immersion in and embodiment of Enlightenment rationality to that of the Romantic imaginary (memorial, memory). Recalling Gilmore’s description of the “disincarnate spirits” summoned in autobiography, Victor once again effaces the boundary between life and death, as he is said to converse aloud with friends and relatives. Through prosopopoeia and apostrophe he again creates a totalizing relation to a world of perfect-because-powerless others, imaginatively representing both the living and the dead.

Early in the novel, Victor's relation to others and means of creation are characterized by the presumed safety of distance and estrangement, as he scrupulously avoids his loved ones in favor of his all-consuming endeavor. For Victor as narrator, friends and family are safely situated in the past, while for much of the novel they remain home in Geneva, as he is studying, recuperating or merely hiding in Ingolstadt. Further, along with creating them as excessively idealized, thus largely fictional, in his autobiographical chapters his female relations in particular are evident more often as portraits and images, including mental images, than in the flesh. It is not entirely uncharacteristic of the once cold scientist to be consumed with sentiment to the extent that he recreates, apostrophizes and otherwise converses with the dead relatives he kept at a distance in life. Victor's tendency toward adequation, like that of Milton's Satan and Spies' Faust, prioritizes the image over the imaged, in that he 'loves' his friends and family when they are safely in the past, repeatedly memorialized in death, as an idea, a fancy, something internalized and seemingly manageable; yet, in further reflecting his loss of "all soul or sensation" (53) but for his singular pursuit, they come to play no more substantive part in his world as creator God than other dead materials to be animated and reanimated.

The No Exit of Existence: From the Prison House of Language to the 'Sans-Issues' of Technology

Victor's imagined world of prelapsarian fullness instantaneously dissolves when he 'succeeds' and the creature opens its "watery" dun-colored eyes (47). Victor's bid for God-like autonomy produces a creature that interrupts the imaginary purity of affirmation

as processed by his creator's gaze with dissimulation, aberration and contamination. The "twin birth or earliest offspring" of the phantasmagoric prosopopoeia of living death discovered by Victor at the grave, his creation represents the making present of something with no corollary, as opposed to an absence, "the presence of a nothingness that cannot be negated." An antiprosopon or no-face, with no name, the creature is not merely a separate entity, but radical alterity incarnate, a corrupt Lazarus-like apparition representative of horror and unfettered threat. Defying notions of absence and presence, internal and external, yet in a manner exceeding what would later be characterized as the role of the classic Gothic double,¹⁰¹ on the one hand the creature is a mirror of Victor's true face and inhuman nature as frozen, petrified subject, an incarnation of the prosopopoeia manifest from the maggot-infested corpse as emblem of soulless, specular, scopocentric life. At the same time, the creature embodies Victor's blindness, what his gaze can never process and what will ever elude him. Like the Gorgon, the hideous face of the monster marks an impossibility relative to the gaze, as that which cannot be looked upon without forfeiting one's status as human.¹⁰²

The inspired, unconstrained creative endeavor thus violates the spaces of nature as well as the ethical. With Shelley following the blueprint of Milton's Satan (by way of the originary Faust tales), in what would become typical Gothic fashion, with the arrival of the monster remaining boundaries and touchstones, including human and inhuman, sane and insane, animate and inanimate, fall away. Rather than resultant from the self's boundless incorporation, however, surpassing the limits of human sensorium and the gaze, as well as mimetic achievement, come at the price of loss of self and sense, of

agency and autonomy attendant to the arrival of the *il y a* and a reign of death in its impossible aspect.

Victor's every action is thereafter dictated by the disaster that is the arrival of the monster. In previously failing to acknowledge the *other* demand, the responsibility he shirks and denies, responsibility sits before him ever thereafter, in the form of the leering creature that haunts his every step and violently visits death upon his friends and family. Unlike Orpheus and the sacrifice that gives way to self-abandonment and freedom, Victor's bid for complete autonomy paradoxically results in his enslavement, initially to the murderous creature and his demands for a father and a mate, and finally to vengeance, as Victor himself comes to appear mechanical or, as Victor claims, in the grip of some mysterious (seemingly) external power. As Mark Hansen states:

"In the end, following the murder of Elizabeth, [Victor] pursues the monster mechanically, driven by an impulse beyond desire: '... vengeance, that burned within me, dies in my heart, and I pursued my path towards the destruction of the daemon, more . . . as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my soul" (Hansen, 204).

Thus, Shelley's cautionary tale of aspirations toward totalization and the gazing into nature's "hiding places" (37) paradoxically results in blindness and enslavement to one's own creations. The God-like creator of human products is paradoxically another victim (re)created by the powerful literary, technological engine he (and Shelley) created, losing agency and autonomy.

The undermining of Victor's pursuit of perfection and pure power is revealed throughout the novel. In one of many examples of humans mirroring the semiotically and technologically produced monster, Victor, Walton and the monster itself are 'created' largely through incessant reading. While the monster finds himself mirroring Milton's

Satan and Goethe's doomed, alienated Romantic Werther,¹⁰³ adventurer Walton is shaped by a number of heroic seafaring tales and rags-to-riches stories reminiscent of those later penned by Horatio Alger. Henry by the chivalry of King Arthur and Victor subsists on Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa. The self-mirroring properties previously described are thus first evidenced in the young males' obsessions with the novels' heroic endeavors. Such obsessions steadily draw Walton and Victor toward isolation through the devaluation of others -- of home, family and friends -- ultimately leading to Walton's ill-advised journey to the North Pole, and Victor's efforts to perfect his artificial life-creating technologies. The presumption to power leads directly to Victor's climactic misreading of the dialectical relation between the corpse and the deathworm as the secret means for the revivification of dead natural elements in a manner reminiscent of early Romantic thought such as that of Fichte. However, in one of the ways Victor and his male counterparts are identified with the monster, textuality and technology belie notions of instrumentality by *creating* and *enlivening* them, dramatically altering and directing the course of their lives while representing eventual enslavement and death.

The moment that Victor's dream of creation shatters with the opening of the nameless monster's eyes signifies, not only the birth of a being radically alterior to patriarchal European culture, but the birth of a new form of literature that embodies the unconstrained aspect of technology. In the work of Martin Heidegger, *techne* - technology in its manageable, implemental role - is regarded as the final form of metaphysics, one that is constantly at work in everyday life yet is reflected, in a most extreme form, in the thought of Victor Frankenstein:

“Heidegger's critique of technology stems from the critical contrast between the metaphysical tradition of philosophy and the genuine thought of Being. This opposition is manifested in the difference between the styles of technological calculation and the utterances of the thinker and poet. For Heidegger, modern technology is the product of western metaphysics; its chief characteristic is the fateful forgetting of Being. The basis of Heidegger's critique is his appraisal of technology as issuing from an aggressively self-assertive style of thought that objectifies the world in terms of its potential usefulness to the human subject. To the technological mind, everything is subject to calculation and valuation in terms of profit or a return on an investment. This orientation inevitably tends toward the goals of human progress and achievement. Even history as a whole and human existence come to be interpreted technologically. ‘To speak of optimism or pessimism,’ Heidegger notes, ‘is to look on being-there as a business proposition, successful or unsuccessful.... [F]or the last few centuries it has become one’ (Heidegger, 1959, 178; Campolo, 435).

Derrida's views on the manageable aspect of technology follow those of Heidegger, with further emphasis on the metaphysics of Hegel's dialectical reason and inherent incorporation:

“A view of the machine emerges through [Derrida's] critique of speculative dialectics. Derrida describes Hegel's dialectic as a kind of machine, in which the power of the negative propels the progressive unfolding of the being/becoming of Geist. Hegel tries to avoid absolute loss by reappropriating it and investing it with meaning and to turn death to a profit by putting it in the service of the life of Spirit. In other words, Hegel can only take the negative seriously by converting it into industry and power or by making it work the dialectical machine. Derrida criticizes this attempt to contain and control death, chance, and loss” (Campolo, 437).

Conversely, Mark Hansen describes the moment crucial for Shelley's Gothic, of the emergence of technology's radically alterior aspect:

“The Frankenstein myth insists that there is something irreducibly exterior or ‘alterior’ about modern technology... Shelley's text discovers a split within culture (or, more precisely, within technology itself) a split between a ‘restricted’ form of technology as techne (or supplement) and a materially robust form of technology as radical exteriority... In Marx's analysis, technology emancipates itself from an essential dependence on nature only following the development of the automatic ‘motive mechanism,’ the application of a machine to run other machines... ‘As soon as tools had been converted from being manual implements of man into implements of a mechanical apparatus, of a machine, the motive mechanism also acquired an independent form, entirely emancipated from the restraints of human strength.’ In his poetic musings on the industrial revolution, Serres correlates the advent of machine autonomy with a fundamental change in matter itself: ‘What is the Industrial Revolution? A revolution operating on matter. It takes place at the very source of dynamics, at the origins of force. One takes force as it is or one produces it. ... a sudden change is imposed on the raw

elements: fire replaces air and water in order to transform the earth. Fire will consume [Lagrange's] Analytical Mechanics and burn down Samuel Whitbread's warehouse... The source, the origin, of force is in this flash of lightning, this ignition. Its energy exceeds form; it transforms.' What distinguishes the steam engine from all previous technologies is its energy principle: it performs a stochastic metamorphosis of matter, transforming a natural material, coal, into a force unrelated (by any mechanical calculus) to its natural potential."

In evoking this elusive aspect of technology as it is embodied by the faceless creature of prosopopoeia and a singular mechanical invention that is likewise without corollary, Shelley highlights "the impotence of inspirational science (and romantic poetry) to control its creation:

"The inspirational leap, she suggests, gives rise to forces which act beyond the poet-scientist's control. Understood as a displaced figure for technological exteriority, the monster is not simply the result of scientific law applied, but rather a technological product in a quite specific, post-industrial sense: a product of a process whose 'effects' are neither predetermined nor constrained by theoretical principles of science" (Hansen, 584-586).

Through inspiration exceeding the instrumental, performative sign manifesting a stochastic mechanical creative apparatus, Shelley and Victor manufacture a product that surpasses the effect of the literary through bringing about literal, material change.¹⁰⁴ As Hansen makes clear, more than a monster "who marries the horrors of Gothic ghosts and spectres to the goal of the Industrial Revolution - science used to imitate and replace man" (Tropp, 30) - the creature embodies something loosed in the world that exceeds human constraint, an obscure power with the ability to "jouer son jeu sans l'homme qui l'a formé" (Blanchot, 317).

The Disaster in Absentia: the End of Living and the Beginning of Survival¹⁰⁵

Le désastre ruine tout en laissant tout en l'état. Il n'atteint pas tel ou tel, « je » ne suis pas sous sa menace: c'est dans la mesure où, épargné, laissé de côté, le désastre me menace qu'il menace en moi ce qui est hors de moi, un autre que moi qui deviens passivement autre. Il n'y a pas atteinte du désastre; hors d'atteinte est celui qu'il menace, on ne saurait dire si c'est de près ou de loin – l'infini de la menace a d'une certaine manière rompu toute limite. Nous sommes au bord du désastre sans que nous puissions le situer dans l'avenir: il est plutôt toujours déjà passé, et pourtant nous sommes au bord ou sous la menace, toutes formulations qui impliqueraient l'avenir si le désastre n'était ce qui ne vient pas, ce qui a arrêté toute venue. Penser le désastre (si c'est possible, et ce n'est pas possible dans la mesure où nous pressentons que le désastre est la pensée), c'est n'avoir plus d'avenir pour le penser. Le désastre est séparé, ce qu'il y a de plus séparé.

Maurice Blanchot (1983, 1)

“We live in years appended by A.D., after death, marking the eternal significance of the event and the living on; Blanchot describes Auschwitz in similar terms...as marking the point at which all is measured, yet cannot be rendered, it's an eternal absence, so never having occurred (at a precise time) it is never ending.”

Jennifer Yusin (14)

The far more pessimistic *Les yeux sans visage* picks up where Shelley's novel leaves off, from the first frame plunging the spectator into darkness in preparation for entry into a world saturated with the ongoing affects of disaster. In the first shot of the film, Franju combines elements evoking technological threat derived from Weimar film and 1930s American horror cinema with an uncanny variant of the early train film. The director employs a variation of the turn-of-the century “phantom ride” short subjects that feature a camera mounted upon an unseen train as it propels the viewer forward and bisects the visual landscape.

Popular between 1896 and 1906, phantom rides such as Edison's “Sarnia Tunnel Grand Trunk” (1903) and “The West Shore Local” (1906) present the power of the train as unseen presence, fathomable only through its subtle yet significant traces and affects.

As Thomas Gunning states, the locomotive “literally embodies an unseen energy that compels the camera, the film and the viewer down the track,” thus taking on “the basic characteristic of a phantom” (Gunning 2009, 169). Klaus Kreimeier cites an early, anonymous review of one such film from *The New York Mail and Express* that makes clear the genre’s potential to induce horror, feelings of helplessness and the threat of apocalyptic collision: “The shadows, the rush of the invisible force and the uncertainty of the issues made one instinctively hold his breath as when on the edge of a crisis that might become a catastrophe” (Kreimeier, 179). Remote from human conceptual grasp or constraint, the unseen force that impels the train, the camera and the dematerialized perspective of the viewer down the track exemplifies the means latent in the scopocentric medium to manifest not only the limits of vision and perspective, but invisibility itself.

From the outset, with his allusion to the elusive, radically exterior aspect of technology, *Franju* indulges in numerous means of hiding and seeking, including that involving a wealth of reference to earlier films and stories. The film’s opening both formally and thematically resembles aspects of such works as *Dark Eyes of London*, *Nosferatu* and Edgar Ulmer’s noir classic *Detour* (1945), while directly referencing *The Raven* and *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*. *Franju*’s variation on the phantom ride is set in blackest night and features what appears to be a single prolonged travelling shot, filmed entirely in long shot. There are in fact two brief, discrete dissolves, after which the same shot begins again. In *Franju*’s deep focus, extreme high-contrast treatment, the blackness is belied by the stark glow of seemingly unending rows of bare plane trees, wooden fences and a brush-covered stone wall that border the lonely rural byway. The high rate of speed, low angle and camera height suggest a perspective consistent with the

view from an open window of a moving automobile. Yet, as neither car, window nor driver is visible, the impossible hovering absent-presence takes on a ghostly independence.

Unlike that of the phantom rides, however, as we watch trees continually pass, the perspective established is backward-looking. We are watching, not the road ahead, but what has already passed and what is apparently being left behind, only to be revisited when the shot begins again. The disconcerting limbo effect is exacerbated by the seemingly interminable length of the sequence (slightly less than three minutes) as well as a repetitive and particularly manic segment of Maurice Jarre's celebrated theme music. With its rapidly ascending and descending scales of crazed musette and xylophone, featuring stabbing staccato horns reminiscent of those subsequently employed by Bernard Hermann in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the music and indeed the sequence as a whole verges on sensory overload. Franju's opening bespeaks not only an ominous presence in absence and the threat inherent in excessive speed but circularity, monotony and madness.¹⁰⁶

The stylized, monochrome treatment also suggests madness and mayhem by way of traces of earlier films,¹⁰⁷ including Fritz Lang's *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933). Franju evokes the climactic scene of Lang's film in which the obsessed Dr. Baum speeds toward the asylum he once ran and in which he will now be confined,¹⁰⁸ the Doctor finally falling into insanity and bending to the will of the unstoppable, invisible criminal force that is Mabuse. In Fritz Lang's film, the crossing over into oblivion takes place within a similarly severe monochrome mise -en- scène in which trees fleetingly passed were purportedly painted silver, in order to enhance the already extreme stylization. The scene is for the most part distinct from the more traditional, gritty, proto-

noir look of the rest of *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, whereas no such transformation is suggested by Franju, who maintains the extreme monochrome treatment throughout.

While resurrecting climactic moments from earlier films, Franju exceeds his predecessors merely by placing the scene, not mid-film, nor as a closure-providing finale, but at the film's outset. Along with the suggestion of madness, redundancy and an unseen force that evokes the dread and helplessness of the moments before a crash, one that nevertheless does not occur or is ever yet to occur, one begins to experience, in the futility of speeding ahead while looking backward and returning to start, a haunted liminal space-time. A world suspended between debased life and the ongoing threat of impending death will characterize the entirety of *Les yeux sans visage*.

Franju's phantom ride sequence thus prepares the spectator for entry into a world perpetually living in the wake of and hovering on the edge of a disaster. In an initial scene that appropriates and expands upon the opening of Friedlander's *The Raven*, wherein a horrific accident *does* occur, at the outset of *Les yeux sans visage* an accident involving Louise is narrowly averted. The near accident will not only remind the spectator of the one at the outset of *The Raven* and other 1930s horror films, but will be recalled throughout in depictions of visible and invisible, creeping or dangerously rushing vehicles, after it is revealed that an automobile accident prior to the time covered by the film both precipitates and haunts all events covered in the diegesis. The scene further establishes that the film will be overrun with traces and affects of, as well as allusions to, accidents and near accidents, including the original disaster that robbed Christiane of identity, one revealed to be the direct result of Génessier's needing to control everyone, as Christiane bitterly states, "même sur les routes."

Emblemized by the homage to the phantom ride and evoked via the plethora of conspicuous visible and unseen vehicles, what is thus most strikingly both absent and disturbingly present throughout *Les yeux sans visage* is the horrific accident, the technological disaster situated beyond diegetic events and the world of the film that nevertheless sets in motion all that occurs. The heedless, duplicitous, repeated actions of those in positions of power, those of Dr. Génessier as well as those he exacts from his assistant, Louise, involving stalking, kidnapping, involuntary surgery and murder, while initially undertaken to mitigate the effects of disaster, only exacerbate its sequelae. In thus paralleling Victor Frankenstein's ongoing attempts to undo the demise of his mother and its subsequent affects, the disaster touches the lives of each of the film's principals, from the girls who disappear to the police, friends, parents and fiancés seeking answers.

Illustrating the nature of Génessier's *art*, the conflicted drive toward wholeness and autonomy is again accompanied by a proliferation of imitation, falsehood and simulacra, including constant lies. Paradoxically, everything Génessier controls in relation to his quest is simulated, falsified and geared toward deception, from the use of faces of others to restore his daughter's 'true face,' to Christiane's mock funeral, as well as the pre-arranged faux 'chance' encounters between Louise and young victims.¹⁰⁹ Most memorably, the static faces of the principals appear as frozen masks or mirrors reflective of deception and artifice, barely concealing true intent. Accompanied by a rigid, mechanical demeanor, Génessier's is a stolid, haughtily emotionless mask of aristocratic authority,¹¹⁰ while the imperious Louise affects a barely-convincing façade of motherly benevolence that is too often betrayed by the furrowed brow and gleaming eyes of a predator. Génessier's duplicity and simulacra permeate every facet of his world, from the

frozen, artificial, lifeless mockery of the natural that is Génessier's home, overrun with imitation plants, as well as life-sized paintings and statues of humans and animals, to the falsities used to cover over his experiments, figured by the mask that covers Christiane's original lost face. Falling short in his endeavors, Génessier and Louise nevertheless continue to demand that others, including the mother of a boy whose eyes he tries to repair, bestow upon him a God-like faith and hope in his presumed powers, though he surely knows the boy will never be able to see again.¹¹¹ In an absurd, sickening early scene that illustrates the warped nature of his endeavor, the Doctor dismissively bestows 'hope' upon the distraught Henri Tessot whose daughter has gone missing. Génessier, who knowingly misidentified Simone Tessot's body as Christiane's in order to continue to work with impunity, is well aware that she is the most recent of his victims.

Mirroring the fluid circuit of exchange and incorporation, the disposability inherent in the Frankenstein-like giving and taking of face and identity central to Génessier's economy of death, the plot of *Les yeux sans visage* is a concatenation of continuous circuits of hide- and -seek, misdirection and deception. Beyond Génessier's work and assistant Louise's search for new victims and places to hide dead bodies, ongoing pursuits include the efforts of the police to uncover the perpetrators and the continual spying of Christiane who, hidden from the world and largely confined to a remote floor of Génessier's home, searches for the truth behind her father's mask of patriarchal authority, power and benevolence. Intrinsic to these pursuits are series of traps, as Edna falls for Louise's fabrications and into the clutches of Génessier, while Paulette is caught stealing and forced to comply with the police who seek, without her full comprehension, to use her to entrap the killer. From young victim Edna's search for an apartment and a

home, to an elderly neighbor's search for stray dogs that, unbeknownst to him, rather than be given a home, will also become fodder for the Doctor's experiments, these redundant circuits and indeed all willful endeavors are rife with futility and inexorably lead to entrapment and death. With little sense of time provided -- there are few time markers beyond a succession of stills inscribed with dates that depict the ongoing decay of Christiane's face in the wake of another failed experiment -- the action evolves unceasingly, as distilled within the circularity and redundancy suggested in the opening credit sequence with its evocation of invisible force.

Diegetic circuits are mirrored by formal circuits that also suggest that modernized postwar society's means of convenience, efficiency and expedience are little more than a meaningless rush to oblivion. While Franju's *mise-en-scène* often gives way to the strange and marvelous, particularly with regard to the arresting presence of Christiane, camera tropes, editing and other formal aspects are for the most part restrained, even clinical. The few conspicuous formal flourishes forge causal links between technology and death. In one example of such, a slightly canted, extreme high-angle shot, borrowed from Fritz Lang's *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* and *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, wherein such shots depict vehicles as strange or off-kilter, connects the arrival of Génessier in his shiny black car to the dead body of Simone Tessot by way of a slow, deliberate zoom from Génessier's perspective. The slow zoom is repeated in both an ominous representation of a furiously rushing, smoke-belching black train (one that appropriates the setup famously used by the Lumière brothers) closing in on the spectator and a subsequent identical rendering of Louise's perspective as she approaches the recently de-faced Edna lying motionless on a gurney. After the ostensibly dead 'patient'

suddenly jumps up and tries to escape, an extreme high- angle shot from a fourth floor window out of which she has jumped captures her broken form lying lifeless on the ground. Less extreme high angle shots also render the removal of Edna's face and the loss of the Doctor's own, as the vacuum of identity that is Christiane proves to be the characteristic condition in Franju's world of living death.

As in *Frankenstein*, life under the sign of disaster occurs in a world wherein antithesis blurs into correspondence in ways that preempt any notion of safety and solidity, a fact reiterated in Franju's formal approach. As the compelling force behind Génessier's falsifying actions, the disaster results in the blurring of conceptual as well as physical boundaries, just as rational and instrumental endeavors devolve into the irrational, with futile endeavors repeated to the point of madness. Nothing is safe, trusted, or unambiguous, as binaries such as interior and exterior, material and immaterial prove false, dangerous or deadly, indicative of entrapment. Once again, elements of modern technological innovation, portrayed by gleaming or eerily glowing light, lead to entrapment and death, as subtle allegorical hints link technology and war. The stone walls, wooden fences and rows of trees that characterize rustic routes surrounding Génessier's lair are paralleled by the abstract steel bridges, elevated tracks and loud, slowly creeping and/or furiously rushing trains, shrouded in fog, that characterize urban environs. We soon learn that, like the walls and fences that line rural settings, the trains, bridges and tracks that define the borders of this cityscape will also come to signify, rather than freedom and mobility, confinement and entrapment. Once the tenor of the film and the nature of Génessier's deadly project are established, the distant trains provide ever-present reminders that the modern technologically enabled, transient society

reliant upon the train and the automobile provide Génessier with a means to act with impunity, as the train delivers hordes of young, solitary potential victims to the city daily. The web of transport that encases the city initially appears to serve Génessier not unlike the surgical implements integral to his ongoing experimentation.

The centrality of the transport system to Génessier's endeavor also reminds the spectator of the role it served during the War, including the trains departing nightly for the camps. In one of numerous scenes wherein Louise appears about to break down under the strain of Génessier's demands, standing outside the Génessier family crypt as the Doctor prepares to deposit another body within, Louise looks up, first with longing, then an expression of fear and dread at a plane passing overhead. We are reminded that the war has transformed everything. Like the train, the airplane no longer merely stands as a representation of freedom, expedience, travel and escape, but also as a reminder of the bombs they delivered. Prompting a similar response from the spectator, the film features a number of scenes of modernity and technology, including the Doctor himself being observed and scrutinized, often with skepticism. An early scene opens with soon-to-be victim Edna flashing a radiant smile in the direction of the Eiffel Tower, France's symbol of modern achievement, a look that fades to one of trepidation and doubt.

In earliest cinema, including Weimar horror films, light often functioned as an emblem of modernity, in terms of techne and progress. In Murnau's *Nosferatu*, the use of black and white, shadow and light represented dualities including safety versus threat, purity versus disease and good versus evil in relation to the vampire and chaste young martyr Ellen. Ultimately, Ellen's spending the night with the vampire exposes him to death by way of the purifying rays of the morning sun. In the spirit of Shelley's novel,

certain mad science films of the 1930s such as James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) upended this trope, utilizing the glare associated with the sterilized white laboratory in a manner more suggestive of threat than that of darkness and the unknown. Monochrome black and white respectively define the domains of the crypt and its modern analogue the operating room, wherein life and death are examined and manipulated. Rather than facilitating vision, glare and light come to signify the blindness, sterility and death associated with Frankenstein-like pursuits.¹¹² And references to light and darkness as equally representative of threat are similarly evoked by Franju.

Scenes of Mr. Tessot rendered temporarily blind by the Doctor's headlights, and Edna looking for a means of escape when she suddenly sees the same glare as Génessier's car pulls up to his garage door again falsely insinuate that these technologies serve solely as instruments for the Doctor. The arrival of Génessier signaled by the light ensures Edna's entrapment and signifies the dead ends that immediately lead to suicide, the only way out being to jump from the fourth floor. Franju identifies Génessier as purveyor of technology and the wielder of its blinding glare symbolized in his car's scopomorphic headlights and the similarly powerful glare of the lamps that facilitate his laboratory work. The glare also characterizes Christiane's appearance, Franju thus marking her as technological victim, as her white mask and gown are brought to life by excessive light, her absent-presence figuring a liminal, half-mechanical creature. As in Shelley's novel, the light emblemizes the scientist's drive to reveal the true "face of nature" to pursue "*her* to her hiding places" (Shelley, 55), again in the usurping and erasing of the privative, the soul and the identity of others. Ultimately the clinical gaze and instrumental perspective epitomized by the light betrays the seemingly willful

blindness of Génessier, his inability or refusal to face the futility and horror inherent in his project.

The looming headlights that appear at the outset of both *The Raven* and *Les yeux sans visage* evoke the stark, glaring eyes of Bela Lugosi, superimposed over a darkened landscape in the opening of both Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932) and *Dark Eyes of London*. Transgressing initial impressions, once again in Franju's film a trope that in earlier films had been suggestive of the power of the mad scientist -- such as Mabuse's embodying radically alterior power in Lang's film -- is found in technology alone. Franju reiterates that, in *Les yeux sans visage*, the radically alterior power loosed by the actions of men like Génessier is in no way innate to him.

The cinematic mad doctors of American films of the 1930s do indeed succeed in their brilliant, twisted endeavors, at least for a time, and are thus responsible, albeit inadvertently, for some good. For all his drive toward immortality and fame through finding the secret of restoring and prolonging life and youth, however, the similarly perverted Génessier (again, like Frankenstein, who causes the deaths of the other principals) is responsible only for death. All-powerful and unstoppable in their desire for abject power, as Cathal Tohill states "the universe dances" (13) to the evil machinations of Vollin, Moreau and the like, Génessier's insatiable thirst for dominance is undermined by failure. Nevertheless, he trudges on, working day and night, refusing to acknowledge the inevitable failure in the quest to possess the original absented object.

Despite his apparently instrumental relation to the surrounding world, after the initial disaster, Génessier's actions, like those of Victor Frankenstein, are dictated by

external influence and circumstance. For Frankenstein, the death of his mother and the birth of the monster dictate his every action which, in the wake of the former, become continued attempts to repair, erase, remake and perfect humanity and nature, to recompose both in materials immune to corruption. When he apparently succeeds, Victor finds that he has instead remade humanity in the image of monstrosity, while the reader discovers that the monstrous visage is a specular reflection of the true monstrosity of its maker. Victor's actions are again dictated not by his wielding prodigious human power but by uncontrollable circumstance, chance as "the angel of destruction" (Shelley, 63) that again makes his acts appear mechanical. For just as Frankenstein's bid for autonomy paradoxically results in his enslavement to mysterious external elements unleashed by his unconstrained technology, the power associated with G  nessier is dissolved to reveal what comes to be associated with the radically anterior force evoked in the first shot.

The futility, helplessness, dread and madness inherent in the dialectical circuits betray an inexorability independent of and counter to human intention, lending Franju's characters, with their repeated activities, the appearance of figurines in a musical box. As actions revolve around the seemingly all-powerful G  nessier and his ongoing efforts to restore his daughter, with revelations regarding the Doctor's failures, Franju presents a modern world characterized by the waning of human agency in the wake of irreparable violation.¹¹³ Franju reinforces the notion that Christiane's mechanicity, lack of agency and subjectivity is shared by all, through repeated renderings of characters, including Christiane and Louise walking, eyes wide and seemingly possessed, past the camera. The slow, somnambulistic gait captured in slightly low - angle medium shot, as characters pass to the left of the camera, precisely mirrors that repeatedly employed to depict Ellen,

the primary victim of Count Orlock in Murnau's *Nosferatu*, while she is in the grip of the vampire's power. As I have suggested, the ominous, obscure powers of Orlock, Caligari and Mabuse are not shared by Génnesier. He is powerless, gripped by a more radical unseen force, and it is telling that he is depicted in a more rigid, robotic gait recalling Karloff as Frankenstein's monster and the seemingly all-powerful Orlock who eventually loses all control and is annihilated in retribution for his desire for Ellen.

With his characters (like film actors) inescapably locked into their roles, thus resembling Victor Frankenstein's proposed assembly line of faceless products brought to life through film's appropriation of the faces or mirror images, "shadows and doubles of absent people," Franju revives the notion of cinema as radical technology depicting a world of living death first breached by Gorky. In the spirit of the ontology of Bazin, who first extolled cinema's singular ability to automatically reproduce the image without interference from the creative power of humans, the soul is occulted in the act of filming, only the material, like so many rigid mummies and statues, remains. While such interpretations alone are disconcerting, the process by which Franju's allusive allegory causes the stereotypical scenarios and characters of classic horror to gradually morph into figures evocative of the Nazi death camps results in a film of shock and frisson, one that would come to redefine the horror film. The remainder of this chapter will focus on this process, including its self-reflexive elements that, like the phantom ride and the face of the monster or Gorgon, evoke the limits of vision and perspective, playing on the duplicity of the image at the heart of cinema and particularly the horror film.

Blindness, Willful and Unwavering: The Self as Deconstructed by Mirrors and Masks

The dynamic between visible and unseen, hiding and seeking, the inherent duplicity, interruption and misconception created by the ongoing process of appropriating and dispensing with bodies/faces, parallels and soon focalizes the more precarious nature of imaging central to Franju's film. Like its American antecedents, from the outset the film announces its concerns with seeing and perspective, with what is revealed and concealed, with seeing beneath the surface to what is hidden, in a scenario that establishes the instability of the scopic realm, thwarting readability, as nothing is as it appears.¹¹⁴ Undermining the incorporating gaze of both character and spectator, Franju calls attention to the controlled nature of the viewer's perspective and its potential for manipulation. The viewer is forced to observe intently, even in the face of horrifying medical experiments. Like Blanchot's tale of Orpheus, Franju's film turns on "the duplicity of vision: that the eye both wants to see and not to see...that which lies beyond the visible" (Newman, 158), the experience, essential to cinema, of wanting and not wanting to see (perhaps watching through eyes half-covered) what is around the next corner or will appear with the next cut or dissolve.

The film focalizes blindness, faulty vision and attendant false hope, as protagonists cling to faith in the failed experiment of modernity epitomized by Génessier. Faulty perception is evident in a number of scenes, as in the plight of the young boy who, after being operated upon by Génessier, cannot discern the number of fingers held up before his eyes. Although Génessier realizes the boy's vision is irreparably damaged, he

assures his mother that there is still hope. In *Les yeux sans visage*, it becomes apparent that blindness and flawed vision are harbored and perpetuated by such patriarchal figures. In a strangely humorous twist that further calls attention to the shortcomings of his scopocentric orientation, when he realizes that the young man's vision remains impaired, a frustrated, frazzled Génessier exchanges his own glasses for a new pair he pulls from his pocket.

The first scene is representative of the film's unexpected perceptual shifts. In the first shot of the opening scene, Louise squints into the distance while wiping mist from her windshield, followed by the appearance in the rearview of the blinding glare of headlights that resemble two large, prying eyes, while illuminating the fear of discovery that flashes across Louise's face. Visible yet immaterial analogues to the willful obscuring and misdirection, fog and mist, glaring light and darkness all of which define the mise- en -scène for the better part of the film, obscure clear vision and call attention to the perceptual concerns central to the film. Ostensibly alone, Louise subsequently adjusts the rearview mirror and the altered perspective reveals what appears to be a sleeping man, in trench coat and fedora, in the back seat. We soon find that the figure is actually the corpse of another of Génessier's experiments, a dead girl wrapped within the external trappings of patriarchy.

From this point on, as Louise deposits what is revealed to be a *female* body in a remote river, Franju introduces hidden elements that, ominously or humorously, alter the tenor of a scene. A seemingly innocuous meeting of a group of smiling young students on the Left Bank becomes a point-of-view shot from Louise's perspective when she suddenly enters the frame, accompanied by her mad leitmotif, in pursuit of a new victim.

In another scene imbued with multiple layers of looking when Edna stares up at the Eiffel Tower, an added element of strangeness emerges as a subsequent cut reveals that she is being clandestinely ogled by a suspicious- looking middle-aged bourgeois male who is subsequently startled and hurried along by the emergence of a police officer.

Likewise, the erosion of boundaries precipitates a proliferation of the inexplicable and truly strange, with Franju depicting a twilight world in fleeting images of subtle yet arresting juxtaposition. After Edna leaps to her death from Christiane's fourth- floor window, the camera exteriorizes Génessier's perspective, entering the room a few seconds after. The viewer briefly glimpses a doll near the floor, its face destroyed, behind which one of Christiane's dresses flutters in the breeze. Like a coat hung from a peg in Génessier's basement that earlier appeared anthropomorphic, Franju hauntingly evokes Christiane's absent-presence. In scenes that call attention to patently artificial elements, boundaries collapse between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic, filmic and meta-filmic. A patently fake airplane, the 'corpse' of Mademoiselle Tessot that resembles a stiff scarecrow and the rubber mask that delivers uneasy laughs at the culmination of the otherwise excruciating six-minute scene wherein Génessier removes Edna's face, betray the influence of Bataille's bizarre surrealist experiments in juxtaposition in his magazine *Documents*.¹¹⁵ Each of these scenes jar or baffle the senses, highlighting the elusiveness of interpretation in defying any clear manner of 'reading.'

Further complicating the confluence of perspectives, each protagonist mirrors, to varying degrees, the games of hiding and seeking, concealing and revealing perpetrated by the principals. While middle-aged bourgeois patronize Génessier, seeking to conceal the imperfections of their aging faces, vulnerable young victims such as those pursued by

Louise seek a life in the big city. These girls include Paulette Mérodon, who hides the fact that she's been caught stealing from her parents. What's more, Paulette steals cosmetics, adding yet one more layer to the manner in which all, to some degree, mirror Génessier's obsessions with concealment, physical reconstitution and perfection. Franju thus further destabilizes identity, as all recall Génessier in his illusory pursuit of self-perfection.

The director intensifies scrutiny of the problematic nature of perception by beginning every scene with characters observing, snooping or clandestinely scrutinizing others. At Christiane's mock funeral, staged so that Génessier can continue to act with impunity,¹¹⁶ a group of rural men initially appear quite perceptive in suspecting that all is not as it seems with regard to Génessier, when, among other things, they surmise that Louise is more than merely the Doctor's secretary and nurse. The apparent clarity of perspective is immediately clouded by racial bias, however, when one of them spits out the word "étrangère" in a tone at once ominous and venomous, with regard to the Doctor's assistant and lover. The image conjures torch-wielding masses whose fear of outsiders leads to their seeking scapegoats for the atrocities that occur in James Whale's *Frankenstein*, Murnau's *Nosferatu* and other early horror films.

Likewise, seemingly blinded by faith in false promises of the future, a diverse but primarily bourgeois audience sits rapt while Genéssier lectures on his experiments in the restoration of aging faces and skin grafts between 'biologically identical' individuals. Spectators are fascinated yet apparently untroubled by mentions of a process that is said to entail exsanguination and amounts of radiation so excessive that the 'donor' would not survive. The initial impression of unproblematic reception is disproved, however, when a

handful of audience members approach the Doctor afterward. The group first flatter him with regard to his ongoing experiments, then immediately gossip behind his back about his strange behavior. Like the groups of old men diverted by racial bias and the police by Génessier's superior stature, the audience members see below the surface but here, blinded by vanity and misguided belief and hope, they fail to look deeply enough. In addition to further underscoring the limitations of visual determination, such scenes illustrate the characters' mirrorroring of Louise and Génessier in that their faces serve as deceptive masks.

Focalizing ambivalence, deception, conflicting points of view and disparity of perspective, Franju plays upon different registers of surface and depth, actual and false, by alternating shots of characters first presented 'in the flesh' and then reflected in a mirror. Detectives are photographed initially speculating whether a recently retrieved victim is Christiane or Simone Tessot, who is also missing, before mistakenly leaning toward the latter. Ultimately, just as the similarly mirrored flattery and gossip prove equally disingenuous, both perspectives are tainted by the false as having been, literally and figuratively robbed of face or treated as nonentities by those in positions of power, young girls, alive or dead, native or foreign, are truly without self. Just as they appear to impede rather than facilitate clear vision, mirrors never appear to serve their original intent, to observe oneself - with one notable exception. Although all reflective surfaces have been removed from her rooms, when she sneaks into her father's lab Christiane, the film's monster-victim without a self, stands before a mirror and removes her mask, revealing the visual analogue of the disturbing, other-than-human reality behind the rigid façade that appears to be 'worn' by nearly all of the characters.

More than the older Greek choruses, young people in particular, including Christiane (whose continual surveilling brings her ever closer to uncovering the deceptive façade upheld by her father and Louise), appear to lack strong faith in appearances. Feelings that something is not quite right are overridden by distinctly modern, instrumental concerns. In need of a place to live, Edna is compelled to accept Louise's hospitality and the promise of an apartment close to Paris. Despite her increasing trepidation and suspicion, she is unable to resist Louise's promise of a place that would offer not only stability but convenience. Access to mobility, transience and expedience - such as Louise's promise that the train can transport her from Génessier's home to Paris in twenty minutes - proves to be the lure that baits a trap leading to death. Others including the staid Jacques, Christiane's fiancé and the successor to Génessier at his clinic, as well as Paulette, who is allbutforced by the police to help lure Génessier without full disclosure of impending danger, have little choice but to accept the veracity of the façades that conceal the true intent of the more powerful and predatory.

As in Shelley's work, young women in particular are treated as disposable, interchangeable entities. In Franju's film they are of little value other than sexual as objectified in Génessier's clinical yet sexually-tainted experimentation. Shockingly treated by the powerful, women are identified with the non-human victims, including the dogs and birds heard outside and trapped inside as living experiments.¹¹⁷ The status of women is made clear as, with name, face and identity effaced, Simone Tessot's body is tossed away in a river and later willfully misidentified as Christiane's and buried in her stead in the Génessier family crypt. Further emphasizing the degraded space afforded the young and female, the similarly faceless Edna's body is later placed in Christiane's grave

atop that of Simone, evoking the mass graves of the death camps and the nameless female victims that appear in vampire tales such as *Carmilla*.

Continuing the subtle emphasis on the blurring of boundaries as well as Génessier's Frankenstein-like incorporation of the natural and female, a conspicuous, unnatural glow (here the key light subverts the hard glare lent the technological, including headlights) defines the contours of the natural-- trees, brush, grass and even the logs stacked for burning in Génessier's basement. Just as trees are turned into logs to be burnt in his fireplace, Génessier's 'natural resources,' including animals and humans, are chopped up or disassembled, treated as mere fodder for his project of appropriation and consumption. Like the collapsing of boundaries that results in both binaries signifying entrapment and death in *Frankenstein*, for animals as well as young girls, not only do interiors illustrate entrapment but, as Edna's plight reveals, the external, including both natural wooded and urban densely populated areas, denotes loss and abandonment.

From Textuality to Technology, from Caméra-Style to Caméra-Scalpel ¹¹⁸

For men in power, lack of clarity and acuity inherent in an instrumental perspective permeates well beyond the sanctum of the laboratory, and resonates throughout the culture. The policemen, too, claim to possess a clinical, analytical eye, succinctly summed up in berating witnesses while insisting they are only interested in facts, not "je crois bien que, je sens que." Typical of then- popular Edgar Wallace pulp novels upon which many early horror films are based, the criminal is pursued by bumbling detectives and at times ethically suspect, logically challenged policemen. Here

the police mirror Génessier, in likewise failing to grasp what appears to be obvious: clues such as the curious fact, established at the outset and revealed just prior to the officers' interview with the Doctor, that an initial victim's face seems to have been removed with a scalpel. As previously stated, the police also parallel Génessier's attitude toward young girls as expendable fodder, using Paulette Mérodon as a guinea pig in an effort to lure the killer.

The police see the key to their respective searches in girls possessed of "un certain genre de beauté." Just as Génessier asserts the desire for total biological identity, the Doctor's search is presumed to be predicated on finding girls resembling Christiane, while the police describe the discarded victims as physically similar. Yet this does not always appear to be the case. We do not get a very good look at Simone Tessot before Louise tosses her body into the river. Yet she appears rather tall, lithe and of fairly light hair and complexion. She seems to bear a general resemblance to Paulette Meridon, who is attractive, with thin, delicate features and large, limpid, expressive eyes. In this respect, she does bear more than a passing resemblance to Christiane Génessier. However, the second victim, Edna Grüberg, is fairly short, a bit more sturdily built, with dark hair and possessed of softer, roundish features, with more piercing, cat-like eyes and a slightly upturned nose. A further element of absurdity is later introduced as guinea pig Paulette is instructed to dye her hair blonde, when Edna, the previous victim, was a brunette.

Here the most troubling aspect of the film emerges in the allegorical fragments that, like the director's earlier offering *Le Sang des Bêtes*, Franju's 1949 documentary set in Parisian slaughter houses, steadily creep into the already grizzly proceedings.¹¹⁹ Both Adam Lowenstein and Joan Hawkins¹²⁰ note the elements that subtly prompt

recollections of events relative to WWII.¹²¹ As Lowenstein states, depictions of young girls lost or displaced resonate with the plight of young women during the German Occupation. In a film already representative of the nightmarish domineering father-daughter relation, the identity of young girls and stray dogs proves particularly unsettling when the local who procures strays for G nnesier tells him how much they are loved when young, yet later abandoned by their family when they grow up. The situation reflects that of young girls abandoned or separated from their own families, while recalling the fate of the nation as a whole, betrayed by the patriarchal Vichy regime.

Significantly, discourse of a certain type of beauty is often accompanied by the expressed need to restore Christiane’s “vrai visage.” As Lowenstein notes, this was the precise term used by France’s fascist-leaning right wing nationalists, who sought to restore the nation’s ‘true face’ by cleansing France of foreign, particularly Jewish, influence. What is perhaps most potentially disturbing then for native audiences, in the wake of the Occupation and ensuing collaboration, is the conflation of two different types of beauty and identity: one, in this context, associated with native and the other with foreign, names, faces, and characteristics. Simone and Paulette possess French names, and betray different characteristics from Edna, whose last name is Gr berg. Edna bears an astonishing resemblance to Louise (in fact, the former could easily pass as the latter’s daughter) who is described as foreign and speaks French with a marked accent. Where type of beauty is presumed integral to his heterograft operation, he uses girls identified as native and foreign indiscriminately in an effort to restore Christiane’s ‘true’ face and identity. Her true face is paradoxically constructed via a palimpsest of others’ faces, each

operation succeeding then eventually failing to give her a true, permanent face and identity.

With Génessier's home functioning as microcosm for society at large, Franju contradicts the possibility of a true face, not only on the level of the individual, but those of the familial and societal as well. Lowenstein and Hawkins both refer to the French-monikered Génessier as distinctly Germanic, and he is at least other or foreign of both face and demeanor, in the context of film. Like the typical mad scientist or charlatan, in all situations he not only behaves but is treated as separate and other, by his rural working-class neighbors, his bourgeois patrons, and even the police, who likely dismiss him as a suspect due to his superior stature as much as their own incompetence. Like *Frankenstein's* Elizabeth and Justine, Louise's designation as foreign, as surrogate of the dead mother, represents death, replacement, simulation and dissimilarity at the center of the family. As with *Frankenstein's* dynamic of incorporation and its intrinsic relation to the notion of identity as fragmented and corrupt, the conception of a 'true face' of France is undermined, paradoxically, by the diverse, transient nature of a modern Parisian world that facilitates Génessier's project, providing easy access to both native and foreign victims. The conflating of native and foreign, French and *other* traits and names, both underscores and undermines issues of purity, classifications by race, nationality, gender, appearance and habit in terms of identity, ultimately rendering all meaningless.

Facing and defacement, the breakdown in the distinction between native and foreign, truth and falsehood, while evoking racist fear and hatred of the other, are also problematized as they gradually raise the spectre of collaboration. This factor most emphatically speaks to the need to see beyond superficial, surface characteristics, beyond

the deceptions, dead ends and impenetrable walls created by the masks and mirrors of persona. The motif of hiding and seeking, revealing and concealing, from the seemingly innocuous, such as the young girl's stealing of cosmetics, to the horrific concealing and revealing project of Génésier, begins to take on ominous new light through Franju's allegorical fragments and allusions. Ultimately, along with that separating foreign from native, the line between humanity and monstrosity is effaced when subtle reminders of the horrors perpetrated by the Germans in WWII are accompanied by those which evoke then-contemporary events in Algeria.

Victimes du devoir: Les yeux sans visage and Domestic Holocaust¹²²

One wonders, with regard to the native-named, *other*-designated Génessier, what exactly constitutes identity or a true face. As the body count escalates, a disconcerting set of questions arises regarding Génessier's intentions and his oft-stated desire to restore his daughter's "vrai visage." One wonders as well, in light of the prototypical mad scientist's propensity to remake the world in his own image, what constitutes the face to which he refers. And one wonders whether the Doctor refers to Christiane's original, pristine, unscarred face, as this would appear impossible in surgery requiring skin appropriated from other girls. We may also ask whether or not Génessier might prefer that his daughter, like the threatening, always unfinished female monster (and indeed, all females) in *Frankenstein*, remain a debilitated work-in-progress, insuring that she is forever in his charge and confined to the home and the operating table.¹²³ Christiane ultimately renders a compelling verdict, holding him directly responsible for the disastrous accident while asserting that her father desires to keep her confined and to continue working on her like one of his dogs, a human guinea pig.

Franju provides no easy answers: Génessier exhibits a conflicted orientation toward Christiane that reflects the refusal of limits and perverting nature of his impossible quest, to restore life while preserving Christiane's status as an object. As much as the film resonates with the Doctor's egomaniacal desire for unlimited power, what sets the staid, undynamic and expressionless Génessier apart is his seeming normalcy and mundanity. Against the histrionics and evil charisma of Lugosi's Vollin or Lorre's Gogol, Génessier is a very human monster. Indeed sympathetic at times, he seems to care deeply for his daughter. Yet concern for his daughter is also clearly tainted by incestuous desire. Génessier makes a consistent effort to distance Christiane from fiancé Jacques while, in a scene at the dinner table after an operation yields temporary success and Christiane is given a beautiful face, a strong sexual element is lent to the proceedings.¹²⁴ The need to preserve her in an objectified, living dead state also resonates with the necrophilia of earlier horror films such as *The Black Cat*. This notion is unnervingly illustrated as Génessier, when inside her crypt after the 'faux' funeral, just as lovingly tends to Christiane's funeral arrangement, tenderly caressing the flowers in the same manner as he does his daughter's hair in a subsequent scene.

The dialectical exchange of faces, between faces and masks, faces as masks and masks serving as face exacerbates the problematizing of restoration and incorporation inherent in post-Shelley Gothic when the horrible truth is realized in the blinding glare of the laboratory. At the very center of the film, in a series of long-held shots and clear deep focus, Franju places an interminable, disturbingly sexualized six-minute operation scene that caused numerous viewers to faint at its initial screening.¹²⁵ Focusing on the removal of Edna's face, no sounds are audible but for the occasional loud clatter of surgical

implements, the heavy breathing and grunting of the profusely sweating Génessier and the intermittent moaning of his barely conscious daughter.

The operation commences with a dissolve from the final shot of the previous scene, the one wherein Christiane sneaks into the lab to look in a mirror and behind her mask. As Edna lies on a nearby operating table, she is awakened to find Christiane, mask removed, standing before her. In a shot-reverse-shot that emulates the introduction of the originary filmic monster of *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (the importance of which was discussed in Chapter 1), from Christiane's perspective we see Edna scream, after which the point-of-view shifts to Edna's perspective. In a cut back to Christiane she subsequently breaks the fourth wall to stare directly at both Edna and the viewer. The film's 'monster' without a self thus represents disruption and contamination of the visual field analogous to that visited upon the rhetorical field by the novel's originary creature. Like Wordsworth's "traveller" and Shelley's reader, Franju's spectator is forced to experience a diminishing of self, to see the self figured in the visual economy. Like Wordsworth's sun and stone, Edna will lose aspects of face and identity in providing the same, however temporarily, for Christiane (whom we subsequently see, face briefly restored, at the dinner table).

In one of many instances wherein the Gothic double relation between father and daughter as creator and creation is reinforced, as Christiane removes her mask to reveal the absence of face, Franju fades into the operation scene with a similar frontal rendering of Génessier *putting on* his surgical mask. The Doctor's procedure is then revealed in excruciating detail, as we watch him carve into Edna's flesh and finally cut off her face. The difference between face and mask will be effaced once and for all in the absurdity of

Génessier's impossible endeavor, his heterograft operation that necessitates biological identity between patients, as the face removed from Edna will subsequently be used as yet another mask to cover the nonprosopon that is Christiane. The attempt to efface the difference between native and foreign, self and other through incorporation again provides not restoration and immortality, but the living death concretized by Christiane and reflected in the final grizzly scene in which we witness Genessier's Akteon-like fate, as he himself loses his face.

The True Face of the Cinema: A Dematerialized Perspective and a Palimpsest of Death Masks

Wandering the corridors of the home in which she is entrapped, perpetually spying on her father's activities, Christiane becomes a nightmarish embodiment of the ghostly absence-presence of filmic character, the 'mobile, dematerialized perspective' of visual modernity. Christiane's living death is suggested not only in her confinement, in the removal of all pictures and references to her within the home, but in the fact that she has seen her own funeral notice. With face replaced by a plastic mask, her body is cloaked in a long Givenchy gown that renders her movements ghostly, her covered legs seeming not to move as she glides throughout her attic abode. Christiane's voice also affects disembodiment, as it is seemingly divorced from her physical being. For most of her screen time Christiane does not talk, and when she does, as a result of the mask she wears, we don't see her lips move. With our first look at her, her face buried in her pillow, it appears initially that her voice could well be rendered in voice-over. As with the artificial treatment of sound in the film in general, Franju is able to exacerbate the

strange disconnect between voice and body in the editing room, giving it excessive ‘presence’ in part through a relative paucity of reverb. The voice comes from an indefinite space yet is thus strangely immediate.¹²⁶ All characters and particularly young women share in Christiane’s status as devoid of face and voice.

In a manner that exceeds the original source of prosopopoeia, Greek tragedy, with its correlation of the theatrical and chthonic wherein the living dead speak, through Christiane Franju chillingly merges filmic absent-presence with that of persons actually absented or eliminated, those that Primo Levi called the drowned and the saved.¹²⁷ When Christiane’s face is briefly restored, her expressing the need to return to life “pour les autres” is one of many instances that result in allusions to the gaze of Orpheus and Akteon giving way to those evocative of that of the Gorgon. Specifically, one recalls Levi’s description of the camp survivor as “one who has seen the Gorgon” (12).

The frontal, visual apostrophe often utilized to characterize the filmic monster originated in ancient characterizations of otherworldly figures that would culminate in the Byzantine saint and Classical art’s depiction of Medusa and her sisters. Following Levi while utilizing Françoise Frontisi-Ducroix’s work in *Du masque au visage, aspects de l’identité en Grèce ancienne* (1995), Agamben notes that, while other beings are rendered in profile, the depiction of the Gorgon in Greek art is consistently frontal. The Gorgon stares ahead, in what can be seen as a direct address to the observer. Beyond the early films of Méliès and the horror film, frontality and this type of direct address are rare in normative film, as both undermine the illusion of realism and insular three-dimensional space. Yet this effect at times lends great power to scenes in Holocaust-related films such as *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) that feature documentary footage of real camp survivors

staring directly into the camera. Combining the tropes of classic horror with those that point toward the legacy of the camps, Franju restores the more unsettling aspects, the shock and frisson of early horror and the cinema of attractions.

Like Agamben's description of the survivor as having seen and been indelibly marked by the Gorgon while functioning as something of a Gorgon for others encountered after the war, Christiane embodies both movie monster and victim of monstrous acts. As Agamben states, regarding the interdiction of the gaze represented by this Classical creature:

"If to see the Gorgon means to see the impossibility of seeing, then the Gorgon does not name something that exists or that happens in the camp, something that the Musselmann, and not the survivor would have seen. Rather the Gorgon designates the impossibility of seeing that belongs to the camp inhabitant, the one who has 'touched bottom' in the camp and has become non-human. The Musselmann has neither seen nor known anything, if not the impossibility of seeing and knowing. This is why to bear witness to the Musselmann, to attempt to contemplate the impossibility of seeing, is not an easy task... That at bottom of the human being there is nothing but the impossibility of seeing - this is the Gorgon, whose vision transforms the human being into the non-human. That precisely this inhuman impossibility of seeing is what calls and addresses the human, the apostrophe from which human beings can't turn away - this and nothing else, is testimony... The Gorgon and he who has seen her and the Musselmann and he who bears witness to him are one gaze; they are the single impossibility of seeing" (54).

Christiane stands as inscrutable amalgam of the innocent victim of unrepresentable horrors, as well as the threat of confrontation and recognition of the nonhuman within or 'at the bottom' of the human. Beyond the dialectic of faces and/as masks, the "true face," of Christiane emerges. Through this scopic lacuna, the monstrous aspect of humanity, that to which one must remain blind, becomes evident. This notion characterizes the manner in which masks and mirrors function in the film - not to look at or present the self, but to help uphold a façade that would avoid the threat of blindness and death attendant upon seeing clear to the bottom of identity.

Christiane's face is a reflection of the inhumanity of those like her father, while embodying the radical alterity that mocks the possessing gaze. She indeed functions as Gorgon for Génessier, who is careful not to look upon Christiane without her mask. Like other victims, Edna dies, losing face after seeing Christiane's absent face. Likewise, the spectator is apostrophized by an entity that assumes face and other living qualities only when an other relinquishes them. The culmination of the continuous circuits of death reflects the darker nature of Victor and Wordsworth's notion of the dialectical process that brings dead things to life.

The life bequeathed to Christiane is thus one that carries on interminably in the face of the impossibility of death. Finally escaping her home-as-prison, Christiane disappears into the dark woods, never to be afforded a place or an identity as, with her father dead, any hope of restoration dies as well. She will remain locked out of life, like the female monster in *Frankenstein*, ever incomplete. Along with the absent-presence represented by the phantom ride, Christiane addresses and accuses us as the "impossibility itself" evoked by Antelme.

The impossibility of seeing, the apostrophe that "calls and addresses the human" (54) and cannot be ignored, as something not tangible but nevertheless palpable, is what Agamben characterizes as testimony. Franju's drawing upon Gothic's apophatic aspect represents one possibility of circumventing the limits of figuration and representation that are nowhere more troubling than in relation to the Holocaust. As Judith Halberstam states, Gothic, "beginning with *Frankenstein*, is a textual machine, a technology that transforms [difficult issues such as] class struggle, hostility towards women, and tensions arising out of the emergent ideology of racism into what looks like sexual or

psychosexual battles between and within individuals” (Halberstam, 33). One of the strengths of the Gothic monster tale in particular is thus its ability to evoke or point toward such issues without direct reference, using allusion or veiled inference. Without invoking historical event or subjective experience, but by utilizing the tried-and-true scenarios established by his Gothic predecessors, Franju manufactures a microcosm that resonates unmistakably with the events of the War, the concentration camps and the devastation of nuclear warfare. The long shadows of the Holocaust, Hiroshima and the French occupation of Algeria thereby emerge to taint aspects of cultural, familial and interpersonal life. The problems inherent in representation that are writ large in relation to the Holocaust and emblemized by the postwar monster or Gorgon are addressed in chapter four, the next chapter to treat Gothic-influenced cinema.

CHAPTER 3

“...SI ON NE VEUT PAS TOMBER DANS LA REPRÉSENTATION:”¹²⁸ ESCAPING A PRISONHOUSE OF LANGUAGE, GAZE AND TECHNOLOGY IN BRESSON’S LE DIABLE, PROBABLEMENT

In chapter 3 I discuss the influence of the apophatic theology and behavioral emphases of Blaise Pascal on the work of Robert Bresson. After elaborating upon Pascal’s theories on the effects of habit-related automatism, I discuss manifestations of such behavior including examples of rigorous praxis in a number of Bresson films. I examine Pascal’s influence in relation to the treatment of the face and the delimitation of thought and expression in Bresson’s actors, as these factors relate to an apophatic transformation of character within the diegesis.

Subsequently, I examine these developments as part of an overall transformation of image. A concentrating, homogenizing effect emergent largely through continuous medium-close shots of characters lacking facial and physical expression is analogous to effects achieved through a similar delimitation of *mise-en-scène*. Within the strict confines of the predominance of medium-close ups, elements such as a proliferation of empty shots¹²⁹ and the diminishing of depth inherent in the use of a fifty-millimeter lens have the effect of focalizing and intensifying the kinetic properties of editing.

Returning to the work of Deleuze and Bazin, I go on to discuss Bresson’s editing process and transformation with regard to similarities to the dynamic function of *différance* and deferral in Derridean linguistic theory discussed in Chapter 1. As Bresson has stated:

“It is necessary for images to participate in a kind of union, to have something in common. I have noticed that the flatter an image is, the less it expresses, the more easily it is transformed in contact with other images...If you take a steam iron to your image, flattening it out, suppressing all expression by mimetism and gesture and you put that image next to an image of the same kind, all of a sudden that image might have a violent effect on another one and both take on another appearance” (Hayman, 34).¹³⁰

Transformation thus refers a cumulative, escalating of affect achieved over the course of the entire film.

Discussion of Pascal’s influence upon Bresson’s approach specific to this process leads to an examination of the tension between the willful, transgressive nature of trapped, alienated protagonists, such as the resistance fighter Fontaine¹³¹ and the thief Michel,¹³² and the cathartic effect of their increasingly automatic behavior. Returning to these figures will facilitate analysis of the more problematic protagonists of Bresson’s later films. Bresson’s three late Dostoevsky adaptations (*Une femme douce*, [1969], *Quatre nuits d’un rêveur* [1974] and *Le diable, probablement* [1977]) will be examined with regard to the formal similarities and inverse diegetic relation to Bresson’s earlier work (particularly *Pickpocket*), as well as the diminishing of the effects of character transformation.

The chapter culminates in a reading of Bresson’s reworking of Dostoevsky’s *Demons* (1872) in *Le diable, probablement*, a film which features the often extreme intensification of formal (editorial) and diegetic strategies developed over the course of the director’s previous eleven films. In his penultimate offering, Bresson, more than in any other film, evokes the radically alterior through *les espaces quelconques*, allusion to offscreen space, and the presentation of effect without cause. I examine the film in light of the tension between the prevalence of enigmatic examples of the affecting of reception

apart from cognition (what Deleuze refers to as “l’affect spirtuel”)¹³³ and the subject matter of Bresson’s evocation of post-’68 Paris, one which depicts a culture rapidly advancing toward collapse.

Automatism versus the Automaton in Pascal and Bresson

In Chapter 1 I outlined the linguistic theories of Pascal and their debt to the apophatic strategies of Denys. As previously discussed, both authors aim toward a total transformation of subjectivity. In the work of Denys, just as the experience of Moses on Sinai is characterized by the interdiction against seeing God’s face and experiencing God’s full presence, union with God, even if successful, never entirely manifests perfect unmediated oneness. Yet the radical linguistic theory constructed upon linguistic failure and the intrinsic failure of understanding, of both God and self, becomes a means for radical self-transformation. Allusions to what lies beyond rigorous self-training for the initiate who endures the extremes of the path, to a dissolution of subjectivity in the absence of the efficacy of speech and sight as well as the rerouting of thought against itself, point to a taking apart and rebuilding of the initiate more perfectly in the image of Christ.

Pascal, like Denys (and, to a lesser extent like Shelley in *Frankenstein*), pursues a strategy that simultaneously reveals the delimiting nature and limits of representation. The linguistic approach characteristic of Pascal’s *Pensées* discussed in Chapter 1 aims to shatter fundamental concepts centered upon notions of being through allusion to what is beyond correlation and incorporation. Forcing a mirror upon contradictory, nebulous notions of subjectivity, Pascal details the complexities and adverse effects of the creation

of a false self, depicting humans as creatures defined by imitation, self-serving contrivance and incoherence. In the process, the author figuratively dismantles and remakes human beings, in order to extend possibility and effect reevaluation of self, as well as reorientation with regard to others.

While these linguistic strategies will prove relevant to Bresson's films with regard to his elimination of affectation and other false aspects of identity, it is Pascal's emphasis on repetitive, habit-inducing behavior that is most compelling in a discussion of the Bressonian oeuvre. *Pensées* is original, perhaps above all, by virtue of its notion of *l'automate*, or the automaton. The theorist evokes an inner, bodily-related aspect of self that, through habit-related, increasingly automatic behavior, can eventually undo the constraints of linguistic and visual legacies. Thus, in the form of an orientation predicated on increased integration as eventually constitutive of a more direct orientation to the world, an immanent, behavioral focus is at the center of Pascal's most celebrated, posthumously published work.

Pascal notes that processes of garnering knowledge, including perception and interpretation, are predicated upon habitual application of inherited signifying structures. Semiological relations created by the habit of "seeing certain elements continually associated, so that the association eventually comes to seem necessary and inevitable" (Melzer, 59) keep persons, like machines, encompassed within imprisoning systems of language and thought. Pascal scoffs at notions that thought is autonomously generated through our rational capabilities, establishing the manner in which thinking shapes and controls us from without (as Claire Colebrook, following Deleuze, states, "thinking happens to us, across us" [39]). In the understanding that persons without faith cannot

merely will themselves to belief, Pascal encourages his readers to choose to “adopt the outside behavior of a given attitude, to act ‘as if’ something were true” (Melzer, 59), and allow one’s sympathies to increasingly align with daily behavior.

As Pascal himself states:

“Car il ne faut pas se méconnaître: nous sommes automate autant qu’esprit. Et de là vient que l’instrument par lequel la persuasion se fait n’est pas la seule démonstration. Combien y a-t-il peu des choses démontrées! Les preuves ne convainquent que l’esprit; la coutume fait nos preuves les plus fortes et les plus crues: elle incline l’automate, qui entraîne l’esprit sans qu’il y pense. Qui a démontré qu’il sera demain jour, et que nous mourrons? Et qu’y a-t-il de plus cru? C’est donc la coutume qui nous en persuade, c’est elle qui fait tant de chrétiens, c’est elle qui fait les Turcs, les païens, les métiers, les soldats, etc. (Il y a la foi reçue dans le baptême de plus aux chrétiens qu’aux païens). Enfin il faut avoir recours à elle, quand une fois l’esprit a vu où est la vérité, afin de nous abreuver et nous teindre de cette créance, qui nous échappe à toute heure. Car d’en avoir toujours les preuves présentes, c’est trop d’affaire. Il faut acquérir une créance plus facile, qui est celle de l’habitude, qui sans violence, sans art, sans argument, nous fait croire les choses et incline toutes nos puissances à cette croyance, en sorte que notre âme y tombe naturellement. Quand on ne croit que par la force de la conviction, et que l’automate est incliné à croire le contraire, ce n’est pas assez. Il faut donc faire croire nos deux pièces: l’esprit, par les raisons, qu’il suffit d’avoir vues une fois, en sa vie: et l’automate, par la coutume, et en ne lui permettant pas de s’incliner au contraire,” (Pascal, 451-52).

In describing Pascal’s attitude, Michael Moriarty surmises:

“We must resort to habit, ritual, repetition to immerse ourselves wholly in belief, to color our whole being with it; in that case, belief will have the immediacy and authority of ‘*sentiment*’” (Moriarty, 216).

Habit-related behavior thus trains the mechanistic side of being as it slowly transforms consciousness, overriding the intellect and stilling the imagination to bring overly-mediated consciousness increasingly into the moment.

The role of automatic action and praxis in eroding a false understanding of self and world fostered by isolation and a deeply estranged orientation¹³⁴ is at the heart of Bresson’s early films. Further, tension between habit-related, increasingly automatic behavior versus that which resembles the mechanized behavior of the automaton will

prove integral to the examination of the films of Bresson. Concerns for automatic, habit-related behavior color every aspect of Bresson's art and working method. Among the most meticulous and demanding of directors, Bresson maintained absolute control over the creation of his films, each of which entailed months, if not years, of pre-planning and scouting for locations, continual script-refining and (notoriously) dozens of takes.

In Theodor Kotulla's 1967 documentary *Zum Beispiel Bresson*,¹³⁵ the director describes his methods of preparation - which begin in isolation, "tout seul entre quatre murs" - as he continuously reworks a given story (often taken, in whole or in part, from a literary source) in order to create "une base, très solide," of ideas and possibilities which will allow him to begin to "voir et entendre le film avant de tourner." Bresson often stressed the importance of creating boundaries and strictures within which to work as an integral part of the process of bringing his ideas to fruition. Allowing thought, memory and imagination to operate within these established limitations, the process is described as a continual paring down and refining, eliminating the false or audacious (for instance, the use of the camera "like a broom" [Samuels, 68] while panning), in order to lend a necessary taut simplicity. The director's description of the process is perhaps analogous to Elie Wiesel's notion of writing as "more like sculpture, where you remove, you eliminate, to make the work visible." On this subject Bresson has stated, "Vider l'étang pour avoir les poisons," and "On ne crée pas en ajoutant, mais en retranchant" (99). Interestingly, with such exhortations as "Ni metteur en scène, ni cinéaste. Oublies que tu fais un film" and "metteur en scène, ou *director*. Il ne s'agit pas de diriger quelqu'un, mais de se diriger soi-même," (Bresson, 10), Bresson characterizes the painstaking manner in which he brings a film to life. The process is regarded as one of self-refining,

ridding himself of “des erreurs et faussetés accumulées” (Bresson, 9) in a manner that mirrors his approach to both actor and mise-en-scène.

Thus, unlike the more traditional pre-planning entailed in storyboarding and the creation of a script to be followed to the letter in accordance with fixed ideas and rules, Bresson’s comprehensive, day-to-day preparation and habit-related exercise was ultimately a means of allowing the director to be automatic and spontaneous upon the commencement of filming. Of the daily process of filming, Bresson has stated:

“I think you must think a lot in the intervals of working and writing, but when you work, you mustn’t think anymore. Thinking is a terrible enemy. You should try to work not with your intelligence, but with your senses and with your heart. With your intuition” (Schrader, 494).

In subsequent interviews and writings, the director has claimed:

‘We are too clever, and our cleverness plays us false. We should trust mainly our feelings and those senses that never lie to us. Our intelligence disturbs our proper vision of things’ (Samuels, 58).

Bresson has quoted Cézanne: “je peins, je travaille, je ne pense à rien” (Ciment, 7). Finally, in his own *Notes sur le cinématographe* (1975) he relates the need for unthinking immersion in the daily activities of filming, to realize “‘C’est ça ou ce n’est pas ça,’ du premier coup d’oeil. Le raisonnement vient après (pour approuver notre premier coup d’oeil)” (135).

Just as Bresson would work to continually simplify and refine, to eliminate falsity and error from his working methods, the director sought to pare away years of his non-professional actors’ cumulative affectation. Bresson exhaustively rehearsed his cast, in order to hone or even eliminate much of their own physical or vocal expression or inflection (as Bresson writes, “Supprime radicalement les intentions chez tes modèles,”

[22]). Regarding ‘personality’ as a false construct, crafted more to conceal rather than reveal, Bresson demanded the absolute opposite of traditional theatre-derived expressionism, which would reduce an individual’s own essential traits to a handful of cultivated signature gestures and mannerisms, in imitation of an already largely false concoction.

Through incessant concentration on the faces, bodies and voices of actors for the most part denuded of persona, intention and individual agency, Bresson would ultimately bring into focus what was regarded as uniquely inherent to each individual, largely through automatic, pre-conscious action. Bresson felt that true expression was primarily involuntary; thus the director focused on pre-conceptual, habit-related behavior: “I don’t want my nonactors to think of what they do” (Samuels, 61); “in three-quarters of a persons’ activities, his mind does not participate, and that is what I am trying to capture” (Samuels, 58); “our gestures, nine times out of ten, are automatic. From the automatism that makes up three quarters of our lives comes the true, not from what is thought and considered” (Samuels, 60). Bresson likewise continually voiced the desire to capture, through the microscopic scrutiny of the camera, the most fleeting of instinctual motions or faintest hints of involuntary expression, before they could be imposed upon by the intellect (“Modèle. C’est son ‘moi’ non rationnel, non logique que ta caméra enregistre,” [86]).

The much rehearsed, clipped, mechanical voice was seen as of primary importance in preserving, in the face of extreme delimitation, what was uniquely inherent to the individual. Voice, according to Bresson, is “âme faite chair,” (Bresson, 66) and is as much as, or perhaps more so than any attribute, affective of what is uniquely inherent

to the individual.¹³⁶ Thus, just as the individual, physical quality (pitch, range, etc.) of a voice remains, in spite of the process of severely enforced inexpression, perhaps so, too, do the collective innate characteristics housed within a face and body emerge, with respect to Bresson's aforementioned notion of transformation.

In a receptive, open state, Bresson is able to improvise freely, while maintaining strict control over his non-actors. The director is able to freely seize upon the many unplanned instances -- born of the novelty of a singular individual, stripped of normative, comfortable, means of behavior and set forth in an unfamiliar setting -- that present themselves ("des surprises infinies dans un cadre fini" [Kotulla]). Bresson expresses the need to be "en alerte toujours" (Kotulla) to respond to "hasards heureux," (Ciment, 295), and to "what the actors give me" (Samuels, 503), unbeknownst to themselves. Bresson states, "l'important n'est pas ce qu'ils me montrent mais ce qu'ils me cachent, et surtout ce qu'ils ne soupçonnent pas qui est en eux" (11). "...to bring to light something they had not realized they contained. The camera catches it...the unknown is what I wish to capture" [Samuels, 56]).

Paradoxically and from the outset, Bresson's sovereign will is ultimately directed toward leading him to what is beyond his control and what is unknown. The non-actor, totally subjugated and rendered a virtual automaton, can alter months of pre-planning when his or her own automatic, less-contrived self emerges, around which Bresson must adjust and reorganize his *modus operandi* in medias res. Thus, "les gestes et paroles qu'il a tyranniquement imposés au modèle produiront alors un film qu'il ne pouvait prévoir, qui peut aller tout à l'encontre de ce qu'il avait programmé" (Rancière, 160).

The Close Up versus the Face that Can't Be Seen: Transformation and Apophasis in the Early Films of Bresson

In order to discuss automatism and the paring away of the false self, the putting aside of affectation relative to both actor and character, we return momentarily to Chapter 1 and the discussion of Bresson's treatment of the face. As I discussed previously, Bresson was to become a purveyor of a mode of filmmaking that initially (in early works such as *Les Anges du péché* (1943), *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951) and *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*, 1956) seemed to pick up where Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* left off. Early criticism saw Bresson seeking to evoke intense *interior* drama in a manner most often discussed in terms of the religious or spiritual, as opposed to psychological or materialist. As in Dreyer's early masterpiece, this was seen as accomplished largely through intense concentration on the faces of his actors. Unlike Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc*, however, wherein the perceived encounter with the interior emerged through Falconetti's harrowing, emotional performance, in Bresson's films affect was generated through the continuity provided by prolonged shots of a singular face that remained *all-but-expressionless*. As Bazin famously stated, "Ce qu'on nous requiert de lire sur son visage n'est point le reflet momentané de ce qu'il dit, mais une permanence d'être, le masque d'un destin spirituel" (Bazin, 41).

In the overview of relevant theoretical writings on the face and the close-up in Chapter 1, I analyzed approaches to faciality in postwar films influenced by *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), the first film to extensively mine the potential for film as rigorous spiritual exercise. I discussed affects relative to, first emotional, spiritual expression and the close up as exemplified in *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* as well as,

subsequently, those relative to the non-expressive, non-signifying face in postwar cinema. Like *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, the early postwar films of Dreyer, Bresson and Rossellini are heavily reliant upon close-ups of the face and an intrinsic obscuring of spatio-temporal relations. Within Dreyer's template, the lack of spatio-temporal particularity, exacerbated by other elements of abstraction including the use of ellipses, false-cutting and a flat, one-dimensional look serves to intensify focus on continuous shots of the face as primary means of preserving continuity.

Further, as asserted by Balázs and Deleuze, Dreyer's film is the example par excellence of the manner in which, extracted from its environs and thereby removed from the visually established hierarchy – including what Deleuze refers to as “un état de choses” (Deleuze I, 50)¹³⁷ - that otherwise defines social relations in the film, a human face can lose its ordinary functionality as it is pared down to the status of vehicle. Balázs describes a dissolution of individuation. as abstracted from time and space and subjected to the camera's microscopic scrutiny, micro-movements of expression revealing heretofore closed off, interior dimensions of character, at the expense of traits that ordinarily define an individual. In the diminishing of personality - the face one presents to the world – continuous series of prolonged close -ups are capable of exposing for analysis what the individual would normally, consciously or unconsciously, keep hidden.

With the face as screen or photographic plate becoming a conduit for abstracted expression, in *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and subsequent films “we see, not a figure of flesh and bone, but... moods, intentions and thoughts, things which, although our eyes can see them, are not in space” (Balázs, 109). Through the emergence of these indicators Dreyer's film could, often with little aid from intertitles, “dive us into the depths” in

presenting a “life or death struggle” wherein “fierce passions, thoughts, emotions, convictions battle ... in the spiritual dimension of facial expression alone” (Balázs, 114). Deleuze goes on to cite Epstein’s claim that “ce visage d’un lâche en train de fuir, dès que nous le voyons en gros plan, nous voyons la lâcheté en personne, le <<sentiment-chose>> l’entité,” (136). Through Dreyer’s unprecedented approach, the effect becomes all the more powerful through Maria Falconetti’s embodiment of the saint-martyr.

While retaining intensifying affects attributable to Dreyer’s utilization of this newly-discovered “language of physiognomy” (Balázs, 13), a number of postwar spiritually-centered films that rely heavily on close-ups and/or medium-close shots also severely suppress expressivity and emoting. Dreyer, Rossellini and particularly Bresson go beyond a focus on the face as reflective of normally hidden, interior dimensions to the face as emblem, used to identify without essentializing, neither ‘speaking’ of nor speaking for the subject or her interiority. Thus largely divorced from use value or truth value, face and being are estranged in a manner that brings to the fore properties akin to those described by Blanchot and discussed in the Introduction, when he writes of the cadaver as the embodiment of imaging par excellence.¹³⁸

Along with the obscuring of causal relations, lack of character development as well as a paucity of psychological explication and expository dialog, the close-up of the blank face renders the individual largely ‘illegible’ and irreducible. The films combine linear, straight-forward, readily recognizable stories of intense spiritual struggle -- including Biblical tales and stories of saints, as well as those culled from the classics of Dostoevsky and Kaj Monk -- with the preempting of traditional means of identifying with or relating to characters beyond their function within a conventional, albeit often

modernized, story. Such means allow its director to harbor emptiness and inscrutability, “the mystery that is human action and the human heart” (Sontag, 7) at the core of the film.

Largely closed off and impenetrable, its capacity to signify significantly minimized, the face in these films *can* indicate. Expression is, however, reduced to a few variations relative to an attitude or disposition. The flashing eyes indicative of the haughty contempt and intermittent paranoia of the otherwise expressionless pickpocket, when mentally sparring with a crafty police inspector, and the fixed, disturbed rapture of Johannes the mad Christ figure in *Ordet*, emerge to mark resistance against and/or the yet-to-be-complete nature of a transformation that ends with the elimination of much that is affectation masking the traumatic effects of extreme alienation.

Thereby, a singular individual’s movement toward escape from dire, spiritually stultifying isolation is illustrated by a struggle between fastidious willfulness and an emergent more open, selfless orientation less adorned by what is impelled by the oscillation between pride and despair characteristic of estrangement. While chance and perhaps other indiscernible factors appear to influence the individual gradually yet continually from beyond his or her remote perspective -- the pickpocket becomes especially attuned to the sway of coincidence in his life -- the ultimate transformation is an invisible one. As Bazin describes with regard to the protagonist of *Journal d’un curé de campagne*, like so many stations of the cross, we are presented with a procession of the most significant events that define a life. Just as Bresson continually elides the dramatic essence of scenarios and encounters, showing just enough to give the spectator an idea of what has occurred,¹³⁹ we see nothing but the end result of transformation.

The transformation betrays no logic and appears through no gradation. The final stages of the process, such as the shocking return to sanity of Johannes of *Ordet*, seemingly emerge 'out of nowhere'. When the pickpocket returns from a two-year stint of traveling, gambling and dissipation, he decides to help Jeanne, a young woman who obviously cares for him, with the child she has borne out of wedlock. While he even finds a job, he quickly can't resist returning to his former pastime and is quickly arrested. After uttering statements of defiance and even contemplating suicide, when Jeanne arrives for a visit after having remained away for weeks, he suddenly approaches her and kisses her through the bars, while noting in voice-over the long strange paths that finally lead him to her. It appears that he will finally dedicate himself to something beyond his selfish pursuits. The protagonist appears to learn little, to adapt, compromise or change sparingly, grudgingly or not at all in successive situations, yet a comprehensive change of character and orientation appears to have occurred, without our having witnessed or grasped it.

An apophysis of self, consistent with that described by Pascal as the result of intensely training *l'automate*, is evoked largely through negative means, including but not limited to the celebrated formal approach contingent upon absence, fragmentation and ellipses. In the end, Bresson does not indicate in favor of psychology, theology or any interpretation or ideology, privileging feelings elicited, paradoxically, as the dénouement of a stylistic endeavor often described as cold and emotionless, largely due to the paucity of expressionism.¹⁴⁰ The triumph of Fontaine's escape from the Nazi death camp at Lyon and the tragedy of the murder of Jeanne d'Arc (*in Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* [1962]),

however, are felt all the more deeply as they are presented with such unadorned, documentary-like precision.

Noa Steimatsky describes the comprehensive transformation rendered subtly and largely without psychological indicators in *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*:

“[A] breakdown of the passage from motivating source (object) to reference opens up a new order of signification. The productive dialectic between the face’s visibility and its textuality surpasses the mute index and achieves consciousness, not as what we would call signified, and certainly not as direct reference but as a cumulative, and deferred, temporal effect of the film” (Steimatsky, Andrew, 332).

While retaining the intensive scrutiny of the face employed in *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc*, yet diminishing the projection of powers and qualities identified by Deleuze, Bresson avoids the ‘fall into representation,’ through a kinetic process of deferral. As described in Chapter 1, the process – one which will be revisited in the forthcoming discussion of its intensification in *Le diable, probablement* - not only inheres in the relation of mise-en-scène to editing in general, in the work of Bresson, but evokes Derridean and Dionysian theories of language.

In analyzing the intrinsic relation between transformation of character and image, it becomes clear that Bresson’s preoccupation with the innately physical (automatic) characteristics of his actors also extends to the material environs that they inhabit. Indeed, much of Bresson’s own singular methodology is applied in order to maximize an aesthetic of clarity, economy, simplicity and precision, in order to focus on the physical, material aspects of a hermetic onscreen world. In his cryptic, Pascalian *Notes sur le cinématographe*, Bresson discusses the importance of this aesthetic as it relates to the limiting of expression and definitive indication in each individual image. In a manner that resonates with previously discussed postmodern theories of language, Bresson writes:

“Film de cinématographe où les images, comme les mots du dictionnaire, n’ont de pouvoir et de valeur que par leur position et relation” (Bresson, 17):

“Si une image, regardée à part, exprime nettement quelque chose, si elle comporte une interprétation, elle ne se transformera pas au contact d’autres images. Les autres images n’auront aucun pouvoir sur elle, et elle n’aura aucun pouvoir sur les autres images. Ni action, ni réaction. Elle est définitive et inutilisable dans le système du cinématographe. (Un système ne règle pas tout. Il est une amorce à quelque chose.) (Bresson, 17-18).

The remainder of this chapter will focus further attention upon the workings of these processes of transformation.

Sleights of Hand: Bresson, Pascal and the Devil (Probably)

Thus far we have, for the most part, focused upon the importance or transformation relative to the face in Bressonian cinema. Likewise, a methodology which bespeaks economy, precision and an obsessive emphasis on material aspects of quotidian reality allows for transformative effects to occur from image to image, ‘as a color is transformed when placed next to an object of a different color.’ In his writings on Bresson, Deleuze focuses on means of abstraction with regard to composition and editing that, beginning with *A Man Escaped*, become integral to the Bressonian oeuvre as focus upon the face is rivaled by intense concentration upon aspects of the body. In addressing the complex relation between Bresson’s use of space and the type of spiritual affect discussed in Chapter 1, Deleuze first ponders whether affect can be evoked without the face and independent of the close-up.

In one of Deleuze’s more compelling chapters, “L’affect spirituel et l’espace chez Bresson,” the theorist finds that, beyond the loss of spatial coordinates intrinsic to the close-up, space is further obscured in the cinema of Bresson through an overall

suppression of depth (flattening). Deleuze describes the employment of “*gros plans coulants*” (flowing close ups), and a technique through which the director is able to imbue a more subtle, yet equally powerful means of affect by treating “le plan moyen et le plan general *comme* des gros plans, par absence de profondeur ou suppression de la perspective” (152).

Within a largely static scenario, for the most part characterized by strict frontality and a consistent use of straight setups in medium shot, perspective is minimized in a variety of subtle ways, with activity most often occurring toward the front of the screen, and few prominent depth cues provided. However, flattening is achieved, first and foremost, through the inherent qualities of the 50mm lens. Even in instances when depth and distance are apparent,¹⁴¹ the use of a 50mm lens is able to preserve a relatively flat look. Through the use of *gros plans coulants*, “les distinctions héritées de l’espace tendent à s’évanouir,” creating a temporal/spiritual perspective out of the suppression of atmospheric perspective; “écrasant la troisième dimension, il met l’espace à deux dimensions en rapport immédiat avec l’affect, avec une quatrième et une cinquième dimensions, Temps et Esprit,” (152).

Deleuze’s treatment of affective elements intensified beyond the predominance of the close-up culminates with a discussion of ‘*fragmentation*’ (153), a concept which, along with the flattening, is regarded as *the* integral aspect of Bresson’s methodology with regard to affect. As much as or perhaps more so than flattening, fragmentation (much like that of Dreyer’s *Jeanne d’Arc*, as discussed in Chapter 1, yet to an appreciably greater degree) severely diminishes our understanding of spatial relations in Bresson’s work. Eschewing traditional establishing shots, Bresson often begins each short scene by

focusing upon smaller details and gradually dispensing information in a precise and economical, yet highly abstract, elliptical manner, as, for example, in the opening scene of *Pickpocket*.¹⁴² Through a predominance of medium- and medium-close shots, along with occasional close-ups, fragmentation results in a claustrophobic, seemingly hermetic world, in which “les tables et les portes ne sont pas données entières...ne sont pas données dans des plans d’ensemble, mais appréhendées successivement suivant des raccords qui en font une réalité chaque fois fermée, mais à l’infini,” (154).

Using *Pickpocket* -- the first of Bresson’s films in which the primacy of the face and close-up is (for the most part) overturned -- as an example, Deleuze outlines Bresson’s original yet appreciably more subtle ways of inviting affect through an obsessive focus upon hands. Within a flattened and fragmented, all-but-plotless scenario, with traditional elements of continuity conspicuously reduced or abandoned, the hand, consistently cut off (in medium-close, medium and occasional close shots) from the body becomes *the* integral element in the propulsion of the narrative. Along with shots of the hand and inexpressive faces, continuity is provided by ‘empty’ shots¹⁴³; however, increasingly as the film progresses, continuity is provided solely by continued focusing upon the hand which, time and again, traverses these otherwise disconnected spaces. Within this strikingly original scenario, it is the construction of a space, fragment by fragment, “de valeur tactile, et où la main finit par prendre la fonction directrice qui lui revient dans <<*Pickpocket*>>, détrônant le visage. La loi de cet espace est <<fragmentation>>.” In Dreyer’s film, the passion appears in “le mode de <<l’extatique>>,” (153), and passes through the face; space becomes tactile in *Pickpocket*, so Bresson can achieve a result that in Dreyer was only indirect; “L’affect

spirituel n'est plus exprimé par un visage, et l'espace n'a plus besoin d'être assujéti ou assimilé à un gros plan, traité comme un gros plan. L'affect est maintenant directement présenté en plan moyen, dans un espace capable de lui correspondre," (154).

When Bresson simply removes the face as locus of communication and expression, when its traditional priority over other aspects of figure is undermined and traditional means of continuity are oddly undone, the hand bears the weight of intense focus, as virtuosic dexterous interaction with its surroundings represents the sole means of continuity and agency. The tactile emphasis, as opposed to an obsessive focus on an expressionless face, restores not only the balance of the two poles, quality and power, discussed in Chapter 1, but to the emphasis on a 'perspective spirituelle/temporelle' Bresson adds a solidly material emphasis. Likewise, the hand, with its quick, supple displays of virtuosic movement, proves astonishingly expressive and dynamic, thus a good deal more reflective of unaffected subjectivity, with regard to the pickpocket Michel, than the countenance.

Conversely, taken out of what is an otherwise precise depiction of a concrete state of things, Bresson's often extreme means of abstraction allow for the emergence of what Deleuze, Bazin, Sontag and Paul Schrader have described as 'another dimension' or a "transcendental reality" (Prokosch, 13), yet which is perhaps best described by Deleuze's description, discussed in Chapter 1, as 'two presents,' the affective here intrinsic to but distinct from the actualized state of things. In *Pickpocket* - a loose remake of *Crime and Punishment* that, in its apparent minimalism, belies the hallucinatory paranoia of Dostoevsky - Bresson ultimately renders a charged, volatile, highly claustrophobic mise-

en-scène filled with abstractly rendered liminal spaces¹⁴⁴ and “les espaces quelconques.”

Deleuze here defines the any-space-whatever as

“un espace parfaitement singulier, qui a seulement perdu son homogénéité, c’est-à-dire le principe de ses rapports métriques ou la connexion de ses propres parties, si bien que les raccordements peuvent se faire d’une infinité de façons. C’est un espace de conjonction virtuelle, saisi comme pur lieu de possible. Ce que manifestent en effet l’instabilité, l’hétérogénéité, l’absence de liaison d’un tel espace, c’est une richesse en potentiels ou singularités qui sont comme les conditions préalables à toute actualisation, à toute détermination” (155).

In Bresson’s flattened and fragmented anyspaces, as soon as we leave the face and close-up, and consider complex shots which go beyond rote distinctions between close, medium and long, “il semble que nous entrons dans un <<système des émotions>> beaucoup plus subtil et différencié, moins facile à identifier, propre à induire des affects non-humains,” (155), and thus hint at forces impervious to comprehension.

Perhaps most importantly, by giving to the hand the intensive weight of focus, of continuity and agency, Bresson is thus able to depict a journey from extreme estrangement and self-will, perceived autonomy and doubt, to (re)integration and faith, first in the self, in its relation to the surrounding world, then gradually in relation to others (or, in this case, a singular other) and ultimately, in powers beyond his own control, namely chance or Deleuze’s ‘extérieur de l’extérieur,’ (II, 219). This journey is conducted or guided almost solely by the hand. Bresson had already staged a similar ‘escape’ from impossible material entrapment in *Un Condamné*, perhaps his clearest, most straight forward depiction of ‘the emptying of self,’ the eroding of will or alienated self-regard, “le double péril...de désespoir ou d’orgueil,” (Pascal, 312), “through total immersion in a project” (Sontag, 11).

From the opening shot, of Fontaine's (Francois Letterier) shackled hands groping toward a car door through which he will make a preliminary, all-too-hasty escape attempt, the character becomes the veritable incarnation of escape. The astonishing unity of purpose, of subject and style, through the effect of "two presents," manifests from the visualized state of things an *interior* journey, from isolated and despairing in his tiny cell, to initial communications with others via Morse code, to gradual immersion in the radical, singular culture of a WWII prison. Fontaine emerges as the central figure amongst the imprisoned, ultimately transforming the once hopeless group, as their collective thoughts, energies and will are bestowed upon Fontaine and his own prodigious will to escape. Through Fontaine's obsessive endeavor,¹⁴⁵ he consolidates all of his ingenuity, strength and hope with that of those around him. Here Bresson makes his most direct, unadorned statement on the importance of Pascalian habit-related behavior, out of which much, with regard to the later films, can be inferred.

Within the film itself, the emphasis is unmistakable – Bresson's characters, with increasing intensity and focus, forge acute perception and skill through habit and repetition; and, in Bresson's unique interpretation of Pascal, the inexorable intensification of habit, through immersion in an obsessive endeavor, is accelerated through the weight of dire circumstance (poverty, imprisonment), as experienced by Michel and Fontaine. These characters render themselves all-but-automatic, forging a more direct connection to the world around them that allows them to engage in actions that exceed the normative bounds of quotidian life, to experience and even influence things outside humans' normal capacities of cognition and intuition.

In *Un Condamné*, *Pickpocket* and *Mouchette*, this type of orientation emerges through the refinement of a prodigious dexterity.¹⁴⁶ At any rate, a direct, integrated orientation toward life, as opposed to an estranged, intellectually mediated existence, habit-related automatism versus debilitating self-consciousness, can be seen as the crux of Bressonian cinema and could perhaps be considered the true subject of his films through the 1960s. Bresson continued to stage scenarios which depict the emptying of self through reason conditioned by habit via immersion in an obsessive endeavor.

This is evident not only in the most straight-forward and accessible films - the man who escapes and his improvised sets of tools, *Mouchette* and her ability to nonchalantly flip a coffee lid high into the air and quickly turn around, not even bothering to watching it land directly in place on top of the coffee pot. Even the curé in *Le Journal d'un cure de campagne*, perhaps Bresson's most estranged character, suddenly receives a flash of insight wherein he drops the pen he is about to apply to the diary that has chronicled, for the spectator, the terrible scope of his lurid, crippling self-consciousness.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this film establishes a paradigm with its use of spoken narration. The incongruity between the words written in and spoken from the priest's subjective diary and their manifestation in stark, ostensibly objective visual imagery illustrates the failings of both linguistic and visual representation. The priest's realization of the futility and emptiness of his solitary Herculean yet misguided attempts to control and manage all things in his tiny parish – namely to 'exterminate' sin and evil within and around him – comes long after that of the spectator. The flash of insight that impels him to finally relinquish the diary that has served as emblem of his misguided efforts impelled by estranged hyper-consciousness signals his final freedom from the torments of a

journey characterized as one sustained moment in Gethsemene. The freedom inherent in the relinquishing of his obsessive signification is encapsulated in his uttering “tout est grâce” as written word and image disappear and the screen finally plunges into darkness and silence. As in the novels of Dostoevsky, in Bresson’s cinema, extreme self-consciousness is antithetical to life and the faith that can manifest through conditioning such as that which may engage *l’automate*.¹⁴⁷

Questions of individual agency, autonomy and its effects are so significant a focus in Bresson's corpus that they are invoked at the outset of nearly every film. Both *Le Journal* and *Pickpocket* open with the hand of their respective acutely self-conscious narrators reflecting upon their experiences in a diary.¹⁴⁸ In *Un Condamné* we see Fontaine’s shackled hands clawing toward the car door that represents his initial, ill-fated escape attempt. The hands of a poacher set a trap for a bird that comes to emblemize the title character and her certain destiny in *Mouchette*. *Le Diable, probablement* commences with a shot of the lower leg and foot of the nihilistic, drug-addicted Valentin, as he raises it to demonstrate the proper way to walk, suggesting cognition even in what is ordinarily the most automatic of actions.¹⁴⁹ The theme is most emphatically and ominously spelled out in the opening of *Une Femme douce*, wherein the nameless girl of the title jumps from a tall building to her death.

Thus, when Bresson calls our attention immediately to agency and will, he is able to subsequently build tension between an adventure freely willed and the impression, fostered through chance encounters, of an inescapable destiny. In *Pickpocket*, the hand that writes in the diary and deftly pilfers the possessions of others appears as an incarnation of will, a declaration rooted in Michel’s Raskolnikovian theories of the

superior man, thus an obsessive attempt at the perceived freedom inherent in autonomy.¹⁵⁰ Yet, while initially appearing as an indicator of Michel's obsession with ideas involving freedom through autonomy, the ostensible mastery of the hand ultimately calls into question the ontology of will and agency. Cut off from the body in medium-close shots and thus unrelated to a state of things, in turning doorknobs, stealing, groping for desired objects, and deftly passing them along, silently sliding them into the hands of his mysterious cohorts, and especially in the many shots of hands exchanging money, the hand begins to betray an impression of independence. Palpable tension is manifest between the autonomy declared by the pickpocket and the agency apparent in the hand. There arises, along with a seeming mind-body split, a deep tension between the agency declared by Michel and that which is strangely affected in shots which isolate the workings of the hand.

At the limits of will and intention, alternate agency is inferred -- perhaps that of unconscious motivation, compulsion toward perhaps some greater design. The impression is exacerbated by the fragmentary nature of film editing discussed in Chapter 1 in which the dissolution of physical wholeness as reflective of psychological instability is seen to allow for individual body parts to take on uncommon significance. The hand in particular would become an apt filmic emblem of the ambiguity of volition, capable of undermining notions of identity and actions. Focalized within the frame, a hand could represent a locus of possibility, between intention and instinct, bodily impulse or unconscious desire, automatic spontaneous action or compulsive automatism. A gray area is thus manifest between intentional and unintentional acts, the latter betraying independent or externally-influenced intention. Writing on automatism, in "De la force de

l'imagination," Montaigne notes, "la main se porte souvent où nous ne l'envoyons pas" (36).

Dudley Andrew writes on the prominent place of the hand in the 1920s and 1930s French Surrealist-influenced cinema, with a number of whose practitioners Bresson was closely associated:¹⁵¹ "The independence of the hand gives it a robotic, automatic quality, an intentionality uncensored by conscience." Surrealists claimed:

"the hand and its fingers, more than the brain, could become the nerve center...Hands and fingers feel in both an active and passive sense, while transmitting in both directions impulses of instinct, mystery, delicacy and accusation (129)... Hands connect modernity and its primitive past... hands sense the outside world like antennae or batter it like a fist, feeling and being felt, they are social and economic instruments...humans hold and link hands to extend the human beyond the individual" (131).

Bresson fills the already charged *mise-en-scène* characterized by liminal spaces and *les espace quelconques* with the physical manifestation of the thief that is most redolent with exegetic possibility. Yet within a scenario¹⁵² characterized by the indefiniteness inherent in severe fragmentation and ellipses, wherein the normal privileging of human bodies over inanimate objects has been severely reduced, in large part through enforced inexpression; in a scenario which affects a sort of enclosing or hemming in, through continual shots depicting bars and railings in an abstract maze of liminal spaces; wherein absurdly loud sounds continuously relay effect without cause while manifesting a vast, imposing off-screen space;¹⁵³ through a complex interrelation between a careful structuring of disparate tableaux around series' of chance encounters and the previously described means which imbue the impression of destiny, Bresson creates scenarios wherein forces incomprehensible to character and spectator take precedence.

As much of Deleuze's work suggests that 'thinking happens to us,' Dostoevsky and Bresson render this idea in the most negative of possible lights. Dostoevsky's novels and Bresson's films evoke the quintessentially modern dilemma of excessive, isolated self-consciousness, of humans mired between perception and action, with a tentative grasp of their own motivations; like the great novels, Bresson's films are increasingly populated by "people acting in ways they themselves do not understand, so that we see both their acts and their own incomprehension, and glimpse through their partial explanations the puzzle of their true motives; the question of who knows what and how much remains open almost to the end of story," ([Pevear I, xxi]; in Bresson's films such questions are left open to interpretation). The manic internal thought process of Raskolnikov, wherein he makes a point or comes to a decision then instantly begins to second-guess and undermine himself, is precisely distilled in Michel's utterances as well as in his journal writing, and is apparent most of all with regard to his obsessive endeavor, as he often ponders in voice-over, "Est-ce-que j'aurais l'audace?" or declares that, although he has been quite lucky, "cela ne pourrait pas durer" Although modern Paris and its inhabitants, like *Crime and Punishment*'s Petersburg (a character in its own right), are rendered in a negative light, the city awash in a sea of grey, bourgeois mediocrity,¹⁵⁴ by the time of his apocalyptic *Le Diable, probablement*, Bresson's post-1968 Paris recalls nothing so much as the loss of agency inherent in Dostoevsky's nightmarish epiphany by the Neva in "Petersburg Visions in Verse and Prose."¹⁵⁵

Here we return to the demonic aspect of the thieving hand as rendered in *Pickpocket*. Paradoxically, as it is also the hand that connects Michel to the world of objects, the hand inadvertently reconnects this grotesquely alienated individual to the

world around him. As in *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*, integral to increasing clear-eyed recognition of opportunity afforded through circumstance and chance that leads to a singular decisive choice is the dissolution of the extreme self-will of Michel through habit and repetition; through concentration and obsession, the insidious ideas that possess Michel are ultimately obliterated. In his bid for autonomy he somehow effects the erosion of an alienated self-will or ego, reintegrating himself into the world of others and beyond that, into the outside world that looms in chance, perhaps grace.

From the film's opening and his first attempt at theft, in which he wonders in voice-over whether he will have the audacity, to his eventual integrated displays of virtuosic dexterity, from the extremes of self-conscious estrangement to automatic action (from *Incertitude*, as the alternate title of the film states, to grace), Michel forgets the injured vanity and undoes the (self) contempt intrinsic to alienation, overcoming the mutual rejection between individual and society mediated through a real connection with a singular other.¹⁵⁶ In *Pickpocket*, events and their outcome are even more inscrutable, as eventual reconciliation is effected through Michel's obsessive industry in *stealing*. The hand that steals is the same hand that ultimately caresses Jeanne's face through the bars of his prison cell, as the nature of freedom is discovered in confinement, the ultimate paradox realized in the culmination of "des chemins étranges" referenced by Bresson at the outset, thus bringing an end to "une aventure...pour laquelle [Michel] n'était pas fait."

Here Bresson merely displays the same "insidieuse" fidelity (Bazin, 136) to Dostoevsky's tale of Raskolnikov's fall and redemption that Bazin chronicled in Bresson's adaptation of Georges Bernanos' *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*. Michel's

willful adventure in transgression that leads him back from estrangement mirrors Raskolnikov's happening, in the aftermath of his own 'rational crime,' to half-consciously, as his friend Rasumkhin notes, "lie his way to the truth" (512), to once again be able to befriend and love others in spite of his ostensible will. The mystery of human behavior embodied in these examples of escape from the imprisoning solitude of estranged consciousness is relentlessly focused upon by Bresson, amounting to an obsession of his own, one which runs through his every film. Therein an orientation of choice, receptiveness to change and chance, can manifest movement toward transformation and an ultimate leap of faith in an emptying or virtual abandonment of self to what is beyond hope, imagination, will, calculation or any given certainties.¹⁵⁷

"Who Is It that Leads Us by the Nose?"¹⁵⁸ L'Automate vs the Automaton in *Le diable, Probablement*

Bresson's later films, beginning with *Une femme douce* (1969), depict a world wherein no such transformative relation to the world appears possible. While Bresson's previous films conclude with a single, long-held shot that infers a modality of freedom (even in death), the dénouement of *Une femme douce*¹⁵⁹ - the first of his three late Dostoevsky adaptations, all of which, set in modern Paris, stylistically harken back to *Pickpocket* - wherein the young protagonist leaps to her death, concludes with a hand tightening the screws that seal her body for all time in her coffin. A brutal finality is actualized, in light of previous Bressonian endings. Likewise, in the subsequent *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur*,¹⁶⁰ an ostensibly whimsical look at post-1968 Parisian youth culture, Bresson depicts a young painter unable, after a momentous chance encounter, to connect

with a young woman who represents his only opportunity to break out of his stultifying, solipsistic existence. The film repeatedly references *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé* and *Pickpocket*, yet the protagonist himself, and thus the outcome of *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur*, is entirely antithetical to the previous films; a final prolonged shot depicts the solitary character's re-immersion in his artificial world of fantastical spoken word stories and amateurish, colorful but lifeless paintings.

Unlike the shots of hands in the two earlier films, *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur* begins with a shot of the aimless young narrator's hand, thumb extended, in an attempt to hitch a ride; when he is finally offered one and asked "where to?" he shrugs his shoulders as if to indicate that it doesn't matter. The dreamer is constantly depicted distractedly working on two paintings at a time and, in general (and not unlike the young girl in *Une femme douce*, who impulsively plays modern jazz, insipid popular music and Beethoven recordings, one after another, in 20-second snippets) is too insubstantial and flighty to manifest the sort of transformation seen in previous films.

In Bresson's later films, habit-related behavior is manifest increasingly in shots of lower legs and feet, which serve to define the itinerant generation of young hippies, artists and musicians that populate Bresson's renditions of modern Paris. Yet the ostensibly automatic action suggested by shots of the lower leg and the peripatetic youth endlessly and aimlessly traversing the modern urban landscape comes to suggest an errant de-centeredness that is entirely antithetical to that at the center of Bresson's earlier films.

In comparison to earlier protagonists, the characters of Bresson's late Dostoevsky adaptations are mired in excesses of intellect and imagination. Their illusory freedom

reaches its logical and most frightening conclusion in the apocalyptic, *Demons*-inspired *Le diable, probablement* which opens with a shot of a lower leg and foot, as a principal character illustrates, for his friends, the proper way to walk, suggesting intellection in even the most traditionally automatic of actions. An acute meditation on the horrors of pollution and the vapidness of modern commercial society, the film focuses primarily on Charles, a fierce, gifted young man who bears more in common with Bresson's earlier protagonists. In his daily attempts to find something or someone to fully invest his prodigious energies in, all institutions and ideologies, including the church, psychiatry, the law, as well as radical politics are summarily dispatched as outdated, ineffectual or far worse. Charles' unmediated orientation toward a nightmarishly debased modern world eventually drives him to take his own life.

As the automatic action and displays of dexterity central to the earlier films disappear with regard to these transient characters, the automatic is grotesquely mirrored in the cold, alienating modern environs - the manmade is characterized by the recurring reference to errant "new paths" that so obviously belie the "strange paths" as unseen potentialities inferred in *Pickpocket*. While groups of beautiful young people meander through an urban world characterized as a sterile maze of Plexiglas and steel, sliding glass doors open, turnstiles turn, elevators ascend and descend, seemingly of their own accord. The nature of the mechanical world is ultimately laid bare in the continual 'life-like' renderings of machines of destruction and pollution, which appear to act on their own. Various apparatuses spreading deadly toxins, pollutants, and insecticides resemble living creatures with their swinging, serpentine hoses and charging pistons that resemble marching limbs, thus displaying a hideous vitality that is all but absent in the wooden,

expressionless characters that wander throughout Bresson's Paris. The manmade is here on the verge of operating entirely without man. As in *Frankenstein* and *Les yeux sans visage*, the ostensible freedom promised by modern technology results in humankind's inexorable march toward extinction. With so much emphasis on agency and automatic action in Bresson's films, their final usurping by the mechanical world appears the ultimate atrocity, in the subtle, even mundane mockery of a world saturated with evil.

Bresson's fidelity to the spirit of Dostoevsky will be discussed in the closing pages of this chapter with regard to the loss of moral aspect attendant to the estrangement of the dreamers and their eventual offspring, the hyper-intellectual underground men.¹⁶¹ Both *Demons* and *Le diable, probablement* can be characterized as depicting a world entirely lacking credible images. The loss of a consensus or shared truth inherent in the sacred (the icon, the Biblical parable) presents a threat to communal language itself, to dialog and story; thus 'new paths' born of intended absolute freedom of will and ego have destroyed the capacity for humans to go beyond what is merely given. As Rowan Williams states, "the isolated will can only ever return to itself and is impervious to otherness - it cannot transcend its own moment by moment agenda," (281) Williams, here writing on Dostoevsky, yet his statement applies equally to Bresson, goes on:

"The tension in Dostoevsky is not straightforwardly between belief and unbelief, but between the world in which image, word and presence are realities that create transformation by addressing the human subject from outside their own frame of reference and one in which there is no such dimension for reality and no such register for speech" (311).

Le diable, probablement and the strange tension between disturbing, didactic imagery is countered by Bresson's most abstract presentation.¹⁶² The film foregrounds a variety of cinematic means - including a more extreme use of ellipses and

fragmentation (supporting the primacy of the particular over the general), the reversal or obscuring of cause and effect, disconcerting sounds that evoke off-screen space, dialog entered into in medias res - that force the viewer to work toward even a preliminary understanding of narrative events. Even in light of the oppressive subject matter, the film thus evokes what Marion calls excess and reception beyond or outside of cognition. Bresson's methods are thus consistent with those of Pascal and the inheritance of apophatic and mystical theology that render the familiar *unheimlich*, thus leading practitioners toward new ways of seeing and new modes of being.

CHAPTER 4

“ALL I HAVE LEFT TO GIVE YOU IS MY DEATH:” THE PASSIONLESS CHRIST AND THE LONGING OF R.W. FASSBINDER IN DIE SEHNSUCHT DER VERONIKA VOSS

In Chapter 4 I return to representations of monsters and vampires, notions of being *qua* being, liminal existence, and living death discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, in order to consider Fassbinder’s deconstruction of representation and identity in his penultimate film, *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss*. Influenced by both Gothic and modern spiritual films, *Veronika Voss* (1982) is set during Germany’s postwar “Wirtschaftswunder” and concerns a drug-addicted former starlet of the Goebbels-run UFA film studios who desperately clings to her once-illustrious image. Mirroring both its title character and its representation of Germany, the film is composed of a dense pastiche of opposites and contradictions wherein life and death, past and present, official history and memory, as well as biography and autobiography, are inextricably buried within representation and simulacra.

Identity emerges as a series of performances thoroughly conditioned by power dictated by wealth and social circumstance. This relation recalls the deconstruction of subjectivity reflected in Bazin’s seminal essay, “L’ontologie de l’image photographique,” (1945), as well as the appropriation of a series of middle- and lower-class victims that feed the deceptive incarnations of the vampire in novels such as Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1871). I go on to elaborate iterations of figure that emerge in films influenced by Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) as well as *Carmilla*, including *Veronika Voss*, wherein Voss’ drug-dealer, Dr. Katz, represents the exploitative, aristocratic undead. Fassbinder thus refashions, in *Veronika Voss*, the relation between sovereign vampire and the lower-

class women fed upon, while offering a microcosm of Germany suggestive of links between the prosperous 1950s and emergent revenants of the Nazi past. Finally, I discuss how themes and motifs of the vampire and mad science tales that influence *Veronika Voss* are derived from the original Faust myth, in order to foreground the film's central dichotomy that figures Voss as both Faustian and Christ-like. Inspired by the work of David Hawkes and Inez Hedges, I relate the Faust myth's critique of the relation between the rise of autonomous representation and the demise of the human subject or soul to Fassbinder's treatment of fragmented identity in the face of the unrestrained forces of capitalism and the mass media.

Gothic Cannibalism at the Heart of Veronika Voss

As I suggested in Chapter 2, "Frankenstein's monster images the monstrous nature of representation" (Cottom, 62). In *Frankenstein* - and, subsequently, *Carmilla*, *Dracula* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - subjectivity and textuality run along parallel lines, as this monstrous means of material survival is mirrored in the Gothic text itself. With its epistolary structure including parts attributable to numerous individuals and the incorporating of pieces (themes and motifs) from other stories and texts, the patchwork nature of Shelley's novel is comprehensive. Judith Halberstam cites Chris Baldick's study, *In Frankenstein's Shadow* (1990), in which the author suggests that Shelley's novel represents the first of the late Gothic novels reliant upon a type of self-conscious, self-reflexive literary parasitism. "There is a fund of literary sources upon which Frankenstein cannibalistically feeds" (Halberstam, 39). Baldick and Halberstam compare the construction of the monster from fragments of corpses to the structure of the novel as

“an aggregate of narrative pieces and furthermore, to the absorption and reproduction by Mary Shelley of a mass of literary influences from Milton to the writings of her mother and father” (Halberstam, 38).

The novel challenges generic categories in a manner similar to that in which the monster defies definition. Both monster and vampire are incarnated through parasitic feeding, a cannibalism that represents an incorporation, recycling and revivification of legendary, Biblical, Classical and other tales and poems. Shelley’s sources include the Biblical tale of Adam and Eve, its recasting by Milton, the Greek Prometheus and various Faust legends, Le Mettrie’s *L’Homme Machine* (1748), as well as the writings of Paracelsus and the alchemists which in turn inspire Victor. Pieces of text are thus appropriated and transformed into a Gothic modality, including some of Western culture’s seminal creation stories, which then forge a new creation that aligns textuality and monstrosity. The recycling of poetry and story is mirrored by that of human life through technological infiltration and revivification, the animation of dead matter, as the appropriating of (parts of) other bodies renders what survives an other-than or beyond human product.

As I suggested in Chapter 2, in its innate excess, “*Frankenstein* generates stories and narrative perspectives like a machine” (Halberstam, 33). Halberstam claims that “the monstrosity of *Frankenstein* is literally built into the textuality of the novel to the point where textual production itself is responsible for generating monsters” (31). Such a wealth of reference exacerbates the already dense convergence of meaning inherent in the treatment of representation and subjectivity. Due in large part to its composite nature, the process of interpretation in the novel “is complex and unstable and it is this instability, in

part, that generates the infinite interpretability of the monster” (Halberstam, 42). The myth’s cultural significance can be extended to encompass all manner of persons or entities marginalized and/or perceived as threat, particularly to an increasingly mechanized, dehumanizing modern society. As Mladen Dolar states:

“the point where the monster emerges is always immediately seized by an overwhelming amount of meaning...the monster can stand for anything that our culture has to repress – the proletariat, sexuality, other cultures, alternative ways of living, heterogeneity, the Other” (19).

Of the different readings elicited by the monster and emergent from its inscrutable patchwork construction -- including those relative to race, class, gender, cloning or eugenics,¹⁶³ its identification as new Adam as well as Eve and Lilith,¹⁶⁴ Milton’s Satan and even Christ¹⁶⁵ -- “nothing is gained by fixing the monster to one of these identities...the monster is always all of these figures” (Halberstam, 36).

The breadth of what Halberstam refers to as literary cannibalism in *Frankenstein*, as well as its convergence of meaning, is easily exceeded in *Veronika Voss*. Composed of deepest shadow and starkest light – thus even more extreme, visually, than *Les yeux sans visage* -- *Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss* depicts an inextricable conflating and fusing of past and present, historical and fictive, original and simulacra. By incorporating the dialectic into a self-reflexive study of the problematic, illusory affects of the medium itself, Fassbinder brings about an unsettling collapsing of binaries. The second part of a trilogy – one which also includes *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (*The Marriage of Maria Braun*, 1978) and *Lola* (1980) -- dealing with the post-war German “Economic Miracle,” *Veronika Voss* is deeply critical of a period about which Fassbinder believed Germany “could have been the freest country in the world” (Kaes 111). The country is depicted,

however, as having quickly fallen back into familiar habits and ways of thinking.

Embodied by the troubled main character, the film illuminates a seemingly irreconcilable split in the society of 1955 Germany, facets of which are reminiscent of some of the more ominous aspects of the country's recent past. I also discuss the manner in which the film reflects characteristics of the milieu in which the film was made, that of the late-1970s and early 1980s, those which would constitute the final years of the director's short life.

Events depicted in *Veronika Voss* are culled from the life of Sybille Schmitz, a prominent UFA actress during the period of National Socialism -- she was a favorite of Goebbels and the two were long rumored to have been involved in an affair -- who quickly descended into obscurity after the war. According to the biopic *Danz mit dem Tod - Der Ufa-Star Sybille Schmitz* (Podak, 2000), Schmitz made headlines once again in April of 1955 when she was discovered to have killed herself, on Easter Sunday, in the apartment she rented from her psychiatrist with whom, it was later divulged, she was having a gay affair. A lurid story was subsequently revealed, in which the actress was found to have been addicted to morphine, which had been provided by the doctor. It was soon determined that a number of the patients of this very same doctor had taken their own lives. The doctor was eventually brought to trial, but was later acquitted for lack of evidence. It was strongly suspected that the doctor benefited from the protection of governmental superiors, one of whom testified at the trial, but nothing could be proven.

Blending basic fact and patent fiction, Fassbinder and his co-writers, Pea Fröhlich and Peter Märthesheimer, embellished Schmitz's story, utilizing stereotypes from various Gothic-expressionist film genres in order to craft a microcosm of Economic Miracle-era society as a whole. Fassbinder appended the fundamental aspects of this story with,

among other things, the invention of a sports reporter and aspiring poet, Robert Krohn, who falls for the main character and is prompted, by her beguiling yet erratic behavior, to plumb Voss' past as well as her present sordid situation. Krohn finds that Voss is virtually held captive by a sadistic "nerve doctor" and her peculiar, menacing assistant, the former of whose patients, Voss included, have all become addicted to morphine. The patients have been forced, by the threat of deprivation, to make Dr. Katz the sole beneficiary of their wills. Eventually, one by one, Katz's clients are forced to commit suicide. In homage to a number of films of the Gothic-expressionist film tradition (examples of which are discussed below), the further Krohn descends into Voss' nightmarish world, the deeper appears the shadowy net of corruption. In the process of his pursuit of the 'truth,' Krohn's long-time girlfriend is murdered; he ultimately learns that he has inadvertently precipitated the demise of Voss as well. Overwhelmed, he can do nothing but return to his lowly station and re-immense himself in the distraction of yet another soccer playoff.

In one of the more interesting examples of the film's fervid multiplying of meaning and subjective attribute, *Veronika Voss* can also be read as inspired by the life of Swedish actress and recording star Zarah Leander who, like Schmitz, flourished in German cinema and UFA propaganda of the 1930s and 1940s. Referencing *Veronika Voss*, along with *In einem Jahr mit dreizehn Monden (In a Year of 13 Moons, 1978)* and *Lili Marleen (1980)*, Alice Kuzniar states, "...in a number of later Fassbinder films, Zarah Leander is the unspoken model – a ghost – behind the main characters" (Kuzniar, 70). Along with reference to actor Gustaf Gründgens, who will be discussed presently,

the lives of Schmitz and Leander provide fodder for the thoroughly Faustian nature of Fassbinder's fictional Economic Miracle Germany.

The Voss-Krohn relationship at the center of the film is conspicuously appropriated from the plot of Murnau's *Phantom* (1922), a film which features a bleached blonde, similarly-coiffed unattainable woman named Veronika who is pursued by an aspiring lower-class poet. Like Krohn, the poet's life is turned upside-down when, after a chance meeting that evokes those of *The Student of Prague* and *Nosferatu*, he grows increasingly obsessed with her, as their accidental encounter becomes a defining event in his life.

The film is thus constructed around a densely complex field of opposites and doublings held together by the improbable fusing of Sirkean melodrama and Brechtian Verfremdungseffekt discussed in Chapter 1. Deploying a hard, clear, deep focus, high contrast look and a proliferation of claustrophobic medium- and medium-close-up shots, Fassbinder also resorts to strategies of obfuscation, filming behind and around obstructing elements of mise-en-scène to severely reduce and restrict the frame. The director also employs often distracting lighting effects, occasionally racking focus to further counter the clarity inherent in the deep focus photography. Along with the profusion of elements that serve to undermine relations between subject and object, original and facsimile, the separation of past from present typical of traditional flashbacks is disregarded. Much like depictions of past events in Bresson's late color films discussed in Chapter 3, flashbacks in *Veronika Voss* begin and end with straight cuts and are thus virtually undifferentiated from the remainder of scenes otherwise portraying events in the present.

While the plot does revolve around recognizable events in the life of Schmitz, the film is paradoxically composed of characters and situations easily recognizable as archetypal to melodrama -- specifically, to the closely related noir (crime/detection) and horror genres popular at the time in which the film is set. In this manner the film not only overlaps key elements of the subject's personal history as well as 'official history,' which makes its appearance in the form of authentic radio broadcasts pertaining to significant historical events that provide the soundtrack for a number of scenes, but elements of German and American film history as well.

Like many of Fassbinder's films, *Veronika Voss* is overrun with references, allusions and parallels to other films, including his own.¹⁶⁶ Even a cursory look at the plot of *Veronika Voss* reveals, at the heart of Fassbinder's film, a number of the central concerns of early Weimar cinema, including that of the destructive potential of repressed desire, as represented in films such as Paul Wegener's *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (1920) as well as both Wegener and Henrick Galeen's versions of *Der Studenten von Prag* (1913 and 1926, respectively), as well as the Faustian deal with the devil and Caligariesque manifestation of hypnotic control over another, all of which are embodied in the relationship between Voss and Katz, and are mirrored in a number of other relationships, including that of Voss and Krohn. As evidenced in the manifestations of desire and amoral, implicitly violent interpersonal manipulation and control entailed in Voss's pact, Fassbinder's film is, above all, concerned with what is here depicted as the deeply fragmented and inherently flawed notion of identity. The word *Sehnsucht* (longing) of the film's German title has undoubted connections to Romanticism as it connotes an obsessive preoccupation – in this case with a

former self that may or may not have at existed -- that ultimately mocks the possibility of consistency or homogeneity of subjectivity.

As detailed by Thomas Elsaesser and others, the typical trappings of film noir – the hapless, restless, often doomed ‘hero’ and his obsession with a ‘femme fatale,’ the claustrophobic, shadowy, Gothic-expressionistic atmosphere, the problematizing of character identity and the sense of inexorable fate -- arguably resonate within *Veronika Voss*. Elsaesser sees particularly salient comparisons with films portraying an everyman’s obsession with an unattainable, mysterious woman such as *Laura* (Preminger, 1944), *Woman in the Window* (Lang, 1944) and particularly *Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder, 1950), the story of a down-at-the-heels screenwriter’s obsession with a gracelessly aging former starlet.¹⁶⁷

Also of interest are the bold, stylistic flourishes of the more lurid German crime-thriller or *krimi* of the 1950s and 1960s, including the irises-in and -out, the myriad different styles of wipes, the impossibly foggy London streets and the prevalent deep focus, high-contrast, low-key look, all of which bear an uncanny resemblance to the look that Fassbinder intensifies and exaggerates in his film. Perhaps more important, however, are the archetypal Edgar Wallace-derived plots and characters. Most often constructed around the search for the identity of an unknown killer who was often the last person one might suspect (for instance a doctor or priest), Wallace’s variations on pulp themes feature now-familiar characters such as the suave, urbane detective, the bumbling police inspector or everyman sleuth, the conniving servant or mysterious, silent assistant, and the killer with a predilection for actresses, showgirls or prostitutes. A number of these films – including *Dead Die toten Augen von London* (Vohrer, 1959) and *Der Mönch mit der Peitsche* (Vohrer, 1968) -- would make a striking addition to this list of characters, in

the person of a mad scientist bent upon a markedly Nazi-like project of world domination or genetic experimentation not unlike that attributed to Germany's health-care industry in *Veronika Voss*.

Recreating the "New World of Gods and Monsters"¹⁶⁸

Of the many films mined to compose the fabric of *Veronika Voss*, two of the most important, in terms of the introduction of elements of the monster/mad-scientist and vampire motifs, are James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1931). While Whale's film was based loosely on parts of Shelley's novel not appropriated for the 1931 original Karloff vehicle, *Vampyr* is a loose adaptation of *Carmilla*. Two of the most influential of early horrors, *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Vampyr*, both films (along with the influential *Kiss Me Deadly*, which will be addressed presently) were landmarks in introducing barely-veiled gay themes.

The nec plus ultra of the mad scientist film, *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) problematizes the identities of its central characters in a much more complex manner than its early Weimar or Hollywood predecessors. Indeed, the film is a virtual panorama of doubling, examples of which include the fact that the identity of the creator, Dr. Frankenstein, with his pitiful, monstrous doppelgänger, is echoed in the relationship between Pretorius and the bride; the bride and monster mirror Frankenstein and his new bride (whom he abandons to assist Pretorius); the strange hunchbacked assistant/double Fritz, killed in the first episode, is replaced by two other grave-robbers, one of whom is played by the very same actor, Dwight Frye, who played Fritz; and, in Whale's most astonishing move, the identity of the estranged monster -- who, as the first of his 'race'

had been identified with Adam in the first installment -- with Christ. Similarly, in a bold paralleling of art and life, the identity of the mad scientist and the director is mirrored in Colin Clive's strong resemblance to James Whale himself. Meanwhile, the film's plot, wherein Frankenstein is forced, through a blackmail- centered pact, into making another monster, mirrors Whale's having been forced (if only through financial circumstances) into reprising a film whose subject matter he claimed to have little interest in revisiting.

As reflected in the many sexual triangles at the heart of Fassbinder's film, particularly that of Voss, Katz and the latter's imposing live-in assistant Josepha, the film is also concerned with the abandonment and neglect of children and, like many of the best examples of the genre, reverberates with perverse, inter-familial sexual experimentation, thus suggesting a subtext that amplifies the insidious taboo-breaking nature of the "all male reproductive paradigm" (Skal 107) of the 1931 original.

After Pretorius (a character whom David Skal calls a "gay Mephistopheles" 116), bursts into Frankenstein's bedchamber, on the eve of the latter's honeymoon (his presence loudly announced by Frankenstein's maid, he is referred to as "a very queer looking fellow"), in order to persuade Frankenstein to resurrect his old obsession with unnatural creation, a stream of hilarious, barely-veiled gay innuendos ensues.¹⁶⁹ Parallels between art and life are thus deepened as Skal relates that *The Bride of Frankenstein* was "teeming with homosexual presence, both before and behind the camera" (Skal 113), including that of the director himself, as well as Clive and Thesiger. Elsa Lanchester, in the role of the bride who wanted no part of her suitor, was married to a gay man (actor Charles Laughton) and, due in part to her masculine style of dress, was often herself suspected of being gay.

Although separated by a mere sixteen years, *The Bride of Frankenstein* is nevertheless a long way from the original Weimar-era films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Strikingly original in its celebrated, beautifully polished cinematography and chiaroscuro lighting, its pioneering use of devices such as the eerie Rembrandt lighting that distorts the faces of its mad scientists and Whale's uniquely exaggerated brand of canted framing would become staples of both the horror and the noir genres. This film and the influential Pretorius are also pertinent, as the character is evoked in Fassbinder's film, his namesake being not the evil 'mad' Doctor Katz, but the casting director who 'discovered' or, perhaps, unearthed Veronika Voss.

The type of exchange between art and life at the center of *Bride* abounds in much of Fassbinder's work and, as I have argued earlier, is traceable in what may well be his most extreme illustration in the incorporation of both biographical elements of Sybille Schmitz' life -- which already bizarrely exemplified this exchange -- as well as elements of her celluloid life. Schmitz appeared in nearly fifty films, more often than not playing the victim, her characters thus suffering innumerable cinematic deaths. In Frank Wysbar's *The Ferryman* Maria Schmitz literally dances with death to save her entire town from peril. The only director considered to have fully taken advantage of Schmitz's enigmatic look and unique thespian gifts was Carl-Theodore Dreyer, who cast her as Leona, the victim of an elderly female vampire, in his landmark 1931 tale of the supernatural, *Vampyr*:¹⁷⁰

"It is significant that Sybille Schmitz' greatest role had been in Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932), in which she played a beautiful young girl preyed upon by an old female vampire. The lesbian overtones are obvious. Veronika herself is controlled by a parasitic and evil female, a doctor who exercises power over her through sexual possession and morphine" (Feinstein 12).

Like *Bride of Frankenstein*, which would appear four years later, *Vampyr* was also deeply influential, both stylistically and thematically, upon future offerings of the horror genre. Films as otherwise disparate as *Les yeux sans visage*, Louis Friedlander's *White Zombie* (1932), George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) as well as *Veronika Voss* directly mirror its striking, washed-out esthetics.

The original "study in the horror of whiteness" set in "a hazy half-world of the undead" (Prawer, 63), Dreyer's methods of 'adaptation' in *Vampyr* include the compilation of characters and the weaving together of visual renderings of a number of the more indelible images culled from at least three different tales from Le Fanu's *Through a Glass Darkly*, the compilation in which *Carmilla* first appeared. The result is framed by basic elements of *Carmilla* -- itself based loosely on the Elizabeth Bathory legend, the aristocratic title character sleeps in a coffin of blood -- yet, in Dreyer's rendition, the comely nubile vampiress becomes a ghastly, frightening, ancient hag. Schmitz's Leona can thus be seen as a sort of composite of both *Carmilla*, the lovely young aristocratic predator, as well as her often equally striking, frequently lower-class victims; and this double nature is further compounded by the presence of Leona's look-alike sister Gisele.

All of these elements, especially the latter, appear abundantly in Fassbinder's treatment of Schmitz's life. The title of Le Fanu's collection also appears to have served as inspiration for much of the look of the film, including the misty white dream-like exterior glare (achieved in large part by covering the camera lens in a thin gauze), the sometimes severely minimizing frames or images shot from behind distorting glass that at

times reduce or obstruct the shot considerably, and the intense parallel worlds depicted in constant shadows, mirrors and doublings.

Most importantly, as we will see, with Veronika Voss, Leona embodies the precarious nature of the vampire victim, trapped between life and death, or the living and the undead, this figure is a perfect example of fluid, uncertain identity. Once bitten she becomes immediately something totally other, between helpless prey and the predatory vampire she (or, perhaps more appropriately, *it*) will eventually become. All of these elements, especially the latter, appear abundantly in Fassbinder's treatment of Schmitz's life. As in most Fassbinder films, the director goes to previously unimagined lengths to problematize the identity of his characters. Nearly all the protagonists have multiple doubles among the other principals; likewise, numerous pairs, trios (or love triangles such as those of Voss-Krohn and his longtime lover Henriette, Krohn, Katz and Voss, Katz, Voss and Josepha) and other groups of characters are identified and most characters are found to have disparate or multiple aspects to their own identity. All other characters shed further light upon the central figure of Voss herself, by embodying aspects either similar or contradictory to her character. Their exchanges almost always involve (often self-conscious) "acting" and role playing and are thus intrinsic to constant interpersonal manipulation; ultimately, there emerges a veritable musical chairs of identification. As Thomas Elsaesser states:

"it is the narrative itself which provides the maze, presenting to the viewer a complicated kind of stereomatic shape. Each position taken in the overall design can be inverted, or is shown to be reversible, available for occupation by different characters in turn...in a Fassbinder film, identities are nothing but shifting places in a configuration, and as such can be re-placed, if not re-played" (Elsaesser 77).

Finally (and most surprisingly for a purportedly historical-biographical film), in *Veronika Voss*, these multiple, shifting identities resonate with (cinematic and literary) hapless heroes and inscrutable villains, mysterious assistants and wise elders, former vamps desperate to recover their youth and mundane, middle-aged protagonists longing for escape. Fassbinder configures a house of mirrors out of both the fluid identities of these characters as well as through the curious interchange between past and present, art and life, of fact and fiction, of 'real' and 'reel' persons, that is compounded by the film's historical and biographical nature. Throughout the course of the film these identifications will be taken to absurd lengths, to the point where binary designations such as truth and fiction, real and unreal, begin to unravel.

The first scene and its film-within-a-film functions as mise-en-abyme, distilling this type of thorough undermining of subjectivity. The first of the film's numerous, seemingly disparate, at first incomprehensible pairings begins with the opening credits and accompanying musical score that succinctly distill the narrative's central concerns. As dark credits fade in, then out, over a white background, each name is mirrored prominently in shadow. In doubling the names of the principals, Fassbinder immediately calls attention to the duality of actor and role, of life and art, which will be contextualized and re-contextualized in innumerable ways in the forthcoming images. Yet the doubling of names is taken a step further, first in the appearance of the title of the film, then again with the final credit, that of the director himself; here the words appear from the bottom-left of the screen and rise diagonally to the top right, while the shadow appears from the top right, moving in the opposite direction, toward the lower left of the screen before both finally disappear. This curious reverse doubling recalls the alienation of spirit and matter

and aforementioned notions of the shadow disconnected from its source and taking on a life of its own, with the undermining of the source's primacy being particularly relevant to what will transpire.

The credits are accompanied by music that starts out boldly and gestures toward the historical and epic; this passage eventually gives way to one evocative of the romantic and nostalgic, yet these wistful, lilting, ersatz folk melodies (variations of which will predominate throughout the film) begin to betray ominous undertones, which finally emerge just before the piece concludes.

Like the film's vaunted cinematography and lighting dominated by extreme glare and sterile, bleached-out whites, the non-diegetic music, in its entirety, seems to obscure as much as or more than it illuminates about the film. Inherent in the epic, self-consciously 'historical' music is something of a deception. That the film will engage with history is certainly true but, by the time this stately yet stale passage makes its second appearance, at the film's dénouement, likewise accompanied by slightly eerie or ominous undertones, one senses that, just as Fassbinder has thoroughly undermined notions of cohesive personal and cultural identity, this musical score, too, mocks, in its sound design, the possibility of embodying or neatly distilling past events (and thus the apparent claims of most historical or biographical offerings).

Likewise, along with much of the overall look of the film, the prevalent folk-tinged passages swathe the film in the romantic and the dream-like, yet much of what lies beneath the surface betrays such a suggestion. There is a certain camp sensibility at work, and there are generous smatterings of black humor (plenty of which could be characterized as verging on parody), yet the mood is just as often quite dark and the film

at times displays the brooding intensity of a nightmare. When the multiple layers are peeled back and the film's central issues are illuminated, *Veronika Voss* reveals itself to be an unsettling perspective on the ongoing state of Germany, from post-WW II to the film's diegetic present (1982, the year of its creation). Fassbinder's decidedly problematic treatment of basic elements culled from the life story of Schmitz continually suggests that the viewer can hope for no more than to see 'through a glass darkly.' Beneath the surface – of the deceptively glossy music and cinematography, of Voss/Schmitz' own personal story, of the disparate social and cultural entities depicted and of all that makes up the contradictory, paradoxical rendering of Germany and the time of the Economic Miracle – lies a murky, half-buried nightmare of a past, of ghosts and shadows, that will continually threaten to emerge from the darkness in ever more ominous forms.

Immediately after the credit sequence, the stark light and shadows of what looks to be an old black and white movie appear – a film-within-a-film sequence entitled "Insidious Poison." Here Fassbinder again succinctly foregrounds the film's major themes, while calling attention to the multi-leveled artificiality inherent in the film experience as a whole. Within a dark theater we observe people watching the movie, one that turns out to be not an old film, but one especially made for *Veronika Voss*. Amidst this crowd we find our protagonist watching herself in the film.¹⁷¹ Here we are given a vivid preliminary illustration of the split/fragmentary identity of Voss -- the celebrated screen star of the past, anxiously observed by the troubled, isolated, all-but-forgotten middle-aged woman (shades of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*). Further complicating the scene, however, is the fact that the elder Voss who, throughout the film, will go to

great lengths to embody the glamorous UFA-vamp ideal, observes not a glamorous star turn but a scene of harrowing victimization, as her character reels from the effects of morphine. Here Voss' problematic relation to memory and the past – the latter seen as by turns compelling and repelling – is perfectly distilled, as the longed-for image proves to be ultimately inseparable from the pain and guilt that are inextricably tied to it.

In keeping with the film's highly complex intermingling of past and present, we will soon come to find that this scene mirrors her own life and the signing away of her soul (along with her possessions) to her personal Mephistopheles, Katz, the doctor who supplies the drug which restores and preserves Voss' self-image. The scene has already been played out in the 'real' life of the elder Voss, but Fassbinder here doubly emphasizes its significance by placing it at the very beginning of *Veronika Voss*, as well as at the center of his film-within-a-film. This scene also recalls the implied pact that the younger Voss would have once signed – with Goebbels and the UFA film industry – which would insure her screen immortality (while likewise recalling Schmitz' innumerable roles as victim – many written by her screenwriter-husband– as well as the aforementioned role she tragically played in life, which is directly reflected here).

When the obviously shaken Voss can bear no more of the harrowing spectacle, she conjures a nostalgic flashback regarding the making of "Insidious Poison." Atypical of flashbacks in general, this fond remembrance of her UFA glory days begins and ends with straight cuts and is virtually undifferentiated from the remainder of the scene, further emphasizing the conflating of past and present. Amidst arresting, unnaturally bright stage lights that obscure far more than they reveal, we see Voss delighting in the successful completion of the scene while lavishing praise upon her screenwriter and soon-to-be

husband, Max -- both for his writing talents as well as his love and support -- before the film's director (ostensible head of the patriarchal UFA studio system, the character is played by Volker Spengler), thus laying the groundwork for establishing both men's responsibility for helping to 'create' Voss, onscreen as well as off.¹⁷²

The idea that, as Tony Rayns suggests in the commentary provided for the Criterion release of the film (2003), the Spengler character "was based on early UFA star Gustaf Gründgens," himself the subject of István Szabó's 1980 film *Mephisto* - so named for Gründgens' most famous role, in the stage version of *Faust* - gives greater resonance to the scene and to the few others which include brief, shadowy glimpses of the character. Like the depiction of Voss as well as of nearly every character in the film as both victim and victimizer, manipulator and manipulated, the actor famous as Mephisto was also portrayed as having signed his own Faustian pact with the Nazis.

Spengler's director character is here barely visible in the overwhelming glare, yet Fassbinder, playing an engrossed spectator and, to a degree, as always (having appeared in a number of his own films), playing himself, is conspicuously watching the film within his own film, fixated on every word and image while draped over Voss' right shoulder.¹⁷³ He thus mirrors Spengler's character, who peers over Voss' left shoulder in the flashback.

After the singular treatment of his name in the opening credits, this prominent display of his own image constitutes the second time that Fassbinder has called attention to himself within the first five minutes of the film, thus placing his own image within the complex circuit of identity. Through enacting the role of spectator, while simultaneously calling attention to his own presence and effacing the presence of Spengler, Fassbinder

embodies both voyeuristic spectator and manipulative, controlling director, the two entities between whom the image of Voss serves as coin.¹⁷⁴

We are thus given a vivid illustration of the impossible position occupied by Veronika, or Veronika's onscreen character – the two will soon be seen as alternately indistinguishable and irreconcilable -- the entirety of whose life is indeed lived as if onscreen. Further adding to the density of identification, however, is the fact that the viewer immediately begins to see, in Veronika, as much as or perhaps more than any single character amongst the array of tortured, monstrous outsiders depicted in Fassbinder's films, salient identifications with the director as well. Voss' problematic relationship to the filmic past is certainly reminiscent of Fassbinder's own well-documented love-hate relationship with the German as well as American film industry and their respective histories. Likewise, Fassbinder's own contentious relationship with family and authority may certainly be discerned (though likely greatly amplified) in Voss' horrific 'family' situations.¹⁷⁵ Most obviously, Fassbinder's legendary public persona, reputedly performed twenty four hours a day, and the reliance upon prodigious quantities of drugs and alcohol and their central role in his early demise, are arguably reflected here.¹⁷⁶ In any case, at this point in his career, Fassbinder's private life was nearly as wellknown (being both celebrated and reviled) as were his films, and indeed, especially in his later films, his own legend would often permeate his work -- none to a greater a degree, however, than in *Veronika Voss*.

A final point of identification is the fact that the film-within-a-film in the opening of *Veronika Voss* is both visually and thematically indebted to a similar episode in Fassbinder's own 1978 offering, *Despair* (based on the short novel by Vladimir

Nabokov). In the latter film, the main character (whose name, Hermann Hermann, makes obvious reference to the central importance of doubling), also attends the screening of a film. As in that of *Veronika Voss*, in *Despair*'s film-within-a-film a plot is laid out wherein what will occur in the narrative is succinctly and ingeniously encapsulated. Hermann, who longs to escape his unenviable life as head of a financially failing chocolate factory and husband of a vulgar, insatiable and unfaithful wife, attends a film in which a criminal kills his twin brother and assumes his identity as a police officer. The scene is visually reminiscent of that depicted in *Veronika Voss*, figured almost identically, but for the fact that it is done primarily in medium, as opposed to medium-close shots, with Hermann's own double sitting conspicuously and disconcertingly behind him, reminiscent of Fassbinder's appearance in the 1982 film. Dirk Bogarde's Hermann, who will enact what he observes in the film-within-a-film, is seen as engrossed in the proceedings, mirroring Fassbinder's rapt gazing at the screen and reinforcing *Veronika Voss*' version of Fassbinder as not only Mephistophelian manipulator but Faustian consumer of images.¹⁷⁷

The cycle of identification between characters on screen and off, the intermingling of present and past, life and art, and the multivalent levels of filmic reality depicted combine here to contrive a dense locus of possibility, arousing the spectator's curiosity for what is to follow.

CONCLUSION

AN ART REPRESENTATIVE OF NOTHING:¹⁷⁸ AN ETHICS OF ABSENCE IN POSTWAR CINEMA

For all of his efforts to describe the nature of being and appearing with regard to the cinema, what most concerned Bazin was what could not be visibly expressed. Like Blanchot's emphases on being qua being in his radical reworking of the tale of Orpheus, Bazin believes the aim and the life of art to be that which cannot be represented or communicated. In light of Bazin's concern with traces and liminal states, it would seem fitting that when Dudley Andrew looks at Bazin's work as a whole he finds the single overriding concern to be film's ability to manifest presence in absence. Quoting Bazin, reminiscent of Denys' prescribing the contemplation of, not God, but the space wherein God would dwell, Andrew states:

"like a canon whose hollow bore is surrounded by bronze,' certain films are defined by the emptiness at their center. In French, the canon's bore is known as its '*âme*' or soul; thus, by analogy, the core of certain films can best be defined by the material around it, what is apparent on the screen portending an invisible spirit. For Bazin, the empty center of visual representation is the evacuated soul of the mummy, the figure with which Bazin begins his great essay... Encased in bandages, wound around it like meters of film, the mummy is laid deep inside a hollow pyramid, protected by a labyrinth (let's call them plot lines) from grave-robbers (let's call them critics). For years it has been said that Bazin's naïve realism took the visible to be the real, the epiphanic image reached after solving or dissolving the maze of narrative, whereas it was ever the soul of the mummy he sought through what appears on the screen" (Andrew 2010, 10).

Andrew goes on to cite Bazin's unwavering zeal for Rossellini's *Viaggio in italia* (*Voyage to Italy*, 1953), whose climactic scene features the excavation of two plaster molds, created by pouring liquid plaster into lacunae left in the ground by the bodies of

those covered in lava during the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D. With an efficacy reminiscent of the terracotta statues, the plaster bodies of two lovers “gradually appear to address (and accuse)” the bourgeois, self-absorbed married principals immersed in petty, sadistic squabbling. As Andrew concludes, regarding the absent present traces that so fascinated Bazin, “thus does the emptiness at the core of cinema call up the fullness of the moral world that addresses us” (Andrew, 2010, 10).

The emptiness at the center of these films of Franju, Fassbinder and Bresson, the manner in which they address and thus accuse by way of crucial ethical quandaries in the aftermath of World War II, the German “Wirtschaftswunder,” French involvement in Algeria and May '68 lies at the heart of this dissertation. For Franju and Fassbinder, it is the radically alterior technology of disaster that facilitated the War and the camps, the atomic and hydrogen bombs, the unseen and unsaid that nevertheless permeate these films from their opening frames. In Bresson’s films, it is the prominent role of chance, the “strange paths” that Michel the pickpocket references that lead to his redemption, their disappearance and final reappearance in the equally apocalyptic *Le diable*, *probablement*.

In this dissertation I have focused on cinematic formal treatments that call attention to that which cannot be seen or grasped cognitively. Through their collective emergence in late-twentieth century modernist cinema, I have analyzed apophatic approaches associated with Christian mysticism, postmodern thought and the literature of Gothic monstrosity. My analysis has foregrounded the films’ relation to estrangement and limit-experience, as well as similarities and differences regarding metaphysics, ontology, ethics and mimesis. I have discussed the ways in which filmic strategies, as

much as diegetic content, introduce ontological and ethical concerns through approaches that test and exceed the limits of concept and reason, thus placing particular demands upon the spectator while belying more traditional approaches conducive to passive spectatorship.

More than any other art form, the sound film is capable of evoking what is absent and silent. In a film such as *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*, characterized by a visual field reduced to predominately medium and close shots, the filmmaker can, through the use of sound design without visible sources, call attention to emptiness offscreen. In *Les yeux sans visage*, like the earliest phantom ride films, a moving camera can evoke an unseen travelling vehicle when it is rapidly maneuvered down a path.

Apophatic treatment of the external world is paralleled by methods that undermine coherent subjectivity. In such films, the filmmaker can call human subjectivity into question by subtly manipulating an actor's natural, spontaneous movement, thus troubling the relation between self and world, while inferring a crisis manifest from within or the imposition of some external force. Excessively hyperkinetic, automatic, or smooth motion can evoke the sensation of human as machine. Vachel Lindsay has stated that "human beings tend to become dolls and mechanisms, and dolls and mechanisms tend to become human" [Lindsay, 53]) when incorporated into the filmic mechanism. This notion can be extended to the entirety of the object world, particularly in films wherein humans (or specific body parts) are continually rendered static and motionless, or in films composed of deep-focus long shots wherein a person becomes a part of an abundant *mise en scène*, rather than its focal point.

The radical undermining of human agency through a subtle imbuing of mechanicity and/or stasis appears in postwar cinema to depict a world in crisis seemingly overrun, and increasingly run by, comparatively vital, dynamic machines. Postwar cinema features innumerable *embodied* characters reminiscent of Dr. Mabuse, whose spirit possesses different bodies, and Jeanne d'Arc, whose ostensible will and intention is either truly that of God or a manifestation of madness. Even persons ostensibly wielding power-- doctors, judges, politicians, priests and policemen-- appear as mere conduits or vectors, devoid of their associated powers and with no choice but to mechanically execute ironclad law.

In postwar cinema, the troubling of interior and exterior can also extend to the viewing experience, when a traditionally passive, distantiated orientation is disrupted by objects hurtling toward the camera or when the absent-present filmic being looks back at the viewer. With the most contemporary of mediums characterizing postwar modernity as a proliferation of controlling machines, the nature of film itself becomes troubling. Cinema's automatic ocular stimulation may also be seen as reducing human experience through the privileging of sight over the other senses. Yet, a major characteristic of postwar Gothic and apophatic films consists of the disruption of visual reception in order to exceed normative visual and signficatory strictures and elicit new ways of seeing.

Postwar films influenced by the Gothic and apophatic are characterized by a proliferation of characters who seek escape or transcendence from a world from which they are inescapably divorced. Estrangement from collective life is perhaps the fundamental condition not only of the postwar protagonist, but also of the Gothic subject and the apophatic initiate. In these films, prolonged solitude invites excessive self-

consciousness and worldly disjunction, eventually manifesting a radicalized otherness that troubles reason and imagination. Characters are propelled toward the borders of madness or illumination as the individual often appears to be on the verge of exceeding once intractable boundaries and opening up unimagined possibilities. Gothic-derived figures such as Dr. Géneisser represent further entrapment and eventual loss of sense and meaning, through the dissolution of boundaries and touchstones attributed to the repression and dissolution of other-directed feeling attendant upon isolation. The curious, intense experience of Michel the pickpocket brings the possibility of transformation and the gradual restoring of connections to the world while symbolizing faith in potentialities beyond perceived reality.

As repeatedly seen in Gothic and negative theological writings and in Blanchot's Orpheus and Derrida's Abraham, at the limits of will and reason, one may ultimately access what is not immediately inherent in present thought and experience - what Gilles Deleuze describes as the *non-pensée* or *Unthought*. According to Deleuze, only then, in generating "an alien thinker within thought," one that is "the function of the breakdown of ordinary thought" (Bogue, 214), can genuine thinking and efforts to work beyond the postwar crisis begin.

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Notes

¹ The citation appears in Jacques Aumont's discussion of the face in close-up in the context of the influence of Cezanne's theories of the gaze (*Du visage au cinema*, 78).

² While the primary figure associated with negative theology is often referred to as Denys in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, he is more commonly known in the West as Dionysius the Areopagite or Pseudo-Dionysius, for having appropriated the nom de plume of a judge reputedly converted by Paul in "Acts of the Apostles."

³ Part of the difficulty of producing a reading of postwar films such as Franju's *Les yeux sans visage* and Bresson's *Le journal d'un cure de campagne* is due to the complex, contradictory aspects of the films' protagonists. Like many of the central characters in Bresson's work, by the end of the film, the Curé can be interpreted as a martyr, yet throughout the spectator sees mounting evidence of alcoholism and incompetence affecting his work. An intense encounter with a grieving woman seems to bring her peace, yet in the next scene we find she has committed suicide. Similarly, while Franju's Christiane Genessier is throughout portrayed as a tragic monster-victim, there are hints that she may be complicit in her father's ghastly affairs.

⁴ Martin Jay's definition of Cartesian perspectivalism relates to its establishment of the self's sovereignty: "In the Cartesian model the intellect inspects entities modeled on retinal images. . . . In Descartes' conception - the one that became the basis for modern epistemology - it is representations which are in the 'mind'" (Jay, 1988:3) Karin Jacobs elaborates: "Taking its bearings from art and philosophical history and, specifically, from challenges to Renaissance notions of perspective and Cartesian ideas of subjective rationality, Cartesian perspectivalism is characterized by a monocular, disembodied, objective and ahistorical vision" (Jacobs, 7).

⁵ The image itself, set apart from normative setting and function, can often evoke Blanchot's description of the cadaver as the embodiment of imaging par excellence. Of the cadaver's disconcerting otherness, Blanchot states: «Qu'on le regarde encore, cet être splendide d'où la beauté rayonne: il est, je le vois, parfaitement semblable à lui-même; il se ressemble. Le cadavre est sa propre image. Il n'a plus avec ce monde où il apparaît encore que les relations d'une image, possibilité obscure, ombre en tout temps présente derrière la forme vivante et qui maintenant, loin de se séparer de cette forme, la transforme tout entière en ombre. Le cadavre est le reflet se rendant maître de la vie reflétée, l'absorbant, s'identifiant substantiellement à elle en la faisant passer de sa valeur d'usage et de vérité à quelque chose d'incroyable – inusuel et neutre. Et si le cadavre est si ressemblant, c'est qu'il est, à un certain moment, la ressemblance par excellence, tout à fait ressemblance, et il n'est aussi rien de plus. Il est le semblable, semblable à un degré absolu, bouleversant et merveilleux. Mais à quoi ressemble-t-il? À rien. » (Blanchot, 1988, 329). Thus, "unlike in the 'ordinary' type of resemblance in which an image takes after its object, the absolute-resemblance-that-resembles-nothing comes *before* and is situated in the gap between the thing and its image" (Peng, 132).

⁶ Use of the terms incorporation and cannibalism refer to tropes identified by Derrida (in Glas [1974]) as longstanding in the history of Western thought. In an interview (translated from Swedish) with Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson, Jacques Derrida gives a succinct account of the dynamic of assimilation, "the figures of incorporation that are to be found in speculative thought—the very notion of comprehending as a kind of incorporation" and its centrality to the history of thought: "The concept of 'Erinnerung,' which means both memory and interiorization, plays a key role in Hegel's philosophy. Spirit incorporates history by assimilating, by remembering its own past. This assimilation acts as a kind of sublimated eating—spirit eats everything that is external and foreign, and thereby transforms it into something internal, something that is its own. Everything shall be incorporated into the great digestive system—nothing is inedible in Hegel's infinite metabolism. The figures of incorporation in hermeneutics and speculative philosophy are what I call the 'tropes of cannibalism.' Nowhere is this clearer than in Hegel, but these tropes are at work everywhere in Western thought." Victor Frankenstein is illustrative of the more dangerous aspects of these tendencies.

⁷ While Merriam-Webster defines alterity as “the quality or state of being radically alien to the conscious self or a particular cultural orientation,” in the spirit of Blanchot I use the term as it relates to what is radically alien and inaccessible to cognitive consciousness yet which may leave its traces upon experience and intuition. Its haunting aspect will be discussed below in detail in relation to the *il y a*, the *there is*, a term for existence independent of existents that is equally attributed to Blanchot and Levinas.

⁸ Charles Stang sees, in Denys’ use of the pseudonym, the notion that “the human self that would solicit union with the unknown God must also become somehow unknown” (Stang, 1). This notion is also reflected in Blanchot’s emphasis on the anonymity of the writer as well as the general postmodern emphasis on the unknowability of the subject.

⁹ The tale of Orpheus and Eurydice appears in, among many other sources, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in 8 A.D. The story tells of Eurydice’s death after falling into a nest of vipers just after the couple’s wedding. The mournful beauty of the odes subsequently composed by Orpheus in memory of his wife charm the nymphs and gods, who advise him to descend to the underworld in pursuit of Eurydice. The music of Orpheus inspires the usually hard-hearted Hades and Persephone to let him take Eurydice back with him, as long as he walks in front of her and does not look back until their journey to the upper world is complete. As soon as he reaches the upper world (perhaps not realizing that she has not) he looks back and loses Eurydice a second time. Orpheus is later dismembered at the hands of the female followers of Dionysius. His head, with mouth still singing, is tossed in the Hebrus river.

¹⁰ Traditional cinema is here exemplified in classical Hollywood’s efforts to seamlessly efface films’ inherently illusory aspects, while maintaining an untroubled, distanced viewer perspective.

¹¹ As Susan Sontag has stated, “all identification with characters, deeply conceived, is an impertinence – an affront to the mystery that is human action and the human heart” (Sontag, 11). Methods inspired by or analogous to Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* or alienation effect could be employed to cultivate a spectator more intellectually distanced by de-humanizing actors and de-naturalizing settings and events. Static figures could function as part of a set as opposed to its continuous focal point. Artificial acting and sets, song and direct address to the audience, would all serve to preempt empathy or escapist engagement with a story. In films such as Bresson’s *Un condamné à mort s’est échappé* (1956), the title of which gives away its ending, *Les yeux sans visage*, which employs a typical detective fiction schematic, yet gives away the identity of the killers at the outset, and *Veronika Voss*, wherein the story to be played out is encapsulated in an opening *mise en abyme*, traditional emphasis on plot and suspense is diminished.

¹² Of this process, Bresson has stated: “elle est indispensable si on ne veut pas tomber dans la représentation. Voir les êtres et les choses dans leurs parties séparables. Isoler ces parties. Les rendre indépendantes afin de leur donner une nouvelle dépendance” (Bresson, 100-101).

¹³ The title refers to Paul de Man’s essay “Autobiography as De-Facement” in which he refers to the use of *prosopopoeia* as “the giving and taking away of faces,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1983, pg. 76).

¹⁴ In this chapter I establish a link between Shelley’s work and that of Wordsworth’s influential Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Therein, Wordsworth expresses the need to create a real, authentic “language of flesh and blood” (742) reflective of common speech as opposed to what are regarded as stale Classical tropes. He goes on to describe a utopian mating of poetry and science that would conceivably create authentic living beings.

¹⁵ While the film is not an allegory of events related to WWII and the Occupation, words and images are used to subtly remind the viewer of the film’s postwar context and present, in the world of Dr. Génessier, troubling continuity with the horrors of the recent past. For example, when the Doctor states that he will succeed in restoring Christiane’s ‘*vrai visage*,’ one can’t help but think of the term in the context of French right wing extremists and their citing the need to restore the ‘true face’ of France by ‘purifying’ the country of foreigners.

¹⁶ In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999).

¹⁷ Bresson's *Notes sur le cinématographe* (63).

¹⁸ As Pascal states, in *Pensées*: "Les preuves ne convainquent que l'esprit; la coutume fait nos preuves les plus fortes et les plus crues: elle incline l'automate, qui entraîne l'esprit sans qu'il y pense. Qui a démontré qu'il sera demain jour, et que nous mourrons? Et qu'y a-t-il de plus cru? C'est donc la coutume qui nous en persuade..." (Pascal, 451).

¹⁹ Excess (surcroît), in Marion's phenomenology refers to intuition exceeding what a concept "can receive, expose, and comprehend," its remaining "incomprehensible in the strict sense, not because of any deficiency...but because of its surplus which neither concept, signification, nor intention can foresee, organize, or contain" (Min, 14).

²⁰ The title evokes Bresson's description of cinema as 'the art of representing nothing.'

²¹ While I have chosen to utilize Colm Luibheid's translations in *Pseudo-Dionysius: the Complete Works* (1987), I find John Parker's referring to God as an ungendered 'it' in his 1897 translations preferable.

²² Works not made by human hands, or *Acheiropoieta*, are paintings claimed to have been manifest, not through human efforts, but through divine miracle. Most are done in the angular Byzantine style and feature the face of Christ or, occasionally, the Virgin Mary as it stares straight ahead, seemingly into the eyes of the observer.

²³ While Victor's letters describe his parents as treating him in a God-like manner in early life, and description of his quest to create his own race is littered with reference to his sovereign attitude, there are other examples of his maintaining a God-like orientation later in the novel. Referencing the death of Victor's loved ones, including his fiancé Elizabeth, Ann Hall discusses another manner in which Victor indulges his self-image as deity: "once Elizabeth is out of the way Frankenstein and the monster can begin their real relationship, the one in which Frankenstein destroys the creature and saves the future, thereby reproducing his role as god" (Hall, 220). His refusal of human companionship in favor of communing with his dead relations, whom he is said to literally converse with, may be seen as another manner in which Victor believes he can exceed earthly boundaries.

²⁴ Similar notions persist to the present day. Rey Chow recently stated, "as the effects of mechanicity, filmic images carry with them an inhuman quality even as they are filled with human contents. This is the reason why film has been compared to a process of embalming ...to fossilization and to death" (Chow, 171).

²⁵ Dudley Andrew recently stated that Bazin's piece is "considered by some the most influential essay on film" (Andrew 2010, 9).

²⁶ As Paul Rorem states, in his introductions to *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (1988): "Affirmative theology begins with the loftier, more congruous comparisons and then proceeds 'down' to the less appropriate ones. Thus, as the author reminds us, The Theological Representations [not extant] began with God's oneness and proceeded down into the multiplicity of affirming the Trinity and the incarnation. The *Divine Names* then affirmed the more numerous designations for God which come from mental concepts, while The *Symbolic Theology* [not extant] 'descended' into the still more pluralized realm of sense perception and its plethora of symbols for the deity" (Rorem, Luibheid, 140, note).

²⁷ In one of numerous references to the way that light, another privileged name for God and Christ in particular, descends from the heavens to permeate even the lowliest earthly entities, Denys makes a simple analogy to reflect the coexistence of multiplicity within correspondence: "In a house the light from all the lamps is completely interpenetrating, yet each is clearly distinct. There is distinction in unity and there is unity in distinction. When there are many lamps in a house there is nevertheless a single undifferentiated light and from all of them comes the undifferentiated brightness" (Luibheid, 61).

²⁸ Addressing the dominant theme of The Negative Theology, “the metaphorical indominability of God” (542), Jeffery Fisher makes a salient comparison between the work of Denys and that of Derrida. “Human beings, attempting to ‘zero in’ on God, multiply metaphor upon metaphor in an endless cycle. Why? Each symbol is of necessity derived from another symbol; in a sense, there is nothing else for a sign to signify but another sign: ‘omne symbolum de symbolo’” (Fisher, 33). After referring to God as a “metaphorical black hole,” Fisher states: “The very metaphor, ‘metaphorical black hole,’ like ‘dis/similarity,’ always collapses in on itself, taking metaphysics with it” (Fisher, 537). Fisher goes on to quote Denys while making the point that “this symbiotic ‘circl[ing] in discourse around the truth of things,” which includes the use of crass symbols to emphasize the impenetrable distance between source and symbol “resembles in its effect Derrida’s heliotropes, which, he says, are bad metaphors yielding the best examples” (Fisher, 539).

²⁹ While accusations of nihilism have mistakenly focused on the purely apophatic, thus disregarding the kataphatic elements of Denys’ negative theology, a common focus for accusations of totalization in Denys’ theology is the hierarchical ordering of being. While the dissolution of the representational hierarchies shows them to be merely steps on the way to a deeper understanding of reality and representation, as described by Denys they are also far from static and restrictive. Mary-Jane Rubenstein explains the manner in which the hierarchical organization of creation avoids logocentrism: “...in the same way that God does not rest in himself ontotheologically but rather is in-ecstasis, the triune orders in God’s image do not simply sit ‘below’ him. Rather, like the Trinity itself, they move in loving relation to one another, both within and between different ranks. For this reason, Dionysius describes the divine intelligences as circling around the Good, diving into creation, and spiraling through all realms, ‘providing for those beneath them [as] they continue to remain what they are.’...And so, this constitutive movement and relation within and among striations opens classic emanation onto a different dimension entirely, where motion and rest, identity and difference are non-exclusive” (Rubenstein, 734). In a variation of the theories of Augustine, Denys describes evil in terms of a privation of the good, one that can work to upset the hierarchies. Denys describes evil as resembling a disease, one which maintains an unnatural, parasitic relation to being. In beings less inclined to or capable of following the path of unknowing, evil may introduce disorder within the self as well as within hierarchical relation. Evil can instill in free beings a desire to stray from one’s assigned place in the hierarchies. It “inserts itself into the fissures opened by the gift of freedom, and pulls people away from their proper nature and being” (Stang, 191), resulting in the dissipation and draining away of being.

³⁰ Mary-Jane Rubenstein cites another of Derrida’s claims that Denys’ theology turns back to the Logos: “In work on the messianic, Derrida explains that the problem with any such ‘calculable programme’ is that it closes off any opening to something new and unexpected. ‘Paradoxically,’ Derrida claims, ‘the absence of horizon conditions the future itself.’ For this reason, deconstruction moves without a destination, functioning as a ‘strategy without finality,’ or a ‘blind tactics.’ And it is precisely this indeterminacy that awaits the coming of the unexpected” (Rubenstein, 736). As the path toward unknowing is described up to the point where union may occur, yet the experience from that point on is beyond word and image, I contend that the indeterminacy Derrida seeks to preserve for deconstruction alone is shared by the earlier work of Denys.

³¹ The apophasis or emptying out of the individual and the dissolution of boundaries such as self and other, past and present, is most interesting when applied to writing itself as apophatic exercise. Stang sees a direct connection between self-transformation and Denys’ notion of pseudonymous writing, describing the adopting and emulating of the identity of an other, one who will eventually permeate the emptiness characterized by the apophasis of self. Pseudonymous writing and other ascetic, potentially ecstatic practices, including that experienced with the dissolution of the hierarchies, renders the self “neither [entirely] oneself nor [entirely]

someone else” (Stang, 204). A negative anthropology focalizing the characterization of humans’ unknowable nature -one’s somehow becoming both/neither self and/nor other - renders the human subject, admittedly lesser, yet still a mirror of God. Blanchot also focuses heavily on writing as spiritual exercise.

³² Pascal is emphatic in his criticism of the powers of imagination as he is in criticizing excessive belief in cognitive powers. In one of numerous examples wherein he emphasizes the unreliable nature of components of our world or our own constitution, Pascal describes imagination thus: “C’est cette partie décevante dans l’homme, cette maîtresse d’erreur et de fausseté, et d’autant plus fourbe qu’elle ne l’est pas toujours; car elle serait règle infaillible de vérité, si elle l’était infaillible du mensonge. Mais, étant le plus souvent fausse, elle ne donne aucune marque de sa qualité, marquant du même caractère le vrai et le faux,” (Pascal, 12).

³³ Contradiction includes breaking the law of the excluded middle, a principle rule of logic which states that a proposition is either true or its negation is. Pascal continually undermines this law, in sentences such as “le bien universel est en nous, est nous-même et n’est pas nous,” (Pascal, 544), and “incompréhensible que Dieu soit et incompréhensible qu’il ne soit pas,” (Pascal, 271).

³⁴ “...astres, ciel, terre, éléments, plantes, choux, poireaux, animaux, insectes, veaux, serpents, fièvre, peste, guerre, famine, vices, adultère, inceste,” (Pascal, 223).

³⁵ “Une ville, une campagne, de loin c’est une ville et une campagne, mais à mesure qu’on s’approche, ce sont des maisons, des arbres, des tuiles, des feuilles, des herbes, des fourmis, des jambes de formis, à l’infini. Tout cela s’enveloppe sous le nom campagne” (Pascal, 82).

³⁶ Levinas refers to Act 3, Scene 4 of *Macbeth*: “...the times have been, That, when the brains were out, the man would dye, And there an end, but now they rise again, With twenty mortal murders on their crowns, And push us from our stools: this is more strange, Than such a murder is” (Shakespeare, 72). In Act 4, Scene 6 of Racine’s *Phaedre*, the title character discovers eternal responsibility and loss of private, singular existence in the impossibility of death, as she states: “Le ciel, tout l’univers est plein de mes aïeux. Où me cacher? Fuyons dans la nuit infernale. Mais que dis-je? Mon père y tient l’urne fatale.”

³⁷ As previously stated, subsequent chapters address the seeming disparity or duality inherent in Blanchot’s Orpheus and, in so doing will address the seemingly contradictory descriptions of the *il y a* and the impossibility of death as fundamental to the experience of seemingly antithetical characters such as, on the one hand Victor Frankenstein and William Wilson, as well as Racine’s *Phaedre* and the selfless postmodern Orpheus.

³⁸ In “La littérature et le droit à la mort,” published in *La part du feu* (1949).

³⁹ The process of sublation both transforms and preserves a term or a concept through dialectical interaction with another term or concept. The crucial concepts of Being and Nothingness are preserved and transformed in the dialectical process that gives rise to Becoming. Hegel’s understanding of historical progress privileges negativity (which includes disaster and wars, etc.) in the dialectical workings of what are popularly referred to as the thesis, its antithesis and the sublating effect of synthesis. Hegel thus regards sublation as an ahistorical concept that holds true eternally, continually transforming thought by preserving what is true and discarding wrongly held notions. This mediation through the dialectical confrontation of concepts is part of a progression toward Wissen (absolute knowledge, the whole).

⁴⁰ Blanchot’s understanding of Hegel was deeply influenced by the work of Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968).

⁴¹ In fact, the existence of the *il y a* provides for the very possibility of the workings of dialectical thought while undermining its totalizing tendencies.

⁴² *L’espace littéraire* provides both the title and much of the subject matter for a collection of essays published in 1955.

⁴³ Blanchot thus refers to the “désœuvrement” or aimlessness of the work of literature

⁴⁴ Writing is thus “not a performative or even a textual concept. It is an event or a space in which one enters into the kind of relation that Blanchot, following Kafka, thinks of as a transformation of an ‘I’ into a ‘he’ (il)” (Bruns, 71).

⁴⁵ An understanding that, as Leslie Hill, Kevin Hart and others have shown, owes much to the theories of Stéphane Mallarmé (see Hill 1997, 79-88, Hart, 65-68).

⁴⁶ In “La littérature et le droit à la mort,” Blanchot notes that a cat, in its singularity, as it sits before me, is effectively annihilated when I write of it utilizing the word cat; the particular cat vanishes in the universal plurality of the concept.

⁴⁷ Blanchot states: “C’est cela seulement qu’il est venu chercher aux Enfers. Toute la gloire de son oeuvre, toute la puissance de son art et le désir même d’une vie heureuse sous la belle clarté du jour sont sacrifiés à cet unique souci: regarder dans la nuit ce que dissimule la nuit, l’autre nuit, la dissimulation qui apparaît” (Blanchot 1955, 180).

⁴⁸ “Où réside donc mon espoir d’atteindre ce que je repousse? Dans la matérialité du langage, dans ce fait que les mots aussi sont des choses, une nature, ce qui m’est donné et me donne plus que je n’en comprends. Tout à l’heure, la réalité des mots était un obstacle. Maintenant, elle est ma seule chance. Le nom cesse d’être le passage éphémère de la non-existence pour devenir une boule concrète, un massif d’existence; le langage, quittant ce sens qu’il voulait être uniquement, cherche à se faire insensé. Tout ce qui est physique joue le premier rôle: le rythme, le poids, la masse, la figure, et puis le papier sur lequel on écrit, la trace de l’encre, le livre. Oui, par bonheur, le langage est une chose: c’est la chose écrite, un morceau d’écorce, un éclat de roche, un fragment d’argile où subsiste la réalité de la terre. Le mot agit, non pas comme une force idéale, mais comme une puissance obscure, comme une incantation qui contraint les choses, les rend réellement présentes hors d’elles-mêmes. Il est un élément, une part à peine détachée du milieu souterrain: non plus un nom, mais un moment de l’anonymat universel, une affirmation brute, la stupeur du face à face au fond de l’obscurité. Et, par là, le langage exige de jouer son jeu sans l’homme qui l’a formé” (Blanchot 1955, 317).

⁴⁹ Intent upon the creation of what is to be the first of a superior race of beings, Victor freezes himself out of life, through immersion in isolation and constant study. One dark night he is able to harness the power of an electrical storm to propel his assembled machinery and animate an inscrutable amalgam of human, animal and other parts. Yet, as soon as the creature opens its eyes, a horrified Victor determines his proposed perfect Adam a daemonic Gorgon. Having long harbored a notion of incalculable debt to be owed him by his proposed new race, the abhorrently vainglorious Victor fails to grasp his own debt to his unnatural offspring and leaves it to fend for itself. In the novel’s most memorable chapter, the astonishingly literate ‘monster’ recounts its own history, including its clandestinely acquiring language as well as, paradoxically, a number of dramatic encounters that see it perpetually frozen out of culture and community due to its horrifying visage and lack of a name. Repeatedly accosting its maker, the increasingly importune creature demands that Victor pay his debt, to abide the ultimate responsibility of a father to a son or a God to his Adam. After Victor repeatedly shuns his creation and aborts a promised mate, however, the creature visits violent death upon the family, friends and fiancé Victor abandoned in favor of his work. With both monster and maker desolate and locked in the grip of vengeance, Victor follows his creature to the Arctic, where he expires and the living dead creature endures, promising to immolate itself sometime thereafter.

⁵⁰ In describing the manner in which both the antiquated language of *The Bible* and the inscrutable ‘language’ of the natural world have been lost to us, Fichte stresses the need for the artist to lend “his soul to dead matter so that it could communicate itself with us” (Fichte 90, Koelb 19). The powers of animation ascribed to the artist from early on in the Romantic period thus begin to resemble those later described by Shelley in the tale of Victor Frankenstein

⁵¹ “Essays upon Epitaphs” contains numerous autobiographical episodes, including a sorrowful encounter with the tomb of a child that lived merely a single day. De Man states, “Essays upon

Epitaphs turns compulsively from an essay upon epitaphs to being itself an epitaph, and, more specifically, the author's own monumental inscription or autobiography" (72).

⁵² In "Discourse of Funeral Monuments" (1631)

⁵³ The sun is seen as representative of the power of "mind with absolute sovereignty upon itself," that of the author or ideal reader sensitive to differences manifest by Wordsworth's use of "smooth gradation or gentle transition"(Wordsworth 1810, 703) as opposed to antithesis. "In the mind of the truly great and good everything that is of importance is at peace with itself...the contemplation of virtue is attended with repose. A lovely quality...fastens the mind with absolute sovereignty upon itself; permitting or inciting it to pass...to some other kindred quality. Thus, a perfect image of meekness...might easily lead to thoughts of magnanimity" (Wordsworth 1810, 703), whereas with the use of antithesis, no such passage of kindred qualities would be possible.

⁵⁴ Of "On Mrs. Corbet Who Died of a Cancer in Her Breast," Wordsworth states, "Nothing is represented implicitly . . . the good qualities are separately abstracted (can it be otherwise than coldly and unfeelingly?) and put together again as coldly and unfeelingly" (705). Likewise, Lord Lytton's Pope-inspired epitaph to his deceased wife, "Monody" wherein the author is "bewitched" by the former's "melody, and dazzled by his polished style," (705) is cited.

⁵⁵ "On Mrs. Corbet Who Died of a Cancer in Her Breast": Here rests a Woman, good without pretence,

Bless'd with plain Reason and with sober Sense: No Conquests she but o'er herself desired,
No Arts essay'd but not to be admired: Passion and Pride were to her soul unknown,
Convinc'd that Virtue only is our own. So unaffected, so composed, a mind, So firm, yet soft, so strong, yet so refin'd, Heav'n, as its purest gold, by Tortures tried: The Saint sustain'd it, but the Woman died.

⁵⁶ At length when sixty years and five were told A slow disease insensibly consumed The powers of nature, and a few short steps Of friends and kindred bore him from his home, Yon cottage shaded by the woody cross, To the profounder stillness of the grave. Nor was his funeral denied the grace Of many tears, virtuous and thoughtful grief, Heart-sorrow rendered sweet by gratitude; And now that monumental stone preserves His name, and unambitiously relates How long and by what kindly outward aids And in what pure contentedness of mind The sad privation was by him endured. And yon tall pine-tree, whose composing sound Was wasted on the good man's living ear, Hath now its own peculiar sanctity, And at the touch of every wandering breeze Murmurs not idly o'er his peaceful grave.

⁵⁷ As Alexander Regier states, the monument reminds us that the deaf Dalesman was "born 'To the profounder stillness of the grave' (Wordsworth, 709). The silence here performs two functions. First, it is renewing; Wordsworth himself implies through the choice of the verb 'born' that there is an understanding by which the moment of death (or the burial) is also the beginning of a new life. Secondly, the stillness of the grave is profounder. The comparative only makes sense in relation to the clarification that the dalesman is deaf. The stillness, the silence, of the grave is more profound because it is deeper, and is more meaningful. It can only be so within a system of signification. This system of signification is the silent language of nature. The stillness is more profound because it is part of a more radical silence that expresses nature's character, rather than being an unnatural impediment" (Regier, 50).

⁵⁸ The unproblematic co-existence of antithesis and correspondence would characterize many of Wordsworth's most celebrated works, perhaps none more so than "The Simplicon Pass" (from *The Prelude* [1850]). Therein, prosopopoeia not only animates winds "bewildered and forelorn," but brings together elements of nature and culture, in 'travelling companions' road and brook, as well as time (hours of walking, the endtime of Apocalypse) and eternity, including ever-decaying woods, never decaying. Sky and earth, "tumult and peace, darkness and light" are all encompassed within a vision of correspondence between material and immaterial, human and inhuman, as the workings of a single mind, the collective features of a face and the blossoms of one tree. Wordsworth invokes the "immeasurable," unfathomable (in figures both Apocalyptic

and Eternal) and finally the impossible in the pure presence “Of first and last, and midst and without end.”

⁵⁹ In “Re-Membering the Real, Dis(re)membering the Dead: Wordsworth's ‘Essays Upon Epitaphs’” (1995), Michelle Sharp elucidates the manner in which, in the following passage, Wordsworth aligns the properties of Pope's antithetical epitaphic style with those of the tumor that killed Mrs. Corbet: “[the epitaph] owes what exemption it may have from these defects in its general plan to the excruciating disease of which the Lady died; but it too is liable to the same censure; and is, like the rest, further objectionable in this: namely, that the thoughts have their nature changed and moulded by the vicious expression in which they are entangled, to an excess rendering them wholly unfit for the place which they occupy” (Owen 77)

⁶⁰ Like most of his theoretical writing, these essays amount to an apology for Wordsworth's own style, here reduced to the difference in styles between himself and Pope. For all of Wordsworth's vitriol, however, it is never truly made clear that Pope is any less sincere than Wordsworth himself. As Debora Forbes writes, “Wordsworth claims that the difference between formal virtuosity and the sincere examination and expression of feelings is easily distinguished, but his reading of Pope fails to make this distinction clear or fully persuasive” (Forbes, 58).

⁶¹ The speech of the dead and muteness of the living does not mean “that the living are scared speechless” (Liman, 16). The living, however, recognize the symmetrical logic of prosopopoeia and “how to read speech in the writing traces of the dead,” thereby coming face-to-face with the absence inherent in their own speech. Prosopopoeia thus “‘defaces’ the living, a metaphor that first turns the living into monuments then erases their epitaphs” (Liman, 16), their essence and identity.

⁶² In “Not Thus, after All, Would Life Be Given”: Technesis”, Technology and the Parody of Romantic Poetics in *Frankenstein*” (1997)

⁶³ Taken from Louis-Georges Schwartz’ “Deconstruction *avant la lettre*: Jacques Derrida before André Bazin” (in *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory & Its Afterlife*, ed. Dudley Andrew, pg. 98, emphasis added).

⁶⁴ In “The Curse of the Pharaohs, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania” (1992), Antonia Lant tracks the genealogy of Bazin's essay “from a plethora of earlier printed, painted, architectural, and filmic texts that infuse the cinema with a pharaonic past or that associate it with an exotic though distant Arabian present. The alliance between optically novel and illusory forms of representation and ideas about Egypt precedes even the invention of cinema. It is detectable at least since the French Revolution and persists throughout the nineteenth century-across lantern shows, panoramas, dioramas, photographs, and photographic criticism, and on into the emerging sphere of cinema itself” (Lant, 58).

⁶⁵ Gorky states, “last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows... Every thing there...is dipped in monotonous grey...It is not life but its shadow, It is not motion but its soundless spectre ...Before you a life is surging, a life deprived of words and shorn of the living spectrum of colours—the grey, the soundless, the bleak and dismal life. It is terrifying to see, but it is the movement of shadows, only of shadows ... Suddenly something clicks, everything vanishes and a train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you—watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones...But this, too, is but a train of shadows” (Gorky, 1896).

⁶⁶ See Kracauer's *Theorie des Films. Die Errettung der äußeren Wirklichkeit* (1960), Cavell's *The World Viewed* (1979) and Arnheim's *Film als Kunst* (1932), “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit,” originally published in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (1936). Maxim Gorky: The Lumiere Cinematograph, 4 July, 1896 [I. M. Pacatus, pseud.], “A review of the Lumière programme at the Nizhni- Novgorod Fair, as printed in the Nizhegorodski listok” (4 July 1896), quoted here from *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, trans. Jay Leyda (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), 407.

⁶⁷After further comparisons to the filmic image as death mask, Bazin also states, “L’existence de l’objet photographié participe...de l’existence du modèle comme une empreinte digitale” (Bazin, 16).

⁶⁸As opposed to a more traditional, metaphysical designation, the term soul, going forward, will be used in a manner closer to F.W.J. von Schelling’s definition, cited in Maurice Blanchot’s *L’écriture du désastre* (1980): “L’âme est le vrai divin dans l’homme, l’impersonnel...L’âme, c’est le non-personnel...dans la mesure où l’esprit humain se rapporte à l’âme comme quelque chose de non-étant, c’est-à-dire à du sans-entendement, son essence la plus profonde (en tant que séparé de l’âme et de Dieu), c’est la folie.. L’entendement est de la folie réglée” (180).

⁶⁹Schwartz plays on the manner in which Bazin connects appearance and apparition to suggest a spectral aspect of cinema that belies its classification as representation. Similarly, Andrew states, “through cinema, the world ‘appears’; that is, it takes on the qualities and the status of an ‘apparition’” (Andrew, 9).

⁷⁰The early American horror films responsible for the mad scientist becoming a fixture in the public psyche on both sides of Atlantic draw inspiration from myriad Gothic-related sources. Still shocking films including James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931), *Murders of the Rue Morgue* (Robert Florey, 1932), Karl Freund’s *The Mummy* (1932), *The Black Cat* (Edgar Ulmer, 1934) and Louis Friedlander’s *The Raven* (1935), resonate with the writings of Sade and the Decadents, Decadent-inspired pulp crime novels by Gaston Leroux and Edgar Wallace, the early cinema of Thomas Edison, Georges Méliès and Louis Feuillade, early Weimar horror and French Surrealist cinema. The American horror cinema of the 1930s was beloved by Surrealist-affiliated film aficionados including Georges Franju, Adou Kyrrou and Robert Benayoun, in large part due to their taboo-shattering obsessions. Equal parts brilliant, estranged scientist and jaded Decadent aristocrat with distinct public and private sides, alternately both healer and destroyer, movie mad scientists “would appear to the world like benign geniuses, curing the sick or making great discoveries, but down in the basement of their souls – and often literally in their basements – something terrible would lurk” (Tohill, 18). Mad doctors such as Bela Lugosi’s Dr. Vollin in *The Raven* and Peter Lorre’s Dr. Gogol in *Mad Love* shatter boundaries, undertaking the unnatural reversal of the progression from life to death, the bringing to life of a young Galatea, in a manner that is colored by elements of (father-daughter) incest, Sadism, homosexuality, Satanism and particularly necrophilia.

⁷¹In “When the Woman Looks” (1984), Linda Williams sees both the beautiful female victim and the increasingly sympathetic monster native to so many classic screen horror tales as a sort of two-sided emanation of a general fear of woman, manifest from within the heavily patriarchal Hollywood system of the times and mirrored in the reception of mostly teenaged and pre-pubescent young men who revel in such filmic tales of terror. Her analysis revolves around a Laura Mulvey-influenced understanding of cinema as predicated upon a controlling, thoroughly masculine and sadistic perspective, often represented through the gaze of the male protagonist (the mad scientist would represent the most extreme version), through which woman functions as mere passive object. Describing numerous indelible early filmic moments when the woman encounters the monster-double, Williams states that “in rare instances when cinema permits the woman’s look, she sees a monster that offers a distorted reflection of her own image” (22) as marginalized other. “Her look at the monster recognizes their similar status within patriarchal structures of seeing” (15).

⁷²I provide detailed examples including that of Karl Freund’s *Mad Love* (1935) wherein what appears to be a painting featuring a view from a window is proved to be an actual window as, with the closure of the opening credits, a hand suddenly emerges to punch a hole in the glass.

⁷³In chapter two I address the radically alterior nature of technology, the manner in which it manifests in the steam engine and its centrality to Shelley’s text and subsequent films of Gothic monstrosity. Mark Hansen discusses precisely this in relation to Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: “The Frankenstein myth insists that there is something irreducibly exterior or ‘alterior’ about modern

technology... Shelley's text discovers a split within culture (or, more precisely, within technology itself) a split between a 'restricted' form of technology as *techne* (or supplement) and a materially robust form of technology as radical exteriority... In Marx's analysis, technology emancipates itself from an essential dependence on nature only following the development of the automatic 'motive mechanism,' the application of a machine to run other machines... 'As soon as tools had been converted from being manual implements of man into implements of a mechanical apparatus, of a machine, the motive mechanism also acquired an independent form, entirely emancipated from the restraints of human strength.'... What distinguishes the steam engine from all previous technologies is its energy principle: it performs a stochastic metamorphosis of matter, transforming a natural material, coal, into a force unrelated (by any mechanical calculus) to its natural potential" (Hansen, 584).

⁷⁴ In "Deconstruction and Film" (2000).

⁷⁵ Lloyd Michaels description of Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), in *The Phantom of Cinema: Character in Modern Film* (1997), depicts the vampire as the perfect representation of the troubling aspects of cine identity: "As *Nosferatu* drains his victims of blood, the film image deprives its referent of the materiality it once possessed when it appeared before the camera. Every object, every actor becomes a ghost in the moment of projection..." (Michaels, 71).

⁷⁶ A framing story in which a young man who, at the outset, began relating the entire tale to us, is ultimately revealed to be an inmate at an asylum presided over by the 'greatly esteemed' Dr. Caligari (heretofore represented as murderous madman), appears to undermine everything the viewer had, all along, accepted as the 'real' story. The film, like numerous monster movies that would follow, rather than efface the illusory properties of film in the manner of Hollywood, calls attention to and maximizes illusion.

⁷⁷ Through his ground-breaking performance, the monster would become identified with Karloff to a degree unseen with regard to actor and role, almost prohibiting his garnering of parts outside the horror genre. Likewise, due in large part to the work of Karloff, the monster would so eclipse its maker that the name Frankenstein theretofore would come to refer, not to maker but monster.

⁷⁸ Deleuze goes on to cite Epstein's claim that "ce visage d'un lâche en train de fuir, des que nous le voyons en gros plan, nous voyons la lâcheté en personne, le <<sentiment-chose>> l'entité," (136).

⁷⁹ Of the cadaver as otherness par excellence, Blanchot states: « Qu'on le regarde encore, cet être splendide d'où la beauté rayonne: il est, je le vois, parfaitement semblable à lui-même; il se ressemble. Le cadavre est sa propre image. Il n'a plus avec ce monde où il apparaît encore que les relations d'une image, possibilité obscure, ombre en tout temps présente derrière la forme vivante et qui maintenant, loin de se séparer de cette forme, la transforme tout entière en ombre. Le cadavre est le reflet se rendant maître de la vie reflétée, l'absorbant, s'identifiant substantiellement à elle en la faisant passer de sa valeur d'usage et de vérité à quelque chose d'incroyable – inusuel et neutre. Et si le cadavre est si ressemblant, c'est qu'il est, à un certain moment, la ressemblance par excellence, tout à fait ressemblance, et il n'est aussi rien de plus. Il est le semblable, semblable à un degré absolu, bouleversant et merveilleux. Mais à quoi ressemble-t-il ? À rien. » (Blanchot, 1988, 329).

⁸⁰ I draw on what Levinas calls the unrepresentable, transcendent aspect of a face as irreducible otherness. The theorist distinguishes between the face of flesh and blood that is immediately perceived, and the face as ethical entity, that which impels ultimate moral responsibility of each individual for the other. In his view, "the epiphany of the face is ethical because it confronts the self with the irreducible and unassimilable reality of the Other, which calls the self into question" (Saxton, 138). I will utilize Levinas by way of Marion's appropriation of this theory to approach the image of the face that appears in art, particularly that of Cézanne.

⁸¹ For instance, when the pickpocket is arrested and is taken before the inspector, who will become his nemesis, for the first time, we see the young man handcuffed and driven off. This is

followed by a dissolve to he and the inspector rising from their chairs as the pickpocket boldly insists that the police have no evidence on him. As he leaves we realize that the entire encounter has been elided.

⁸² When the pickpocket returns from a two year stint of travelling, gambling and dissipation, he decides to help Jeanne, a young woman who obviously cares for him, with the child she has borne out of wedlock. While he even finds a job, he quickly can't resist returning to his former pastime and is quickly arrested. After continually uttering statements of defiance and even contemplating suicide, when Jeanne arrives for a visit after having remained away for weeks, he suddenly approaches her and kisses her through the bars, while noting in voice-over the long strange paths that finally lead him to her. It appears that he will finally dedicate himself to something beyond his selfish pursuits.

⁸³ In terms that evoke Derridean theories of language, Bresson writes: "Film de cinématographe où les images, comme les mots du dictionnaire, n'ont de pouvoir et de valeur que par leurs position et relation" (Bresson, 17). In his cryptic, Pascalian *Notes sur le cinématographe*, Bresson writes: "Si une image, regardée à part, exprime nettement quelque chose, si elle comporte une interprétation, elle ne se transformera pas au contact d'autres images. Les autres images n'auront aucun pouvoir sur elle, et elle n'aura aucun pouvoir sur les autres images. Ni action, ni réaction. Elle est définitive et inutilisable dans le système du cinématographe. (Un système ne règle pas tout. Il est une amorce à quelque chose.) (Bresson, 17-18). He also makes a salient comparison of cinematography to painting: "Il faut qu'un image se transforme au contact d'autres images comme une couleur au contact d'autres couleurs. Un bleu n'est pas le même bleu à côté d'un vert, d'un jaune, d'un rouge. Pas d'art sans transformation," (16).

⁸⁴ In "Desperation and Meditation: Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*" (1981).

⁸⁵ Brian Price sees the Priest's writing as excessive to the point that it is akin to his constant drinking.

⁸⁶ The Priest of the title behaves as if he considers it his job to wipe out every vestige of sin around and within him and, as a fellow priest states, "exterminer le diable."

⁸⁷ Quote taken from de Man's "The Rhetoric of Romanticism" (71).

⁸⁸ In Michel Foucault's *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical* (1963), wherein the theorist traces the history of the medical profession and the birth of the clinic, the *regard médical* refers to the manner in which a doctor objectifies and dehumanizes a patient, conceiving of the latter in terms of a mere body, as opposed to an individual identity. The notion of the gaze of the wielder of power would later fuel notions of both the male gaze of Feminist theory (associated with the film theory of Laura Mulvey) and the postcolonial gaze discussed by Edward Said and others.

⁸⁹ Biological reductionism refers to notions such as Descartes' claim that the principles of the life of animals such as birds can be compared to the somewhat less complex principles that animate machines - depict the human body as "essentially a mechanism" (Dolar, 17).

⁹⁰ In the influential Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that will be discussed in this chapter, Wordsworth expresses the need to create a real, authentic "language of flesh and blood" (742) reflective of common speech as opposed to what are regarded as stale Classical tropes.

⁹¹ Génessier's fate, wherein he dies having his face eaten away by his own dogs recalls that of Akteon. In yet another Classical warning relative to gazing impertinently into the realm of the gods, hunter Akteon happens across goddess of the hunt Artemis while she is bathing and is instantly transformed into a stag. The hunter is then hunted down and consumed by his own dogs.

⁹² In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999).

⁹³ A recurrent theme in early cinema centered on the (real or imagined) loss and replacement of a limb that comes to have intentions of its own. Such films, including those inspired by Maurice Renard's medico-horror novel *Les mains d'Orlac* (1922), reflect obsessions and fears regarding the nature of film and then-contemporary scientific developments. The basic plot of *Les mains d'Orlac* involves a malevolent or mad surgeon replacing the hands of a pianist, mangled in a train

wreck, with those of a recently executed knife-throwing murderer. The pianist loses his musical skills, yet an ability to throw knives and other unsavory skills inhere in the hand. Numerous adaptations include Roberts Wiene's *Orlac's Hände* (1926), Karl Freund's *Mad Love* (1935), Louis Friedlander's *The Raven* (1935) and Robert Florey's *The Beast with Five Fingers* (1946). Concerns would include that of the body's vulnerability before esoteric, invasive medical practices, as well as notions regarding Freud's work on the unconscious and the psychosomatic. In some versions of the story, including Wiene's, events are largely products of the overwrought mind of the protagonist. The transplantation of bodily parts is also analogous to film's ability to implant what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory." Landsberg refers to the ability of the viewer to assimilate experiences through which he/she did not live, to acquire memories that are not truly his/her own. Like many early Weimar, Surrealist and American horror films, the Orlac-inspired works are thus a dark reflection of aspects of the medium itself, as they foreground their own potential for manipulating the operation of the psyche at its deepest levels.

⁹⁴ "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Since as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also has made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:1-6).

⁹⁵ In "Der Sandman," Nathaniel watches Olimpia through a window daily, unaware that she is an automaton. At a party at which her creator presents his creation to his guests, Nathaniel is the only one unaware that she is not a genuine woman. The scorn he directs at those who describe her as cold and lifeless satirically echoes discussions of those not sensitive enough to enliven Galatea and other great works. Further, continual reference, in Nathaniel's description of Olimpia, of her coming to life in his eyes, to reply to his (rather pedestrian, self-indulgent) poetry is mirrored in Victor Frankenstein's relation to Elizabeth early in the novel, as well as sentiments expressed in Walton's letters as to the need for a friend who would reflect back his outsized self-image.

Walton's discussion of such will be discussed presently.

⁹⁶ As Susan J. Wolfson notes, in *Romantic Inquiries: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (2010), in "The Brothers," Walter Eubanks is described as tending to his orphaned grandchildren "with a mother's love" (115). Likewise, the old mountain man in "Forefathers" nurtures a baby with "a woman's gentle hand" (467).

⁹⁷ In another of the many paradoxes and/or examples of antithesis overcome, while expressing "feelings which the poet... believes to represent the general feelings of humanity" (Sharpe, 281), Wordsworth also takes pains to describe himself as superior to those who would make up the general population (while again claiming unto himself qualities then perceived as feminine). In one of numerous passages, Wordsworth states: "The Poet is a man...endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" (435).

⁹⁸ While Victor as autobiographer illustrates his self-centered disposition as remarkably consistent throughout, this early trauma introduces chance, death and a perception of otherness – all of which come to represent absolute evil and threat to his compulsion for control, while coming to be identified as feminine – into his insular, seemingly purely homogenous Eden. Early in the novel women are creators and nurturers who engender and enliven. They retain an active albeit still subordinate role of their own, not only literally but Elizabeth is repeatedly described as inspiring, even animating Henry and Victor. Before the death of his mother forces him to acknowledge human vulnerability and mortality, women pose little to no threat to his (whole, untainted) subjectivity. Later, with the death of the mother, Victor must re-create women, who are no longer perfect but in need of perfecting. The death of his mother provides the impetus for Victor Frankenstein's obsessive quest to re-create humanity in immortal form, to throw a mask

over human frailty, imperfection and unpredictability. Throughout the novel he does so in many ways, culminating in his producing the Adam, or more appropriately, Eve, of an intended new race. The monster that is manifest through his efforts is repeatedly identified - through dreams, pictures and various imagery - with Victor's mother Caroline, as well as her lookalike, Victor's fiancée Elizabeth. Thus, in Victor's static, markedly juvenile, black and white conception of the world, of absolute good and utter evil, the material and maternal become difference and death.

⁹⁹ For example, while orphans Elizabeth and Justine both resemble Caroline, because of fine ancestry and class distinction, Elizabeth is adopted as a daughter while Justine becomes the Frankenstein's maid. She is later falsely accused of murder and executed. Others marginalized or locked out include Safie's Turkish father and the rough peasant crew that serve Walton on his voyage.

¹⁰⁰ This occurs, in the first of many examples, as soon as Victor encounters the living monster and sees its hideous face, which inspires Victor's dream of seeing his mother's, then Elizabeth's face turn into that of a decomposing corpse.

¹⁰¹ Compelling if less inscrutable, more clearly dualistic or dialectical examples of the Gothic double are represented in Poe's aforementioned short story "William Wilson," R.L. Stephenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Dostoevsky's novel *The Double* (1846).

¹⁰² Besides Victor, the only persons to see the monster are the ones it kills.

¹⁰³ As previously stated, Shelley identifies herself with her prototypical mad scientist and artistic with scientific creation in numerous ways throughout the text. In an inverse mirroring of Victor's idyllic account of his own youth and immersion in an initially rational endeavor, in her introduction, Shelley describes indulging in innumerable imaginative fairy tales. In preparation for her novel, she also claims to have read a great deal of German horror stories. Numerous instances of such occur in Wordsworth's works as well; for example, Book V of *The Prelude* details how young Wordsworth fears not the apparition of the drowned man after already having encountered the like in books.

¹⁰⁴ In comparing Shelley's novel, by way of Michel Serres' *La traduction. Hermès III* (1974), to the work of J.M.W. Turner, Hansen claims that Shelley forgoes "a (relative) critique of representation" in favor of "a radical engagement with the real." Taking into account the drastic changes in the material world, including those brought about by inventions such as the steam engine, both Hansen and Serres contend that "the privilege accorded representation no longer remains tenable following the industrial revolution. For Serres, Turner's significance as artist stems from his ability to revolutionize the immanent principle of his medium in light of the revolution of matter brought about in the industrial revolution. He internalizes this revolution of matter as the very source of his work, with the result that painting must no longer be thought to represent the real, but rather to work directly in and on it: 'There is no longer any representation in Turner's foundry. The painting is a furnace, the very furnace itself. It is a disordered black mass centered on the lighted hearths. We pass from geometry to matter or from representation to work. By going back to the sources of matter, the painter has broken the stranglehold of copying in the arts' (Serres 62). With Turner, and with the industrial revolution more generally, 'the perception of the stochastic replaces the art of drawing the form' (Serres 58).'" Hansen goes on to suggest that Frankenstein achieves similar results by incorporating radical technological alterity as the very structuring mechanism of her text. Thus, "the novel explodes the 'closure of representation.' It...suggests that our relation with post-industrial technology can no longer be mediated in 'textual' form" (Hansen, 23).

¹⁰⁵ The quote is attributed to Chief Seattle's letter to all people warning of the despoiling of America; it also appears in Bresson's *Le diable probablement*.

¹⁰⁶ This mad leitmotif will be associated throughout with Louise and her repeated excursions to troll for and dispose of victims.

¹⁰⁷ The motif of an out-of-control, hurtling vehicle precipitating a chance, life altering encounter and/or advancement into an altered, twilight world also has visual and thematic roots in scenes from the earliest Weimar offerings, including Henrik Galeen's 1926 remake of Paul Wegener's *Der Student von Prag* (1913) and particularly that of Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Influenced by Edison's "The Ghost Train," with its x-ray like inversion of black and white and the suggestion of powerful unseen forces, Murnau's celebrated phantom carriage sequence, wherein the naïve protagonist is delivered to the vampire's lair, inspired both *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* and *Les yeux sans visage*.

¹⁰⁸ Like Frankenstein's bid for total freedom that ends in enslavement, this inversion is mirrored in the fate of Dr. Génessier, the taker of faces who ultimately loses his own.

¹⁰⁹ The motif of controlled 'chance' encounters has its origins in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, wherein the young vampire's imperious mother (like Louise, she is described as of masculine appearance and demeanor) arranges for her daughter to stay with unwitting young victims when their carriage appears to crash.

¹¹⁰ In "The Fall of the House of Ulmer: Europe vs. America in the Gothic Vision of the Black Cat" (2010), Paul A. Cantor discusses Karloff's portrayal of Hjamler Poelzig as less mad scientist than middle-aged, sophisticated, amoral European aristocrat, more vampire than Victor Frankenstein. Poelzig is thus a significant threat to the staid, unsophisticated middle class American husband of Joan Alison (Julie Bishop), whom Poelzig takes a liking to. Cantor's description of Poelzig as part mad doctor, part Decadent, aristocratic vampire terrorizing less sophisticated (often American) members of the middle and working classes aptly describes the majority of movie mad scientists, including Dr. Vollin of *The Raven*, Dr. Gogol of *Mad Love*, Dr. Moreau of *The Island of Lost Souls* and the terrifying hunter of humans Zaroff of *The Most Dangerous Game* (1932). The emphasis on class-based vengeance, even from beyond the grave, is intrinsic to the vampire at least as far back as Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). In *Les yeux sans visage* the role traditionally played by the naïve American is bestowed upon French youth who are continually exploited by their older compatriots.

¹¹¹ Doubt, the sentiment most often reiterated by daughter Christiane underscores the significance of the relation of her name to the followers of Christ lending dark resonance to her continually expressed lack of hope and faith, with particular reference to the powers of her ostensibly God-like father.

¹¹² The trope of blinding light perhaps originates in the light that suddenly breaks in on Victor when he makes his great 'discovery' within the crypt.

¹¹³ With Christiane drawn like moth to a flame ever closer to the secrets of Génessier's lab and Louise resembling a predator drawn inexorably to its prey, a Pavlovian aspect further highlights issues regarding agency.

¹¹⁴ By commencing narratives with vehicular disasters, directors of 1930s horror films subvert the notion of film as part of an uninterrupted progression of technologies functioning in the manner of techne or tool. Along with plunging the onscreen world into darkness by way of the vehicular wreck and/or establishing the monster's inhuman face as masking a victim most human and sympathetic, from the outset the early horror films continually interrupt a consuming relation to film's visual wonders by employing various formal strategies to establish that the visual field is highly unstable, and nothing is as it appears. Beginning with the opening scene of James Whale's *Frankenstein*, wherein (as Ann C. Hall notes), a group of mourners depart a funeral, leaving behind one well-dressed man, who subsequently removes his proper jacket, revealing the tattered clothes of a gravedigger, the 30s horror film would establish from the outset that the nature of the world of the film and its inhabitants would be anything but readily discernible. *Mad Love* begins with opening credits that roll across an artificial, expressionistic shot of a nighttime cityscape as seen through a window at the forefront of the frame. When the last credit appears, a hand reaches across the frame and punches the window, breaking the glass as well as the final credits that are revealed to be painted upon it. With a dissolve to the initial scene a hanged man and a walking

headless corpse appear, before it is revealed that the scenario we are introduced to is that of a Grand Guignol-style theater. In *The Island of Lost Souls* the credits appear in the sand at the edge of an ocean, and are periodically ‘washed away’ by the surf. Similar instances that mock clear visual apprehension abound throughout these films (and will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter).

¹¹⁵ Published in 1929 and 1930, Bataille’s *Documents* consisted of fifteen issues of Surrealist writings and photography.

¹¹⁶ The faceless body buried is actually that of Simone Tessot.

¹¹⁷ The screams and cries of trapped and tortured victims not only remind one of Dr. Moreau’s house of pain in *The Island of Lost Souls* (1934), wherein human-animals are tortured and killed, but carry distinct associations with Mengele as well.

¹¹⁸ Formulated by Alexander Astruc, the concept of the *caméra-stylo* refers to film as a language in and of itself, with the director thus akin to a writer utilizing light and shadow.

¹¹⁹ By the time, in *Le sang des bêtes*, that Georges Hubert’s voice-over commentary references “la chèvre traîtresse” that leads the rest of the goats to slaughter (before turning away and saving itself at the last second) it becomes shockingly clear that the film resonates far beyond the abattoirs of La Villette, referencing events surrounding the Occupation and Vichy regime. A subsequent shot of a ghostly train, passing over a distant bridge amidst dense fog, much like those that recur so often in *Les yeux sans visage* will surely, as Lowenstein notes, be reminiscent of the many trains that left France in secret en route to the death camps. Thus, the train as symbol of modernity and progress, the breaking of previously unrealizable human boundaries, of speed, distance, expedience, becomes in *Le sang des bêtes* and eventually in *Les Yeux sans visage* as well, a symbol of the ultimate atrocity of Auschwitz.

¹²⁰ In *Shocking Representations: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (2007) and *The Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific Avant-garde* (2000) respectively.

¹²¹ Both note, among other similarities, the prominent place of dogs in both the camps as well as in Génessier’s home.

¹²² *Victimes du devoir* refers to a 1953 absurdist play by Eugene Ionesco. Louise first meets Edna as they stand in line to buy tickets to the play.

¹²³ These notions are further complicated, as Génessier informs the temporarily restored Christiane that she will have to choose a new name to go along with her (as Louise states, even more beautiful and angelic) “nouvelle visage.” The possibility that Génessier has altered or “improved upon” his daughter’s looks arises when one notes that both the photo atop the piano in the living room and the portrait of Christiane, previously covered over, in her attic realm look somewhat different than the Christiane we see seated at the dinner table.

¹²⁴ Among other things, it is the only scene in the film wherein Génessier smiles, while also betraying a lustful leer. Romantic candlelight along with his repeated stroking of the stem of his wine glass make for a strangely suggestive scene.

¹²⁵ The film made its debut at the 1959 Edinburg Film Festival.

¹²⁶ In “The Voice in Cinema,” Mary Anne Doanne explains how voice is normally treated in cinema. “The dangers of post-synchronization and looping stem from the fact that the voice is disengaged from its ‘proper’ space (the space conveyed by the visual image) and the credibility of that voice depends upon the technician’s ability to return it to the side of its origin” (Braudy, 366). Although such treatment is rare, the voice purposely alienated from the body is occasionally used to striking effect in the horror, science fiction and noir genres, beginning with *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*. This technique is also used in Robert Aldrich’s Mabuse-influenced *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960).

¹²⁷ Levi’s 1986 collection of essays is titled *I sommersi e i salvati*, or *The Drowned and the Saved*.

¹²⁸ Bresson’s *Notes sur le cinématographe* (63).

¹²⁹ In films such as *Pickpocket*, fragmented shots ‘empty’ of human figure – for example, a portion of a wall, hallway or other “petite pièce de réalité” (Deleuze I, 106) traditionally relegated to the background of a shot - constitute an elaborate, increasingly abstract maze of liminal spaces through which Bresson’s characters continually pass. As discussed in Chapter 1, Deleuze refers to such cinematic spaces, particularly those regarded as productive of affect independent of the face, as *les espaces quelconques* (or any-space-whatever). The any-space whatever is a setting which loses its spatio-temporal coordinates and is thus, like the face in close up, a place of virtual conjunction, with the potential for infinite linkages, a ‘locus pur du possible’ (109).

¹³⁰ Reiterating the connection between transformation of image and treatment of the actor, Bresson states: “I flatten, not to deprive an image of meaning, but so that each picture loses its independence...The same with actors proclaiming their personas, even though persona doesn’t really exist, is pure invention, an artificial self, not a real one” (Samuels, 67). Elsewhere Bresson has stated: “Il faut qu’une image se transforme au contact d’autres images comme une couleur au contact d’autres couleurs. Un bleu n’est pas le même bleu à côté d’un vert, d’un jaune, d’un rouge” (16).

¹³¹ In *Un condamné à mort s’est échappé*, (1956).

¹³² In *Pickpocket* (1959).

¹³³ Affect is sensible data that is not organized into meaning; as it is derived from the senses, as opposed to the intellect, affect is in many ways the opposite of a concept. Concepts provide order, allow us “to think a form or connection without sensibility,” (Herzog, 64) thus giving shape to one’s thought, whereas affect interrupts synthesis and order. Art often functions by taking us back from composites of experience to the affects from which those synthesized wholes emerge. Affect is thus “a state of possibility prior to any linkage in a system of signification, or to a sequence of action/reaction,” a form of pre-personal perception which results in “a marked indeterminacy between perception and action” (Herzog, 64). “I watch a scene and my heart races, my eye flinches ...before I even think or conceptualize there is an element of response that is prior to any decision” (Colebrook, 41). As discussed in Chapter 1, in *Cinema I: L’image-mouvement* Deleuze describes spiritual affect in a similar manner, while focusing on *La passion de Jeanne d’Arc* and affects emergent from Jeanne’s ongoing clashes with judges, soldiers and priests, as well as her ultimate execution.

¹³⁴ Pascal describes the arrival of grace as a ‘beginning of sorrows’ accompanied by strong feelings of alienation, including loss of interest in previously revered goods and experience, particularly those relative to distraction and/or immersion in wayward pursuits. Thus the discussion of grace relative to the works of Bresson, wherein, for example, immersion in highly-skilled thievery in *Pickpocket* leads the protagonist from estrangement to a more positive, more externally focused orientation, can be enriched by way of further analysis of Pascal. Timothy Moriarty describes the arrival of grace and its unnerving manifestations in Pascal’s theology: “The first thing that God inspires in the soul he deigns truly to touch is an unaccustomed insight whereby the soul considers things in a new light. This new enlightenment is a source of fear, and produces an unsettling feeling that disturbs the untroubled relationship with the objects of its former delight. A continuous anxiety along with growing insight “prevents the previous sweetness to which the heart used to go, [as] the solidity of invisible things affects it more than the futility of the visible...this is grace” (99-100).

¹³⁵ Part of the 2006 Criterion release of *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1967).

¹³⁶ The director, never forthcoming with regard to his methods, occasionally claimed to have first auditioned potential actors over the telephone.

¹³⁷ A state of things would include an actual, determined space and time, objects, people, and realistic relations between these entities. In a specific milieu wherein they are manifest, “la qualité devient le <<quale>> d’un objet, la puissance devient action ou passion, l’affect devient sensation, sentiment, émotion ou même pulsion dans une personne, le visage devient caractère ou

masque de la personne...mais nous ne sommes plus alors dans le domaine de l'image-affection, nous sommes dans le domaine de l'image action. L'image-affection pour son compte est abstraite des coordonnées spatio-temporelles qui la rapporteraient à un état de choses, et abstrait le visage de la personne à laquelle il appartient dans l'état de choses" (138).

¹³⁸ Of the cadaver as otherness par excellence, Blanchot states: « Qu'on le regarde encore, cet être splendide d'où la beauté rayonne: il est, je le vois, parfaitement semblable à lui-même; il se ressemble. Le cadavre est sa propre image. Il n'a plus avec ce monde où il apparaît encore que les relations d'une image, possibilité obscure, ombre en tout temps présente derrière la forme vivante et qui maintenant, loin de se séparer de cette forme, la transforme tout entière en ombre. Le cadavre est le reflet se rendant maître de la vie reflétée, l'absorbant, s'identifiant substantiellement à elle en la faisant passer de sa valeur d'usage et de vérité à quelque chose d'incroyable – inusuel et neutre. Et si le cadavre est si ressemblant, c'est qu'il est, à un certain moment, la ressemblance par excellence, tout à fait ressemblance, et il n'est aussi rien de plus. Il est le semblable, semblable à un degré absolu, bouleversant et merveilleux. Mais à quoi ressemble-t-il? À rien. » (Blanchot, 1988, 329). Thus, "unlike in the 'ordinary' type of resemblance in which an image takes after its object, the absolute-resemblance-that-resembles-nothing comes *before* and is situated in the gap between the thing and its image" (Peng, 132).

¹³⁹ For instance, when the pickpocket is arrested and taken before the inspector, who will become his nemesis, for the first time, we see the young man handcuffed and driven off. This is followed by a dissolve to him and the inspector rising from their chairs as the pickpocket boldly insists that the police have no evidence on him. As he leaves we realize that the entire encounter has been elided.

¹⁴⁰ While Bresson is careful to avoid explicit ideology, theology or reference to God (late in life the director referred to himself as a Christian-Atheist), what he hopes will illicit feeling and emotion from the viewer, prior to the workings of reason is often, in interviews, related to God. the foregoing could be placed within the text "...the more life is what it is – ordinary, simple – without pronouncing the word 'God', the more I see the presence of God in that...I don't want to shoot something in which God would be too transparent...the further I go on in my work, the more careful I am to do something without too much ideology...I want to make people who see the film feel the presence of God in ordinary life....there is a presence of something which I call God, but I don't want to show it too much, I prefer to make people feel it"(498)... "I don't want to show you anything, especially. I want to make people feel life as I do" (Schrader, 487).

¹⁴¹ Indeed, the only suggestion of depth in Bresson's films is the occasional placement of characters in a diagonal orientation to camera and background and, most notably, the continuous diagonal paths, toward and away from the camera, followed herd-like by crowds, which Bresson employed consistently, starting with *Pickpocket*, and which as often as not seem to call attention to, rather than belie, the overall flatness of composition.

¹⁴² A hand writing in a diary dissolves to a shot of hands exchanging money; Bresson then cuts to a medium shot of a group of people seen from the back, approaching what appears to be a ticket counter; tracking behind a man who purchases a ticket, the camera ultimately holds focus on a different group of people; a young man with a fixed, intense look and angular face stands out and, as we hear a voice-over narrator speak over the shot, we come to realize that he is our protagonist; we follow him into a large crowd who stand looking off into the distance; finally, a voice calling over a loudspeaker lets us know we are at a horse race.

¹⁴³ Empty shots here refer to shots of portions of walls or hallways in and around Michel's barren apartment, or those that constitute the elaborate, increasingly abstract maze of liminal spaces through which the character continually passes.

¹⁴⁴ *Crime and Punishment* is notoriously reliant upon doorways and thresholds, anonymous public squares and backalleys, not to mention the intensive chronicling of infinitesimal, liminal states of consciousness.

¹⁴⁵ At one point we ourselves are so immersed that we anticipate Fontaine's reaction to the arrival of a package of clothes sent from his family; for Fontaine, these are not clothes but more tools, in this case, ropes.

¹⁴⁶ Bresson has stated, "I have always liked manual dexterity and...I've never understood intellectuals who put dexterity aside," as a manifestation of deeply substantive intelligence, etc. (Samuels, 61).

¹⁴⁷ This is perhaps best distilled in Inspector Porfiry's suggestion to Raskolnikov, as the latter is about to leave for Siberia to serve out his sentence: "Just give yourself over to life. Don't be too clever about it," (*Crime and Punishment*, 573).

¹⁴⁸ In the latter film, Michel's hand immediately dissolves into a hand exchanging money with another, the latter perhaps the predominant shot in all of Bresson's work

¹⁴⁹ Valentin's act is directly reminiscent of Brice Parain's recounting of the death of Dumas' Porthos in Jean-Luc Godard's Bresson-influenced *Vivre sa vie* (1962).

¹⁵⁰ After Michel's first theft he declares "J'avais dominé le monde."

¹⁵¹ "L'Âge d'or and the Eroticism of the Spirit," in *Masterpieces of Modernist Cinema*, 2006.

¹⁵² Here relating specifically to *Pickpocket*, but the description applies to nearly all of Bresson's films.

¹⁵³ One thinks of *Le Journal* and the loud creaking of the wheels of an ox-drawn cart, as well as innumerable sets of footsteps, both of which serve to remind the viewer, as well as the Curé himself, of his endless earthly toiling.

¹⁵⁴ Bresson's methods of casting are supremely affective, as he casts the least sympathetic of faces to play, paradoxically, the victims of Michel's thievery.

¹⁵⁵ "Suddenly a certain strange thought began to stir inside me...I understood something which up to that time had only stirred in me...I saw clearly, as it were, into something new, a completely new world, unfamiliar to me and known only through some obscure heresay, through a certain mysterious sign. I think that in those precise minutes, my real existence began...I began to look about and suddenly I noticed some strange people. They were all strange, extraordinary figures, completely prosaic, not Don Carloses or Posas to be sure, rather down-to-earth titular councillors and yet at the same time, as it were, sort of fantastic titular councilors. Someone was grimacing in front of me, having hidden himself behind all this fantastic crowd, and he was fidgeting some thread...and these little dolls moved, and he laughed and laughed away" (36).

¹⁵⁶ In a first step toward reconciliation, Raskolnikov tells Sonia, who has just read to him the story of Lazarus, "it wasn't the old woman, it was myself I killed," (548); this rebirth through the undoing of self-will is a theme that recurs in all of Dostoevsky's work, including, most vividly, in the disparity between the respective fates of Ivan and Dmitri in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

¹⁵⁷ One cannot help but be reminded of Kierkegaard's statement that "the instant of decision is madness" when, at the climactic moment of *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé*, Fontaine sits pensively, for an inordinately long period, finally stating merely "to decide is hardest," before scaling the prison wall, as Nazi soldiers unknowingly pass below.

¹⁵⁸ The very loose translation, provided in the subtitles of an out-of-print New Yorker Films VHS version of Bresson's *Le diable, probablement*, of a key question asked at the climax of the film. The reply to the question is also the title of the film: "Oui, qui est-ce qui nous manœuvre en douce? Le diable probablement!"

¹⁵⁹ The first of his three late Dostoevsky adaptations, all of which, set in modern Paris, stylistically harken back to *Pickpocket*.

¹⁶⁰ Despite its having been, in this respect, faithfully adapted from an ultimately tragic tale, the film has time and again been interpreted in a more positive light. Recent examples include Cunneen, 2003, and Pipolo, 2010.

¹⁶¹ The dreamer is seen as a product of 1840s Russia's obsession with European Romanticism and Dostoevsky regarded these types as directly responsible for the underground men and the

nihilistic bent of the 1860s; a similar link can be inferred between *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur* and *Le diable, probablement*.

¹⁶² Bresson depicts a world caught between deadly absolutes, including a sterile, steel and Plexiglas Paris and ill-defined rural spaces continually befouled by polluting machines, planes and tankards (the effects of which are illustrated in documentary footage of children with mercury poisoning, dead fish and mutilated baby seals). The effect and intent of such scenes allows Bresson to counter with extended sequences more inscrutable and evocative than anything in his previous films or the subsequent *L'argent* (1983).

¹⁶³ On the latter subject, see Angela Smith's *Hideous Progeny: Disability, Eugenics and Classic Horror Cinema* (2012).

¹⁶⁴ While the monster is easily recognized as originary Adam of a proposed new race, his relation to his maker is perhaps better characterized by way of Eve, representative in the patriarchal religions of original sin, or Lilith, Adam's first wife who refuses to subordinate herself to the patriarchal rule of Adam and is thus cast out of Eden to become the ruler of a race of demons.

¹⁶⁵ Christ references with regard to the monster abound in particular in James Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), a film which has also been read as a reflection on American attitudes toward miscegenation (see Elizabeth Young's "Here Comes the Bride: Wedding Gender and Race in James Whale's *The Bride of Frankenstein*" [1991]).

¹⁶⁶ Among others, Fassbinder appropriates the signature wide pans of *Chinesisches Roulette* (1976), recreates a film within a film sequence that functions as mise en abyme in *Despair* (1978) and echoes the ending of *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, all of which will be discussed presently.

¹⁶⁷ Other haunting melodramas involving fading former beauties, such as Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* could be mentioned as well.

¹⁶⁸ The quotation is from James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). Uttered by mad scientist Septimus Pretorius in reference to his joint venture, with Dr. Frankenstein, in the creation of artificial humans, the statement also obviously references the fledgling medium itself, as well as the newfound popularity of a string of monster/mad-scientist movies.

¹⁶⁹ The manner in which Thesiger plays the iconic character - as an insolent, narcissistic sociopathic queen - is astonishing considering the era in which it was made.

¹⁷⁰ Tellingly, the address of Voss's estate in the film is 25 Carl-Theodore Street.

¹⁷¹ This recalls Norma Desmond's obsession with watching herself onscreen, in films within that film, which were actually clips of Gloria Swanson's early work.

¹⁷² More importantly, there is the intimation of a sexual triangle between the three, which mirrors those such as Voss, Katz and Josepha.

¹⁷³ In his role in *The Marriage of Maria Braun* as a devilishly-depicted black market dealer, while betraying slyly hidden suicidal elements that resonate with those of *Veronika Voss*, Fassbinder also manifests at a critical juncture in the protagonist's life. The dealer sells Braun a black dress which enables her to enter into the cold, capitalistic, for-the-most-part masculine world which will directly lead to her death/suicide. He also attempts to sell her the complete works of Kleist, an author that Fassbinder often lauded for, among other things, having found "someone to [commit suicide] with him."

¹⁷⁴ With the time period of the film coinciding as it does with his own formative years, it coincides with Fassbinder's own biography and early years as avid spectator. The scene foreshadows Spengler's similarly fascinated gaze, observing the first of Voss's two deathbed scenes near film's end. Voss's entrapment between spectator and director is replicated in the body of the film by her placement between the often helpless Krohn and the ever-manipulating Katz.

¹⁷⁵ It is tempting to read the Katz-Voss relationship as something of a mirror of Fassbinder's own well-known (but likely little understood) relationship to his mother, who remained a "friend" as well as an integral member of his repertory yet who, perhaps tellingly, was cast in a string of nasty and unsavory roles, including the abominable petty-bourgeois mother of the protagonist-suicide Hans in *Merchant of the Four Seasons*. Fassbinder's mother, billed as Lilo Pempeit,

makes an appearance in *Veronika Voss* as well, playing a ghostly, grotesquely-depicted jewelry store owner.

¹⁷⁶ The suicidal aspect of Voss' enigmatic death certainly resonates with that of Fassbinder as well. One of the director's more memorable utterances cited his preference for the accelerated "short, full life" that cocaine could seemingly provide one with, over a longer, more mundane existence. His description of Voss's life as having been "played out," with no more "interesting options" left for her in this world could likewise be seen as possibly describing what he felt to be his own situation at the time (mere months, as it turned out, before his death).

¹⁷⁷ Hermann will later discover a destitute man he believes to be his own double, and he will ultimately kill the man to assume his identity, while arranging it so that the police will believe he himself has died. Yet it is apparent from the start that the two look nothing alike, therefore the police have no trouble tracking Hermann down. Thus mirroring the fate of the criminal in the film-within-a-film and, more importantly, evoking the climax of as well as *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *William Wilson* and numerous other such tales, the killing of the double results in Hermann's own demise, a development that further reinforces the nature of the Fassbinder-Voss relation.

¹⁷⁸ The title evokes Bresson's description of cinema as 'the art of representing nothing.'