

# Confronting Eternity

Strange (Im)mortalities, and States of Undying in  
Popular Fiction

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*To Glen and Benjamin,  
The inspirations for immortality.*

# Table of Contents

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TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	III
THESIS ABSTRACT .....	V
AN INTRODUCTION TO IMMORTALITY.....	VI
GLOSSARY OF NEOLOGISMS AND UNIQUE PHRASES .....	IX
<b>CHAPTER ONE: THE MIRIFIC MORTALITIES OF DOCTOR WHO .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>PHOENICAL MEN, AND “THE MASTER RACE” .....</i>	1
<i>Phoenical Bodies, Tardevism, and “The Long View” .....</i>	3
<i>Moriartesque Supervillainies: The Master as a Moriarty .....</i>	13
<i>The Master as a Cambion, as a Merl(i/y)n, and as a Misanthrope .....</i>	16
<i>The Master as Misanthrope, and as Many.....</i>	20
<i>“Breaking News”: Vote Saxon! (Conclusion) .....</i>	28
GALLIFREYAN GALLIMAUFRIES: UNDYING, AND THE PHYSICIAN OF THE UNIVERSE .....	31
<i>The Doctor, Holmes, and Immortal Insouciance .....</i>	34
<i>The Corsair, Orlando, Woolf, and Dickinson.....</i>	38
THE IMMORTALS OF THE WHONIVERSE .....	42
<i>Undying, and Pansexuality: Captain Jack Harkness .....</i>	42
<i>“Hello Sweetie”: Congenital and Quantum Immortalities, and River Song .....</i>	43
<b>CHAPTER TWO: PARALLEL UNDYINGS IN BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER .....</b>	<b>47</b>
GALDERDASH! REJUVENESCENCE IN <i>BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER</i> .....	47
<i>Malefic Magic(k), and Galderdash .....</i>	48
<i>“Your Suffering Has To End”: The Dwimmer Doll, “Mistressing” Reality, and Magic(k) as the         Language of the Teenage Nihilist.....</i>	55
<i>Vampwill: Darkness as a Bride, and Parallel Undyings .....</i>	64
“THIS ISN’T EVEN MY FINAL FORM”: DEAD FACES IN <i>BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER</i> .....	67
<i>The First, and Dead-Faced Portrayal.....</i>	67
<i>The Proteus of Death, and Mirimortality .....</i>	69
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE VIZARD AND ETERNAL LIFE IN <i>THE MASK, BATMAN, AND SCREAM</i>.....</b>	<b>71</b>
DEATHLESS TOONTOWN: MIRIFIC MASKS, AND PERSONAL AGGREGORIANISM IN <i>THE MASK</i> .....	71
<i>Head, Hyde, and the Corporeal Protean.....</i>	71
<i>‘Toon Thespians, and Spurning Science.....</i>	75
<i>Serfs in Reality, Kings in Toonworld .....</i>	77
IMMORTAL THROUGH INACTION: GOTHAM’S GYWNPLAINE IN <i>BATMAN</i> .....	80

<i>Slaughter is Salutory: The Joker, His Scars, and The Modern Fool</i> .....	80
<i>A Kinship of Abnormalcy: Batman and The Joker</i> .....	83
<i>Anarchy Athanatised: The Joker as an Immortal, and as an Emulable</i> .....	89
MURDER IN THE MOVIES: GHOSTFACE, CABIN IN THE WOODS, AND THE MASK AS A MIRROR .....	94
<i>Emulation and The Ghostfaced Killer</i> .....	94
<i>The Villainous Affable, and The Re-casting of The Teenage Role</i> .....	95
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: THE IMMORTAL MORIBUNDS OF SAW AND BREAKING BAD .....</b>	<b>101</b>
THE ANGEL WHO TAUGHT US GORE: DYSCHRONIA, AND <i>MEMORIAL VIVEFACTION</i> IN THE <i>SAW</i> SEPTILOGY .....	101
<i>The Jigsaw Legacy, and Memorial Vivefaction</i> .....	101
<i>Lungwitz, Metempsychosis, and Dyschronia</i> .....	106
THE DEATHLESS MORIBUND: WALTER WHITE AND THE ALCHEMY OF <i>BREAKING BAD</i> .....	110
<i>Walter White, The Portrait Persona, and The “Grammar of Evil”</i> .....	110
<i>Satanic Sagacities, and Cacomimesis</i> .....	114
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: FROM SCIENCE TO STRULDBRUGGS: HEROES AND GULLIVER'S TRAVELS .....</b>	<b>119</b>
TOO SPECIAL TO SUCCUMB: SYLAR AND <i>HEROES</i> .....	119
<i>The Gossamer God</i> .....	119
<i>i-Mortality: Editing the Corporal, and Embellishing One’s Genome</i> .....	122
NIGHTMARE PERPETUITY: THE GULLIBLE TRAVELLER, AND STRULDBRUGGISM IN <i>GULLIVER’S TRAVELS</i> .....	126
<i>Lambasting Laputa: Swift vs. The Royal Society</i> .....	126
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>132</b>
A CHAOS OF FORTITUDES: RECAPITULATION, AND A LOOK TO THE FUTURE OF UNDYING.....	132
<b>WORKS CITED .....</b>	<b>139</b>

# Thesis Abstract

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*“I do not set my life at a pin’s fee, / And for my soul, what can it do to that, / Being a thing as immortal  
as itself?”*

*-Hamlet, (1.4.65), Hamlet, speaking to Horatio.*

When the meritless scuffle for the bauble of deity, they ironically set their human lives at the “pin’s fee” to which Shakespeare’s Hamlet refers. This thesis focuses on these undeserving individuals in premillennial and postmillennial fiction, who seek immortality at the expense of both their humanities, and their natural mortalities.

I will analyse an array of popular modern characters, paying particular attention to the precursors of immortal personages. I will inaugurate these analyses with an examination of fan favourite series *Doctor Who*. I will first examine the characters of the Time Lords named The Doctor and The Master, and adduce them as parallels of Sherlock Holmes, and his nemesis Professor Moriarty. I will use these figures of the deathless to introduce the concepts upon which my research is founded. I will elucidate firstly the strange mortality which I refer to as *mirimortality*, and secondly, the *corporeal protean*, the mutability of the human form. I will concretise these terms and compare somatic and mnemonic immortalities through an observation of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s Willow Rosenberg/Dark Willow and the primordial entity known as The First. I will analyse magic and science thereafter, and their influences on both dying and undying in fiction as I move through subsequent chapters on modern immortals from Big Head/The Mask, to The Joker, to “moribunds” such as John Kramer and Walter White.

Those who pursue the illusion of immortality live less than those who seize life’s brief candle, and burn it at both ends. So would you pay a pin to be a phoenix? Those seeking eternity pay this and more, and find their strange mortalities in both good and evil.

# An Introduction to Immortality

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There is but a thin membrane between us humans and death, however loath we may be to concede it so. Any deprivation of food, or water, or oxygen; drowning, asphyxiation, bludgeoning by a blunt object, transfixion by a blade, poisoning, strokes and cardiac arrest, being crushed, trampled, burned, or frozen, decapitation, and many other methods too numerous to list. The ways in which we can and might die are fearsomely enumerable.

This thesis acts as a comprehensive dissection of the modes of mortality in primarily postmillennial fiction, and the individuals who wish to put a million year bulwark between themselves and dying. I will argue that the immortal is reality's homunculus, who must at first live the mortal's life. The immortal then dies the only death possible to an immortal, the death of disremembrance, as he or she grows more nihilistic. I will continue that the existences of the deathless cannot but lapse into evil, for as their lifespans increase, so too must these immortals' desires to control not only how long they might live, but the chronology of the universe that enshrines these bright stars of being.

The first third of my thesis will concentrate on the long-running science fiction series *Doctor Who*, and its immortal protagonists and antagonists. I will first establish the binary that exists between the immortal "Time Lords" who have styled themselves as "The Doctor" and "The Master." My dissertation on the *Doctor Who* canon will therefore encompass the various modes of intrinsic and inbred immortality in fiction. I will delve deeper into the subtypes of congenital undying through a close reading of several Master-centric episodes of *Doctor Who*: 3:11, "Utopia," 3:12 "The Sound of Drums," 3:13 "The Last of the Time Lords," 4:17 "The End of Time Part One," and 4:18 "The End of Time Part Two." I will introduce two neologisms to guide my research: *mirimortality*, and *tardevism*. The first neologism, *mirimortality*, will be explained as a state of strange mortality, here the process of becoming a god or godly by the means of Time, or temporal energies. I will posit that these two diametrically-opposed beings are *mirimortal*: that is to say, they are strangely-mortal, and they draw their ability to survive from an extended exposure to the "Untempered Schism," a "gap in the fabric of reality" near the Time Lords' home planet of Gallifrey. The second neologism, *tardevism*, will be described as the ability to live without ageing: to exist in a body that is literally slow of the aeons. I will elucidate the effects of *tardevism* in the TARDIS, as the immortal Doctor flies from time to time, and world to world, and reality to reality. Throughout, I will engage with critics who view the heroic Doctor and the envenomed Master as immortal parallels of Sherlock Holmes, and his nemesis Professor James Moriarty, to establish the effects of *tardevism* and deviant mortality on human(oid) paragons. I will then bind this argument with brief descriptions of Captain Jack Harkness and

Professor River Song, two allies of The Doctor who attain immortality during their undertakings with the renowned Gallifreyan.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses on two immortals from the cult television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: Willow Rosenberg, and The First. Willow Rosenberg immortalises herself through sheer willpower, using k-suffixed “magick” as a means of avenging. I will cite critic Judith Butler, and her theories on the politics of the performative to establish that both magic(k) and immortality are thespian. I will ultimately conclude that Willow plays the undier with such scenical perfection that she becomes immortal. I will then continue my analysis of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with a look at the multiform proto-evil known only as “The First.” I will affirm The First as a being who precedes any concept of maleficence, and draws its faces and forms from the pool of the dead. I will therefore characterise the formless First as an amalgam who better illuminates the personalities of the faces it wears. I will call The First a mummer immortal who is immortal through the portrayal of the dead faces of the *Buffyverse*.

Being fantastical at present, immortality has been mused over more by philosophers than scientists. I aim here to augment the somewhat shallow pool of critical theory related to fictional immortality through linking and agglomerating disparate dissertations on this intriguing subject. I will construct a conceptual edifice that depicts immortality as a state that is both meliorative and deleterious to humanity. Immortality is a fascinating subject as it environs the very human concepts of what it is to be and to unbecome; and to die and to undie. In accordance with this goal, I will reconcile the scientific side of immortality with an analysis of the cartoon god Big Head/The Mask, from the eponymous comic book and film series. Big Head’s typhonic rollicking will be compared to Max Rafferty’s *A Chronicle of Masks*, to posit Big Head as both an Aeschylean dramaturge, and a Bugs Bunnyish immortal. This will lead into an analysis of DC Comics’s villainous mainstay The Joker, who has been depicted as both mortal and immortal in his seven-decade tenure as Batman’s archnemesis. This chapter will preface my analysis of my last mummer immortal, *Scream*’s Ghostfaced Killer. I will weigh this masked, many-identified killer against the protagonists and antagonists of Joss Whedon’s 2012 film *Cabin in the Woods*. I will pull apart the binary of the killers who cast themselves as Ghostface (*Scream*), and the innocent, intelligent teenagers (*Cabin in the Woods*) who are cast by others in the roles of the comely meat destined to die.

I will then proceed to an analysis of two figures who gain their immortalities through more natural means: John Kramer/The Jigsaw Killer of the *Saw* septilogy, and *Breaking Bad*’s Walter White/Heisenberg. Kramer becomes immortal through what I will refer to as *memorial vivefaction*: the process by which one is returned to life posthumously by being revived in the memories of those still alive. I will compare *memorial vivefaction* to the writings of Plato and his concept of metempsychosis, and Hanz Lungwitz’ antiquarian psychiatry paper *Über Unsterblichkeit*. I will then counterbalance this analysis with a look at *Breaking Bad*’s Walter White/Heisenberg, who occupies

the opposite end of the mortal spectrum. Walter is a man whose pernicious strain of pulmonary cancer should be his cause of death, however Walter's increasingly reckless actions invite the potential for him to perish by myriad other means. I will here adduce and analyse critic Calvin O. Schragg's concepts of evil and Otherness to establish the inextricability of immortality and malevolence in relation to Walter White, and the other immortals discussed thus far.

The penultimate chapter of this thesis will contemplate the last two immortals of my research: Gabriel Gray/Sylar, and the Struldbruggs. Television series *Heroes's* Gabriel Gray/Sylar represents the science of immortality. Gray aggregates disparate superpowers within his own constitution, tearing the ability to "undie" from the skulls of his fellow specials. I will then conclude my thesis with an illustration of one of the most well-known group of literary immortals: Jonathan Swift's "Struldbruggs." Appearing in *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift's Struldbruggs demonstrate the shadow side of *mirimortality* and wondrous undying. These beings become melancholy as they age, but no matter what, they cannot die. They exist, they fade, and life dessicates their bodies to a bloodless pulp. However, they remain imperishable, and ever exiled from the kingdom of death.

From *Hamlet* to *Gulliver's Travels*, I will finally compare and contrast the modes of mortality in popular fiction. Immortality is assumed by those who act it out. Candidates for immortality must therefore make the choice of which is the more heinous curse: to die tomorrow, or to live forever. I will recapitulate my concepts of undying here, and end with an analogy that postulates the worst-case scenario that could eventuate if an institute comes to monetise revenance. I will then draw conclusions on the ultimate effect of undying on all of my immortals, to prove that immortality, at its core, is more a curse than a boon.

## Glossary of Neologisms and Unique Phrases

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*Anima/Superanima/Superanimate*: The Latin for “soul.” This root is extrapolated into *Superanima*, an oversoul, or supreme soul; and *Superanimate*, having, being, or being in possession of, an oversoul.

*Cacomimesis/Cacomimetic*: Neologised from Greek *kakos* (evil) plus -mimesis (imitation). Literally, “evil-imitation”: a becoming evil by imitating evil. Adjectivally, of *cacomimesis*.

*Cambionism/Cambionic*: The state of being a *cambion*, a mythological word meaning the half-human offspring that arises from sexual intercourse between a human male and a succubus, or a human and an incubus. I extend this term further herein to mean “one of deviant genome,” or “one of aberrant biology.” Also, adjectivally, “of this state.”

*Flexilinear*: Neologised from the Latin *flexus* (curved), plus “linear.” Following a curved line. Used herein to mean time that flows in a non-linear fashion, as in a “*flexilinear* chronology.”

*Galderdash*: A portmanteau term neologised from the Old English *galdor*: magic, song, sorcery; plus “balderdash,” nonsense. A silly scion of magic where great power is derived from linguistic nonsense and mystic burbling. This neologism is used to refer to (Dark) Willow Rosenberg’s sorcery in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

*i-Mortalities*: A paronomasia meaning “monetised and merchandisable body enhancements” that I feel will inevitably arise, such as genetic engineering, prosthetisings, and corporal bionics. The “i-” signifies a mortality that is sold as a bodily accessory by a modish company (such as Apple’s i-Pods).

*Memorial Vivefaction*: Posthumous “immortality” as gained through the living who vivefy or revivefy through memory. Living past one’s natural life span through being remembered.

*Mirimortality/Mirific Mortality/Mirimortal*: Neologised from the Latin adjective *mirus*, meaning strange or wonderful, and “mortality.” Adjectivally: strange, deviant, wondrous or *mirific mortality*. Nounally: the state of being not wholly mortal or immortal, but something wonderfully in-between. One who is *mirifically-mortal*, *mirimortal*; of or concerning *mirimortality*. One who is strangely, deviantly, or wondrously mortal, by supernatural or other means. These neologisms are primarily used to refer to

The Doctor's and The Master's mortalities, in the *Doctor Who* mythos, and other immortals throughout this thesis.

*Moriartesque/Moriartesquerie*: Adjectivally: Moriarty-like; of or befitting Sherlock Holmes nemesis, Professor James Moriarty. Nounally: A piece of villainy or supervillainy befitting Professor Moriarty.

*Moriturus/Morituri/The Moriturus Principle*: A moribund individual, one about to die. Moribund individuals, those about to die. The belief that those not about to die have no grounds to judge the actions of the moribund.

*Nibilation/Self-Nibilation*: Neologised from the Latin *nihil*, plus -ation. A making into nothing. Also used as *self-nibilation*, a making one's self and soul into nothing. *Nililous*: Neologised from the Latin *nihil*, plus -ous. Of or relating to nothing, nothingness, or nihility. *Nilil Reality/The Nilil Real*: The unison of the real and false-real through the mergence of reality and the supernatural.

*Personal Aggregorianism*: A process by which a subject or individual aggregates the latent feelings in his or her mind to forge new personae, both dramatically and cathartically. The process of aggregating the disparate facets of one's personality to make a new persona entirely.

*Phoenical*: Phoenix-like; of, befitting, or resembling a phoenix. Also, being as immortal as a phoenix; having a similar life-cycle and death-cycle to a phoenix.

*Psychomarasmus/Psychomarasmic*: Neologised from the Greek *soma*, flesh and *marasmos*, wasting. A wasting of the mind or soul. Of or concerning a *psychomarasmus*, or wasting of the mind or soul. Paralleled herein by *somatomarasmus*, a wasting of the flesh or body.

*Rectilinear*: Neologised from the Latin *rectus* (right, correct) plus "linear." Following a straight line. Used herein to mean Time that flows in a linear fashion, as in a "*rectilinear* chronology."

*Retrovivent/Retrovivence*: Neologised from the Latin *retro*, backwards and *vivere*, to live. Literally, living backwards in time from death to birth, such as the wizard Merlyn from T.H. White's "The Once and Future King." The state of this. Also, one who is a *retrovivent*, such as Merlyn.

*Somatomarasmus*: Neologised from the Greek *soma*, flesh and *marasmos*, wasting. A wasting of the body or flesh. Paralleled herein by *psychomarasmus*, a wasting of the mind or spirit.

*Tardevism/Tardevous*: Neologised from the Latin adjective *tardus* (slow) plus *-evous* (of the aeons). The process of decelerated ageing to the point that the subject can look the same for decades, if not centuries, if not millennia. These beings' bodies are literally "slow of the aeons." Of or concerning one whose body is "slow of the aeons." This neologism is used to refer to the Time Lords of the *Doctor Who* mythos.

## Chapter One: The *Mirific Mortalities* of *Doctor Who*

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### **Phoenical Men, and “The Master Race”**

*“Eternal life!/ It’s super fun!/ And if you let us in we’ll show you how it can be done!”*

*-The Book of Mormon.*

*“You are indeed a worthy opponent, Doctor. It’s what gives your destruction its ... piquancy”*

*-The Master, “The Mark of the Rani” (1985).*

Prince Hamlet states upon sight of a shade in Shakespeare’s eponymous play “I do not set my life at a pin’s fee” (1.4.65). The protagonist sees the spectral form of death, and is compelled to speak abruptly and epiphanously of (im)mortality. He continues that no harm can befall his own soul as his animating force is “a thing immortal as (the ghost)” (1.4.67). Hamlet’s theorisations are emblematic of the immortal’s condition. When the immortal meets death, he or she gains sovereignty in the interstitial spaces between living and dying. The immortal personage is undying, but also unliving; and good, yet descending into evil.

These beings are what I shall hereafter refer to as *mirimortal*. I have neologised this term from the Latin adjective *mirus*, meaning strange or wonderful, and “mortality,” to refer to a strange state of eternal life: a “strange or wonderful mortality” that I will define and conceptualise throughout the course of this thesis in relation to the more theorised-about immortality. Indeed, there are many characters who would have passed muster in this assessment of pop cultural immortality. Any from Alucard, from *Hellsing*; Barbas, from *Charmed*; Castiel from *Supernatural*; Cell from *Dragonball Z*; Count Dracula from *Dracula*; Emanon, from *Memories of Emanon*; Hidan, Orochimaru, and Madara Uchiha from *Naruto*; Father from *Fullmetal Alchemist*; Juan Sánchez Villa-Lobos Ramírez from *Highlander*; Lord Voldemort from *Harry Potter*; Lestat de Lioncourt from Anne Rice’s novels; Marcus Flaminius Rufus from Jorge Luis Borges’s short story *The Immortal*; Nathan Young from *Misfits*; Phoenix from *Hinotori*; Professor Paradox from *Ben 10*, Ra’s Al Ghul and Vandal Savage from DC Comics; Samantha, from *Her*; Stanton Parish from *Alphas*; The Ice King from *Adventure Time*; The Planeswalkers Nicol Bolas, and Xenagos, God of Revels from *Magic: The Gathering*; The Q, from *Star Trek*; and over a hundred immortals besides. I have however chosen immortals who best capture the many modes of undying which remain and are expanded upon in twenty-first century fiction, from somatic immortality, to revenance, to those who are revived in memory. These immortals include The Doctor and The Master from *Doctor Who*; Orlando from *Orlando: A Biography*; (Dark) Willow

Rosenberg and The First from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; Stanley Ipkiss/Big Head from *The Mask*; The Joker from *Batman*; Ghostface from *Scream*; John Kramer/Jigsaw from *Saw*; Walter White from *Breaking Bad*; Dorian Gray from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; Sylar from *Heroes*; and the Struldbruggs from *Gulliver's Travels*. I ultimately aim herein to denominate, elucidate, and expound complex concepts of undying and *mirimortality* in relation to (mostly) recent literary and visual fiction, beginning with the ever-popular *Doctor Who*, and concluding with Jonathan Swift's classic *Gulliver's Travels*. I will position myself for and against my peers in the academic discourse throughout, to raise an exciting new edifice of thinking for the textual dimensions of (im)mortality in the present day.

Immortality, whether intrinsic or indued within an organism, is the natural or supernatural ability to live beyond the short time to which we humans are heirs. In this thesis I intend to establish the historical context of the popularity of immortal or *mirimortal* characters in (primarily) postmillennial literature, film, and television through a closer examination of their precursors. I will commence with analyses of Professor James Moriarty of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* series; the backwards-living Merlyn from T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*; and the maverick Time Lord named The Master, from BBC's long-running science fiction series *Doctor Who* (1963 -).<sup>1</sup> My analysis of Moriarty, Merl(i/y)n and The Master will precede an elucidation of both mortality and my concept of *mirimortality*<sup>2</sup>: strange mortalities and deviant existences in fiction. My thoughts on *mirimortality* will encompass a scrutiny of deviant mortality in humans, humanoids, homiforms, and transhumans in literary and visual fiction.<sup>3</sup> These characters will range from Orlando in Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel *Orlando: A Biography*, to such men of eternity as The Doctor and the Time Lords/Gallifreyans<sup>4</sup> in *Who*. I will predicate my foci on deviant existences and strange undyings, such as those of immortal "Moriarties" The Master and Lord President Rassilon, The Patris of the Vortex. I will submit that these beings are malefic immortals, who screen themselves behind the masks of the mirific. I will

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1 Hereafter referred to as *Who*. The programme celebrated two milestones in 2013: its fiftieth anniversary ("The Day of the Doctor") and its eight-hundredth episode ("The Time of the Doctor"). Taylor Parkes writes in his essay entitled "The Least Important Things: *Doctor Who* at Fifty" that "*Doctor Who* is not in fact a continuum but a sequence of very different programmes, some of which have very little in common with the others except for the central character's name- or lack of it- and the box where he lives. (New *Who*) is something else entirely: a 21<sup>st</sup> century spectacle which doesn't, and couldn't, recapture the texture and tone of the original show in any of its incarnations, all of which now seem ... tied to a particular time, a particular world ... (1)." *Who*, like its central protagonist, regenerates in light and fire to become different, and better embody the time in which it airs.

2 Mirific mortality. Neologised from the Latin adjective *mirus*, meaning "strange or wonderful," and "mortality."

3 Humanoids are human-like beings, homiforms are beings who have assumed the forms of humans, and transhumans are humans who have evolved past their humanity. I will delve more deeply into these variations of humans during the course of this thesis.

4 The inhabitants of the planet Gallifrey and the constellation of Kasterborus in the *Whoniverse*.

found my argument on references to both literary and pop cultural “immortals” such as Virginia Woolf’s Orlando and Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray, in order to establish definitions of immortality, and my related concept of *mirimortality*. I will state that a character’s presence in fiction can lead to a *mirimortal* existence in reality. This will lead into a citation of critic Michael Saler, who writes on “the fancy that Holmes and Watson were real” (600). I will compare Saler’s fascination with the reality of Holmes and Watson with pop cultural fancies that a version of The Doctor exists, and acts as an agent against chaos in our reality.<sup>5</sup> Holmes is The Doctor’s precursor, just as Professor James Moriarty’s precursive role gives rise to the existence of The Master, the enduring enemy of The Doctor in *Who*. I will focus chiefly on five Master-centric episodes of new *Who*: 3:11 “Utopia,” 3:12 “The Sound of Drums,” 3:13 “The Last of the Time Lords,” 4:17 “The End of Time Part One,” and 4:18 “The End of Time Part Two”; and make more peripheral references to the greater-than-fifty year span of the series as a whole. I will establish therefore that filmic and literary characters here take on a metaphysical form, and are translated into a parallel reality by their contemporary consumers. I will conclude then that The Doctor and The Master thereby become *mirimortal* in both fiction and reality.

The immortal is reality’s homunculus, who must at first live the mortal’s life, and as he or she grows more nihilistic, die the only death possible to an immortal. The existences of the deathless cannot but lapse into evil, for as their lifespans increase, so too must these immortals’ desires to control not only how long they might live, but the shape and the chronology of the universe.

### **Phoenical Bodies, Tardevism, and “The Long View”**

The Doctor and The Master are parallels of Sherlock Holmes and his nemesis, Professor James Moriarty.<sup>6</sup> There is a symbiosis between the *mirimortal*, or strangely-mortal Master, and the mortal Moriarty in their postmillennial depictions. *Who*’s Master is indeed like a *mirimortal* Moriarty, whose machinations must represent a threat that is no less than the complete alteration or extermination of earthly life. To compete with The Doctor, The Master must engineer schemes of *Moriartesque*<sup>7</sup> supervillainy on a planetary, universal, or multiversal scale. These schemes include decimating the population of the planet by literally executing one human in every ten, and later, using a device to transmit his genetic code across the planet, transforming every human into a facsimile of himself. The Master’s designs can even span a period of one hundred trillion years, as he

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5 Holmes and The Doctor are so popular that pilgrimages to Baker Street and TARDIS-spotting are fan favourite activities in tours of Great Britain.

6 An Irish surname, meaning “descendant of the navigator.” Moriarty is depicted as crime’s Napoleon, and the navigator of all crime in London.

7 Moriarty-like; of or befitting Sherlock Holmes’s nemesis, Professor James Moriarty.

demonstrates in the 2007 episode, 3:11 “Utopia.” The Master is a threat to Earth as his longevity affords him the supreme science of the universe. As Lois H. Gresh writes in *The Science of Supervillains*: “immortality (makes) villains ... rise from menace to mastermind. Undying villains are memorable because they take the long view” (116). Gresh’s “long view,” for the time-roving Master, can be a period of a centitrillion years in which to chicanery and connive The Doctor’s death, and the universe’s capitulation. As L.P. Hartley writes in his 1953 novel *The Go-Between* “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” For Time Lords, all of Time and Space is this foreign country, to be experienced, to be conquered, to be ruled, and to be changed. The Master believes he will exist in one form or another for eternity, no matter how strange and how changed this existence may become.

Many of the immortals presented in this thesis have shed their mortal names, and taken on a title, or alter-name. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s Willow Rosenberg becomes “Dark Willow,” *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s primordial enemy is referred to by humans as “The First,” *The Mask*’s Stanley Ipkiiss becomes “Big Head,” an unnamed Gothamite becomes “The Joker,” *Saw*’s John Kramer becomes “The Jigsaw Killer,” *Breaking Bad*’s Walter White becomes “Heisenberg,” and many others. The Master’s chosen name reflects his basic aspirations for supremacy in the universe. Time Lords have indeed ascended higher than the need for names and instead operate under titles, codes, epithets, and aggrandizations such as The Doctor, The Master, The War Chief, The Corsair<sup>8</sup>, and The Rani<sup>9</sup> (Kate O’Mara). These epithets represent platonic forms, and reflect these Gallifreyans’ existential missions. The Eleventh Doctor (Matt Smith) explains in 7:13 “The Name of the Doctor” that “the name you choose, it’s like a promise you make.” To break that promise is to lose one’s name, and consequently one’s identity.<sup>10</sup> The Doctor’s and The Master’s “promises” are to mend and to dominate respectively. The Doctor therefore administers to the universe, The Master seeks its conquest, The Corsair charts a course through the stars, and the Tempus Empress named The Rani aspires to queendom. Time Lords are best elucidated as *phoenical*<sup>11</sup>, or phoenix-like men and women who burn beyond any necessity for gewgaw nomenclature. They are a homiform and ancient race who, like the

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8 Referred to by The Doctor in 6:04 “The Doctor’s Wife.”

9 “Rani” is the Sanskrit and the Hebrew word for “queen.”

10 Internet critic Paul Kelly, of Doux Reviews, explains in his review of the episode that ““doctor” is a word associated with healing and care, and (when a) Doctor (breaks) that promise, (the other Doctors) (refuse) to allow ... the name (1).” Philip Bates of Kasterborous writes in a similar vein to Kelly, stating in “Review: *The Name of the Doctor*” that “The Doctor’s real name isn’t what’s important here: instead it’s what is done in the name of the Doctor (1).” When an incarnation breaks the spirit or the desire of The Doctor’s to heal the universe, The Doctor effectively erases this version from his own history through the act of disrememberance. The one is ostracised by the many.

11 Phoenix-like; of, befitting, or resembling a phoenix.

legendary firebird, regenerate in light and fire.<sup>12</sup> The Doctor divulges in 3:12 “The Sound of Drums” that the Time Lords gain their ability to regenerate from the “Untempered Schism” near their homeworld of Gallifrey. This “Schism” is a scar upon the universe through which flows the essential nature of Time. It is described as a “gap in the fabric of reality” through which the whole of the Time Vortex may be perceived. A Time Lord’s congenital power of regeneration is therefore symptomatic of that subject’s proximity to the font of Time itself. The Master, like all Time Lords then, is heir to the power of regeneration, an ability that restores a dying body before death. This is the Time Lord’s strange existence, or as I refer to it, *mirimortality*. Each Time Lord is configured with a set of thirteen incarnations, the result of a congenital inheritance which grants twelve regenerations to each Gallifreyan.<sup>13</sup> A Time Lord regenerating is indeed depicted in a way that resembles the death and the renewal of the mythic phoenix. The regenerator is caped with a seraphic glister which renews the form, and reshapes the visage. The Time Lord’s body begins to radiate with temporal energy that eventually effulges in a burst.<sup>14</sup> The hue of this regenerative energy depends on the individual subject. The Doctor’s hue is gold, like the very energy of the Time Vortex that sustains the Gallifreyans’ nigh-eternal lives. The Master’s hue is representative of his chaotic nature, incorporating phoenix-plume crimsons, oranges, purples, and greens. The Time Lord then expels this energy and becomes disconnected from the sustaining “Schism” that facilitated his regeneration. The subject becomes a variant of his former self, retaining his memories yet abandoning the idiosyncrasies of his previous incarnation. This version of the organism adopts idiosyncrasies of his own, like a child growing into his or her personality. Death to these Time Lords is no more than evolution and self-reinvention, a re-styling of the body and the mind within.<sup>15</sup>

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12 Rebecca Brayton, of WatchMojo, refers to The Doctor in “Top 10 TV Replacement Characters” as “the undisputed champion of cast shifts. *Doctor Who* built its fanbase based on the inevitable replacement of its main character” (1).

13 A cycle which can only be extended as the Time Lords decree. After expending all thirteen of his lives, The Doctor is granted a new set of twelve regenerations at the climax of the latest episode to air at the time of writing: 2013’s “The Time of the Doctor.”

14 It is revealed in 2013’s “The Time of the Doctor” that a Time Lord’s regenerations become more explosive the more times a Gallifreyan has died and been reborn. For example, The Tenth Doctor’s conflagrant regeneration into The Eleventh Doctor sets the TARDIS ablaze in 4:18 “The End of Time Part Two.” However, after being endowed with a new set of regenerations in the 2013 Christmas special “The Time of the Doctor,” The Eleventh Doctor’s transformation into The Twelfth takes place in an instant, and with few pyrotechnics.

15 Mike Hernandez describes the re-styling nature of regeneration in his article ““You can’t just change what I look like without consulting me!”: The shifting racial identity of the Doctor.” Hernandez states that “The Doctor now accepts his heritage in a mature way, not going back to some past Time Lord identity, but coming to terms with his past and creating a new identity (54).” Regeneration therefore builds upon the earth of the past, to reach towards the sky of the future.

Captain Jack Harkness (John Barrowman) describes the process of The Master's recent regeneration at the beginning of the 2007 episode 3:12 "The Sound of Drums."<sup>16</sup> "If The Master's a Time Lord," he says, "then he must have regenerated ... changed his face, body, voice, everything. New man." Time Lords enter into a state of pre-regeneration when their existences are ending due to the ravages of a mortal wound, or a sickness, or an affliction. As The Tenth Doctor (David Tennant) explains to Rose Tyler (Billie Piper) in the 2005 special "Born Again": "I was dying ... I changed my body, every ... cell." The Time Lord's body is that of the humano-phoenix.<sup>17</sup> The Master (Anthony Ainley<sup>18</sup>) indeed ascribes such *phoenical* imagery to himself in 1984's "Planet of Fire." He proclaims to The Doctor "I shall come from this fire ... stronger, to hound you to the borders of the universe!"<sup>19</sup> However, as the so-called "numismaton flames" consume him, The Master threatens that he will "plague (his foe) to the end of Time for this!"<sup>20</sup> In the continuity of the canon, every time The Master is seen to perish, he later returns more minatory than ever, or with new abilities. As in myth, death to the phoenix sees an augmentation in its fire. The Time Lord known as The Master portrays the phoenix with such perfection, that his desires to live forever see him rise from the ashes time and again. The Time Lords' strange mortalities are such that their forms facilitate their desires to be.

When the *mirimortal* is seen to die, he later is revived more puissant than ever. Such *mirimortality* invites comparisons of the Time Lords to the polymythos of various gods. The Time War is a retelling of Ragnarök, with the Time Lords recast as its Nordic gods. The fall of the Time Lords in their interplanetary war with the Daleks of Skaro is comparable to Richard Wagner's opera entitled *Götterdämmerung*<sup>21</sup>, a work inspired by the Norse mythological precedent of Ragnarök.<sup>22</sup> The Time Lords are the gods of the piece. The Daleks are the teratoids of the End Time, who resemble the Jötunn, the marauding giants<sup>23</sup> of Muspel(heim)<sup>24</sup> in the myth of Ragnarök. Roger A. Hall Jr. writes in "The Psychological Motivation of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*" that "among ... critics there is

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16 Hereafter referred to as "Drums."

17 Mike Hernandez too describes The Doctor using the imagery of the phoenix in "'You can't just change what I look like without consulting me!': The shifting racial identity of the Doctor." He writes of The Doctor: "Just when you think you know him, his body explodes into flames and a stranger takes his place (57)."

18 Ainley was the third onscreen version of The Master in the *Who* canon.

19 A prophecy which comes true in 3:11 "Utopia."

20 "The End of Time" is interestingly the name of the two-parter which features The Master's last appearance in New *Who* at the time of writing.

21 The German for *The Twilight of the Gods*.

22 The Norse meaning "fate of the gods," and translated in error from the Old Norse *ragnarokker*, "the twilight of the gods."

23 Ruled by the giant Surt, the avowed foe of the Æsir, the Norse pantheon.

24 The fire-realm in Norse mythology.

a ... tendency to regard (Wagner's *Ring* tetralogy<sup>25</sup>) as ... a confused conglomeration of ... Nordic mythological figures deceiving, fighting and killing each other in a murk of bombastic narration" (245). The Gallifreyans of the *Who* mythos are agnatic to the gods and heroes of Wagner's works. They too exist in a caligo of war, deceit, and bombast. I therefore refer to the *phoenical* Gallifreyans as *mirimortals*— gods and masters over very Time. The somatic constitutions of these *mirmimortals* are quite literally touched by Time. Immortality, to these beings that I call *mirimortals*, is a taking of a tangible Time into themselves, and using this temporal energy to repair damaged cells. *Mirimortality* in *Who* is therefore the union of time, humanity, and a fervent desire to be. The somatic morphology of the Gallifreyans is a coalition between Time and flesh. *Mirimortals* in *Who* are therefore the literal equivalents of St. Augustine's notion of the *homo temporalis*<sup>26</sup> who clings to his remembrances. Stephan Kampowski writes in *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning* that memory is that which "guards the temporal character of human existence (and) ... constitutes man's faculty for time" (190). However, the existence of a flexuous Time in relation to these *mirimortals* expands these subjects' influence to close-to-godly proportions. The experience of Time is radically different to the immortal, and the agnate of God. Whereas most immortals have a *per aspera ad astra*<sup>27</sup> experience, Time Lords go through the stars to hardships. The Master and The Doctor, as the last of their race, revise both their bodies and their identities frequently, and write their own evolutions. Time Lords are the authors of their *mirimortalities*. Mike Hernandez affirms this bodily and personal revision in "'You can't just change what I look like without consulting me!": The shifting racial identity of the Doctor" that The Doctor's "remembrances range from idealistic to regretful to even-handed ... (The Doctor) goes from renegade to exile to outcast to "last of the Time Lords" to "lonely god" to "Time Lord Victorious (55)." Remembrance shapes the personal future of the last two Time Lords. The last sons of Gallifrey pen their own ascensions, and make themselves through remembering, mythmaking, and self-identifying.

The Master is indeed a modern agnate of Loki<sup>28</sup>, the fire-trickster of the Æsir, or Norse pantheon. Frank Stanton Cawley refers to the Wagnerian Loki in "The Figure of Loki in Germanic Mythology" as "sly and treacherous, standing midway between the doomed gods and the hostile powers which ultimately compass their destruction" (311). Loki's position in the pantheon of Norse mythology is identical to The Master's position within the hierarchy of Gallifrey. He is the Gallifreyans' last bastion between themselves (the doomed gods of Wagner) and the Daleks (the

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25 A corpus of four works.

26 The Latin meaning "temporal man."

27 The Latin meaning "through hardships to the stars."

28 Also known as "Loptr."

giants/demons/hostile powers). The Master is the middle of the maelstrom. Cawley continues<sup>29</sup> that Loki's nature is "expressed in his name, which is derived from *luka* "to end" ... he is the limit and end of the gods' power" (311). The Master is both the Time Lords' greatest weapon and their most odious betrayer. As Lord President Borusa (Philip Latham) says to The Master in 1983's "The Five Doctors": "you are one of the most evil and corrupt beings this ... race has ever produced. Your crimes are without number, your villainy without end." It is revealed over two decades later that Borusa meant this factually. The Master is a "creation" of Gallifrey, and the living representation of the limit of the planet's might. The alphas of Gallifrey fear and condemn The Master, yet know that his matchless ingenuity will be a source of leverage against the Daleks and their mad creator Davros.<sup>30</sup> The Master is both the best and the most evil of the Time Lords. Both Loki and The Master occupy a unique position between two empires. The Master's roles as a *phoenical* god, mesmer, father, and decimator in his first appearance in the revived series are elucidated by the different lives led by this beguiling Gallifreyan.

Through a chaotically asymptotic Time, The Master's redemption precedes his fall. When The Doctor, Martha Jones (Freema Agyeman) and Captain Jack Harkness arrive in the year One Hundred Trillion in 3:11 "Utopia," they meet an aged professor named Yana (Derek Jacobi).<sup>31</sup> The professor's works are said to exalt the last of a humanity persecuted by monsters to a place called "Utopia." Yana is shown to be a brilliant scientist who wearily laments his age and the lack of admiration the last of humanity affords. Yana is presented as an individual of indefinite history who states "I was found ... an orphan in the storm. I was a naked child found on ... the Silver Devastation ... with this (fob-watch)." However, Yana is in fact a perishing phoenix whose renaissance will come from opening a pocket-watch which contains the mind of The Master. The Doctor refers to his earlier adventures entitled "Human Nature" (3:08) and "The Family of Blood" (3:09)<sup>32</sup> in describing The Master's fob-watch, stating "this device, it rewrites biology. Changes a Time Lord into a human." While The Doctor speaks of the watch with awe, Yana deems it with

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29 Citing Danish scholar N.M. Petersen.

30 Who, to continue my mythological parallels, can be thought of as the giant Surt, attempting to turn Asgard (here Gallifrey) into a flaming wasteland.

31 Internet critic Andrew Smith appraises Jacobi's performance in "Nostalgia Filter Review: *Doctor Who* 3:11 "Utopia"" as "wonderfully unassuming ... and equally bitter and hammy once his identity is revealed (1)." Smith goes on to say in another review, "*Doctor Who* 4:17-18: "The End of Time"" that "The Master has always had a problem with being taken seriously as a villain and this cross from the Moriarty-like figure to something of a more Joker-like archetype (in these episodes) doesn't do the stories any favours" (1). As I will later argue, Moriarties are fast becoming gregarious (J/i)okers in twenty-first century fiction.

32 This two-parter aired earlier in the season, and foreshadowed both The Master's appearance and the "Vote Saxon" motif.

disdain. He says of the Master-ensouled artefact that “it’s only an old relic. Like me.” The Master’s perdition is literal: not damnation, but a state of being lost. His cowardice (and his “long view”) led to his assuming human form and setting himself adrift through Time. He fled to its very cusp, “at the edge of knowledge itself.” Yana refers to himself as “always late (and) lost,” despite his only possession of value being a strange horologue that he considers blankly to be “stuck,” “old,” and “not meant to be.” The Master’s greatest trickery is indeed worked upon himself, and the Yana persona that is upraised over seventy odd years. The child who would be named Yana becomes but a spark flying from the soul of *phoenical* light that burns within his possession. The professor persona is therefore but a scintilla rising from an igneous phoenix. He is one spark among many, all of which are destined to dim. The soul of The Master comprises the essence of the fob-watch; however the Master’s foibles are discernible within Yana. To exemplify, the professor’s self-disparagement parallels The Master’s expressions of misanthropy. When Yana is human, he derides himself, and when Yana regenerates into a Time Lord, he loses his hatred onto humans. Yana is literally and figuratively a humanification of The Master. These beings encapsulate the mortal/immortal dichotomy, with each living and dying the other’s experience. Heraclitus of Ephesus writes in *Fragment 62* “Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the other’s death and dying the other’s life” (9). This is precisely the case with the human Yana and the *phoenical* Master. Yana is dying as an immortal, and the Master is living as a mortal.

Yana exists as a distortive mirror of The Master’s “majesty.” This “majesty” that the *mirimortal* essence of the watch offers the professor is, upon Yana’s acceptance, underwhelming. The Master’s soul incites Yana to kill, and in doing so, be killed. Yana is an inverse immortal, a sacrificial vessel for a satanic force. Here The Master is comparable not only to the Wagnerian Loki, but to Satan<sup>33</sup> himself. The Trickster and The Tempter become interchangeable in this instance, for as Cawley writes in “The Figure of Loki in Germanic Mythology,” Loki’s name can be equated to “the tempter, the deceiver” (311). The rebellious *mirimortal* resembles the Joycean Archtempter<sup>34</sup> as he wheedles Yana to facilitate his egress from the fob-watch. Indeed, even the signals that intimidate the populace after The Master’s rise to power in 2007 are comparable to the whisperings of Abaddon. The Master further elects to give the originator of these signals the luciferous name of “the Archangel Network,” a satellite that wings its way through the Time Lord heaven of space. The imagery of The Master evokes such immortal creatures as angels and phoenixes. He is therefore an agnate of Loki and Satan, who, like Lucifer, spends his strange mortality in the pursuit of turpitude,

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33 The figure of Satan is many times named in mythology. I will refer to these numerous appellations through this thesis, citing the devil by his many names: Lucifer (Latin), Abaddon/Satan (Hebrew), and the Tempter/Archtempter (English).

34 As to which Satan was referred in James Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

over beatitude. The Master expends his eternity in the subjugation of lesser beings, to prove his supposed superiority to his rival The Doctor.<sup>35</sup> The Master's use of eternity thus bears examination. Ted M. Preston writes in "Who Wants To Live Forever? Immortality, Authenticity and Living Forever in the Present" that "immortality is less desirable than mortality not because an eternal life would be insufferably boring, but because of the loss of temporally-contingent value immortality would bring about" (113).<sup>36</sup> Preston means that an organism whose time knows no periphery would live outside of this notion of temporal contingency. The immortal forgets the eudemonic sentience that is the province of the ephemeral organism. Preston argues above that with time (or Time) comes dysdemony, and that the aeons bring ennui. The assumption that with aeonian life comes aeonian ennui is an assumption made by the ephemeral scholar. It is not the province of the mortal to wish they were dead, and neither is it the province of the immortal to wish for mortality. The Master perhaps immured his true self at the end of Time not wholly out of timidity, but also as a challenge to himself. If an aeonian life truly brings ennui, then the *mirimortal* Master fought this ennui through setting himself a trap from which to break free over the course of a century. He outmanoeuvres the Gallifreyans though hiding that detectable part of himself, his immortality, in a reliquary on his person, then setting himself adrift through Time. Whilst the civilisations of Skaro and Gallifrey were sundered by a conflict that The Doctor would eventually end, The Master was living a mortal life that would eventually result in the restoration of his undying state. This would leave him free to conquer the universe after the demise of its superpowers. The 'Time Lords' strange vitalities therefore afford them an eternity with which to turn their legacies. There is no need for the temporally-contingent value to which Preston refers if one is heir to eternity. Time is then one's to spend in thaumaturgic works. Indeed, temporally-contingent value may be tempered in the fires of forever.

Time, to the Gallifreyans, is also both *rectilinear*<sup>37</sup> and *flexilinear*<sup>38</sup> due to the existence of the time-travelling devices known as TARDISEs. The Gallifreyans have the ability to act as adventuring arbiters throughout Time, altering and intervening in events where they deign, or deem necessary.

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35 Who is an agnate of God, or any of God's incorruptible archangels.

36 A similar view is presented in Bernard Williams's much-debated essay entitled "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality." To summarise this work, Williams postulates therein that life is only worth living when one pursues one's "categorical" desires. However, such desires are finite, and when an immortal subject satiates all of these desires that drive him or her, then this subject's endless life becomes ennui itself, and no longer worth living past the point of the completion of this subject's life's works. As Williams writes, "Nothing less will do for eternity than something that makes boredom *unthinkable* (87). For The Master, enthraling the stars is this eternal task that makes boredom unthinkable- not simply because it requires centuries of planning, but because The Doctor thwarts The Master at every turn.

37 Neologised from the Latin *rectus* (right, correct) plus "linear." Following a straight line.

38 Neologised from the Latin *flexus* (curved) plus "linear." Following a curved line.

The disordered temporal nature of The Master's and The Doctor's deeds evoke Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz's<sup>39</sup> concepts of Time. Take Paz's most transcendent poetic work, *Piedra De Sol/Sunstone* (1957). Therein he writes of

time that comes back in a swell of sea,  
time that recedes without turning its head,  
the past is not past, it is still passing by,  
flowing silently into the next vanishing moment.<sup>40</sup> (191-194)

Here Paz speaks of temporal parallels and the recurrence of the past in the present. In Paz's poem, linear and non-linear Time interlaces in the chaos of presence. Time is like an infinite series of rooms, some open, and some locked. The TARDIS flies from room to room to facilitate The Doctor's adventures, and deliver its pilot to where he needs to be. To apply Paz's stanza to Time Lords, if one is able to curve Time's once-straight line, whilst possessing the mirific vitality of a phoenix, then one is indeed a master in the universe. The past and the future are the adventurer's to unlock. The Time Lord may control the future and the past: not one moment of Time is "threatened by night's lugubrious yawn."<sup>41</sup> All of Time is present, and yet disjunct from the Time Lord's personal presence. Such immortals as The Doctor and The Master revive moments and people through their adventures, as I will later argue. To return again to this curving of timelines, when Captain Jack refers to the encounter with the Slitheen<sup>42</sup> that he shared with The Ninth Doctor (Christopher Eccleston)<sup>43</sup>, The Tenth muses that although only two linear years have passed since this encounter, "that was a long time ago. Lifetimes. I was a different man." The Doctor can live for centuries in what I refer to as a *tardevous* body. *Tardivism*<sup>44</sup> is the process of decelerated ageing to the point that the subject can look the same for decades, if not centuries. These beings' bodies are literally slow of

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39 1914-1998. Paz was the winner of the 1990 Nobel Prize for Literature.

40 "tiempo que vuelve en una marejada  
y se retira sin volver el rostro,  
lo que pasó no fue pero está siendo  
y silenciosamente desemboca  
en otro instante que se desvanece:"

41 Line 177 of *Sunstone*.

42 A cabal of obese green aliens who pose as humans.

43 In Season 1's "Boom Town" (1.11).

44 Neologised from the Latin adjective *tardus* (slow), plus *-evous* (of the aeons).

the aeons. When The Eleventh Doctor is prophesied to die in a manner that prohibits regeneration in the latter half of 2011's Season Six, he travels alone for a period of approximately two hundred years. When The Doctor returns from this "farewell tour" he appears to have not aged a year since his departure. Likewise, The Eleventh Doctor spends more than three hundred years defending a town called Christmas on the planet Trenzalore in the 2013 Christmas special "The Time of the Doctor."<sup>45</sup> When The Eleventh's companion Clara Oswald (Jenna-Louise Coleman) returns to Trenzalore, The Doctor seems only to have aged a handful of decades.<sup>46</sup> The bodies of Time Lords are *tardevous*, therefore, to the extent that they may enter and egress from a time and appear to those they meet as ageless. The Doctor's and The Master's *tardevous* bodies are integral to their simulation of deity, and their mastery over both *rectilinear* and *flexilinear* Time.

In the year 2007, the newly-regenerated Master (now portrayed by John Simm) is divested of his ability to travel through (T/t)ime. The Tenth Doctor time-locks his TARDIS in response to The Master's intention to commandeer it, confining The Master to travel only between the years 2006 and One Hundred Trillion. The Doctor disempowers The Master through depriving his enemy of an unrestricted TARDIS. Though The Master retains his ability of cellular metamorphosis<sup>47</sup>, his "majesty" is much dimmed by his being stranded in 2006-era Britain. Each incarnation of this Time Lord demonstrates his entrapment as an irredeemable evil. The audience first sees the aged Yana trapped at the end of Time, then The Master's essence locked within a fob-watch, then finally the rejuvenated Prime Minister Harry Saxon<sup>48</sup> bound in a time in which human technology has not yet advanced to anything close to that of the Gallifreyans. All three forms of The Master experience entrapment in some way. His versions are all equally manacled and disempowered. The parallels

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45 Andrew Smith criticises the episode's use of paradoxes and retroactive continuity in his review entitled "*Doctor Who* 7.a: "The Time of The Doctor." He writes "Moffat (has) ... written a ... massive paradox which makes his entire era totally moot. He has ... retconned his own retcons. The Doctor doesn't die at Trenzalore, so the TARDIS is never at Trenzalore to be his grave. Clara never jumps into the past, The Doctor never meets Clara in the first place, Clara isn't at Trenzalore to help him and thus The Doctor dies. And then he doesn't. And then he does. It's an eternal paradox (1)." Fans and reviewers take issue with any event in *Who* which reverses or erases The Doctor's sacrosanct history of that which has gone before.

46 Brian Heinz states in his review of "Time of the Doctor" that "Time Lord ageing (is) ... perhaps one of the most ill-defined of all the biological characteristics of the Gallifreyans" (1). It is likely that this aspect of Time Lord *tardevism* will be addressed or explained in future episodes of *Who*.

47 The alteration of a Time Lord's cells through regeneration.

48 The Master's chosen human name. "Mister Saxon" is an anagram of "Master No. Six." "Harold Saxon" can also be construed to mean "leader of the army of the Britains," an appropriate name for one who usurps the position of Prime Minister of Great Britain. ("Harold" comes from the Old English name "Hereweald," meaning "leader of the army," and "Saxon" comes from "The Saxons," a confederacy of Germanic tribes who conquered areas of Great Britain at the time of the early Middle Ages).

between the “majesty” of The Master manacled within a watch, and a fallen Lucifer damned to Hell are patent. Both Lucifer and The Master were once the most extraordinary of their kind who were used as the facilitators of God/Rassilon’s higher design. Lucifer’s role is to test humanity, that our probity and our worthiness of Heaven might be revealed. The Master’s role is to be the weapon that exalts the Time Lords to their own heaven: a plane of pure consciousness.<sup>49</sup> Their goal is to turn *tardevisim* into a true and inviolable eternity. The Master, Loki, and Lucifer are three immortals whose predecessors used them to enact events of the Cataclysm. However, it is in the vicissitudes of circumstance that the immortal and the *mirimortal* can make a fool of fate.

### **Moriartesque Supervillainies: The Master as a Moriarty**

*“I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty of mathematical celebrity” – Sherlock Holmes’s description of Moriarty, The Final Problem, (239).*

The Master is not only an agnate of Lucifer and the god-trickster Loki, but also a modern Moriarty. Professor James Moriarty is the arch-nemesis of Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story *The Final Problem*<sup>50</sup> in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.<sup>51</sup> Holmes soliloquises in the latter that Moriarty “is a man of good birth and education, endowed with a phenomenal mathematical faculty” (239). Moriarty was to have a long career ahead of him as a luminary in academia, writing *The Dynamics of an Asteroid*, a treatise which is described by Holmes in *The Valley of Fear*<sup>52</sup> as containing mathematics so rarefied that “there was no man in the scientific press capable of criticising it” (10). However, the mathematician is said in *Problem* to be diabolically destined, his “extraordinary mental powers” (239) augmenting the “criminal strain ... in his blood” (239). Moriarty’s immutable destiny is to become “the Napoleon of crime” (239) who orchestrates “half that is evil and nearly all that is undetected” (239) in London. He is a spider at the centre of a web of “a thousand radiations” (239). Holmes here grants the professor an immortality in eloquence, claiming that Moriarty’s aptitude for crime matches the martial dexterity of Napoleon. Doyle’s deducer views his nemesis as the rarefactor of crime as much as the rarefactor of numbers. The Doctor similarly lauds the attainments of The Master, calling both Professor Yana (3:11 “Utopia”) and later The Master (4:17/4:18 “The End of Time”) “brilliant” for possessing the genius required to

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49 As is revealed in 4:18 “The End of Time Part Two.”

50 Hereafter referred to as *Problem*.

51 1893.

52 1915. Hereafter referred to as *Valley*.

both elevate the last human remnants to Utopia, and convert the human multitudes into duplicates of himself.<sup>53</sup> The binaries between crime and domination and numeracy and technical knowledge, and The Master's and Moriarty's rarefaction thereof render them similar and at times interdependent characters. The mathematician inspired The Master, and the various incarnations of The Master inspired contemporary Moriarties, such as those depicted in episodes three to six of Steven Moffat's 2010 series *Sherlock* and the Guy Ritchie-directed *Sherlock Holmes* films of 2009 and 2011.<sup>54</sup> Moriarty and The Master both share shackling destinies. The latter himself reflects in 1984's "Planet of Fire": "do not be confused by my shifting appearance ... I am immutably ... The Master." Moriarty and The Master are both immortals through their writings. Moriarty becomes "immortal" through the authority of his treatise on the dynamics of an asteroid; and The Master becomes immortal more literally through "the secret books of Saxon," esoteric tomes that were used in haling The Master's soul from death and reviving it in the body of Harold Saxon, The Master's human persona in 2009's 4.17/4.18 "The End of Time, Parts One and Two." The Professor and The Master are both figures who are eternal in their own eloquences, and through the eloquences of their foes. They are, as Holmes says of Moriarty in *Valley*, "the organizer of every devilry" who might make or mar "the destiny of nations" (10).

The Master represents what Doyle's proto-supervillain may have been if he possessed the longevity and the technical knowledge required to wage "war with the rest of the universe." The Master indeed has such a conversance with machines that he converts Earth into a functioning war-station to answer "the drumming call to war" at the climax of 3:12 "Drums." The Master reshapes the Earth into a Neo-Gallifrey, a world that, while technically resplendent to behold, is plundered for progression. The Master's Gallifrey bears small resemblance to the radiant planet that The Doctor conjures in his recollections of his homeworld in 3:12 "Drums." The Earth's satellites are also repurposed to the end of broadcasting signals that keep humanity in a state of paralysing fear. Martha explains in 3:13 "Last of the Time Lords"<sup>55</sup> that The Master is "broadcasting a signal that keeps people scared." The Master fabricates his own deity through the use of waves and signals. The parallel between God and The Master is indeed evident when a character exclaims awefully in "Last" that The Master "never comes to earth ... (or) walks upon the ground!" The *Moriartesque* and *mirimortal* Master is therefore theic through technology, deifying himself literally through his own devices. Simm's portrayal of The Master is also comparable with the character of Jim Moriarty (Andrew Scott) in Steven Moffat's 2010 crime series *Sherlock*. The performances of Scott and Simm are similar to the point of being intertextual, with both feeding from the other. The textual Moriarty

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53 A centitrillion years earlier in *rectilinear* time.

54 In which Moriarty is portrayed by Jared Harris. A third Ritchie-directed *Holmes* film is in the works.

55 Hereafter referred to as "Last."

inspired the televisionary Master, which then inspired the televisionary Moriarty. Both Simm's Master and Scott's Moriarty are besuited gentlemen who, when angered, speak and jape with an effusion of emotion. Both represent the modernisation of the archetypal supervillain, who uses humour to endear himself or herself to both the surrounding characters and more metareferentially, the viewing audience.<sup>56</sup> These characters cast themselves as antagonists in the narratives of their existences. The Moffat-Moriarty states to Sherlock in 2:03 "The Reichenbach Fall" that "every fairytale needs a good old-fashioned villain. You need me, or you're nothing." The new Masters and Moriarties demonstrate that modern malefactors are gregarious; and no more the shadowy loners of the twentieth century. Dark spiders at the centre of webs are fast becoming gewgaw butterflies that operate in the daylight. In the last two episodes of *Who*'s Season Three The Master is indeed shown to have developed a sense of caustic humour. He mocks his snatched position of power as Prime Minister of Great Britain, and all those who share similar roles. He sees human authority as a joke, as though railing against the hierarchical society of Gallifrey itself. In 3:12 "Drums," as the President of the United States (Colin Stinton) gazes austere-ly onward, The Master rambles "you know what it's like ... new job, all that paperwork. I think it's down the back of the settee. I did have a ... look, I found a pen, a sweet, a bus ticket, and er ... have you met the wife?" The Master's newfound capacity to jest disproves The Third Doctor's (Jon Pertwee) theory in 1971's "Terror of the Autons" that The Master is an "unimaginative plodder." The Master's capacity for childlike conception elucidates the rejuvenating effect of both power and the prospect of undying.<sup>57</sup> He becomes physically younger and mentally more child-like with each regeneration. In fact, he is unperturbed by any prospect of The Doctor's intervention, such that that he watches an episode of British children's television show *The Teletubbies*<sup>58</sup> just a few hours before beginning a war with the rest of existence. His line "television in their stomachs. Now that's evolution!" foreshadows the arrival of the Toclafane, a host of Master-modified humans from the end of Time. His ability to watch *The Teletubbies* with the wonderment with which a child would view such a programme, and his capacity to imagine if such fabulous creatures were real, are vital to his schematic for humanity's final form. He becomes a paternal figure presiding over two paradoxical humanities: the humans of the 2000's whom he bewitched into

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56 Paul Kelly writes of Andrew Scott's performance in his review of 2:03 "The Reichenbach Fall": "(Scott)'s versatility was astounding. He switched from madman, to simpleton, to brooding genius, with perfect fluidity (1)."

57 Andrew Smith states in his 2013 essay on the last two episodes of Season 3 entitled "*Doctor Who* 3:12-13 "The Sound of Drums" and "Last of the Time Lords"" that "John Simm's portrayal of The Master is one filled with a ... manic energy, less of a scheming archvillain and more of a mischievous schoolboy ... His is a character of paranoia and fear, obsessed with his own ego and making small petty victories over his enemies ... Simm does manage to pull off the Moriarty spiel just as easily as any of his other incarnations (1)."

58 A 365-episode programme that ran from 31 March 1997- 5 January 2001.

electing him Prime Minister, and the humans existing at the end of Time. The Toclafane, too, have regressed to a juvenile state, and require a father figure to guide them. It is almost as though The Master alters humanity into the Teletubbies he enjoys viewing on television, and bequeaths this new race with the similar-sounding name “Toclafane.” The Master’s army is composed of children who admonish the “naughty Noo-Noos” of their ancestral genus. The Master sees himself as the father figure of this future humanity, jubilantly crying “down you go, kids!” as the Toclafane decimate<sup>59</sup> Earth’s populace. He is like Lucifer lording the fallen in his command of the Toclafane. Indeed, he uses biblical parody in his expression of triumph, declaring “and I looked down on my ... dominion as Master of all, and I thought it ... good.” He here parodies Genesis 1:31, which states “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good” (Genesis 1.31). The Master profanes the book of Christianity and the Jewish tradition for his self-deification. He establishes himself as both a bibliophile and a logophile in this scene; and a creature of brute whim who orders the Toclafane to kill one human in every ten simply because he likes the euphony of the word “decimate.” This scene indeed contains the “murk of bombastic narration” referred to by Hall in his dissertation on the figures of Ragnarök. The Master’s diction is as Wagnerian and as *Moriartesque* as his deeds.

### **The Master as a *Cambion*, as a Merl(i/y)n, and as a Misanthrope**

*“You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake ... listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by ... lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn”*

-Merlyn, *The Once and Future King* (185-186).

*“This is an anachronism,”* he said severely. *“That is what it is, a beastly anachronism”*

-Merlyn, conjuring an anachronistic sailor hat from earlier in his timeline, *The Once and Future King* (87).

Now that I have established The Master as a modern Moriarty, I will establish a connection between The Master and the “ancient nigromant” (72)<sup>60</sup> of Arthurian legend. The Master is similar to Merlyn, magician and mentor of King Arthur in *The Once and Future King*<sup>61</sup>, inasmuch as the fact that both Merlyn and The Master live their lives inversely, from death until birth. To speak

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<sup>59</sup> That is, exterminate one in ten.

<sup>60</sup> An outmoded synonym for “necromancer” that is used in White’s prose.

<sup>61</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Future*.

to the somatic morphology of the famous wizard, Merlyn himself is something of a Time Lord. He is a *flexilinear* being both in and out of Time. He is described as having “testimonials ... signed by Aristotle (and) a parchment signed by Hecate” (33). White’s descriptions of Merlyn are anachronistic, with the necromancer being described as putting “his fingers together like Sherlock Holmes” (158). Merlyn’s presence is consistently illustrated as incongruous. He is as ludicrously pre-existent and yet to belong as a *Lost in Space*-style robot revolving its arms at a prim Victorian tea party. All about him is disharmonious with the time period, but only the Wart seems to perceive any abnormalcy. Merlyn’s body is yet stranger than these testimonials that speak to his paranormality. The magician is physically a mythological *cambion*<sup>62</sup>, the result of the issue of a human man gestating within the womb of a succubus. *Cambions* begin life unbreathing and with their hearts impalpant. Those who undergo a *cambionic* life cycle commence life from death, and progress towards birth.<sup>63</sup> Merlyn and The Master should in these terms be considered *cambions*, or aberrations of their genomes.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the latter’s staring into eternity activated the aberrations within the schematic of his Time Lord genome. When he turned eight years old he was subjected to a rite of passage in which he was taken to gaze into the Untempered Schism, the burning heart of Time. The Master’s strange perpetuity was actuated within his somatic schematic by this peering into Time. This renders the youth corporeally a humanoid, and mentally a fiend. The Master’s *mirimortality* was thrust upon him by his elders. Similarly, the Futurekind who terrorise Yana and the final fragments of humanity in the year One Hundred Trillion in 3:11 “Utopia” are depicted as *cambionic*, aberrative figures with honed fangs and succubine etchings upon their flesh. The Futurekind are emblematic of the monstrosity of evolution’s impulse. The more monstrous, the more evolved, just as in the case of The Master. *Mirimortality* and *cambionism*<sup>65</sup> thereby become connected, rendering The Master something of a lame deity like Hephaestus of ancient Greek myth. The Master is both a crippled god, and an aberration of his Gallifreyan lineage.

*Cambionism*<sup>66</sup> is illuminated in the fifteenth-century treatise entitled *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>67</sup> *Malleus* was designed to be a magistrate’s disquisition for the trying of witches. That is to say, it is named after the judge’s gavel that convicts a so-called “witch.” *Malleus* is a codification of the

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62 A mythological term meaning “one of aberrant genome or constitution.”

63 Such *cambionism* is explored in literature and such films as 2008’s *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, based on the 1922 short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

64 Merlyn is indeed representative of many modes of being within the materials of the myth; and in White’s narrative. Charles Long, in his interpretation of Merlynian myth entitled “Was The Green Knight Really Merlin?” “Merlin has ... been identified as a former Celtic deity, a shape-shifting demon, as devil, a fiend, an anti-Christ, a chthonic being, (and) a natural force” (1). I add to this, in my saying that Merlyn is also a *cambion*.

65 My term for the state of being a cambion. I will refer hereafter to this state as *cambionism*.

66 Though not referred to as such.

67 Alternatively known as *The Witch’s Hammer*/*Der Hexenhammer*. Hereafter referred to as *Malleus*.

ludicrous laws that surrounded women in the fifteenth century. It reads as a phantasy of women as weak and corruptible, and liable to become the consorts of demons. *Malleus* therefore appears more as a mythopoesis and less as a legal document to a postmillennial reader. Therein, devils are said (in a citation of Walafrid Strabo) to “go around ... collecting every sort of seed, and can ... broadcast ... species” (63-64). *Malleus* explains away both diabolism and defects in humanity by ascribing the agency of the devil and his demons to the imperfect individual. The text monstrifies the inexplicable, and presumes that there can be no other explanation than the machinations of a lurking Lucifer. The same processes are at work in the Time Lords’ treatment of The Master. For such evil to exist within one of their own, external forces must have corrupted him. The inapprehensible in Time Lord society is explicable only by the external. The Time Lords fail to realise that they themselves have corrupted The Master through their placing within his mind the cacophony of drums which acts as a safeguard for their own eternity. The Master’s vainglories are led by the sound of drums. He morosely tells The Doctor in the first part of “The End of Time,” “it’s just noise inside my head, Doctor. Constant noise ...” His “aberration” is in fact an intelligent design placed within his mind by The First Earl of Prydon Rassilon (Timothy Dalton)<sup>68</sup>, and his council. The Master is therefore a *cambion* by this definition. He is the unnatural murgence of the art and the organism just as the *cambion* is the murgence of the demonic and the human. He is *mirimortal* through a pernicious series of chance and circumstance. Like Lucifer desacralised, The Master is deprived of his province and his purpose, and becomes a temporal vagrant. The mesmer of men rambles the universe in search of either revenge or conquest, that he might silence the din of drums within his mind.

The Master’s *cambionism* is also reflected in his human (Yana) and Time Lord (Master) aspects. Yana is as an ever-existent human parallel to The Master who, in an immutable moment in Time, reassumes the role of the renegade after a coruscating rebirth. The Master inadvertently wins his redemption through a parallel humanity: no matter what his deeds, Yana will always exist in the entirety of Time, tinkering away for the salvation of humankind. He is quantumly immortal at the end of the universe. Yana is The Master’s vessel and victim both, who performed in a custodial role for humanity for decades, serving “the last ... humans scattered across the night.” Yana should therefore be perceived not as the obverse of The Master’s coin, but as a coalition between circumstance and the effects of environment. Yana, however begrudgingly, has lived a human existence from birth until the days before death. The Master views the human race as stunted simians, and is therefore fury-stricken that he should have to languish away a (human) lifetime at the end of the universe. He blames everyone but himself, despite it being his choice to secrete himself away. There is also an impontificable distance between The Master and the humanity he so richly despises. His rancour that the Time Lords perished whilst humanity survives “beyond the collapse of

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68 The President of the Time Lords during the Time War.

reality itself' is indeed implacable. He is furious that humans should survive whilst the Gallifreyans died. There is a binary between Yana as the custodian of humanity, and The Master as its destroyer. The latter is a collision of chaos and order, and human and Time Lord; just as the *cambion* is a conflux of the world and the Otherworld. The constitution of the *cambion* is therefore both worldly and otherworldly, as is the deviant constitution of the mad Master. However, while The Master is a *cambionic* figure, Yana is a Merlynian figure to The Doctor's Arthur. In T.H. White's narrative *Future*, the magician Merlyn remarks upon his temporal condition to the boy named "the Wart." "Ordinary people are born forwards in time," Merlyn observes, "... and nearly everything in the world goes forward too ... but I ... was born at the wrong end of time, and I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind" (29). I refer to this state of being as *retrovivence*<sup>69</sup>, or backwards-living.<sup>70</sup> Merlyn's description of what I call *cambionism* is apt in relation to Yana, who lives as an unwitting *cambion*, surrounded by humans who shuffle on to death. Whilst Merlyn is terribly aware of his *cambionic* state, Yana believes that exalting the last scatterings of humanity to Utopia is his final act as a man. The professor is living "backwards in time" inasmuch as, like the phoenix, he is ageing towards youth. Indeed, when the embers of a phoenix glow their dimmest, this portends not death, but burning new life. The *retrovivent*, then, is like Merlyn: gifted with both insight and "backsight" in each room of Time he comes to inhabit. Yana is also Merlynian in his comportment. The Master speaks in the manner of a Lucifer or a Loki, in stark contrast to Yana, who speaks in the manner of a mattoid or a Merlyn. The professor is, like Merlyn, an avuncular pedagogue who has lived beyond his natural energies. The weary, low-burning Yana is therefore willing to stay behind to ensure that humanity reaches its destination, if only to command a modicum of their admiration in the new world. *Retrovivence*, or backwards-living is the key to Yana's

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69 Neologised from the Latin *retro*, backwards; and *vivere*, to live. Merlyn's deviant mortality, which I refer to as *retrovivence*, renders *Future* a *bildungsroman* for both the Wart, and for Merlyn, inasmuch as the fact that the Wart is growing and changing as he ages, and Merlyn is growing and changing as Time only makes him more youthful. Merlyn and the Wart therefore share different temporal trajectories as their characters develop, as the aged and avuncular tutor figure juvenescens towards birth, and the youthful protagonist ages towards death. Indeed, as Evans Lansing Smith writes in "The Narrative Structure of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, "(White) achieves ... wholeness through a consistency of thematic development, a reconciliation of opposites ... and through a highly wrought scheme of parallelism among the books" (39). This parallelism is also patently present in The Doctor and The Master; and Professor Yana and The Master.

70 Anne Lawrence-Mathers writes of the "historical" Merlin (sic) in *The True History of Merlin the Magician*. She writes of Merlin's prophetic faculty that "(he) may have known about the gigantic peoples and the distant lands of ... history, and he may have seen the very heavens fall into chaos in the distant lands of ancient history (170)." Merlyn, of *Future*, may have seen the end of days play out in reverse, due to his condition of *retrovivence*. Merlyn, like The Master in *Who*, is therefore a *cambion* by heritage, and a *cambion* in (T/time).

genius, for with time comes infinitude. The weathered nature of Yana's face and the (seemingly) early efflorescence of The Tenth Doctor's belie the reality of the situation, until it is difficult to discern which is the Merlyn, and which is the Wart. The Doctor is over nine hundred years of age at this juncture in the series, whereas Yana is under a century – until it is revealed that Yana is unwittingly The Master. Yana, like Merlyn, is a *cambion* serving humanity. Yet ultimately, The Master is no Merlyn, but rather humanity's extirpator, as is powerfully seen in the ironic foreshadowing in Yana's recitation of the platitude “no rest for the wicked” in 3:11 “Utopia.” The concept of *retrovivence* is integral to a comprehension of The Master, who is a phoenix peregrinating through Time. His *phoenical* longevity, then, explains The Master's hatred for the “stunted ... apes” of humanity. He simply despises the fact that the universe is so strangely anthropocentric, and that the race of ephemera should live whilst the race of phoenixes so spectacularly dies. Both The Doctor and The Master then are Merlynian *retrovivents*, living forward yet looking back.

### The Master as Misanthrope, and as Many

The Doctor: “*You're risking the ... destruction of the entire cosmos!*”

The Master: “*All or nothing, literally! What a glorious alternative!*”

-“The Time Monster” (1972).

“*My power is greater than your imagination can encompass.*”

-The Master, “The Time Monster” (1972).

The Master's misanthropy is a facet of his character that often acts as his undoing. The newly-regenerated Time Lord realises the errors that he has made in the past, and seeks to rectify them. He even meta-refers to his own past proclivities to grandiosely reveal the matter of his schemes to The Doctor. The Master smiles, and shouts at the climax of 3:11 “Utopia” “why don't we ... have a nice ... chat while I tell you ... my plans and you can ... stop me, I don't think!” The Master's most monstrous fear is that “The Time Lord Victorious”<sup>71</sup> should stand over him, having again unpicked the former's plans. The Master becomes consumed by a hatred for the human race, such that he might become our solitary annihilator simply as an affront to The Doctor.<sup>72</sup> Such

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71 The anastrophe by which The Doctor refers to himself in 4:16 “The Waters of Mars.” This is counterposed by the title of The Master's musical theme, *The Master Vainglorious*.

72 Murray Gold's composition, anastrophically entitled *The Master Vainglorious*, conveys the character's derangement through strident drumbeats that start as tapping (which represent the percussive sounds of The Master's fingers lifting from and falling to his desk) before rising into a crescendo.

rewriters of reality as The Master wish to alter the universe until it best resembles themselves. He despises the truth that the universe is indeed anthropocentric, and the crepuscular hour of humanity will not come until the demise of Time itself. His envy of the human race impels him to take its place through billions of metamorphoses in 4:17/4:18 “The End of Time.” Altering that which he failed to control, the Time Lord homogenises humanity until its every face<sup>73</sup> is branded by his own grin. The renegade recovers something of the power he held in The Year That Never Was.<sup>74</sup> He both enslaves humanity anew, and overtakes its corporeal forms. The human race is converted into a host of artificial *cambions*. That is to say, the human body is transformed into a Time Lord’s body through creative reinvention. The Master’s techno-zombification of the human race is a living tribute to both his power and his genius. Using the Immortality Gate, he bestows both blessing and curse upon humanity whereby we all have the knowledge of The Master grafted within our minds. The Time Lord states in “Part Two” “I’ve transplanted myself into every ... human ... But who wants a mongrel ... species like them? ... Now I can transplant myself into every ... Time Lord!” This mass metamorphosis accents human immortality as derived from transmundane antecedents. As in the everlasting war between God and Lucifer, humans are depicted as play pieces in a game of gods, to be swept back and forth across the table as each being lays down their trump. The Master strives to circumlocute his own culpability using such devil’s rhetoric in 3:13 “Last” as “the human race. Greatest monsters of all!” The renegade’s odium for, and his desire to alter or exterminate humanity is a sublimation of his hatred for himself and his Gallifreyan manipulators. His actions are indeed impelled by his memories of Gallifrey. The Master is a grace-fallen Lucifer trying to raise a heaven on the neutral ground of Earth. As he states in 3:13 “Last,” he will either win Earth, or “stand upon (it) ... as it burns.” Although his motives may appear to be purely selfish, he is in fact enacting the “long view” of Rassilon. Humans here serve as the play pieces, Earth the chessboard, and the two Time Lords the dueling grandmasters. Certainly, as The Master defines The Doctor through opposition, if the hero loves humanity, the foe must naturally hate it. The Master’s misanthropy is simply the inversion of The Doctor’s (literal) philanthropy. The former cannot relate to humanity, for to compare the lives of The Master and any human is to compare the phoenix with the ephemeron. The Master seeks to destroy or alter humanity based on what serves his ends best, whereas The Doctor will gladly give his life, or any number of his regenerations, to counter any threat that besets his beloved terran race. These two Time Lords’ motives and personalities are indeed comparable, yet are still markedly different. The Master matches both The Doctor’s ratiocination and his ability to alleviate a situation through humour. To exemplify, The Master uses popular music to convey his

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73 But for Donna (portrayed by Catherine Tate; a former companion who possesses Time Lord DNA) and Wilf (portrayed by Bernard Cribbins; Donna’s grandfather, who is shielded from The Master’s DNA).

74 May 2008-May 2009.

moods. The diegetic music that The Master<sup>75</sup> blasts inside the Valiant is the Scissor Sisters' *I Can't Decide*<sup>76</sup> and the Rogue Traders' *Voodoo Child*<sup>77</sup>, as though in an effort to silence or drown out the cacophony within his mind. He distorts The Doctor's tendency to jape to set his companions' minds at ease. The Master rather uses japery as an arbalest to transfix his foes, as is evident in his ridicules of The Doctor such as "end of the universe. Have fun! Bye!" and "it's been a long time since we saw each other. Must be what, a hundred trillion years?" in 3:11 "Utopia" and 3:12 "Drums" respectively. His *Moriartesquerie*, or supervillainy, is founded upon false foolery. He is a paronomast<sup>78</sup>, who smiths words into weapons. The hebetudes of Time have rendered him child-like: whilst the Gehennic cantoes of Rassilon scream within his soul, he ponders puns and the mechanics of Teletubbies. Inside The Master, evil wears the array of the extreme banal.

The Doctor's and The Master's roles as the last children of Gallifrey are the fulcra of their lives and deaths; survivals and renewals. The Master desires to rule, and lives in perpetual fear of dying, or his immortality subsiding. This explains his bastilling his essence within the fob-watch. He ran for his own safety, and to allow the Daleks and the Gallifreyans the time to both surcease in an internecine battle. The post-Time War universe, to someone as powerful as The Master, is risibly subjugable: an Order of Silents here, a platoon of Cybermen there. The roles of Gallifrey's last children, therefore, are to vanquish (The Master) and to protect (The Doctor). The Master is implementing a stratagem that he has elaborated over the course of centuries to enthrall or eliminate all of the universe's sapient races. In his two postmillennial plots to enslave humanity, he uses technology and mesmerism to cultivate his image as an alien god or God. The Doctor's companion Martha Jones says in 3:13 "Last" that The Master has "even carved himself into Mount Rushmore." The Master's defacement of Mount Rushmore is both an exaltation of the self, and an annihilation of human history. The only history permissible by The Master is that which involves himself or perpetuates his own reign. He effaces and erases human history, profaning the reliquary of memory through his techno-mesmerism. His latter plot represents the communication of immortality: what was once as rare as astatine has now become quotidian. Indeed, Saxon is a mirific man who trucks in

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75 To briefly return to the character's first appearance in 2007.

76 From their 2006 album *Ta-Dab*. The song features a reference to Grigori Rasputin (1869-1916) in the lyric "Oh I could throw you in the lake/Or feed you poisoned birthday cake." Rasputin was a mystic and a discreditor of the tsarist government who, remarkably, survived being poisoned and shot three times in the back with a revolver before being drowned in the Neva River. This account has led to Rasputin being depicted as immortal in works such as the comic series *Hellboy* and the 1997 film *Anastacia*. The song's references to death, murder, and immortals make it fitting music for The Master to enjoy.

77 From their 2005 album *Here Comes the Drums*. This song aptly features the lyric "now here it comes/the sound of drums."

78 One who is hopelessly addicted to puns and wordplay.

paradoxes and oxymorons. The Time Lord ironically makes each human less special by lifting us up to his level. We in fact become less, by being made more. To humans, the Immortality Gate featured in Saxon's second appearance is a boon of invention. To the *mirimortal*, it is but a redundant device for repurposing. If we are all to become gods, then neither God nor humanity exists. The Master himself indeed has the form of many gods and "gods": Loki, Lucifer, even Janus, the Roman god of gateways. The rogue *mirimortal* claims the Immortality Gate for his own in 4:17 "The End of Time Part One," and within he gives the illusion that like Janus, he is two-faced. His head blurs from left to right to give the appearance of multiple heads as he claims the template of humanity as his own. Those whose bodies exist beyond the imagination thereby conflate thaumaturgies and their bodies with the human and the banal.

Like Lucifer then, The Master shares a relationship with humanity that is, although predatory in appearance, more similar to the relationship that a chessmaster shares with his pawns. Humans are not a complex race of individuals to The Master, but rather the play-pieces in an eternal game played against The Doctor and the High Council of Time Lords. We are a species to be broadcast by fiends and the Devil, just as is stated in *Mallens*. Indeed, The Master views all humanity as ordure, no matter what the station of the individual whose life he consumes. His becoming Prime Minister of Great Britain or President of the United States means no more to him than becoming the council flat residents who laugh at the climax of "Part One." When he consumes humanity, The Master portrays every life as a stereotype. Take, for example, his parody of sensationalistic newscasting in "Part One" as Trinity Wells (Lachele Carl). He does not absorb Trinity's mannerisms, but rather he replicates them, through having observed the anchorwoman's methods during her broadcasts. Each of The Master's clones is a commentary of the human it replaced. He uses humanity to injure The Doctor, letting each of his clones speak in turn. The Time Lord himself does not announce the extent of his plot to The Doctor. It is the Trinity-Master, still clad in the anchorwoman's garments, who says triumphantly over the airwaves "breaking news: I'm everyone. And everyone in the world ... is me!"<sup>79</sup> All of anthropology is verminous to The Master, though it is ironically agents of humanity who realise the Time Lord's plan to return to life in 4:17/4.18 "The End of Time." He is resurrected at the beginning of the special by a cult of female members using the "potions of life," and enters into a state of dead-living. The female is here depicted not only as a mother, but as a resurrector, and a self-sacrificist. The female is also the disruptor of eternal life: Saxon's former wife Lucy (Alexandra Moen) throws an anti-potion at the regenerating Master which throws his ritual into chaos. Thenceforward, Saxon becomes a revenant, a being returned from death

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79 A member of The Master's mob even changes the news graphic to the left of the Trinity-Master to an image of the President-Master wide-eyed in mid-cacchination. This is yet another testament to The Master's ego and his view of himself as "breaking news."

by means of mysticism. He gains the ability to project energy from his hands, which he uses to soar through the air, and immolate his enemies. Saxon becomes what can only be oxymoronicly described as a moribund immortal. He retains the power to regenerate, and yet to sustain his form he must consume vast amounts of food. He ravens the carcass of a Christmas turkey and a takeaway hamburger as though he has not eaten in a fortnight. He is dying, yet undying in this state. His skull flashes beneath his face with increasing frequency, indicative of his waning vitality. He occasionally even disappears, his shining skull lit by a leer. However, as in myth, death augments the phoenix's fire. The Master may be insane, but he plies preposterous power. Already potent, the new, madder Master has the power to vanquish humanity and the rest of the universe with risible ease. His cries of "never dying!" as he is torn from the womb of death emphasise this increasing insanity and his obsession with immortality. David Tennant<sup>80</sup> says in the accompanying episode of *Doctor Who Confidential*<sup>81</sup> entitled "Lords and Masters" that "The Master ... is madder than before (and) a lunatic." Saxon's rictused face is ironically emblematic of a sort of perfection: as his powers reach their pinnacle, so too does his insanity. There are indeed many interplays between The Master and humanity in this, the end of the Time Lord's character arc. Over the course of these five episodes, he moves from a tired old man to a deiform. This metamorphosis is facilitated by a human, Martha Jones, whose curiosity moves Yana to open the fob-watch and unseal The Master's spirit. One hundred trillion years in the past, however, Martha is The Master's defeater, as she rallies all of earth's inhabitants to think of The Doctor at once, which shatters The Master's hold over humanity and the flesh of The Doctor. Martha's burden of guilt after having been the one to induce Yana to open the fob-watch that he had borne on his person for all of his human decades is alleviated by her year-long crusade to dethrone The Master in her time. A human is therefore The Master's liberator and his vanquisher both. Furthermore, as has been heretofore described, The Master's resurrection is disrupted by another human, his former wife Lucy. As Saxon's followers required the carrier of The Master's biometric imprint<sup>82</sup>, Lucy was present at The Master's ritual of revenance, and therefore able to throw it into chaos. Though The Master may not consider humans to be in any way threatening, they have proved to be his undoing on many occasions. The maverick has seen much of Time and Space, and yet persists to see humans as ordure, as though privy to our future. Saxon is indeed acquainted with a version of humanity's end in the Year One Hundred Trillion. He phlegmatically regales The Doctor in 3:13 "Last" of "furnaces burning ... humanity screaming at the dark." The Master's inference in this ignoble end is that the human race is not yet, or never will be, a great

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80 Who concludes his run as The Doctor in this special.

81 An accompanying series for each episode of *Who* which provides a behind-the-scenes look at the making of each installment.

82 Which Lucy bore on her lips after kissing The Master during their brief marriage.

civilisation. Earth and its inhabitants will be ever subaltern to superior races. The Doctor's rhapsodising about humanity in 3:11 "Utopia," however, avers his personal knowledge of terran perpetuity. "Don't you see though," he grins, "the ripe old smell of humans. You survived! You might have spent a million years evolving into clouds of gas, and another million as downloads, but you always revert to the same ... shape ... the fundamental humans ... end of the universe, here you are. Indomitable!" He and The Master have differing views on humanity's fate, as each has desecrated us in diverging scions of our terminal time. These Time Lords judge our potentials by the position of the terran doomsday in Time. The Doctor loves humanity as he views us as indomitable despite our mortalities. The Master despises humanity both for rising so high in The Doctor's esteem, and for ultimately surviving Gallifrey by tens of trillions of years. The Master cannot fathom that ants should live whilst angels die. Gallifreyans are *phoenical* conflagrations compared to the cold embers of humanity, yet somehow we always survive. The Time Lord therefore holds us in Luciferian hate and envy. In "Lords and Masters," the episode of *Doctor Who Confidential* that accompanies 4:17 "The End of Time Part One," *Who's* showrunner Russell T. Davies describes Saxon's plot to assume the faces of humanity as "the greatest affront to The Doctor." Humanity cannot fulfil its fate to evolve into gas nebulae or the cyber-athanatous if The Master enslaved the race early in its narrative. Saxon, in his plots, attempts to alter the seeming predestinies of both himself and all of anthropology. Like Lucifer, he endeavours to hang "a new Gallifrey in the heavens" by creating a paradox whereby humanity destroys itself. Both Saxon and Lucifer are, in their respective narratives, combating their predestinies and shaking the yoke of inauspicious stars from their world-wearied flesh. The falls of both Lucifer and The Master were predestined by God and Rassilon respectively. Indeed, for the biblical and fictional Lucifers, an angelic life was not accompanied by an angelic mansuetude, or the deathless desire to serve their Gods.<sup>83</sup> The human professor Yana embodies the hypothetical state in which the Devil's mind has fallen into desuetude: The Master is Lucifer, and Yana is Lucifer in mental bonds. Yana is The Master's contingency plan and perhaps his greatest victim. When tempted, Yana finds the monster within to be implacable and yields to the spirit of The Master. The latter places himself in manacles of ice, a pair of obsolescent bonds that dissolve over time. The Master is a rat adrift in the sluiceways of time, who, upon heaving his bedraggled self onto a dry perch, discovers he has gained the wings and the soul of a phoenix.

If The Master is Lucifer, then it is pertinent for me to consider Gallifrey as a Gehenna or, conversely, a Heaven that is only accessible when Time itself is bleeding. The radical laments that "all the great civilisations are gone" and that there are only inferior races to administer the rule of the

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83 Irish writer James Joyce (through the medium of his character Father Arnall in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) attributes the phrase "Non serviam"/"I will not serve" to Lucifer. This phrase appears in the Latin Vulgate.

universe. The Time Lord may have been a renegade during the apogee of Gallifrey, yet his reverence for both his race and his planet are indubitable. He cleaves to his Gallifreyan implements, like the fallen to their swords hammered in heaven. He plies a self-engineered laser screwdriver which he equips with biometric<sup>84</sup> security, lest any human should have the temerity to steal it. His actions echo those of the Gehennic angel as he takes his immortality into his own hands. He wears on his second most ulnar finger not a wedding band, but a ring bearing the figures of a rite. The Master wears the code to eternity to symbolise that although he may perish, his plans will always restore him. His acumina of life, machines, and the art of war are that which will always tear him cackling from the void after his ostensible death. The Doctor's enemy has a Luciferian ego, as he shapes his "Time Lord empire" in his own image, commanding humanity to erect mega-effigies of himself posed as a god in his first three appearances. The Master is however a terrible ruler, as the universe's authorities declare that Sol-3, or planet Earth is an area that is "entering into terminal extinction" in 3:13 "Last." The renegade embodies all who believe they could and should be God, but fail upon their deification. To The Master, however, becoming God may simply be an engaging way to spend a millennium. Assuming deity is perhaps the last act of the immortal who decides that all meaning has vanished. It is also interesting to note how God chooses to clothe Himself. It is ironic that The Master wears a simple black hoodie in his most majestic form, far from the professorial attire of Yana, or the resplendent robes of the Gallifreyans, or the exquisite suits of his previous incarnations. His surge in power is bemeaned by his shabby array, as though he is so super-evolved that appearances are suddenly to be perceived as unimportant. With The Master's timewalking, temporal mastery has slowly devolved into temporal vagrancy. The dead-living Master is markedly more bestial than before, such that he becomes more the cloven-hoofed Satan imagined by Browne or Shakespeare than Lucifer, the fallen lord of light. The dissident's sojourns in Time return me to Preston's concept of temporal contingency. I disagree with Preston regarding The Master: no one could be bored who is enthralling the stars. Temporal contingency is to be found in each of the time periods onto which The Master imprints. I argue, however, that it was perhaps the conflux of Rassilon's directives and The Master's peering into the Untempered Schism that begat any sense of boredom that the latter might feel. The Tenth Doctor states in 3:12 "Last" that when his nemesis looked into the pure essence of Time at eight years old, "that's when (he) saw eternity." It was at this juncture in the young Time Lord's life that he lost his sanity to the abyss. Mesmerism in *Who* is therefore cyclical. The Master was mesmerised both by Rassilon and by Time itself, thus the rogue Time Lord mesmerises the remainder of the universe. Indeed investigative journalist Vivien Rook (Nichola McAuliffe) conjectures in 3:12 "Drums" "it's as if he's mesmerised the ... world." Mesmerism and bondage are conjugated in The Master's character. He was entranced by both Rassilon's drumbeat

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84 His screwdriver has isomorphic controls, therefore it can be activated only by his touch.

and gazing into the heart of Time as a young Gallifreyan; and in turn he uses mesmercraft to bind humanity. He is both the mesmer and the mesmerised as he rues monotonously in “Part One” “the drumbeat (is) coming closer ...” The master mesmerist is ultimately the dupe as much as he is the conqueror, as centuries before he was unleashed as the ravin of Rassilon’s fell hunt. The last time we see The Master in “Part Two” he finally exacts his revenge. He uses his powers to push Rassilon and his entourage back into the Time Lock. This scene unfolds like Lucifer striking the heart of God. The Master’s character arc culminates in his vengeance on his predestiner, and his sacrifice to save Earth and The Doctor. Once but an implement wielded by its shaper, The Master has grown more powerful than the whilom God of Gallifrey, and casts Rassilon back with a firebolt. The Master assails the President with another one, two, three lances of lightning, counting out the fourfold drum beat that has echoed in his mind for centuries. Rassilon, his retinue, and The Master are transported irrepealably to Gallifrey, the planet that The Doctor refers to as “Hell.” Lucifer hales God and his Host down to Hell, which will serve as the field of their eternal affray. In the case of The Master, Lucifer is lionised. A quondam foe of humanity is turned suddenly and strangely into its saviour.

I must return briefly to my concept of the Moriarty precedent, to bookend my argument. Holmes and Moriarty are the literary precursors of The Doctor and The Master, and therefore the antecedent acts upon the modern. Holmes and Moriarty are immortals in ink: when Doyle killed off Holmes in *Problem*, pressure from readers eventually persuaded the author to “resurrect” his creation. The “foremost champions” of law and crime will never lie in the “dreadful cauldron” of their deaths for long: Doyle brought Holmes back from the grave in *The Adventure of the Empty House*.<sup>85</sup> Critic Michael Saler even opines “the fancy that Holmes and Watson were real was an international phenomenon” (600) in “Clap If You Believe in Sherlock Holmes: Mass Culture and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity.” It is fun for a fan to imagine that in times of hopelessness The Doctor might materialise in the TARDIS, make a quip, and save the day. Saler refers to this as “ironic imagination” (599), a process by which readers “pretend that (the protagonist) (is) real, and his creator fictitious” (599). Holmes and The Doctor and Moriarty and The Master exemplify characters that are so popular that they take on a paper flesh and an inken blood. They gain physicality in the minds of their fanatics, effectively commandeering the existences of their shapers. Saler refers to this as “the fetishization (sic) of Holmes,” (601) in which “adults openly embraced (Holmes) as real while ... minimizing (sic) or ignoring (his) creator” (601). These paper personages are therefore the ultimate immortals, for their readers, the Whovians and Sherlockians of the world, will always resurrect them. Holmes lives by the death of Doyle, with this acting as, according to Saler, “a template for succeeding infatuations for the characters and worlds of (the popular fictional)”

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<sup>85</sup> Published in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* series in 1903-1904.

(601/602). The imaginary assumes a metaphysical being when it is translated into a parallel reality by its consumers. The Doctor lives when his writers are invisible above, behind, or beyond him.

The phoenix therefore does not die, and cannot die. It rather repurposes and repermutes the somatic, until fanatics of the thanatic cease to come to claim it. Such is the case with these proto- and anti- agonists of fiction.

### **“Breaking News”: Vote Saxon! (Conclusion)**

*“Ooh ... financial solution! Er ... deleted!”*

-The Master, 4:17 “The End of Time, Part One.”

With these analyses complete, I move now to recapitulate upon The Master with a retrospective look at his mind and his deeds. The Master validates the notion that an immortal may be subject to such boredom that he or she would eventually turn his or her hand to the subjugation of his mortal fellows. War becomes The Master’s life work. He dispels the ennui of the aeons through sculpting conflict like Michelangelo his “David.” His eudemony<sup>86</sup> is the art of war. As in biblical lore, the humans of the *Whoniverse* are always under threat of the supernatural. Though it is not depicted, Martha Jones too would have stamped with the Cheshire rictus of The Master, and had Lucy Saxon been alive, so would she. Even companions of The Doctor and The Master are unsafe.

Having enemies such as The Master is one of the many reasons that The Doctor has become reluctant to have companions at all. The “sainted physician”<sup>87</sup> is losing the perspective of the young, as he deems his adventures to be too dangerous for accompaniment. The relationship between The Doctor and his companions is the subject of prolific fan fictions. Indeed, online serials such as *Untitled Web Series About A Space Traveller Who Can Also Travel Through Time* parody The Doctor, his associates, and their adventures. The Doctor’s decision to shelter the human and the young is interesting, as Time Lords are Methuselahs visaged as James Deans. Indeed, the narrative often depicts situations in which one’s capacity for victory is based solely upon one’s youth and undying. In these five episodes, each Time Lord undergoes one resurrection each: The Master’s, almost three (linear) years after his death; and The Doctor’s, a year after all nine hundred of his years fall upon his flesh by effect of The Master’s device. The Doctor’s abject humiliation at the hands of his foe is founded upon the latter forcing the former to deteriorate, asking The Doctor “all nine

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86 Also called eudaimonia. This is a philosophical term meaning happiness, flourishing, or welfare, which encompasses phronesis, the application of practical thought.

87 As to which The Doctor is referred in “Part One” by a hitherto-uncharacterised Time Lady (Claire Bloom) who is known only to the audience as “The Woman.”

hundred years of your life. What if we could see them?” The Doctor’s body contorts as his years crush and consume him. Yana and the age-accelerated Doctor are comparable in their debilities and seeming proximities to death. Asthenia is in senescence, and dignity is in youth.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, potency is to be found in the reversal of gerontoid states. The Doctor is always incarnated as modish and young in the modern series, and for him to be shown as otherwise seems to make him weak, and able to be humiliated. When Saxon asks The Doctor in 3:13 “Last” “what if I suspend your capacity to regenerate?” he holds no desire to see The Doctor dead. He rather wishes to see his foe weak and embarrassed, calling him “Gandalf,”<sup>89</sup> “granddad,” and other derisory names. The Doctor’s debility, however, is illusory as he rejuvenates himself at the climax of the narrative. This aspect of the narrative encompasses gerontophobic attitudes. The upper hand is only to be gained through regeneration and the reclamation of one’s youth. Indeed, the idea of a fat, or female, or aged, or racially-other, or mentally- or physically-disabled Doctor seems alien to the series as it stands, despite canonical hints to the contrary. This speaks more broadly to the philosophies behind undying in general. Fictional personages often seek immortality as a counterbalance to the humiliations they feel over growing older, or becoming ill. These two Time Lords embody these attitudes as well as any other. To the immortal or “immortal,” death is both a literal and a figurative mortification. Indeed, The Master’s refusal to regenerate<sup>90</sup> at the end of 3:13 “Last” is the greatest strike against The Doctor that the former can devise. The Doctor disbelieves that his brother-in-arms should have so little respect for his eternity that he would not regenerate after a fatal wound. Life to the immortal is both a bauble and a rarity, abundant yet always requisite.

An affront that later surpasses The Master’s willingness to die is the foe’s mutation of the human race into facsimiles of himself by trajecting his DNA across the globe. The dissenter strikes at The Doctor’s heart in 4:17 “The End of Time Part One,” quipping “the human race was always your favourite, Doctor! But now ... there is onlllly ... The Master Race!” The world laughs with The Master as he announces his victory. The fact that The Master would be better than The Doctor, were the former not insane, suffuses their encounters. The Doctor is the less proficient of the two Time Lords, but his sanity is a boon of which The Master can only dream. These “piquancies of

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88 Characters ageing before their time have also been explored in such science fiction series as *Stargate SG1*, specifically in the episode 1:09 “Brief Candle” (1997). Such narratives exemplify humans, humanoids, and homiforms as ephemeral beings held captive by their biologies; and in this discuss the meaning, if any, of existing at all.

89 The wizard from J.R.R. Tolkien’s literary trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*.

90 The Master is shot by his wife Lucy, who was freed from her husband’s influence in 3:13 “Last.” This foreshadows her disruption of The Master’s resurrection-rite in their next appearance in 4:17/4:18 “The End of Time, Parts One and Two.”

destruction”<sup>91</sup> that tantalise the dissenter are that which render him worse. The Doctor’s is a sanity beyond shaking, a counterbalance to his enemy’s deliria. As of the 2013 Christmas special “The Time of the Doctor,” it has been four (linear) years since The Master was absorbed into the Time Lock. However, The Doctor has not seen his foe in over five hundred years due to the former’s *flexilinear* chronology. The renegade will undoubtedly escape the Time Lock and return to plague The Doctor. The Master will return for as long as The Doctor exists to oppose him. Just as The Master lays traps in Time for The Doctor<sup>92</sup>, he unquestionably fabricated methods to escape from his prison before the imprisonment even transpired. The “master of all matter”<sup>93</sup> will return regardless of how fervently The Doctor might wish he remain immured.<sup>94</sup> The Master will abjure death until all the stars are in shackles, and he stands not only as the self-proclaimed God of Gallifrey, but of the universe.

The Loki-Lucifer demonstrates that evil is eternity. Suicide to the immortal is but a becoming different, just as a phoenix is never plumed the same way twice. The Master embodies concepts of what I will refer to as the *corporeal protean*, and the somatic morphology of humanoids, homiforms and transhumans in science fiction. These homiforms are protean to the extent that their minds are as ductile as the bodies that bear them. The Master is an agonist who has been both the Prime Minister of Britain and the President of the United States in the space of three *rectilinear* years, and whose essence has spent almost a century in the metaphysical oubliette of the fob-watch. He is multiform, and a modern Moriarty. Moriarty’s role as precursive to The Master reflects the scope and *flexilinear* nature of villains in Time. The Master is a spider at the centre of a web of innumerable realities. The Master and Moriarty are inextricably intertwined, just as The Doctor and Sherlock Holmes. The Master uses technology and his innate abilities to hypnotise weaker minds. Moriarty too is a mesmer, inasmuch as the fact that his deeds compel others to follow and to serve.

The Master represents one side of the Time Lord coin. I will now continue my argument with a more exhaustive cross-analysis of The Master’s foe and antithesis, The Doctor.

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91 To which he refers in “The Mark of the Rani” (1985).

92 He crows to The Doctor in 3:12 “Drums” “I’ve been laying traps for you all this time.”

93 As The Master referred to himself in 14:03 “The Deadly Assassin” (1976).

94 Though as Andrew Allen rightfully points out in “*Doctor Who*: Our hopes for Peter Capaldi’s era,” after Moffat’s resurrection of Gallifrey and the Time Lords in “The Day of the Doctor” a lot of mythology might have been changed or reversed. “Hang on, are Rassilon and The Master still fighting it out in there?” he asks. “Erm, shh” (1). The Twelfth Doctor’s era should shed light on these paradoxes when the series resumes in late 2014.

## Gallifreyan Gallimaufries: Undying, and the Physician of the Universe

“*Regenerate*: This card may only be used twelve times. GET OUT OF DEATH FREE.

Copyright 1963.”

(“Who” parodist Craig Hurlle created a “community chest” card for the Hasbro/Parker Brothers board game *Monopoly*. The card features The Eleventh Doctor leaping from the TARDIS with this text).

“*A cosmos without The Doctor scarcely bears thinking about.*”

-The Master, *The Five Doctors*.

I will hence complete my analysis of undying in *Who* with two compendary chapters on other immortal characters in the *Whoniverse*: The Doctor, Captain Jack Harkness, and Professor River Song.

The *Who* franchise is established upon the tenet that The Doctor will live forever in one form or another, whether physically alive, or thirteen (or more) faces spread across Time. Take for example the aforementioned *Untitled Web Series About A Space Traveller Who Can Also Travel Through Time*.<sup>95</sup> Written by fans for fans, the series is a madrigal to *Who*, playing upon its characters, and nomenclatural and narrative conventions. The ridiculously-long name of the series parodies the naming conventions of *Who* episodes during its initial run. This series follows the polychronic emprises of an “Infinity Knight” named Inspector Spacetime (Travis Richey)<sup>96</sup> and his “faithful associate” Piper Tate (Carrie Keranen)<sup>97</sup>, and his arch-nemesis “The Sergeant.”<sup>98</sup> Living by his motto “inspect the uninspected,” The Inspector goes up against all manner of *Who* homologues such as Circuit Chaps (Cybermen) in “Part One,” and the nefarious Blogrons (Daleks). The *Who* fandom is founded upon the premise that, like Sherlock Holmes, The Doctor might be a real polymorphic

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95 Hereafter referred to as *Untitled*.

96 The character is depicted like an incarnation of The Doctor’s, wearing a blue trenchcoat and cravat; and carrying an optic pocket knife (like The Doctor’s sonic screwdriver).

97 The character’s name is a reference to Billie Piper and Catherine Tate, two actresses who portrayed The Tenth Doctor’s companions Rose Tyler and Donna Noble respectively.

98 A non-appearing character whose first incarnation was portrayed by “legendary horror actor Vincent Price,” according to the series’s self-legitimising Wikia page, Madman With A Booth:  
<[http://madmanwithabooth.wikia.com/wiki/Inspector\\_SpaceTime\\_Wiki](http://madmanwithabooth.wikia.com/wiki/Inspector_SpaceTime_Wiki)>

entity, averting crises beyond our gaze; and thwarting the plans of machinating Moriarties. Humorously, on the twenty-first of December 2012, the day in which the world was prophesied to end<sup>99</sup>, “The Inspector” posted a status update on his Facebook page, stating simply “the Earth was not destroyed. You are welcome, Earth. – The Inspector.” The writers of *Untitled*, just as the writers of *Who*, strive to involve the viewer in nods to the real world, such as the ultimate fan service of each watcher having become a facsimile of The Master during the events of the 2009/10 *Who* special “The End of Time.” The Doctor and The Inspector are depicted in their respective canons as solitary averters of cataclysmic events. They are beings of innumerable timestreams, and more metareferentially, cross-canon beings, such as The Doctor and Holmes, and The Master and Moriarty.

The Doctor is aptly named, as he acts as the medicine man of the universe. Gallifrey too is perhaps a fanciful alteration of the word “gallimaufry,” meaning “an imbroglio of things.” The name of the Time Lords’ homeworld is perhaps a reference to the gallimaufry of sciences and technologies that the Time Lords lucubrate Laputan-like.<sup>100</sup> Each incarnation of The Doctor indeed forms a palimpsest bound within an ancient manuscript. He has undergone many mutations, inhabiting thirteen bodies over his greater than one point two millennium life span.<sup>101</sup> He has endured the crucible of death thirteen times over the course of fifteen hundred years.<sup>102</sup> However even a regenerator like The Doctor doubts that an entity can live eternally. His abiding faith is that whether through death, or darkness, or obliviation, existences end. As The Doctor himself comments on Time Lord regeneration in 4:17 “The End of Time Part One” “even if I change it still feels like dying. Everything I am dies. Some new man goes sauntering away ... and I’m dead.” Regeneration, in The Doctor’s thinking, is not immortality or rebirth, but rather the birth of a different Doctor. His sentiment is as much a commentary on the heterotopia of the world that is cast between the cameras<sup>103</sup>, as his congenital ability to regenerate. He has become his own director, as a Time Lord’s existence has become *phoenical* since the extinction of his fellow Gallifreyans. His life span has moved

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99 Also known as “the 2012 phenomenon.” This “phenomenon” was based on a series of eschatological credences that stated that some form of apocalypse would take place around this date. This was supposedly heralded by the end of an epoch in the Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar.

100 I will return to the concept of Gallifrey as a Laputa in my penultimate section, “Nightmare Perpetuity.”

101 The Doctor expended a regeneration in 4:13 “Journey’s End,” yet retained the same face due to diverting all excess regeneration energy into his severed hand, and thereby creating a mortal clone of The Tenth Doctor.

102 To crunch the numbers, The Doctor’s latest incarnation (portrayed by Peter Capaldi) begins The Doctor’s second cycle of regenerations. The Capaldi-Doctor is the character’s thirteenth regeneration, and is his fourteenth incarnation, and is known in fandom as “The Twelfth Doctor.”

103 And indeed, in the world of the *Who* fandom.

from thirteen bodies, to twenty-six. Since the demise of his homeworld Gallifrey in the war with the Daleks, The Doctor has closed his palm around eternity, and, as of the 2013 Christmas special “The Time of the Doctor” gained another thirteen regenerations. The return of Gallifrey in 2009/2010’s two-part special divulges to The Doctor that anything is possible when the barriers of Time are dropping. Indeed, the entirety of the Gallifreyan civilisation should be thought of as a permanently-locked room existing in the house of Time. The room of the Time War exists, but one may never egress from, or enter into, this room unless Time itself is bleeding. The Time War therefore acts as a metaphor for the notion of periods of history as heterotopias: that is to say, places and periods from which we can learn, but to which we can never return. Those to whom The Doctor tells the story of the Time War consider this event as someone born postmillennially might consider, say, the Second World War. It is a period of time into which none may re-enter except through the imagination. This historical event is becoming increasingly more fictionalised with the release of such films as *Schindler’s List* (1993), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *Downfall* (2004). The great war of Gallifrey suffers from this same segregation. The Doctor may not return to or in any way alter the events of his own timeline including, most tragically of all, the conflict that reduced his planet to ash. He is a “lonely god,”<sup>104</sup> and assuredly the last of his kind. The descent of Gallifrey hangs heavy in his mind, not as a motivation to conquer as it acts for The Master, but rather as an impetus to administer his brand of physic to the universe. It is in this that The Doctor becomes the obverse of The Master’s tarnished coin. Their relationship and the peripheral information of the now-deceased Rani, Corsair, War Chief, and others establish the Time Lords as a former celestial Round Table that rode the universe like Lancelots, Gawains, and Sagremors of the stars. All were different, some were less heroic, but most served the good of Gallifrey. Gallifrey too is a cosmic Camelot, with The Doctor, the Arthur of the narrative, the only one to subsist after the fall of his kingdom. Mike Hernandez writes in ““You can’t just change what I look like without consulting me!”: The shifting racial identity of the Doctor” that “the real magic of *Doctor Who* was to use the Time Lords, cast as oppressors, fools, and villains, to emphasise the Doctor’s anti-authoritarianism and superior intellect (52). However, in *New Who*, The Doctor has become jaded without other Time Lords to counter his intellect. With Gallifrey gone, The Doctor knows he is the most intelligent being in the universe. This lack of opposition has rendered him less, for his superiority is unmarked without the presence of comparable combatants. German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel writes of “independence and dependence of self-consciousness” and “lordship and bondage” in his 1807 work “Phänomenologie des Geistes”/“The Phenomenology of Mind.” This dialectic relates a parable in which a lord’s reliance on his bondsman reverses these individual roles: to be a bondsman is in essence to become the lord

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104As he is referred to by The Face of Boe in 2:01 “New Earth.”

of the lord. To be a master is to be dependent upon a slave, and thereby confer masterhood on the slave, and serfdom on the master, or as Andrew Cole writes in “What Hegel’s Master/Slave Dialectic Really Means” “feudalism ... marked by its peasant/lord relations (577). The Doctor’s situation after Gallifrey burns echoes this Hegelian parable. Without his homeworld, without the binarisation of subordinates, without the “conflict of self-consciousness in self-opposition” to which Hegel refers, The Doctor is lost, homeless, and eternally undefined. John H. Smith writes of Hegel’s dialectic in “U-topian Hegel: Dialectic and Its Other in Poststructuralism” that “The goal of absolute knowledge is attained only by a *doubling* of essential sameness and identity (the Spirit becomes its own Other), thus making reflection possible and sacrificing a knowledge of the particular. On the proper ground of Hegel’s dialectics of self, Friday turns out to be his master’s projection” (242). This doubling and this Otherness are at work in *Who*: The Doctor requires The Master and Time Lord society to act as his own reflection, the double that defines him and concretises his identity as a rogue Time Lord. The symmetry between The Doctor and his inferiors is destroyed with Gallifrey and The Master locked away forever: without this mirroring, without this opposition, without these peasant/(Time) Lord relations, The Doctor is less. Although he is the physician of the universe, Time and loss have rendered The Doctor less solicitous about divagating the constellations. The fall of Gallifrey and its people has rendered the immortal increasingly more insouciant about his travels of the universe, and serene about its fate. When The Doctor has finally defeated The Master, The Rani, The Meddling Monk, Morbius, and many others, nothing is left to him but his own incontestable superiority over all life. The death of Gallifrey was also a death for The Doctor, for without these beings The Doctor is a man without a shadow.

### **The Doctor, Holmes, and Immortal Insouciance**

*“Every single one of these questions might or might not be answered next week ... Same space channel! Same space time!”*

*- Untitled, Season 1, “Boyish the Extraordinary, Part 1.”*

*“Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my proper atmosphere.”*

*-Sherlock Holmes, The Sign of the Four (1).*

The Doctor may obviate future events, or intervene in those events in progress, or return to the events of the past. He has however become indifferent to Time. He states in an unreleased

bridge scene from the aforementioned 5:05 “Flesh and Stone”: “I look at a star and it’s just a big ball of burning gas. And I know how it began ... how it ends, and I was probably there both times ... that’s the problem. You make all of space and time your backyard, and what do you have? A backyard. But ... you can see it. And when you see it, I see it.” The Doctor’s statement here encompasses the immortal’s insouciance. The only thing that makes him feel is another insurmountable threat to planet Earth. Ambivalence is the cost of existing beyond destruction and the rancours of “God.” To be *mirimortal* is to have seen all sights, and witnessed every wonder. The Doctor uses his companions for their wondering eyes, and their uncorrupted abilities to perceive. These companions therefore “treat” him as he much as he attends to them. His travels also revive the long-since-passed. When The Doctor and Donna visit authress Agatha Christie (Fenella Woolgar) in 4:07 “The Unicorn and the Wasp,” The Doctor is essentially resurrecting this historical figure, and rewriting her narrative. He can do this to any person, in any time. This is true *mirimortality*. The Doctor controls not only his own mortality, but the mortalities of those who intrigue him. I designate the Time Lords as *mirimortal* beings as Time itself seems to sentinel the children of Gallifrey. Indeed, there is an infinite number of Doctors in the tapestry of Time battling anything from Angels to Zygons. All of reality is The Doctor’s “abstruse cryptogram.” The Doctor’s *mirimortality* is that even if he should die permanently, he has influenced incalculable threads of Time, and will therefore exist eternally in these timestreams. In Time, The Doctor is quantumly immortal. His wondrous state of being, like The Master’s, is an immortality beyond immortality: a *mirimortality*. This is also evident in the way in which The Doctor helps his companions and compatriots to rectify or subtly influence their own timelines. In the DVD short special “Good Night”<sup>105</sup> The Doctor is depicted returning from an adventure with his new wife, River Song. Companion Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) is seated upon the TARDIS stairs in her night attire, having been unable to fall asleep. She is being kept out of bed by thoughts of the senselessness of her existence, being able to recall two versions of her life. The Doctor distracts his companion by reminding her of the saddest moment of her days, dropping an ice cream cone at a fair when she was a child. Amy is still influencing her childhood as an adult with The Doctor’s assistance, (re)shaping in the present what occurred in the past. She recalls that a red-haired woman in a nightgown replaced the confection, and notices The Doctor smiling by the TARDIS doors as she finishes her anecdote. Those who meet The Doctor are

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<sup>105</sup> Produced in 2011. The title of this short foreshadows Amy’s last words to the regenerating Eleventh Doctor in Matt Smith’s final appearance in the 2013 Christmas special “The Time of the Doctor.” “Raggedy Man,” she whispers. “Good night.”

able to softly and deftly revise their own narratives, converting sadness into joy.<sup>106</sup> Pandimensional beings such as The Doctor and The Master are the lords and physicians of the universe, and the tome of Time is theirs upon which to write. These temporal men are cosmic paladins, yes, but they are also the editors of occurrence. The experience of staring into Time itself is that which can irrevocably inspire, intimidate, or dement a young Gallifreyan. The Untempered Schism, as The Doctor relates to his friends in 3:12 “Drums,” maddened The Master, and inspired The Doctor to purloin a TARDIS and flee from Gallifrey. The Doctor and The Master act out of awe and mania respectively. Their long-nurtured relationship, and their mutual hatred for the presidency of Gallifrey is encapsulated in this exchange in 4:18 “The End of Time Part Two”:

The Doctor: (to The Master) Get out of the way (shoots the machinery behind The Master). The link is broken. Back into the Time War, Rassilon! Back into Hell!

The Visionary (Brid Brennan): (voice-over) ... Gallifrey falls!

Rassilon (hatefully) You die with me, Doctor!

The Doctor: I know.

The Doctor tells The Master to get out of the way so he can save them both from Rassilon’s rage. The Master however disobeys, and takes the onus to defeat Rassilon onto his own (and in his mind superior) shoulders. Having passed a century at the end of the universe, The Master is more than content to enter the Time Lock for any quantum of time, from a second to an aeon if this facilitates his revenge against Rassilon. A Time Lord’s temporal experience is not a meagre sixty to one hundred years, but the entirety of eternity. *Mirimortals* whose bodies draw from the source of Time need not fear such negligible quanta of time as centuries and millennia. Though The Doctor may doubt, those sustained by Time itself are the very undying.

The Doctor is indeed so long-lived that ennui and disconnection are beginning to stultify him. The Time Lord is beginning to sink into his role as “the man who forgets.”<sup>107</sup> In the last

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106 However, as Andrew Smith rightly states in his essay entitled “The Best Laid Schemes of Mice and Moffat” “All of (The Doctor’s companions’) cosmic significances are directly related to The Doctor’s interference, and all of their lives revolve around him. There’s nothing deeply intuned as to *who* they are, rather who they are is determined by that cosmic significance ... (The Doctor) seems to warp the lives of everyone around him to surround his own business” (1).

107 The Eleventh Doctor is referred to as such in 2013’s “The Day of the Doctor.”

episode of 2012 entitled “The Snowmen” (7.06), The Doctor’s apathy is at its apex. Having lost his companions Amy and Rory to the Weeping Angels in 7:05 “The Angels Take Manhattan,” The Doctor has stationed the TARDIS in the clouds above Victorian London. He has entered a period of retirement, having resolved to never befriend a human or intervene in the destruction of the planet again. This despondency is a radical departure from what was once The Doctor’s adamant *raison d’être*. His bereavement has led him to segregate himself above humanity. He is a secret god in the aethers, watching humanity yet never interceding in their affairs. God’s angels in this instance are his old friends: the Silurian Madam Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Vastra’s wife Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart), and a Sontaran named Strax (Dan Starkey), with whom The Doctor converses, but never assists in repelling extraterrestrial threats. The Doctor here embraces his position as a terran god. He abjures his role of saviour of the Earth, and seemingly abandons its people to the many agents of desolation while he gazes languidly from his provisional Olympus.<sup>108</sup> Possessing the impartiality of an ancient god, The Doctor’s assistance, according to the 2012 minisode entitled “The Great Detective” “is only sought in the direst emergencies.”<sup>109</sup> Therein The Doctor’s compatriots endeavour to rekindle his interest in the welfare of the universe, with Strax the Sontaran humorously stating that he himself is “declar(ing) war on the moon,” as “too long the moon has hung unmonitored and unsuspected in the sky” and the “Moonites” “won’t suspect a thing.” The Doctor responds sullenly to this badinage, simply sighing “I’m tired ... what is the point?” The “lonely god” here focuses on the individuals he has lost, rather than the hundreds of races he has saved. In 7:06 “The Snowmen,” Madam Vastra regales new companion Clara Oswald of a time in which the pilot of the TARDIS was different. “A saviour of worlds,” she says, “but he suffered losses ... now he prefers isolation to the possibility of pain’s return.” Vastra conveys obduracy over the Time Lord’s inability to help, stating that “(he) is not kind” and “(he) doesn’t help people. Not anyone, not ever. He stands above this world. And doesn’t interfere in the affairs of its inhabitants,” before finalising that “he is not your salvation, nor your protector.” The Silurian here sets a challenge to Clara to demonstrate to The Doctor that the universe needs him, whether in the thawing of Snowmen, or in the délabrement of a thousand fleets of Daleks. Upon hearing Clara utter the word “pond,” the surname of his former companion Amy,

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108 Matt Risley writes in his review of “The Snowmen” that the depicted Doctor is “deflated (and) emotionally ravaged” (1) and “The Ponds’ farewell had cut deep, and (The Doctor had) severed ties with a universe that didn’t want to play ball” (1).

109 Stephen Shirres criticises the minisode in his review entitled “TV Review: *Doctor Who*, “The Great Detective” (BBC1).” Shirres states “The biggest problem with “The Great Detective” (is) its lack of believable tension. I don’t think anyone believes that the Doctor has retired. In fact we know he’ll be back, on Christmas day at around 5ish” (1). Regardless, the minisode foreshadows the events of the Christmas special well.

The Doctor apparels himself in the deerstalker and overcoat of the classic Sherlock Holmes, complete with magnifying glass.<sup>110</sup> The utterance of a familiar word allays a measure of the Time Lord's indifference, and sets him to investigating the mystery of the Snowmen in the garb of the character with whom he shares an interdependence. The music in this scene is even a nod to showrunner Moffat's aforementioned series *Sherlock*.<sup>111</sup> The Doctor reacquaints himself with repelling the preternatural through a portrayal of the fictional detective from which he draws so much, and in the world of *Who*, from which Doctor Doyle drew to create Holmes. Though The Doctor is here more sham soothsayer than observant detective, his assumption of this role is telling. The Eleventh even refers to the Great Intelligence of the Snow (Richard E. Grant/Ian McKellen) as "the clever one. You're Moriarty." Though The Doctor acknowledges The Master as his Moriarty, he plies the term to mean an intelligent supervillain, or the strings-puller in a plot. The Holmes/Moriarty binary is omnipresent in Time and the Universe. The Doctor, having not seen The Master in hundreds of years, needs neo-Moriarties to sustain his interest. "I'm making deductions-it's very exciting," he exults, upon having found a new villain to test him. Apathy therefore, to the immortal, ebbs and flows as the tides. His influences, however, feed and feed from the literary, from Holmes and Moriarty, to Woolf's Orlando. The writers themselves here suffer ennui even more than their creations, because they cannot bring themselves to put their protagonists (and the series they protagonise) to death.

### **The Corsair, Orlando, Woolf, and Dickinson**

Young Amy: "*Who are you?*"

The Eleventh Doctor: "*I don't know yet. Still cooking*"

-5:01, "The Eleventh Hour."

The Doctor demonstrates a disengagement with reality and linear time which is born of living too long. His time-hopping adventures evoke Virginia Woolf's Orlando from *Orlando: A Biography*, a character who changes gender from a man to a woman throughout the four hundred year span of the fiction. Woolf's narrative chronicles the life of this mirific man as he oscillates gender into Lady Orlando. Time Lords can also change from men to women or vice-versa during

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<sup>110</sup> The Doctor has dressed up as Sherlock Holmes previously, in 1977's "The Talons of Weng-Chiang."

<sup>111</sup> Starring Benedict Cumberbatch.

regeneration, as is revealed in 6:04 “The Doctor’s Wife.”<sup>112</sup> The Doctor describes his old mentor The Corsair<sup>113</sup> as a Time Lord who has vacillated between the genders in many bodies. The Corsair<sup>114</sup> is perhaps writer Neil Gaiman’s tribute to Orlando/Lady Orlando: in his final (ninth) incarnation he is “a strapping big bloke” with muscular arms. However The Doctor notes that whenever The Corsair regenerated into a female body “she was a bad girl,” implying that she used her sex appeal and newfound feminine wiles to accomplish what a burly hulk of a man could not. Characters such as The Corsair and Orlando are the perfect amalgams of the masculine and the feminine, forming a potent masculofeminine aggregate. *The Brilliant Book 2012* recounts an amusing anecdote in which a female incarnation of The Corsair was involved in removing the suction cups and manipulator arms from the Dalekanium<sup>115</sup> shells of the pilots of a Dalek scout ship. The Corsair likely was the one to fuse these parts into a Skarosian profanity, inducing the Daleks to flee in seeming humiliation from the distant planet of Clarkor Nine. The mirifically-androgynous have science beyond the gods, having experienced qualia and sense data in different bodies, and having possessed bodies of boths genders. Orlando and The Corsair know what it is like, to exemplify, to experience the passage of time as both a male and a female. Both knows what it is like to enjoy a meal, speak, and walk in bodies of both sex, and to possess sexual organs first of the male, then of the female. They are wholly enlightened to the experience of each gender. They acquaint themselves with both genders in a single lifetime. These characters who embrace their changing genders find a new sort of mortality in this unique somatic experience. As neither The Doctor nor The Master nor Rassilon has regenerated into a Time Lady as of yet, it is implied by the narrative that gender-shifting is either a rarity or an aberration. However the potential remains for either of these characters to have the “fairer” gender thrust upon them.

This gender fluidity speaks to regeneration and selfhood in general. The coherence of the self in the case of both The Doctor and The Master is always shown to be thrown into chaos by an untimely regeneration. For The Doctor, this disarray of the soul is to be remedied by shedding the literal array of his former self, and selecting new apparel. The Doctor has not fully regenerated until he changes his clothes, refusing to speak to the invading Atraxi<sup>116</sup> in his inaugural appearance<sup>117</sup> until

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112 The title of this episode is not a reference to River Song as fans expected, but Idris (portrayed by Suranne Jones), the host body for the sentience of The Doctor’s TARDIS.

113 From *corsaire*, a French word ultimately derived from the Latin *cursor*, run, course. The word has come to mean “a privateer or pirate,” indicating The Corsair’s mercenary nature.

114 Who appears in the episode only as an Ouroboros-tattooed arm.

115 A Skarosian metal from which all Dalek casings are formed.

116 An oculiform species which forms a galactic police force.

117 5:01 “The Eleventh Hour.”

he has found “a decent shirt.” His persona is therefore partially sartorial, or at least sartorially-reliant: he has not finished “cooking” (read: regenerating) until he chooses an ensemble that suits him. Clothes make the immortal, a facet of undying I will return to at many points in this thesis. Ego inheres in one’s vestments, even when that ego is protean. The mirific in the (im)mortal leans on the experience of the ego, no matter which body this ego might inhabit.

Whether of the Æsir, or of Arthur’s court, Time Lords are the cavaliers of the universe, and the arbiters of Time. The war of the mirific and the malefic, The Time Lord Victorious and The Master Vainglorious, is one that will continue inevitably for millennia. Their *mirimortalities* are that of perpetual rejuvenation, with the youngest and the strongest gaining the upper hand. The newly-Mastered Yana seems almost happy when his aged body perishes, inducing his regeneration into the ever-young Master. These characters encompass concepts of youth and beauty, and its immortalising power. The mirifically-beautiful, like Orlando, can simply elect not to age. Not quite as literally in life, take for example photographs and an unageing in cinema for ever-young and “immortal” stars from James Dean to Heath Ledger.<sup>118</sup> The dying-young can be viewed as the ultimate *tardevous* bodies. To conclude these two analyses on Time Lords, I compare a photograph of James Dean with a passage from *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*. Therein the authress writes “does not Eternity seem dreadful to you (sic). I often get thinking of it and it seems so dark to me that I almost wish there was no Eternity. To think that we must forever live and never cease to be.” All eternity, as I will argue in this thesis, is as dark as Dickinson posits. As she writes in *I’m Nobody! Who are you?* “How dreary- to be-somebody! How public- like a Frog- to tell your name- the livelong June- to an admiring bog.” I concur with Dickinson’s positions in the former passage and in the latter passage. To be gazed upon whilst one’s body putrefies in the earth is meaningless. Images of the body ill-remembrance us, when the ego dissipates in dying. *Tardevism* and ever-youth in film and photography are emblematic of an empty immortality. Memorials of the dead should be activated by words, scientific discoveries, and deeds, not by fair faces captured in celluloid. The mirifically-beautiful, therefore, are heirs to a barren eternity. One should essay to immortalise his or her own meaningful words, not his or her mouldering flesh. This, as sustention by Time, is true eternity.

To conclude my analysis of the *Whoniverse* and somatic athanatism<sup>119</sup> I will move to The Doctor’s companion, Captain Jack Harkness (John Barrowman), accidental immortal and neoteric

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118 An actor to which I will refer again in Chapter 3 “Immortal through Inaction.”

119 I will use and modify this word, athanatism, throughout the remainder of this thesis. I have uplifted this word from August Haeckel’s interesting treatise on being: *The Riddle Of The Universe At The End of the Nineteenth Century*. Haeckel herein refers to the word athanatism as a “convenient expression” for “the belief in man’s personal immortality” (189). I will dilate on this with reference to memorial immortality, which I shall refer to as

Struldbrugg. I will herein augment my analysis of gender and mortality with a look at sexuality and mortality, and the effect that confronting one's eternity can have on one's sex and one's sexuality.

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mnemonic athanatism, and corporeal immortality, which I shall refer to (as I have above in relation to The Doctor) as somatic athanatism.

## The Immortals of the Whoniverse

### Undying, and Pansexuality: Captain Jack Harkness

*“Fell off a cliff, trampled by horses, World War I, World War II, poison, starvation ... stray javelin ...”*

(Jack’s hearers cringe)

- Captain Jack Harkness, 3:11 “Utopia.”

The Doctor’s ally Captain Jack Harkness is the Joey Tribbiani<sup>120</sup> of Time and Space. He flirts and coquets with every man, woman, and alien he meets in every era. Jack is a pansexual<sup>121</sup>, literally, as he finds both genders and many, if not all, anthropomorphic species attractive. More Don Juan or Lothario than Lazarus, Jack uses his undying to seduce every man, woman, and alien who crosses his path. Originally born in the fifty-first century on one of humanity’s colony planets, specifically in an area known as the Boeshane Peninsula, Jack joined the Time Agency and began using a vortex manipulator to step through time.

Jack dies by the extermination ray of a Dalek in 1:13 “The Parting of the Ways,” yet returns back to life after being revived by Rose Tyler, The Ninth Doctor’s companion. Harkness’s “immortality” certifies the theory that many a blessing best bestowed is a plague in a cardinalatial cassock. Jack’s every year hangs grave upon his bones as he ages. His (im)mortality is dissimilar to the *mirimortalities* of The Doctor and The Master. Time is like a baselard in the breast of man, whether that man is immortal or not. Jack is a Struldbrug<sup>122</sup>, a species of immortal who senesces as stock. Jack inhabits a temporally-anomalous body: he ages, he falls ill, he remains imperfect, but no matter how many times he dies he gasps back to being.<sup>123</sup> Rose, having absorbed the Time Vortex in 1:13 “The Parting of the Ways,” not only resurrects Jack, but irrevocably immortalises him. Jack is immortal through having known The Doctor, and Rose; and the agency of Time itself.

The Tenth and Jack discuss the fate of the latter in 3:11 “Utopia.” Jack boldly, almost brashly states “I’m the man who can never die” to which The Doctor replies “you’re wrong.” The Tenth is correct, but only due to his pessimistic outlook, and his disbelief that any being can be

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120 The promiscuous and out-of-work actor from television comedy *Friends*. Portrayed by Matt Le Blanc.

121 One who is attracted to both genders, and bases attraction on the individual.

122 This term comes from Jonathan Swift’s eighteenth-century work *Gulliver’s Travels* and is used to describe a group of ageing immortals. I will analyse the Struldbruggs in Chapter 5.

123 Internet critic Billie Doux remarks in her review of 3:11 “Utopia” that “Jack is now “wrong.” He’s the opposite of a Time Lord, a “fixed point in time and space,” something that was never meant to happen (1).”

omnitemporal, or a living anomaly in Time. Unbeknownst to The Tenth, he watched Jack die earlier in his timeline in 3:03 “Gridlock.” Therein, on New Earth in the year Five Billion and Fifty Three, The Tenth Doctor witnesses the death of The Face of Boe<sup>124</sup>, The Doctor’s ally and “the oldest ... creature in the Isop galaxy.” The Face’s dying words to The Tenth are “you are not alone,” a phrase which can be acronymised into “YANA.”<sup>125</sup> There is a subconscious connection between Jack and his future form, The Face of Boe, both of whom serve as allies to The Doctor in two different forms, in two different futures. Billions of years after the fact, JackFace warns The Doctor of The Master’s reappearance without disrupting his own timeline. Jack, like the Time Lords, is a being whose carbon comprises many facets of the past, the present, and the future. His existence depicts Time as a great, complex web: he was born in the fifty-first century, he travelled to our century<sup>126</sup> and to the Year One Hundred Trillion, and died trillions of years earlier as The Face of Boe in another temporal thread. Jack embodies immortals who have no wish to die, but by the same token do not desire to live forever. Jack bemoans his undying state to The Doctor in 3:11 “Utopia,” to which The Doctor’s counterblast is “do you wanna die?” Jack’s response is surprisingly ambivalent considering the passion with which he launched his lament, saying “I thought I did. I don’t know. But this lot (the humanity of the Year One Hundred Trillion). You see them and they’re surviving. And that’s fantastic.” In a darkly-glimpsed future, The Face of Boe exists, heavy with malaises, and feeling every clock-stroke of his five billion years. Jack is a prime exemplar of an all-too-ancient being, who despite ageing and fading, indulges his every sexual yearning. JackFace even becomes the progenitor of a race, giving birth to Boe-like beings known as the Boemina, or Boekind in the Year Two Hundred Thousand.

I will proceed now to compare Jack and The Face of Boe’s bequeathed immortalities with the congenital and quantum immortalities of Melody Pond/River Song.

### “Hello Sweetie”: Congenital and Quantum Immortalities, and River Song

*“... I was on my way to this gay gypsy bar mitzvah for the disabled, when I ... thought, “gosh! The Third Reich’s a bit rubbish! I think I’ll kill the Führer.” Who’s with me?”*

-River Song, 6:08 “Let’s Kill Hitler.”<sup>127</sup>

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124 An abbreviation of Boeshane, the peninsula in which Jack was raised.

125 Andrew Smith writes in “Review: *Doctor Who* 3:3 “Gridlock”” that in the episode “there’s ... a lot of mythology stroking, with (The Tenth Doctor) getting to lament about Gallifrey ... and making many references to the both the Classic Series and to the present arc running up to the return of The Master (1).”

126 And ran Torchwood Three for years.

127 Hereafter referred to as “Let’s Kill.”

I will now conclude my *Whoniversal* essay with my views on Professor River Song (Alex Kingston), the terran-Time Lord hybrid and indictable academic. River is introduced in 4:08 “Silence in the Library”<sup>128</sup> as an Artful Dodger-esque<sup>129</sup> figure who, like Jack, uses a vortex manipulator to step through (T/t)ime. She is a modern take on the trope of the heroic “criminal” who is not a criminal at all. She was conceived aboard the TARDIS by The Doctor’s companions Amy Pond and her husband Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill) and christened “Melody Pond.” River is born of the TARDIS, and therefore has Gallifreyan-like abilities. She is intrinsically and congenitally immortal. She regenerates twice in the narrative<sup>130</sup>, and, like Time Lords, is impervious to death, injury, or vulneration for a significant period after her transformations. The narrative is made more complex, however, by its non-linear nature. The first time The Doctor meets River she sacrifices her life to save his. Every time the later Doctors encounter her after this point she is younger, and at an earlier point in their shared timeline. River therefore embodies mnemonic athanatism, specifically immortality in the mind of the deathless Doctor. The Library revivifies River just as the artefact of her diary remembers her life. One’s possessions are one’s remembrancers. River demonstrates the resurrective power of time travel. She, like The Doctor, exists in a thousand threads of Time, ever-living and ever-being. We as humans can deem ourselves to be immortal in our timestreams. This is what is hypothesised in science and in fiction as quantum immortality. In a time travel narrative, any figure is quantumly immortal. Charles Dickens, J.R.R. Tolkien, you, the reader: anyone the time traveller might care to meet, and therefore revivify. Every human whom somebody remembers, therefore, is quantumly immortal by this metric. We as the existent are indelible impressions onto the template of Time in these narratives. We become the populace of the Hartleyan “foreign country” of the past. River, and more broadly *Who*, raise questions of the implications of deathlessness for all. If everyone is quantumly immortal in their timeline, are moments as well? Can a kiss be held in chronic stasis? A word? A gesture? All able to be reviewed and revisited by those who step through (T/t)ime? *Who* affirms, but only to the TARDIS’ed Time Lord. It would be but dowsing for me to offer an opinion on quantum immortality. However, this hypothesis may offer hope to those who see no meaning in life’s brief candle. Act then, as though any might step through time to see you, and revive you. Use the theory that what you do will remain eternally and immutably. Live as though your descendants are watching you. Live as though you will live forever.

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128 And its second part, 4:09 “Forest of the Dead.” Hereafter referred to as “Forest.”

129 A character from Charles Dickens’s second novel *Oliver Twist* (1838).

130 First in 6:02 “Day of the Moon,” then in 6:08, “Let’s Kill.”

TARDIS-born River does just this, becoming a living library of her experiences with and without The Doctor, and a redundant record of her diary. Despite the fact that River ceded her existence to save The Doctor's in 6:08 "Let's Kill," River's escutcheon is blotted by her unelucidated past. The Doctor pressures River in each of their encounters to reveal details of her crimes but she only smiles and says "spoilers," and changes the topic of conversation. It is ultimately disclosed that River kills The Doctor against her will in a seemingly immutable thread of Time. River is kidnapped from the Luna University by The Silence, an order of "memory-proof" aliens who resemble the screamer from Edvard Munch's painting "The Scream." The Doctor discovers that the fixed point in Time is actually River's destruction of a Doctoriform ship in 6:13 "The Wedding of River Song." This deceives The Silence into thinking The Doctor dead. The Doctor changes this timeline through his marriage to Song, though humorously the Time Lord still considers his real wife to be his sentient TARDIS.

River's existence evokes the sad caducity of life, should we fail to conceive ourselves as fixtures in Time. She regenerates for the second and final time in 6:08 "Let's Kill," and goes on a rampage through Nazi-policed Berlin in 1938. River then gives up her remaining regenerations to save The Doctor from death. Mels's regeneration conveys the supernatural metamorphosis at work in Gallifreyan revitalisation. Mels's braided hair morphs into River's frizzy, untamed tresses. Mel shifts race as well, changing from dark-skinned, to fair-skinned. Mels dies, and, just as with The Doctor, River saunters away. River's life of scurrilous curiosity is compartmentalised into a small square of Time, but she should still be considered immortal even after the loss of her regenerations. River dies in The Tenth's timeline only two years before The Eleventh befriends River's eventual parents. However River is quantumly immortal in numerous streams of time. The honorary Time Lady's end is even a regaining of her sacrificed undying. She reclaims her eternal life through being uploaded to the core of the library-planet in 4:09 "Forest," wherein she might indulge her curiosity forever. Far from becoming an ex-phoenix, River's immortality merely mutates over the course of her (non-linear) narrative.

Her ultimate fate indeed speaks to the writers' inversion of tropes. Twice in new *Who* angels<sup>131</sup>, for example, are depicted not as beings of beatitude, but predators. We see such examples as the cybernetic angels aboard the Titanic starship in 4:01 "Voyage of the Damned" (2007) and the more famous Weeping Angels from 3:10 "Blink" (2007), 5:04 "The Time of Angels"/5.05 "Flesh and Stone" (2010), 7:05 "The Angels Take Manhattan" (2012), and the 2013 Christmas special "The Time of the Doctor." Each angel falls into a state of quantum dormancy when perceived by the eyes of the existent. Showrunner Steven Moffat's creatures invoke the fear that any or all statues might

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131 The second of Moffat's major additions to the *Who* canon.

become locked in states of desistence when observed, and attack when the viewer looks away. The angels prey upon the relatively common fear of automatonophobia.<sup>132</sup> We might therefore imagine the concept of quantum immortality to be like these temporal anomalies. The Weeping Angels are like the existent in Time: we do not exist, until someone turns their gaze towards us, and activates our immortalities. We are immortal, but only when observed in the Hartleyan “foreign country” of the past. Trope inversion, in *Who*, exhibits this multiform nature of Time, mortality, and being. The Doctor, The Master, Jack, and River all either spend or squander their strange mortalities in the pursuit of knowledge, kingdom, love, and a host of other pursuits. Somatic immortals all, these beings also possess quantum immortality. They are ever alive in thousands of scions of TARDIS-accessible Time. These four are somatically and quantumly immortal in their narratives, and shining exemplars of the shifting face of fictional immortality in the present day.

The Master demonstrates the hubris that can accompany immortality, and The Doctor demonstrates the humility that can accompany immortality. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s Willow Rosenberg, however, recounts the rise of hubris in the child enduring. Willow rises in a time in which trite alakazams have been emptied entirely of their power. As I will explore in the next chapter, those dying or undying share a “marriage” with death. The ceding of one’s sanity to longevise one’s flesh is to “encounter darkness as a bride” and enter into a *nihilous* immortality.

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132 The fear of anything that falsifies a sentient being, such as puppets, statues, and ventriloquists’ dummies.

## Chapter Two: Parallel Undyings in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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### ***Galderdash!* Rejuvenescence in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

*“That’s a little blacker than I like my arts.”*

-Willow Rosenberg, 3:16 “Doppelgängland.”

*“Words are, in my not so humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic, capable of both inflicting injury and remedying it”*

-Albus Dumbledore, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part II*.

The seven seasons of Joss Whedon’s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*<sup>133</sup> depict the eponymous heroine “dusting” vampires and defeating the “Big Bads” that rise from the Hellmouth to conquer Buffy’s home town of Sunnydale. Buffy Summers’s (Sarah Michelle Gellar) most powerful accomplice in the war against the vampires is Willow Rosenberg (Alyson Hannagan) who, after beginning the series as a technophile and a firm advocate of science, begins to culture a credence in the mystic and unknown. Naturally talented, Willow ascends the echelons of “magic(k)” and evolves from a self-effacing teenager to an immortal witch with the powers of a goddess. Willow’s parchment, like Merlyn’s in *The Once and Future King*, becomes signed by Hecate. Season Six of *Buffy* is the season most focused on this character and encompasses such issues as murder, teen suicide, and the insanity that grief can bring. Willow therein trades her blood for black ink, and becomes a living fiction. She exsanguinates sortilege, and breathes black magick, essentially becoming the grim tomes of magick she voids for power. I will make my argument on Willow’s immortality as stemming from the *nihilation*<sup>134</sup> of the self – the more she embraces eternity the more she cedes of her self to oblivion. I will also argue that with eternity comes a perpetual youth: just as in the case of The Master in *Who*, an immortal is an amalgam of the ancient and the ever-young. Willow and the malcontent Time Lord are representations of two different subtypes of the immortal. The former controls Death and the

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133 Hereafter referred to as *Buffy*.

134 Neologised from the Latin *nihil*, plus –ation. A making into nothing. Also used as *self-nihilation*, a making one’s self and soul into nothing.

latter controls Time, yet both are amalgam immortals, young yet old, and potent yet in some way debile. Even with cosmoclastic powers sparking at her fingertips, Willow is no more than a teenage presuicide, destroying herself and the world around her.

I will predicate these foci on the following six *Buffy* episodes: 3:09 “The Wish,” 3:16 “Doppelgängerland,” 6:19 “Seeing Red,” 6:20 “Villains,” 6:21 “Two to Go,” and 6:22 “Grave.” I will also refer to the 2004 novel *Wicked Willow: The Darkening*<sup>135</sup> by Yvonne Navarro, which charts a different course for Willow than that depicted on television. Navarro’s novelisation delineates what could have happened had Willow’s rampage not been halted by the Scooby Gang.

### **Malefic Magic(k), and Galderdash**

The sixth season of *Buffy* deals with the descent of Willow into an addiction to magic(k) and the degeneration of her relationship with her lover and fellow witch Tara Maclay (Amber Benson). Willow becomes an incomparable sorceress, or what is known in the Latin language as a *trivenefica*, a thrice-witch. Simultaneously, a trio of would-be supervillains consisting of robotics expert Warren Meers (Adam Busch), demon summoner Andrew Wells (Tom Lenk), and spellcaster Jonathan Levinson (Danny Strong) become a nuisance in Sunnydale. Buffy initially treats the three in 6:11 “Gone” as irritations who have “banded together to be pains in (her) ass.” Buffy’s dismissal of the Trio leads to an escalation of their plans, in which Warren steals the Orbs of Nezzla’khan, two mystical spheres which grant their holder an enhanced physical strength in 6:19 “Seeing Red.” Buffy’s breaking of these spheres prompts the psychotic Warren to later attack Buffy in her backyard. The leader of the Trio ineptly discharges a firearm, shooting Buffy and accidentally hitting Tara in her bedroom upstairs. While Buffy’s strength as the Slayer allows her to cling to life to receive medical treatment, Tara perishes instantly as a distraught Willow’s eyes glow<sup>136</sup> magic(k)ally and malefically red.<sup>137</sup>

Willow enchants the Summers’s house with a magic(k)al storm and makes an appellation to Osiris, the god of rebirth and regeneration in Egyptian mythology. Osiris angrily rejects Willow’s wish to restore Tara to life, stating that Tara’s “was a human death by human means.” The witch is infuriated beyond her sanity, and blasts the god with a magic(k)al projection. She kills death’s authority with her magic(k)s. A calm-faced Willow is next shown walking from the Summers’s

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135 Hereafter referred to as *Darkening*.

136 Indeed, as the episode’s title predicts.

137 The colour red is used symbolically throughout the episode to foreshadow Tara’s spraying blood, and Willow’s suddenly-scarlet eyes. Internet critic Billie Doux writes in her review entitled “*Buffy*: Seeing Red” that “In the first scene we (have) red sheets, red hair, red sunlight on naked skin, precursor to the blood in the last scene (1).”

residence, intent on exacting revenge. She moves with a hitherto-unseen confidence, with Tara's blood visibly unwashed from Willow's neck and clothing. Bulbs burst within their shades as Willow walks into Giles's occult merchandiser, the Magic Box. Therein, she invokes and absorbs weighty tomes of magic(k), the ink of which flows into her body and her being, corrupting her into Dark Willow. Interestingly, the close-up shots on these tomes reveal them to be more dictionary and less grimoire. They have the appearance of lexicons rather than books of circles, rhombs, and diagrams. These words become symbols as the witch absorbs them. Willow's presence diagrammises and simplifies the words, purifying them into raw power. The ink of these volumes flows into her eyes like reverse lacrimations, as her arms are swathed in sigils and her veins bulge black. She assumes the role of the mistress of all magic(k), leaving all other beldams and blightcasters in her wake. Willow's corruption by magic(k) is therefore literal: an inky pentacle is stamped upon her forehead before flowing into her mind, and darkening her eyes. Willow becomes a conduit to and from chaos, and gains the abilities to project lightning and tenebrous energy from her hands. Her palms become portals, through which flare the furors of chaos and magic(k). She mutates from a burning phoenix to a dying star, and her once-natural magic(k) becomes malefic. Creation thus becomes her marionette, which she may manipulate at will. She may steer trucks by standing atop them, and move objects telekinetically, all whilst veins of ink surge across her cheeks. Willow's garments also reflect her power and her grief. She dons the colours of the very chaos-magic(k) that sustains her rampage after her transformation. She wears the same dusk-hued jacket and trousers in 6:13 "Dead Things." Although her red hair and light-coloured top render her ensemble much brighter than the garb of a chaos-witch, this outfit is worn by Willow only when she is undergoing a period of sorrow. She wears these clothes firstly in 6:13 "Dead Things" when she runs into her then ex-girlfriend Tara; and secondly after her transformation into Dark Willow. The latter is shown to dress in this sombre garb twice to convey that her relationship with Tara is hurtling from light to darkness, and inexorably towards its end. Clothes are used as signifiers for two pivotal moments in the relationship between Willow and Tara: these moments being the end of their affiliation through Willow's addiction and the end of Tara's life by Warren's hand. Willow changes into this same black garb like an actress changing into a costume, using garments to perform the role of the avenging chaos-witch. She replicates her moment of misery in 6:13 "Dead Things," through donning the same set of clothes she wore at her nadir. Willow, having stolen magic(k) from book and being, becomes what she will later refer to as a "black-eyed baddie" who is "not coming back."

Willow's draining of the tomes of malefic magic(k) in 6:20 "Villains" symbolically replaces the liquids lost by Tara (blood) and Willow (tears). Willow's face is flecked with drops of blood, tears, and atrament. The liquid of life, blood, commingles here with the liquid of fiction, ink. Her body seethes with both fictive and vital waters, rendering her as a witch who may rewrite the text of reality. Her declamation of "that's better" begins what will be a series of laconisms that she will utter to

disguise her grief. The use of ink and tears in this scene conveys the unison of the real and false-real, which I will hereafter refer to as *the nihil real*. The tears on Willow's face represent her true self, which is seethed in grief; whilst the moving ink that travels into her eyes represent Willow's "Other" half, that of a star-browed witch. She uses her malefic magic(k) in the next scene as though it is the same nature-based magic(k) that she practised with her lover Tara. Dismissing the medical team saving Buffy with simply "leave ... now," Willow thoughtfully lifts the bullet from Buffy's breast, and considers the destructive power of something so small. After finding only a robotic decoy of Warren on a bus headed out of Sunnydale, Willow rejects her friends' offer of assistance in bringing Warren to justice. She strikes down Buffy and Xander with streaks of chaos-lightning projected casually from her hands, and walks away to find the real master of the Trio. In fact, Willow is so magic(k)ally empowered that when she later enters the woods of Sunnydale in pursuit of her prey, the very trees part to admit her. The ruthless Warren catches Willow off guard and embeds an axe in her back, and then detonates a fairy-winged explosive in her proximity.<sup>138</sup> Willow freezes the fire in response, and converts the blast into vitreous shards which shatter harmlessly around her. The witch then trammels Warren with the branches of a nearby tree. In the knowledge that Warren's imitation of a supervillain is uplifted directly from the comic books to which he cleaves, Willow reconjures the bullet that she extracted from Buffy. She tells Warren that taking a bullet is "not like in the comics," and pushes it telekinetically against the psychopath's slowly-yielding flesh. Finally, Willow kills Warren after echoing her vampire counterpart's expression of ennui in 3:16 "Doppelgängerland": "bored now."<sup>139</sup> However, Willow does not tear Warren limb from limb. Warren's death is by magic(k)al excoriation, an ultra-rapid flaying of his flesh. Willow flicks her wrist impulsively and Warren's pallid cutis flashes from his hypodermis before he can end a scream.<sup>140</sup> His body slumps over in shock before it bursts into magic(k)al flame. This flame is later changed retroactively in the Season Eight comics to be teleportative: Willow's rival Amy Madison (Elizabeth Anne Allen) averts Warren's demise and transports him, in order that Amy's magic(k) might act as a false flesh for him. Willow however

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138 Billie Doux outlines Warren's descent into villainy in her review entitled "*Buffy*: Villains." She writes "Warren was a human who wanted to be a monster; he was laughable early in the season, and then he was despicable ... The line between human and demon (becomes) increasingly blurred this season with demon lovers and human villains" (1). Season Six notes a shift in narrative in *Buffy*, in which the "villains" of the episode's title do not refer to vampires and demons, but rather to Warren and Willow, two quintessentially human characters who become more monstrous than the monsters.

139 This is eerie, as Willow never actually heard Vampwill say this. "Bored now" is a phrase that both fallen Willows are heard to recite. This links the two versions of Willow across the planes.

140 Internet critic Mikangelo Marinaro states in his review of 6:20 "Villains" that "Willow's flaying of Warren is ...to this day ... probably the most shocking thing I've seen on television ... the show's earned our fear for not only Willow, but everyone around her (1)."

believes that she has executed Warren, and whispers “one down” before magicking herself away. The conjurers here continue her pattern of short, oligosyllabic sentences that convey nothing of the grief that she is feeling. Willow’s speech becomes mostly matter with little art. However, the witch’s speech is indicative of her newly-inherited role as “the most powerful Wicca in the western hemisphere.”<sup>141</sup> Like *Who’s Master*, Willow is simultaneously ancient and pubescent. She represents the unnatural melding of the mythological body of Hecate with the mind of an addicted human teenager. Willow’s preferred method of enforcing silence, the stitching of mouths, is like a child holding her hand over her parent’s mouth in a futile effort to assert dominance. She becomes a goddess with the mind and intents of a child. The witch is a coalescence of light and darkness; water and ink; youth and ancientness; and early and modern languages.

After her absorption of the Magic Box’s library, Willow’s language becomes a fusion between magic(k)al imperatives, and mordant rhetoric. She induces sleep in a policeman by telling him in plain English to “take a nap” rather than using the Latin imperative “*dormi*,” meaning “sleep.” Willow’s spellcasting appears falser and less earned than its previous depictions, as she no longer has to speak a language at which she claims not to excel to bewitch a subject. That is to say, she no longer has to perform the role of the witch, as the ink of Giles’s grimoires now thrashes through her veins. Willow claims in 6:21 “Two to Go” that she no longer practises magic(k); she is magic(k), such that no other can compete. Indeed Sunnydale’s most powerful practitioners of magic(k) and demonic conjuration are reduced to trembling boys. Willow taunts Jonathan and Andrew, asking “you boys like magic(k) don’t you? Abracadabra!”<sup>142</sup> before assailing “the duo” with clouds of lightening chaos. Willow cannot resist using language to insult and intimidate the “couple of geeks” one last time before attempting to blast them to atoms. Denigration is Willow’s true magic(k)al language. In the absence of the magician’s grammar, Latin, the witch may only utter insults and puerile statements such as “abracadabras” and “alakazams” to cast her spells. Willow, who is usually such a nuanced and neologistic speaker, embraces the conventions of nonsense and speaking ill. She alternates between geekspeak and profundity, thus losing the ability to register nuance and originality in her language. She merges galdor and balderdash to create her own make of *galderdash*. Indeed, when Willow’s mangled recitations of ancient tongues are disabled by Anya’s (Emma Caulfield) chants in the climactic Magic Box battle in 6:21 “Two to Go,” the only words left to Willow are juvenile japes and jibes, which she delivers with a purposeful sardonicism. When spells fail Willow, only insults are left. She omits the “g’s” in her gerunds in a child-imitative fashion, stating that Anya “can’t chant if she’s sleepin’” before knocking the vengeance demon unconscious. Despite her power then, Willow’s is decidedly not the diction of an ancient or immortal. She uses language and her make of *galderdash*

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141 A reference to *The Wizard of Oz*. Willow has become like the Wicked Witch of the West in Sunnydale’s reality.

142 A false spellword that Willow re-utters in *Darkening*.

to achieve her ends as a child might: in this case, to silence Anya's protective incantations. Willow's linguistic performance is more that of an indignant child than a witchering goddess, a fact that is confirmed by Willow's irreverently (and über-coolly) referring to her newfound energies as "mojo" rather than "magic(k).

The language of magic(k), and the language of denigration, are two different weapons wielded by Willow. Judith Butler writes in *Excitable Voices: A Politics of the Performative* that "language injure(s) us," because we are all "linguistic beings" (1). Willow's magic(k)s are linguistic performances invoked to injure and avenge. Her performance is one of pain, a pain that she attempts to salve through inflicting the same or greater agony onto others. In these cogitations, "magic(k)" is the truth wielded as a knife: Willow derives her immense power from the rage coursing within her. She claims in 6:21 "Two to Go" that she is "more honest" about her pain than Buffy, and it is in this honesty that the Wiccan gains what she believes to be a superior power to Buffy's Slayer strength. When this power proves to be insufficient, Willow bewitches her body until she possesses the might to beat Buffy in physical combat. Language is depicted in *Buffy* as empowering even those who dismiss its efficacy. Butler continues that "to be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context ... to not know where you are" (1). Willow's insults and her false alakazams become interwoven into a sort of *galderdash*, an artificial and somewhat silly scion of magick which she uses to inflict pain and, as Butler says, disorient her victims. Willow's different weapons of speech meld into one. Hexes and denigrations ultimately become interchangeable in the teenager's vocabulary, to the end that Willow's words ensorcel as much as her dialogic process, her "magic(k)s." She reweaves reality through both the insult and magic(k)al phrase: "maledictions" have the dual meaning of both obloquies and dark curses. Willow is visibly immortal to the extent that death is but another reality that is alterable by magic(k)al and non-magic(k)al speech. In his crafting of Willow, Whedon takes his cue from such pop cultural precedents as Marvel Comics character Scarlet Witch<sup>143</sup>, inasmuch as the fact that Willow's magic(k)s are deflections and reversals of the real which are achieved through speech and gestures. When Willow takes damage in a fervid battle with a newly-empowered Giles (Anthony Stewart Head) in 6:22 "Grave"<sup>144</sup>, she sweeps her hand across her face and abrogates her injuries. In doing this, she actually erases her wounds, making flesh uncut, and blood unbled. "This is nothing," she says, after reweaving the reality in which she ever began to bleed. She confluminates nihilism and reality, and thereby creates *nihil reality*. Willow weaves magic(k) mostly in modern, colloquial English,

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143 First appearing in March 1964 in *X-Men #4*. Scarlet Witch is a powerful sorceress who, like Willow, has the power to bend realities. *The Marvel Encyclopedia* states that Scarlet Witch "possessed (the) ability to affect probability fields to cause unlikely events to occur" (257). Dark Willow uses similar powers to protect herself, such as freezing an explosion with a thought in 6:20 "Villains."

144 Giles explains in 6:22 "Grave" that he gained his magicks from a "coven in Devon."

whilst Giles uses such Latinisms as “*vincere*,” the present active infinitive of the Latin verb “*vinco*,”<sup>145</sup> to cast a binding spell. However, the magic(k)s of both combatants seems false and absorbed, rather than earned by rote study. Willow is improficient at Latin, and shapes spells using English, whilst Giles mispronounces his Latinate spells, elocuting the verb “*vincere*” with a “V” sound rather than with the “W” sound of an educated Latinist. Giles pronounces the word vin-CHEER-ree, when the proper pronunciation is “wink-EAR-ray.” These minutiae emphasise the fact that Willow and Giles conduct their duel using stolen and lent magic(k)s respectively. Neither is the natural heir to the powers they wield and neither is adequately educated in their use. Both are the “rank, arrogant amateurs” to which the two combatants refer at the outset of 6:22 “Grave.” Though Willow and Giles may perform the roles of dark and natural mages respectively, neither have equitably gained their new invulnerabilities.<sup>146</sup> Willow’s performance of magic(k) is no more than Hecatean puerility, adorned with the semblances of spellcraft.

Willow’s powers in spellweaving are further explored in Yvonne Navarro’s narrative *The Darkening* in which Willow seeks to reverse Tara’s death and resurrect her lost lover. Therein, Willow imagines her agglomerated magic(k)s “bleeding into her essence and establishing itself as a permanent source” (192). She becomes the laughing face of grief, whose refiction of the real seems to be too great a power for its callow, ineloquent wielder. Willow seems childishly innocuous when she makes a reference to *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>147</sup> in 6:22 “Grave,” commanding a conjured fireball to “fly, my pretty” before jeering to Giles “see what I did there?” She appears to return momentarily to the mousy girl who makes jokes in order to be noticed by her oblivious schoolmates; a nervous joking that is mirrored by Willow’s foe Andrew’s referring to her as being alike to Archie Comics’s teenage witch, Sabrina Spellman. Comics are a coping mechanism: both Willow and Andrew make nerdy and often obscure references as a means of interacting. However, Willow’s jests are each imbued with a portent of peril, as she subtly conveys to Buffy and Giles that the former must abandon her mentor to save Xander (Nicholas Brendon), Dawn (Michelle Trachtenberg), and the last two members of the Trio from Willow’s conjured comet. Willow’s saying that the heroic interventions of Buffy are “kinda pesky” and that the Slayer “need(s) every ... inch of (her) ass kicked” is not the expected diction of a

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145 A Latin verb which translates to “to win, to conquer, to overcome.”

146 Giles here acts against type. The ex-librarian absorbs great power rather than finding in books “the images, the information, the incantation, the lore that will assist Buffy (against evil)” (46) as GraceAnne A. DeCandido refers to the character in her 1999 review entitled “Bibliographic Good vs. Evil.” He is not the “SuperLibrarian” to which Xander refers in 1:05 “Never Kill a Boy on the First Date,” but rather a vessel for the magic(k) that represents humankind’s last hope against Willow’s darkness. Giles here operates differently to DeCandido’s description of one who “thirst(s) to know ... the forces of darkness, to name them, and hence to defang them” (46): Giles instead absorbs magic(k)al might from more powerful beings to defeat Willow.

147 Hereafter referred to as *Oz*.

necromantic goddess, but rather that of a geeky and irascible schoolgirl. Indeed, in these episodes of *Buffy*, God(ess) is a nerd. The battle between the witch and the Slayer is waged not only through the use of physical and magic(k)al brawn, but through the means of barbed jest, verbal altercation, and awkward references to Oꝛ. Willow's is the immortal's *miserere*, as mewled by the babe.

Caroline Ruddell writes in ““I am the Law” “I am the Magics”: Speech, Power and the Split Identity of Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*” that Willow “becomes so ... immersed in black magic that she claims that she IS magic ... Magic is Willow's language” (1). However, to dispute this, if magic(k) is Willow's language, then magic(k) is no more difficult than colloquialism. As Willow claims to Dawn in 6:21 “Two to Go”: “no honey ... I am the magic(k)s.” Magic(k) and language share a sisterhood in Willow's art. Both magic (*magicae artes*) and language (*lingua*) are feminine nouns in the magician's grammar of Latin. Willow combines the interdependent arts of tongues and sorcery and becomes their mistress. It is apt that it is a woman who aspires to such heights of conjuration that she herself becomes magic(k). It, and more specifically Wiccanism, are traditionally feminine arts that do not naturally inhere in such semi-sorcerers as the “dabble boy”<sup>148</sup> Jonathan. Such are simply dilettantes in the cabalistic crafts, as magic(k) in *Buffy* is a force that exists only in dearths and plenitudes. The craft is either lamentably understudied, as by Jonathan or Giles; or eldritch in its abundance, as in Willow. The masculine signifies dearth and the feminine signifies plenitude. Willow refers to this imbalance at the outset of 6:22 “Grave” when she performs the role of the subservient female or daughter to a newly-returned Giles. “Uh-oh,” she snickers. “Daddy's home- I'm in wicked trouble now.” Willow here uses this sort of sarcasm to injure, and convey to her obviously weaker mentor that it is only in the daughters of Hecate that the k-suffixed “magic(k)” flows in torrents. Thus Willow does not appeal to male gods of “magic(k)” such as say the Cymric god Gwydion fab Dôn or the Slavic god Veles, and nor does the narrative even give credence to these mythic gods of galdor. Her magic(k) is quintessentially feminine, and is educed only by goddesses and muliebral words. Willow gains immortality in both this feminine language and this feminine performance, and the darkness of the witch's psyche is revealed within her (undoubtedly gendered) words.

As Fantasy teaches us, magic(k) in fiction is a polynymous force. Take as exemplars any from J.R.R. Tolkien's wizard Saruman who is described in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* as both “cunning and dwimmer-crafty”<sup>149</sup> (426) and The Witch King of Angmar, who is referred to in *The Return of the King* as a “*Dwimmerlaik*”<sup>150</sup> (822); to Christopher Paolini's Eragon who practises

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148 As Xander refers to Jonathan in 6:21 “Two to Go.”

149 Which Tolkien neologised from the Old English *dwomecraft*, the practice of magic.

150 That is to say a corpse or lich of dwimmer; a dwimmer-lich.

“gramarye” in *The Inheritance Cycle*<sup>151</sup>, to Ashibe Yuuho’s Celtic-inspired manga<sup>152</sup> series, *Kaze no Garudoru/The Wind of Galdor*. Willow however, reduces the name of the magic(k) she shared with Tara and the Scoobies down to simply “mojo.” Magic(k) is a power that runs parallel to powerlessness, just as the colloquial is aligned with the arcane in the witch’s words. Willow devocabulates magian speech for her own convenience. The grammar of “dwimmer,”<sup>153</sup> then, is founded upon its binaries: male and female, power and powerlessness, colloquial and arcane. Magic(k), to Willow, is less power than, and more the spoken forms of teenage nihilism and self-reproach.

Willow’s guilt in having wrenched earth’s heroine from her heaven in the two-parter 6.1/6.2 “Bargaining” is indeed evident in her dialogue. She refers to her former self’s resurrective rite as a sin that wrenched Buffy from her rest. It is patently plain that the witch would happily return the Slayer to the ground in exchange for the resurrection of Tara. Willow becomes a dichotomy of power and impuissance, as of the end of 6.19 “Seeing Red.” She has gained mastery over the restoration of any life that has been taken by preternatural means, but is forbidden by Osiris himself to raise any soul who has been taken by “human means.” The combination of the human and the Hecatean is woefully subpotent to Willow, as her reality-weaving extends only to the unnatural; and the present and the future. She can make gods yawp in terror, yet she may not rescind the propulsion of a burning bullet into her lover’s chest. She is omnipotent minus one, possessing every grain of sand on the shore but for the last. When confronted by a choice of eternities, whether to live and avenge, or to die and see Tara again in the hereafter, Willow lamentably chooses an eternity of reprisal. In selecting vengeance and immortality over lenity and dying, Willow excludes herself from the afterlife, and thereby from ever being reunited with Tara. Though Willow tries to make her reach exceed her grasp, the past is, as the Time War to The Doctor, a locked room into which none may enter.<sup>154</sup>

### **“Your Suffering Has To End”: The Dwimmer Doll, “Mistressing” Reality, and Magic(k) as the Language of the Teenage Nihilist**

Rupert Giles: *“The magicks you channelled were more ... primal than anything you could ... hope to understand ... you rank, arrogant amateur!”*

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151 Which Paolini uplifted from the obsolete noun *gramarye*, magic; ultimately derived from the Old French *gramaire*, grammar; book of magic.

152 Manga is a Japanese genre of comic books and graphic novels.

153 As J.R.R. Tolkien referred to the craft.

154 Except of course when the plot demands. Although it may be stated as such, nothing is impossible in the fantasy genre. As in *Who’s* 4:17/4:18 “The End of Time Parts One and Two,” the recurrence of the dead can test the protagonist to his or her limits.

Willow Rosenberg: *"You're right. The magicks I channelled are ... powerful. I'm ... powerful and maybe it's not ... a good idea for you to piss me off."*

-6:04 "Flooded."

*"My gym is dark magic, and my protein shake is rage!"*

-Don John, *Adventure Time*, 5:46 "The Red Throne."

One commonality amongst the undying is this implacable sense of nihilism. Willow has gained a magic(k)al godhead through drinking the very ink of Giles's grimoires, and yet this power fails to sate her. She gains the gift of undying at a point in which having this gift becomes irrelevant due to her having no one with whom to share it. Warren, in killing Tara, also kills the better part of Willow, leaving only the latter's hunger and addiction ensouled by the smallest scintillation of human sentience. Willow becomes the human and the hecatean in one dark aggregate. The witch whose power grants her an audience with the gods cannot overcome the laws of natural passing. This impotence leads to Willow's nihilistically saying in 6:22 "Grave" that "it's all nothing." In gaining power, Willow becomes heiress to, and mistress of, a "*nihil*," or nothing reality. She is but a doll through which the dwimmer flows. She is a witch of similitudes who creates *nihilous*<sup>155</sup>, or nothing realities out of grief and ire. Proving again that her conjuring palms have become portals to other realms, when Willow lifts the bullet from Buffy's chest in 6:20 "Villains," she grasps it in her hand, thereby erasing it from existence. She later reproduces it as a device for torturing Warren, inexorably driving the "tiny piece of metal" into Warren's heart. Willow uses her magic(k) to push the bullet against Warren's skin, piercing the flesh as she slowly describes what happens when one is shot.

The *nihilous* reality of the undying extends also to the language of the immortal. That is to say, there seems to be no discernible reason as to why Willow deviates between speaking Latin and not in her sorcery. She absorbs the ink of magic(k)al texts that are written in ancient languages, yet does not gain the ability to speak these languages fluently as one of her (many) new abilities. To *magi* and *magae*, there is lightning in Latin, for galdor endows the lucubrationist. However, Willow is depicted as being so special that there is no necessity to complete her study in Prospero's tongues. Magic(k) itself seems to accelerate her ascension: she may become a Prospera in modernity with little effort. The Wiccan has no need to scope and scrutinise grimoires when she can quickly desiccate their pages for power and savance. The reasons for Willow's conjuring in English then are indolence and ignorance, as both speech and gesture seem to have equal effect. Witchery is here extremely

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155 Neologised from the Latin *nihil*, plus -ous.

different to the “walking widdershins” of yore. It is a wish made into flesh, and a desire made into a deity. When Giles binds Willow in a ring of natural magic(k) at the outset of 6:22 “Grave,” the witch Latinises her requests for release, shouting “*Solvo! Libero!*”<sup>156</sup> Willow misincants here, citing the Latin verbs meaning “to release.” Her pronunciation of the words is even closer to the English words “solo” and “liberate” than the actual Latin. Magick, when practised at Willow’s level, is not shown to require any correctitude. Willow binds Warren with a magickal word (“*irretite*”<sup>157</sup>), however she employs an English recitation (“reveal”) to make Warren’s deceased girlfriend Katrina Silber (Melinda Embry) appear and reveal how she met her demise. There is no consistency in how Willow and Giles operate or indeed, perform their stolen/lent magic(k)s. These forces kneel before their practitioners, who debase dark dwimmer into jejune alakazams. This lack of consistency is even lampshaded in 7:15 “Get It Done” in which Willow shouts during a conjuration: “*Via, concursus, tempus, spatium, audi me ut imperio.*”<sup>158</sup> Screw it! Mighty forces, I suck at Latin, okay? But that’s not the issue. I’m the one in charge, and I’m telling you open that portal, now!” Here the dwimmer-weaver dismisses both the potency of Latin and her own ability to speak it, despite the language’s evident thaumaturgic properties. Willow fails to complete her spell whilst speaking Latin, yet goading the gods and “mighty forces” in modern English colloquialisms wins the magic(k) immediately. Willow’s saying that she “sucks at Latin” embodies the writers’ attitude towards the language. Latin is little more than a dependable source of mystic burbling which close to the entirety of *Buffy*’s target audience are unlikely to understand. Magic(k) in modernity is shown to be most effective when it is spoken in unadorned English. Latin is depicted as a language better off dead; despite Latin’s being the lodestar of Western languages, the source that forms the basis of significant vocabulary of modern English.

This repudiation of the efficacy of Latin as the language of both speech and sorcery contributes to the *nihilous* reality of the immortal. Though the organism may be somatically immortal, the memories within the mind of this organism are not. The language and methods of communication of the undying evolve with the elapsing of time. The (presumably) immortal “mighty forces” to which Willow appeals in 7:15 “Get It Done” have forgotten the power of Latin as the “*lingua magica*,” or magian grammar. These immortals are now endlessly appealed to in conjurations phrased in fractured Latin which swiftly devolve into English and other modern tongues. Latin is being abnegated by conjurers, as the mage’s language has become the *lingua franca* of the age. The conversative tongue between the witch and the forces to which she appeals has become colloquial English that is laden with modern references. Songs of Hecate have been rendered *nihilous* in the

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156 Latin verbs: *solvo, solvere*: to loosen, undo, free, release; and *libero, liberare*, to free, set free, release.

157 To ensnare, entangle: comes from the Latin verb *irretio, irretire*.

158 A Latin phrase that translates into English as “Way, gathering, time, space, hear me as I command!”

modern day. The most powerful Wiccan anglicises the ancient tongues in her becoming not merely a practitioner of magic(k), but magic(k) itself. There is a symbiosis between mortal mages and immortal mage-tongues, and the changes that must occur in these to remain existent forever.

Immortality is indeed to be gained through change, as is to be seen through the examples of The Doctor, The Master, Captain Jack Harkness, River Song, and indeed this teenage Gandalf(ina). If one alters and adapts oneself then one may become sempiternal. However, these adaptations and alterations of the self can be viewed as forms of death. If one's flesh is immortal, yet one's memories are not, then one is not truly immortal. Immortality is simply living and changing eternally. One's selfhood is thereby decidedly mortal, but the *anima* or animating force that ensouls the organism becomes deathless. When Willow "shimmers"<sup>159</sup> in *Darkening* she muses that when her body "moves from place to place using mystical energy – (she) got what she thought might be a brief taste of eternity" (13). It is in a state of somatic disunion that Willow's *anima* feels the pull of eternity. She also notes that when she shimmers the dolour of Tara's death is "blasted from her mind" (13). The spellcaster finds in her bodily dissolution a state of ultimate undying. Eternity is found in forgetting. Willow profanes the reliquary of her memory in order to embrace eternity. However, the last vestige of her humanity disavows the immortality in "staying all shimmered apart" (14) and calls such a *nihilous* state a "luxury" (14). This state of bodily shifting is an immortality that requires the seeker to desacralise and dissolve that which composes their self. If one is corporeally-protean, then one may adapt against death, and halt it indefinitely. The youthful Saru(wo)man cedes all but a quantum of her own self in exchange for strength in sorcery. She thereby loses all that constructs her psyche as she trades her selfhood for each magic(k) codex. Willow therefore becomes but a grimoire given form and voice, losing her soul in a manner that is similar to the *psychomarusmic*<sup>160</sup> mania which consumes The Joker of the "Batman" mythos. Willow's new antipathy astonishes those around her, especially the youngest of the Scooby Gang. When Willow and Dawn discuss Tara's death in 6:21 "Two to Go," Willow tells a tearful Dawn "I understand the crying ... you cry, because you're human." The spellweaver's assertion that Dawn cries because she is human is strange because Dawn is in fact not human, and Willow is. Willow has become alien to the human condition, as the teenager observes Dawn's grief with insouciance. The witch derogates Dawn with a cruel imitation, saying "Mom! Buffy! Tara! Wah!" She criticises Dawn for being moved by the same grief that nigrified the witch's own hair and eyes. Willow's practice of magic(k) leads her to believe that she is both no longer human, and no longer alive. She ponders in *Darkening* that "crying was believed to be cathartic, purifying a person of pain and sorrow ... But no Willow couldn't do that ... besides, to cry

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159 A process of teleporting through corporal disintegration and reintegration.

160 A *psychomarusmus* is a degeneration of the psyche that is caused by madness. I will return to this term in Chapter 3 "Immortal through Inaction" in relation to Batman's arch-antagonist, The Joker.

she needed to be alive, and she wasn't anymore ..." (56). The witch here observes her body as having died, not realising that it is not her flesh, but her human soul/self that is in peril of perdition. Willow's new corporal inconstancy leads her to believe that she has become nothing, as though in a final and irrevocable act of *self-nihilation*. Willow, however, has not been made into nothing, but rather is the new mistress of nihility. She becomes mistress of the *nihil* real, whose powers may disintegrate and reintegrate the body that tempts them. It is in this bodily chaos that Willow feels ironically most immortal. Her immortality is itself then a *nihilous* or "nothing" reality that evokes the apocalypse of adolescence.

Willow's interior monologues in *Darkening* reveal more of her thoughts on her self-image whilst addicted to magic(k). She imagines herself as hieratic to Hecate, having the semblance of a "high priestess among the acolytes," whilst all others are "brain-challenged lumps" (33). She uses sacerdotal imagery to convey her ascension. However she views her new eternity as a form of death that denies all but bodily functioning. She describes the sounds and smells of the vespertine scene through which she strolls, but states that "none of (these perceptions) made her alive, (they) just made her functioning" (56). Hierophantic language appears to share a painful similarity to the language of the pre-suicide, and the suicide ideator.<sup>161</sup> To become a priest of death is to enter into either a pre-death, or an alter state of death. As a method of coping with her new power, Willow makes the world around *nihilous* through both spells and speech. In this state she uses pure will<sup>162</sup> to form her diverse suite of sorceries; as though she has become a form of the goddess to which she appeals. Willow is hecatean, and barely-human. She is emblematic of the state of the immortal who enters and occupies a *nihilous* space in which Time and Nature are disempowered. The immortal is never to senesce, fall ill, or have his or her senses hebetated by Time. The immortal becomes an undethronable king of being, or as the witch refers to herself in *Darkening*, a "queen of the Realm" (74). Those undying become fixtures and symbols in Time, never to age or die, but changing sempiternally. These beings are quantumly immortal, as per The Doctor, The Master, Captain Jack, and River Song in *Who*. However it is the undying who seek death best. Those who exist in the *nihilous* world of the undying have the most life to lose. Willow reconsiders her position as "queen" in *Darkening* after witnessing the nihility of undying and decides that "I'm the queen of nothing and no one" (101). She voids her soul in the pursuit of vengeance. Giles states in 6.22 "Grave" that if

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161 Suicide completion and suicide ideation in adolescents is being studied more than ever in 2014 due to a significant increase in the number of teen suicides. Charles Zorumski cites alarming figures in his column "Suicidal Behavior in Adolescents," stating that the latest paper on non-lethal suicide behaviours in American adolescents suggests that "about 12 % reported suicidal ideations" (1). Willow is the supernatural embodiment of this disturbing trend.

162 The Greek word for "will" is indeed one of the conjectured radices of the goddess Hecate's name.

Willow continues down the path of self-consumption she will “wind up dead.” Her expenditures of her animic forces are indeed shown to bring her to states of semi-death. Willow’s eyes are black when her power levels are steady, and flash red when she is overexpending her power through teleportations by means of light and lightning, or blasting her opponents with hexes. Willow even absorbs the potent soul of Rack (Jeff Kober), the penultimate power in Sunnydale, and yet is still only strong enough for a duel of fists with Buffy before needing to recharge. Willow’s immortality and nigh-omnipotence are transitory, and require the suffering of others for their sustention. Her immortality is not a *phoenical mirimortality* like The Doctor’s or The Master’s, but rather a life that is derived from death. Bleakness and blackness are before and behind her. The Wiccan considers both her previous life and her looming future as nothings, stating in 6:21 “Two to Go” that “the only thing I had going for me were the moments ... when Tara would look at me and I was wonderful. And that will never happen again.” There is a juxtaposition then of power and debility; and gaining and losing in both Willow’s character, and her abilities. The immortal’s body is sundered from her sanity, leaving only an addict. The kind of magic(k) that Willow works is the magic(k) of black cessation, and if she herself is magic(k) then she has also become death. Her complete change of personality signifies the power that forces her once-mortal veins to worm blackly across her visage. The witch seems to take pride in her power and her addiction as she crows, as though referring to someone else, “Willow’s a junkie” (6:21 “Two to Go”) and “Willow doesn’t live here anymore” (6.22 “Grave”).<sup>163</sup> Her addiction (and indeed her relapse) is depicted as similar to a narcotics addict breaking their abstinence. Shepard Siegel writes in “Drug Tolerance, Drug Addiction and Drug Anticipation” that “autobiographical accounts of addiction typically describe difficulties ... in maintaining ... abstinence.” As Jean Cocteau<sup>164</sup> noted in his description of his own addiction “the dead drug leaves a ghost behind. At certain hours it haunts the house” (299). Magick is Willow’s “dead drug” that returns so spectacularly to life. The “ghost haunting the house” in this case is the power and addictivity of the drug of magic(k). Tara’s death liberates this spectre from the “house” of Willow’s mind and body, triggering the end of Willow’s magic(k)al abstinence. The “conditional stimuli” (299) that she has paired with her “drug use” (the practice of magic(k)) are ironically her feelings for her lover and fellow witch, Tara. Willow returns thunderously to her witching when Tara is taken by Warren’s stray bullet. Willow’s eyes glow malefically red just moments after Tara’s life ebbs away. The witch perceives her relapse as facilitating a righteous course of vengeance. She

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163 Mikelangelo Marinaro correctly states in his review of 6:21 “Two to Go” “when (Willow is) focused on ... rage, it’s the magic talking; when she’s focused on her emotions (i.e. when she recalls how Tara enriched her life), it’s Willow talking. The change is ... denoted in how Willow refers to herself- in the third person for the former, and in the first person for the latter” (1).

164 A French novelist and filmmaker (1889-1963).

believes that her actions are not fuelled by addiction, but rather a desire to exact revenge from her lover's killer. The Wiccan embraces the "drug" of witchery, quipping "who's your supplier?" to Giles in 6:22 "Grave" after having drained his soul of the magic(k)s within. The human soul is as a chalice to Willow, from which she may consume the might of those who oppose her. Her drinking from the souls of others obliterates the text of her own soul, and renders her different.<sup>165</sup> She takes and aggregates within herself something from the souls from which she sups, as though drawing from her vampiric form in the parallel world of 3:09 "The Wish."<sup>166</sup> For example, Willow masculinises her magic(k) after she kills and drinks from Rack. She greets Buffy's sister Dawn as "cutie" just as Rack used to refer to Willow as "strawberry." Willow also states in 6:21 "Two to Go" "I'm just getting the wood for the violence here" as she attempts to extirpate Andrew and Jonathan in the Magic Box and "that all you got, Jeeves?" to an exhausted Giles in 6:22 "Grave." The Wiccan utters many such masculinisms<sup>167</sup> as though having taken on Rack's faux-patriarchal condescension. The witch undergoes a final metamorphosis when she absorbs the benign forces of Giles, becoming omniaudient of the passions winging from every human mind. The waters of every human soul augment Willow's own: she becomes a pantopath<sup>168</sup> and a locus for the penthetic. That is to say, she becomes sentient to all human feeling. She becomes a *Superanima*, a supreme soul that is seethed in the joys and the miseries of all other *animae*. Willow's is a transcendentalised eternity: by invading one soul she gains access to all in error. She is to live as long as humans are sentient, and alive. The witch's athanatism, once derived from a communion with nature and its magic(k)s, becomes an insufferable bane. Willow's omniscience<sup>169</sup> moves her to raise the altar of the demoness Proserpexa<sup>170</sup> at Kingman's Bluff, and in doing so end the world. "The true essence of magic(k)"<sup>171</sup> mingles with the "dark juice"<sup>172</sup> of Rack and the tomes of the Magic Box. The witch, in her new position as a pantopath, regresses to a juvenile state in which any pain is literally the end of the world. The loss of Willow's beacon Tara forces the former to return to her youth as a timid and

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165 As another literary example, the sorcerer Prospero in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* saves the book of his soul by drowning his literal spellbook and abjuring magic. Therein, as in *Buffy*, magic(k) is depicted as a powerful yet mutating force. One must choose between either life, or magic(k).

166 To which I will refer later in this chapter.

167 Such as screaming at Buffy "get off me, super-bitch!" in 6:21 "Two to Go."

168 A psychological term, meaning one who can sense, imagine, or empathise with the emotions of all others.

169 A philosophical term meaning "having sensory awareness of all things."

170 Also known as "Sister of the Dark." Proserpexa's name is possibly derived from the Latin "pro" (before) and "serpent," indicating that she is a pre-Satanic entity.

171 As Giles refers to his borrowed power in 6:22 "Grave."

172 As Rack refers to Willow in 6:21 "Two to Go."

empathetic girl. Adolescence and its inherent tragedies are depicted as a literal apocalypse. However the god from the machine that saves the witch and the world is friendship.<sup>173</sup>

Willow's powers are not merely limited to caliginous blasts and the abrogation of her injuries. Reality is her weft to ravel and resew as she wishes. She takes the roles of the Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos<sup>174</sup> of the real, becoming what Buffy refers to in the novel *Darkening* as a "doom goddess" (138) who controls matter like a mistress of puppets. Buffy observes that Willow's powers allow her to manipulate "the unseen hand of the universe" (137) as though each life is equipped with invisible "puppet strings" (137) that she may hitch and yank on a whim. When the witch raises the altar of Proserpexa in 6:22 "Grave," it is her intent to ravel reality and sever these "puppet strings" which sustain life. Her final hex is to end the world. Willow's apocalypse incorporates both the ancient and the modern meanings of the word: firstly, a revelation, and secondly, an Armageddon. Having learned that there are agonies in our human sphere greater than her own, she decides to end the world, an act which (in her terms) extends lenience to its inhabitants. Yet this decision to uncreate the world is undertaken by a bereaved witch who has only recently passed pubescence. Willow's decision is a metaphor for the adolescent apocalypse. Upon learning that the world is a darker place than we imagined as children, the response of some is to rebel, and to rail against authority. Willow is the quintessential teenage dissident as she uses her powers to hurl the police against their cruisers in 6:21 "Two to Go." She is the rebelling teenager made deiform. Some teenagers in the midst of their adolescent apocalypse also elect to take their own lives, or as incidents such as the 1999 Columbine Massacre, or the 2007 Virginia Tech Massacre convey, to murder others before one's suicide. Willow decides to end not just her existence, but the existence of every suffering mortal. Her decision encompasses both suicide and genocide, or as Lillian M. Range writes in "Suicide Prevention: Guidelines for Schools," "a solution to a life of intolerable psychological pain ... an escape into the soothing balm of nothingness" (135). Here it is the *nihilation* of the immortal self and the extirpation of the human race. For Willow, nothingness is indeed the soothing balm she seeks for her soul. The witch's reactions to pain seem to be hyperbolisations of research into why teenagers who have experienced pain and loss elect the egress of suicide. Willow's wish to repeal reality like a god erasing his creation is a manifestation of her will to take her own life. Jack Frymier writes in "Understanding and Preventing Teen Suicide: An Interview With Barry Garfinkel" that "an accumulation of ... stresses ... overwhelms ... youngsters and leaves them believing that suicide is the only option available to them" (291). Willow, as a pantopathic immortal, sees these tortures of

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173 Indeed, as online critic "Mark Does Stuff" elegantly sums up in "Mark Watches *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. S06E22

"Grave": "Xander saves the world with a hug ... the simplistic brilliance of what takes Willow down (is) friendship" (1).

174 Also known as the *Moirai* (Ancient Greek "apportioners"): the spinners of Fate in Greek mythology.

existence fractured through the prism of her grief-bloodied self. The integrity of all human agony is set upon the witch's shoulders that she may think of nothing but inducing the earth to revert to pretemporal silence. Confronting eternity overwhelms Willow, when confronting decades has already caused irreparable damage. The Wiccan's pantopathy and her reaction to both Warren's inexcusable act; and all the woes of humankind besetting her at once is a metaphor for the overlooked adolescent. Having gained immortality, she sees all of humankind as young and unable to perceive the true terrors of existence. She decides in an instant that everyone would be better off dead. Human life, as Willow says in the novel *Darkening*, is "miserably earthly" (247). It is such lines of thinking that induce impetuous and misguided teenagers to commit suicide, rather than face the situations that have befallen them. Though Willow indeed explores her latent propensity for evil as a hypothetical vampire in another dimension in 3:16 "Doppelgängland," and as an avenging chaos-witch at the climax of Season Six, Willow is shown at her most false and her most frangible in these roles. Vampwill and Dark Willow are leering spectres from other realities, or distortions projected by a funhouse mirror. Willow's parallel alternates are certainly the most explored of the characters in *Buffy*, to the end that she could be viewed as a figure whose exterior belies her true malefic nature. She is however better envisioned as an everyteenager who overcomes the pains of the adolescent apocalypse through confronting the pain of eternity. Whedon's aim is not to induce a hatred for Willow in his audience, but rather to demonstrate that at times one's morality and one's mortality can be tissue together. The audience is compelled to forgive Willow as we see her tears, regret, and the arrant lack of consequences for her actions: neither the police, nor Warren's family, nor the remnants of the Trio force the Wiccan to pay for her actions whilst under the influence of magic(k). She is finally whisked away to England before the events of 7:01 "Lessons," not to be punished for her killing two people and injuring more, but rather to be rewarded with the lighter side of the craft, with Giles acting as Willow's "(Albus) Dumbledore."<sup>175</sup> The flaming return of Willow's red hair as the malefic magic(k)al ink flows from her body signifies her *phoenical* rebirth. The wonders of mortal life are presented in this scene, as the books of the world's most sable magic(k) bleed from Willow's core. She becomes freed from the influences of Giles's grimoires and the magic(k)s from Rack's benighted soul, and returns screaming to the vale of tears. The pretermission of the suffering adolescent by the adolescent's parents, friends, and mentors is an issue addressed in Willow's magic(k)al addiction. Immortality is a curse if one is miserable in one's mortal life, and a bane to one whose soulmate is irrevocably dead. Immortality does not heal what diseases the soul. If Hell is timeless and respitless, then Hell is surely being forever. *Mirimortality* can be of illusory value, as the

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175 The headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the *Harry Potter* septilogy. Willow refers to Giles as her "Dumbledore" in 7:01 "Lessons" (an episode which I will refer to in depth in the next section in relation to Buffy's greatest nemesis, The First).

insouciance of The Doctor and the mad gambits of The Master reveal. Willow's descent into magic(k) is then a form of suicide as her mind is bowed by the bale of Tara's death. She relinquishes her life to an immortal vengeance, and like *Who's* Master is simultaneously a grand god and an impotent child. However, just as Hecate is depicted mythologically as a treble-formed goddess, Willow is not solely limited to the form of a witch. The *trivenefica's* body is also thrice-formed, shifting between human, witch, and vampire. Such magical beings as Tolkien's twentieth century "*dwimmerlaik*"<sup>176</sup> have evolved into such beings as the Wiccan Willow, the dwimmer doll of the new millennium.

### **Vampwill: Darkness as a Bride, and Parallel Undyings**

Finally in this chapter, I wish to address Willow's parallel-world vampiric form presented in the third season episodes entitled 3:09 "The Wish" and 3:16 "Doppelgängerland," in order to further analyse the *nihilous* reality of the immortal. Vampire Willow, or Vampwill<sup>177</sup>, is the visualisation of what I refer to as "the skanky sempiternal," the sort of sex-obsessed immortal that is replicated in such characters as Pamela Swynford De Beaufort in Charlaine Harris's series *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* and the 2008 HBO series *True Blood*.<sup>178</sup> Like Captain Jack Harkness, such characters dispel the ennui that can accompany eternity through having sex, sexual deviance, polyamory, and destructive relationships. Vampwill is a nightmarish projection of Willow's sexual desires, a figure who presages Willow's latent lesbianism. This Willow was prominent and favoured in the Order of Aurelius by The Master (Mark Metcalf), the archvampiric "Big Bad" of the first season of *Buffy*. Vampwill defies Preston's view that an eternal life would be devoid of temporal contingency as she cheerfully rapes and tortures her way through the corridors of eternity. She says "... look at me ... I'm all fuzzy" upon seeing her former self dressed in a flowery jumper in 3:16 "Doppelgängerland." Vampwill's disdain towards the clothing of her former self exemplifies the mortal "memory" that can exist in garments. Clothes in 3:16 "Doppelgängerland" are signifiers of morality and mortality (Willow), and immorality and immortality (Vampwill). Vampwill is a hypersexualisation of Willow, who, in one of the strangest scenes of the series, licks and caresses her prevampirised self. Willow, too, is unnerved by the clothing of her future self, and perceives her corseted doppelgänger as a cautionary tale. Willow tells Buffy late in the episode "strangely, I feel like staying at home ... and doing my homework ... and flossing ... and dying a virgin." Clothing, to the two versions of Willow, is symbolic of states which set both Willows ill at ease: nerdiness, virginity, and mortality, to

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176 An alternate name for Sauron's chief satellite, The Witch King of Angmar in *The Lord of the Rings*.

177 As to which she was referred in the production script of 3:09 "The Wish."

178 In which Pam is portrayed by Kristin Bauer.

Vampwill; and hypersexuality, disinhibition, and an empty eternity, to Willow.<sup>179</sup> As with Dark Willow (black) and Wiccan Willow (white) at the climax of Season Six, clothes represent the future and the former, the immortal and the mortal.

Vampwill indeed shows Willow the cost of eternal life: bestowers of eternity such as The Master require servitude as the price for vampirisation. Just as Dark Willow relinquishes her sanity to revenge, Vampwill relinquishes her sanity to a vacuous undying. In one reality immortality is bestowed upon Willow only for her to lose it, whilst in another reality the witch bestows her own immortality and lives forever. Magic(k) and vampirism are corruptive, yet they illuminate the darker recesses of Willow's essence. These forces function as an algebra: changes on one side of the affected psyche must be balanced, or the organism becomes an absolute such as the deranged Vampwill. Narratives in which heirdoms to forever are commutable for one's soul are symbolic of the times in which they were produced. The desire for immortality is born of the desire not to die before one's time: those who desire another day, month, or year beyond their allotment will soon crave life in perpetuity. Indeed, the individual who can best imagine their coffin best seeks the condition of immortality. The vampire's body is both immortal, and a memorialisation of the human form. Vampwill's lungs cage a stilled heart, the relics of an erstwhile existence as a mortal girl who dressed dully, and enjoyed studying and getting "sugared up on mochas." Indeed, when a staked Vampwill shrivels into a million motes of dust in 3:09 "The Wish," the death is presented as just the staking of another innominate vampire. Vampwill's "dusting" is presented without pathos, as the gentle Willow who assisted Buffy has long since perished. Vampwill is simply a mirror-mortal, a false face of a girl long dead. The witch whose power in another reality almost unmade the world wastes into ignominy around a sharpened stake. Vampwill's second dusting in 3:16 "Doppelgängerland" is even presented comedically as she is staked in the same fashion as seven episodes earlier in 3:09 "The Wish." As though having experienced the same staking before, Vampwill says "oh fuc-" before the tongue that forms the words disintegrates into dust. Her existence is like another thread of the weft of alter realities woven by Willow's magic(k)s. The Wiccan's body is protean, her destinies are manifold, and her immortality is certain.

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179 Indeed, Willow's fashion sense was seen as indissolubly emblematic of her geekiness even in contemporary critiques of the programme: GraceAnne A. DeCandido's 1999 review entitled "Bibliographic Good vs. Evil" referred to Willow in her pre-magic(k) days as simply "Xander(s) best friend ... the brilliant and fashion-impaired Willow (44)" whilst exalting male characters such as Angel ("brooding (and) beautiful" (44)) and Giles ("elegant, deeply educated, (and) "our great sage and sex symbol (44/45)). Clothes make the (im)mortal. When one considers Willow's importance to the series as a whole, this article is an interesting example of how a character's costume can throw the viewer: being geekily-dressed or "fashion-impaired" can blind a watcher to a character's importance and potential, just as Vampwill's corset, or Dark Willow's dusky garb can play up these alternates' propensity for conflict.

Willow's fate is in flux in *Buffy*. She is an immortal-in-training whose fate could be fractured by circumstances outside of her control. Whether she is a "skanky sempitern," or the arbitress of all magic(k), her everlife is assured. The many-threaded weft of Willow's existence can be unravelled or reloomed at the witch's whim. Immortality, to the witch and the vampire versions of Willow, is both the merchandise of the soul, and a fabric that is loomed by will. Those who wish to master sempiternity must offer their soul as tribute. This loss of one's soul is exemplified by Willow's quest to destroy the Trio taking precedence over taking time to grieve for Tara. Revenge trumps remembrance, despite Buffy's offer to help her friend bring Warren and his lackeys to justice. Willow wagers her life on exterminating the Trio, and in doing so finds a magic(k)al sempiternity. Everliving, however, is emptier than mortality for Willow because she must spend this everlife in the constant pursuit of power, like a moribund seeking medicine, or an addict seeking a fix. She loses the temporal contingency to which Preston and Williams refer, as she must sustain her wretched existence by disensouling dark mages and drinking from grimoires, or in the parallel world, toping blood. Whether in seeking blood or seeking the sparks of magick within the human soul, Willow is little more than a "junkie" hunting for a hit when she is either an immortal vampire or an avenging witch. More tragically still, eternal life raises a wall between Willow and the ever-dead Tara. The prices accompanying eternity are a return to juvenescence, or sexually-unbounded teenagedom, or worse, *self-nibilation* and never seeing one's beloved again. Immortality, in the case of Willow, can thus be ironically construed as a form of suicide. Willow's strange mortalities are far from the *mirimortality* of The Doctor or The Master. This sort of everlife should be perceived as an instantaneous death when one peers beneath its veneer. Immortality is not presented as a *phoenical* wonder in *Buffy*. The thaumatic nature of mortality is better presented within the penumbra of life's brief candle, and in the transitory loves we experience; over a tenebrous eternity. Willow validates William Shakespeare's notion in *Measure for Measure* that "If I must die/I will encounter darkness as a bride/And hug it in mine arms" (1.1.83-85). Willow exchanges mortality for immortality, and light for darkness after the loss of her "bride" Tara.

I will now continue my analysis of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with a look at the multiform proto-evil known only as "The First," and its drawing of immortality from the pool of the dead.

## “This Isn’t Even My Final Form”: Dead Faces in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

*“You came pretty close to smackin’ me down. What more do you want?”*

-The First, impersonating Buffy Summers, 7:22 “Chosen.”

In addition to Dark Willow, another antagonist from *Buffy* warrants scrutiny as a recalcitrant against death: the formless First Evil. The First appears as a one-shot villain in 3:10 “Amends.” Therein, it costumes itself in the form of deceased character Jenny Calendar (Robia LaMorte), and attempts to induce Calendar’s murderer, the ensouled vampire Angel (David Boreanaz), to kill Buffy Summers. The First returns in 7:01 “Lessons,” and serves as the “Big Bad”<sup>180</sup> until *Buffy*’s conclusion.

The ancient malevolence of The First represents the greatest challenge to the Scooby Gang. The First uses the faces of the dead to manoeuvre and manipulate, that it might liberate an apocalypse-host of Toruk-Han (Camden Toy).<sup>181</sup> The First’s ability to infiltrate every aspect of Buffy’s operation through its portrayal of dead faces is its greatest strength, as it reveals in Season Seven’s first episode, 7:01 “Lessons.”

### The First, and Dead-Faced Portrayal

Form is portrayal to The First. Any entity who imprints itself even momentarily onto the plane of the dead becomes a potential form of The First.<sup>182</sup> All of the dead and the resurrected form the repertoire of The First. At the climax of 7:01 “Lessons” it assumes the forms of every “Big Bad” of *Buffy* in reverse order.<sup>183</sup> The First begins the scene as the “Big Bad” from season six: Warren Meers (Adam Busch). Warren rambles to The Slayer’s on-off lover, the recently-reensouled vampire Spike (James Marsters) about Buffy’s impotence. He states that “she’s a girl, with sugar and spice, and everything useless unless you’re baking!” Here The First, a primordial being, takes on the face, voice, and mannerisms of Warren, a deceased villain from Buffy’s past. He rambles and refers, and doesn’t perform like an ancient Evil. He acts more like a jocular fanboy describing a comic book character. The First/Warren continues that it is “more than flesh.” It then shifts its shape mid-sentence into the perished hell-goddess Glory (Claire Kramer) and states that it is “more than

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180 “Buffyspeak” (the idiosyncratic dialogue of *Buffy*verse characters) for each season’s primary antagonist.

181 Also known as “Übervamps.” A race of ancient supervampires.

182 Such as Warren Meers, who technically “died” in 6:20 “Villains,” but was rescued by Amy Madison.

183 Mikangelo Marinaro writes in his review of 7:01 “Lessons” that “(this) final scene of the episode is just spectacular. This is The First launching an all-out assault on Spike while he’s in no state to fight back ... Having all the villains from the previous seasons morph into each other with the tone-setting music, ending with Buffy herself, was chilling ... (1)”

blood.” However, The First/Glory then slips into Glory’s mannerisms, stating “I’m – ya know, I honestly don’t think there’s a human word *fabulous* enough for me.” The First, as the living fabulous, uses Glory’s colloquial vocabulary to describe itself. Despite having lived for millennia and undoubtedly having learned every language created, The First is reduced to using Glory’s jabber to describe its majesty. It also exhibits the Stygian goddess’s bloodthirst, stating that its “name will be on everyone’s lips ... assuming their lips haven’t been torn off.” The First then morphs into Adam (George Hertzberg)<sup>184</sup>, the stitch-sinew cyberdemon from Season Five. The First/Adam speaks in technical jargon stating that his schemes are “well within parameters.” It also refers to Spike as “Number Seventeen,” his number when he was imprisoned by the anti-vampire Initiative in Season Four. Here The First is an aggregate of flesh, spirit, and steel, whose thoughts are both demonic and computorial. The First, through its metamorphoses, takes on the forms and minds of human, god, demon, and device, all in the space of a minute. The First’s manifold shapes are derived from the dead. The First is also both intangible and intactile, meaning it is unable to touch or be touched. It then drops to its knees as the “Big Bad” of Season Three: Mayor Richard Wilkins III (Harry Groener).<sup>185</sup> The First/Mayor’s phrasis is that of a Southern gentleman discussing mysticism. He asks Spike “so what did you think? You’d get your soul back and everything would be Jim Dandy? Soul’s slipperier than a greased weasel, why do you think I sold mine?” The First, in the form of the Mayor, here uses the language of hunting to describe the human animation. The First/Mayor giggles, then transforms into Drusilla (Juliet Landau), Spike’s former vampire lover. The First/Drusilla maunders poignantly to Spike about the songs they used to sing together, before arising again in its penultimate form, that of The Master (Mark Metcalf), Buffy’s first vampire nemesis. Here The First portrays the comparably young vampire Drusilla, and then ascends into the monstiform Master. The kneeling vampiress becomes the upstanding lord of vampires. The female morphs into the male in an eye-blink mouldering of flesh. The Master’s pointed ears replace those of Drusilla, and Drusilla’s fangs lengthen. The three antagonists’ motions encompass The First’s thoughts on supernatural ascension. The human antagonist (the Mayor) falls to his knees, and rises again only once he has taken the form of a (first female, then male) vampire. The First/Master states that they’re going “right back to the beginning. Not the *bang* ... not the *word* ... the *true* beginning.” The First establishes itself as an animation that preceded life and speaking: it is an evil that preceded evil. The First is an antagonist that is designed to further elucidate the deceased characters of the *Buffyverse*. The First, in its having access to the shapes and cogitations of every deceased being, reveals the darker aspects of Buffy’s friends and foes. The First/Master finishes its monologue, stating that “it’s not about *right* ... it’s not

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184 The “bio-mechanical demonoid.” Adam is a modern analogue of Frankenstein’s monster from Mary Shelly’s 1818 novel *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*.

185 A character whom I will dissect further later in this thesis.

about *wrong*.” The First/Master then shifts shape off-screen into Buffy Summers, who says “it’s about *power*.” The First is a being whose shapes are not its own. It is a Proteus of death who may derive its shapes solely from the dead. The actions of The First signify that the perished are to become prophets for the forthcoming apocalypse. It has the ability to corrupt the minds of every human, as it may assume the shape of our dead forebears, loved ones, or mentors. The First manipulates its victims through its conjuration of the reverence, respect, and love that those with whom The First converses feel or once felt for the face that it presently assumes. The First is what I refer to as a mummer immortal, or one who gains immortality through portraying immortality. It has dead faces to wear like a mummer his masks, and “performs” as the face that it wears. The First wears the faces of the dead and speaks their tongues, as it itself is faceless and tongueless. Its puppetry of corpses allows it access to any locked heart, or the mind of any intransigent opponent. Faceless and formless but for the anthropomorphic dead, The First may even take the form of technically-dead vampires, or their prevampirised human forms. It is therefore as near to omniscient as an organism can be without encountering any paradox, as it assumes the knowledge of the being whose face it wears. The omniform First’s “performance” blurs the line with “becoming” through its power of facial mimesis.

### **The Proteus of Death, and *Mirimortality***

*“Fact is, the whole good versus evil, balancing the scales thing? I’m over it. I’m done with the mortal coil”*

-The First, impersonating Cassie Newton (Azura Skye), 7.07 “Conversations With Dead People.”

The First is, like Vampwill, an immortal that is empowered by death. The First does not so much as wear the faces of the perished, but rather it temporarily becomes that deceased being. Its method of immortalising the dead therefore allows it access to the minds and emotions of its opponents. It derives its power from the mortal coil it so fervently wishes to destroy. It is therefore a constitution of human evil: The First’s performance of the malign is mimetic. It is something of an *umbra viva*<sup>186</sup>, an animate shadow who performs evil as a coalescence of humanity’s most malign. It prefers the forms of villains, gleefully cycling through all of Buffy’s “Big Bads” in 7:01 “Lessons” whilst choosing to never take the form of someone pure such as Tara. The shadow is a mimic of human malignancy, and a Proteus that derives its forms from the human dead. It is the prevalence of evil in humanity that empowers The First, and therefore, the human emotion to which The First is

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186 The Latin for “living shadow.”

attracted is pain, and not love. The shadow draws it desires from the avarices and malevolences of the very kind it dreams to ruin. However, the nebulous First's lack of both tangibility and tactility is both a strength, and a source of tremendous yearning. It states almost dolefully of humans in 7:20 "Touched," "I know why they grab at each other. To feel. I want to feel. I want to wrap my hands around some innocent neck and feel it crack." The First is a human evil that lacks human compunction. It can passively cause pain as it has never felt pain itself. It can only imagine pain and touching as imperfectly as we humans might imagine the state of being an intangible metamorph who emulates humanity. The First wishes to touch not to comfort, love, or embrace, but to hear the melody of bones breaking between its fingers.<sup>187</sup> It wishes, as Willow did, to "feel" all of the facets of pain, and emotion: omniscience. It, like Willow, will commit suicide through its efforts in crushing the very "mortal coil" that sustains it. The antecedent Evil evokes, like The Master, the mytheme<sup>188</sup> of the Loki or the Lucifer existing in the shadows. The First lives in umbrage, and uses its powers to corrupt, and to gain the form of humanity. Its immortality, as it perceives, is an odious descent into the flesh of the very beings it wishes to exterminate. This mummer immortal is a false homiform that feeds upon the carrion of our friends and forebears, wishing so vehemently to become the flesh that it draws on that, when it fails, it dreams only of our terminus. It is therefore a paradoxical immortal: formless, yet possessing an infinitude of forms; sentient, yet unfeeling. This Proteus of death is a speculum that reflects every aspect of the history of humanity: our greed, our guile, our odium, and above all, our dark aspirations. The First, in its undying, immortalises us, and all of our malignancies.

The Doctor and The Master; Willow Rosenberg and The First: these beings find their *mirimortalities* and immortalities in forces such as Time and Nothing; Life and Death. I move now to Edge City, the home of my most powerful immortal, wherein the lowest drudges become deified. Willow's puppetry of life and The First's morbid performances reveal that identity can become protean on the stage of (im)mortality. The Mask of Loki in *The Mask*, as I will hereafter discuss, is another mechanism by which the identity of the (im)mortal becomes protean. The art of semblance, as I will argue, reveals "the lineaments of the gods."

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187 The First's desire to touch is juxtaposed by the relationships that are forming within the episode, which are in turn consummated by sexual intercourse. Billie Doux quips in her review of the episode entitled "*Buffy*: 'Touched,'" "Is this the most sex we've gotten in a single episode? All this passionate sex, ... and the most romantic moments ... were Spike and Buffy just holding each other" (1). The episode juxtaposes human contact, from grabbing at one another for pleasure, to embracing for solace, to The First wishing to squeeze an innocent's throat until it breaks.

188 A mytheme is the irreducible component of a myth.

## Chapter Three: The Vizard and Eternal Life in *The Mask*, *Batman*, and *Scream*

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### Deathless Toontown: Mirific Masks, and Personal Aggregorianism in *The Mask*

Cop: (*frisking The Mask, pulls an impossibly long weapon from The Mask's pocket*) Bazooka ...

The Mask: *I have a permit for that.*

-*The Mask*, (1994).

*"Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth."*

-Oscar Wilde.

#### Head, Hyde, and the Corporeal Protean

The history of the theatre is inextricable from the history of the mask. Critical theorists have written passionately of the manner in which the brass mouthpieces of masks made the words of its wearer all the more strident in the times of Sophoclean and Aeschylean dramaturgy. Max Rafferty writes in an interesting piece on education published in the 1950's entitled "A Chronicle of Masks" that "drama, that unexcelled catharsis of the human spirit, began with masks" (298). Masks aided in this expression of the human spirit on the proto-dramatic stage, as well as allowing dramaturges to semble the "lineaments" of the gods under "ubiquitous and stylised scraps of cloth ... thread and metal" (298). The mask shrouds the face such that it, as Rafferty writes, "removes the necessity for inhibiting the emotions, and permits the release of ... feelings from behind the screen of anonymity" (298). The mask allows its wearer to aggregate the latent feelings in one's mind and forge new personae, both dramatically and cathartically, in a process that I will refer to as *personal aggregorianism*.<sup>189</sup>

The nature of the mask and its relation to drama and performance is explored in the series of comic books entitled *The Mask*, which was converted into two feature films: 1994's *The Mask*<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Neologised from the Latin *aggrego*, to bring or lump together, plus *-ism*.

<sup>190</sup> In which *The Mask* is portrayed by Jim Carrey.

and its critically-panned sequel 2005's *Son of the Mask*.<sup>191</sup> The eponymous mask allows its wearer to literally assume the lineaments of a god and become an immortal cartoon Proteus. The comic book series depicts a neurotic man named Stanley Ipkiss purchasing an antique jade mask as a gift for his girlfriend Kathy. Ipkiss is depicted as the quintessential drudge, whose very name mocks his position in society. The ugly-sounding surname "Ipkiss" is a letter change away from being an anagram of "kiss-up," which is what the reader presumes Ipkiss must do to get anywhere in the grey miasma of his existence. However, when a curious Ipkiss dons the mask, he becomes the opposite of his human self. He spins in a gyre as his face becomes putty-green, his eyes bulge red, and his teeth protract cartoonishly. He gains every power he might imagine, and thousands of others besides.<sup>192</sup> Like Dr. Jekyll turning into Mr. Hyde, Ipkiss becomes "Big Head," a grotesque cartoonification of what are purportedly his deepest desires. We see here the enthralling consequences of placing one or those of deviant mortality in the mundane tableau. Big Head is a living animation who bestrides the mete between our world, and the world of cartoon undying. He is the strongest immortal analysed in this thesis, as he has the power to disobey the laws of reality. He produces weapons *ex nihilo*, and becomes something of an impugnable immortal at the centre of a whirling cartoon hurricane. This alter ego cannot die because his presence, and Ipkiss's wearing of the mask, introduces the heterotopia, or Otherspace of the cartoon/comic: the animated/imagined world bleeds into the real world when Big Head is present. Similarly, those who arrive to combat Big Head act as haplessly as though they were the antagonists in a madcap cartoon. They are gunned down with cartoon bullets, but unlike the masked Ipkiss they do not rise again. The emotions that Ipkiss releases from behind his "screen of anonymity" form the desire to punish and to kill all those who have bullied or opposed him. The interrelationships between masks and impugny, and masks and Otherness, are at work in Big Head's rampage. Big Head is the demon form of anyone who has muttered threats or

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191 In which *The Mask* is portrayed by Jamie Kennedy. The late critic Roger Ebert writes in his contemporary review of the film entitled "*Son of the Mask*" that "the movie's premise is that if you wear a magical ancient mask, it will cause you to behave in strange ways ... and in Jim Carrey's original *The Mask* (1994) the premise worked ... there was a baseline of sanity from which the mania proceeded. *Son of the Mask* lacks a baseline. It is mania, all the time; the behavior (sic) in the movie is not inappropriate, shocking, out of character, impolite, or anything else except behavior (sic) ... The plot, like Wile E. Coyote, keeps running into the wall" (1). Rafe Telsch concurs with Ebert, stating in his review that the events of the film reach "Wile E. Coyote vs. Roadrunner levels, only not as funny, or as well animated, or as interesting" (1). Likewise, internet celebrity Doug Walker/The Nostalgia Critic states in his 2013 nostalgic review of the film "Not only is the movie horridly-written, awkwardly-acted, filled with lame ... (special effects) and (uses) ... too much ... wide angle lens ... it is scary" (1). The film is universally regarded as a poor, incongruous follow-up to the successful first film.

192 Roger Ebert states in his 1994 review of *The Mask* that Stanley Ipkiss "whirls like a beebop dervish and triumphantly prevails in situations that would have baffled (his unmasked counterpart)" (1).

execrations under his or her breath. Ipkiss's Raffertian "unexcelled catharsis" is facilitated literally through the donning of an eldritch mask. He becomes immortal and impugnable; and a point of confluence between our world and the imagined world.

Masks, in relation to (im)mortality, represent what I term *personal aggregoritarianism*. This concept encapsulates the superficial and subfacial aggregation of latent feelings and personalities within the mind of the mask's wearer. Big Head acts like a version of say, Superman, were this alternate cognisant of his existence within a comic book world. Big Head's zany-fonted speech reveals him as other to the universe, like a cartoon alien having stepped into our reality. Ipkiss is a modern day Dr. Jekyll<sup>193</sup>, who aggregates and releases his Hyde side with the donning of the mask. The mask aggregates one's latent feelings, and personifies these in one intractable superman. Ipkiss's metamorphosis, however, is certainly grittier than Jekyll's. Irving S. Saposnik describes Jekyll in "The Anatomy of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" "as the epitome of goodness ... lacking only a halo to complete his beatitude" (715). If we are to presume that Saposnik's interpretation of Jekyll is correct, then Ipkiss is certainly a darker Jekyll, who secretly wishes to revenge himself on the world, but lacks the power and the perfect will to do so. Ipkiss is little more than a muttering execrator, who fortuitously gains the one object in the multiverse which can facilitate his fantasies. The mask aggregates Ipkiss's mental fragments into the mind of the perfect self-avenger who dispatches anyone, even those who have in no way wronged him. The mask ostensibly disinhibits one's mind, and releases those demons that we hold in durance. Saposnik further describes Mr. Hyde as "hairy, grimacing, unkempt ... (and) eager to pounce from within his Jekyllian confines" (715). However, I counterargue this point: one's "Hyde side" is not a lurking beast within the mind or soul, but rather an aggregation of once-separate pieces: the process of *personal aggregoritarianism*. If Jekyll represents the (as Saposnik calls it) "good-evil antithesis that lurks in all men (715)" then Ipkiss represents the aggregation of disparate evils within oneself through the *corporeal protean*. Big Head is not a whole being that is "eager to pounce" from within his "Ipkissian" confines. "Big Head" is rather a coalition between the disparate "demons" of the human psyche, and the obliterating force of the supernatural.

One can only presume the following when one takes into account that no person who wears the mask<sup>194</sup> acts as a force for good. Firstly, that no human is the unhaloed form of beatitude (as Saposnik refers to Jekyll); or secondly, that the mask corrupts (or heightens the corrupted aspect of) all who wear it. I argue that one's Hyde side is not a single demon we hold in durance, but rather is like a troupe of maskless dramaturges, waiting within us all. One's persona<sup>195</sup> or alter persona(e) form(s) the aggregate of one's mentality. The immortality that the mask bestows appeals to those

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193 The protagonist of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

194 Its first wearers being Stanley Ipkiss, Kathy, and Lt. Kellaway in the comics.

195 The Latin noun meaning "mask" or "character."

corrupted aspects, these alter personae that would have more from life than to be bullied and oppressed until death hurls the *anima* into non-existence. For example, after being beaten up by a gang of thugs in “Mayhem,” Ipkiss imagines himself exacting his revenge whilst wearing different costumes and wielding cartoonish weapons such as wrenches, baseball bats, and flamethrowers. The mask, once donned, aggregates and augments these fantastical *personae*, rendering them into one unit who has the lineaments of an actor portraying a god. Ipkiss is the human actor of the aggregate, and the mask facilitates Ipkiss’s portrayal of a vengeful deity. The mask is an activator and an aggregator of alter personae. I contest therefore that both Big Head and Mr. Hyde are activated units of the Other, rather than demons waiting within the mortal psyche. The mask of disinhibition encompasses not only tropes of bodies of inconstant shape and the *corporeal protean*; but also the mental protean.

Big Head also wields the power to alter the world into something of a cartoon playground. His access of what fans of cartoons refer to as “Hammerspace”<sup>196</sup> exemplify this alteration. These abilities are writ large in the 1994 film, in which Big Head, here referred to as “The Mask” escapes from the police with a distracting music number.<sup>197</sup> The film borrows heavily from the cartoon aesthetic of the 1940’s. The Mask’s eyes pop from their sockets and the shot cuts away to his stunned audience. When we next see The Mask, he is posed in a shiny Ricky Ricardo-like costume, and is brandishing a pair of maracas. This *ex nihilo* object manifestation renders Big Head/The Mask as something of a cartoon terrorist, able to annihilate any foe; or merely distract them.<sup>198</sup> The brightly-coloured suits from which the Big Head of the comics manifests his weapons are like the vestments of the dramaturge. Ipkiss is a human who portrays a cartoon character, like a masked and costumed dramaturge portraying a god. However, just as the torn clothing of Hyde was once the smooth vestments of Jekyll, Big Head’s suits are merely cartoonish hyperboles of Ipkiss’s spiral-patterned pyjamas. Masks and costumes straddle the mete between reality and the world of the stage. Big Head’s clothing combines the world of reality and the world of the mallet-wielding ‘toon, and aggregates both into one set of eye-assaulting garments.

Big Head, like any ‘toon, is a showman and an actorial figure whose existence is eternal by its very nature. This extends to a Road Runner-esque immortality, as cartoon characters are immortal

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196 The pocket dimensions from which manga and cartoon characters pull their mallets, anvils, sticks of dynamite, and other comical weapons.

197 *Cuban Pete*.

198 Internet critic Captain Logan relates the interesting history of the film’s production in his review entitled “Superhero Rewind: *The Mask* Review.” Logan states that “according to director Chuck Russell in his 1996 commentary ... when New Line (Cinema) bought an option for a *Mask* film, they thought they might have a new *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, or *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise. In the original Dark Horse mini-series, Stanley loses all his inhibitions when he puts on the mask ... but there the mask has the tendency to turn its wearer into an actual psychopath” (1).

through portrayal. Just as no character may die on the stage unless the writer wills it, cartoon protagonists may not die as there would be nothing without their existence. The cartoon genre is iterative and kneels before the rules established by its history. Animated protagonists are the ultimate figures of impugny, as Toontown exists because its heroes sustain it. The greatest immortal is therefore the cartoon hero, who cannot die because there is no death in Toontown. There is no story if Bugs Bunny is vulnerable to Elmer Fudd's muskets. However, for a human to become a cartoon character is to trivialise life, mind, and body. To exchange one's sanity for power is to deem one's selfhood to be a nugacity, for eternal life is nothing without one's *anima* remaining unaltered. Ipkiss is therefore less a Jekyll or a Hyde, and more a Goethian Faust. To become Big Head is to make a Mephistophelean bargain with the mask, and accept the consequences of its power. Such Faustian exchanges further irradiate the mutant personae within the human mind. As the human body assumes increasingly more theic lineaments, the human mind becomes something that is far more mutable.

Big Head represents a becoming corporeally godlike without actually becoming a god. Ipkiss is not a true god, as his deity can be annulled simply by removing the mask. Such bodies as Big Head's therefore configure the corrupted human soul into the form of a god. He exemplifies the human *anima* occupying the theic body, and the destructive nature of such a confluence. It is relevant, however, that the human side of this confluence represents the evil of the fused being. The mask is never shown to reject its new wearer, demonstrating that evil exists, and is able to be inflamed within, every human being. However, evil is not the antithesis of good, but the aggregating and the altering of the forces of good. Ipkiss exemplifies the cautionary tale of the revenger who ends up dead; or more specifically, the mortal who becomes immortal. To wear the mask is to experience immortality, but to take it off is to die. Like Willow Rosenberg touching the divine when she shimmers, or The Doctor and The Master when they burn with the *phoenical* light of regeneration, Ipkiss is emblematic of the human(oid) subject subsuming the ethereal within his or her or its soul. This subsumption of supernatural forces within the human *soma* results in the confluence of man and god in one fused combinate.

### **'Toon Thespians, and Spurning Science**

*"I must share these powers with mankind, use them to protect and serve others in need. BUT FIRST!"*

-Big Head, "Mayhem," *The Mask*.

*"With these powers I could be ... a superhero!"*

The Mask, *The Mask*.

*“Wholesome and kind; staid and refined! Totally out of my mind!”*

-The Mask, *The Mask: The Animated Series*'s theme song.

I will proceed now to further elucidate the *corporeal protean* in relation to Big Head. Dissimilar to The Master and Willow Rosenberg, Big Head's powers are not derived from the *nihil real*. These abilities are gained from the real beyond the real. Big Head's body represents the melding of the human body with the exterior ethereal. The masked Ipkiss is evidently more powerful than The Master or Dark Willow, a fact that demonstrates that the greatest undying is beyond reality, in the ethers of the unreal. Big Head's violation of reality further illustrates the dichotomy that exists between the terran god and the “Toonworlder” (the cartoon protagonist). Both The Master and Ipkiss are human(oid)s enhanced by external sources of power.<sup>199</sup> Whilst The Doctor's and The Master's bodies are nourished by the pure essence of Time, Ipkiss's human body is aggregated with a cartoon superreality via the juncture-device of the mask. The etherealising of the body and the soul, in these fictions, springs from a transmundane mediator. Though the source of the mask's magic remains uninvestigated in the Dark Horse comic, the transformation of the nebbishy Ipkiss into the nigh-cunctipotent Big Head is explicated through Norse mythology in the 1994 film *The Mask*. The explanation given in this filmic version is that the mask contains the essence of the trickster-god Loki.<sup>200</sup> The mask's wearer is transformed into Loki's avatar, complete with a portion of his powers. The combination of a human and a god of Valhalla<sup>201</sup> is a Toonworld superbeing.

Big Head embodies the concepts of cartoon acceptance and cartoon protagonism. An audience will tolerate violence, so long as that violence is not wrought upon the cute, pie-eyed protagonist. Such “Toonworlders” as Big Head therefore attenuate the significances of the lives they take. Big Head does not strike an indestructible foe with a cartoon mallet. He volleys the fragile bodies of his attackers with hyperbolised weapons of the human world. Just as with Bug Bunny or any other cartoon protagonist, no one is perturbed by Big Head's metamorphoses, or feels the need to question the mechanics of his abilities. Indeed, Big Head's potencies also evoke another comic book hero. Doctor Fate<sup>202</sup> of the DC Comics mythos is a superhero created through the melding of magic and humanity. Fate is forged through a human donning the Helm of an ancient sorcerer named Nabu. This practitioner of magic inhabits the Helmet of Fate, which imbues its wearer with

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199 The Untempered Schism, and the mask respectively.

200 To which I referred in Chapter 1.

201 Valhalla is an otherworldly banquet hall in Norse mythology, to which the slain who died in battle are sent (Old Norse “Valhöll,” hall of the slain).

202 Doctor Fate/Kent Nelson was first introduced in *More Fun Comics No. 55*, circa May 1940.

supreme sorcerous abilities. As a cost, however, one must cede one's selfhood to Nabu. Fate, like Big Head, is immortal as long as a human is wearing his Helm. The result of the conflux of human and magic in these examples is immortality.

### Serfs in Reality, Kings in Toonworld

*"It was for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face?"*

-Mr. Poole, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Chapter Eight.

*"God has given you one face and you make yourselves another"*

Hamlet, to Ophelia, *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1, Lines 128-129.

I have heretofore established Toonworld as a heterotopia in which the cartoon protagonist is king, and all others are luckless victims. Ipkiss gains transhumanity<sup>203</sup> from the world of the cartoon protagonist through the bridge-device of the mask. Big Head draws limitless power from the real beyond the real in a manner similar to Doctor Fate from the DC Comics mythos; or Dark Willow, who derives power in *Darkening* from "stray pulses in the ether" (159). Powerful immortals are 'toon-like figures who operate under a sort of meta-science. Kings of Cartoonia such as Big Head spurn the sciences of humanity, and in doing so find unlimited power. Big Head is comparable to a line of meta-referential figures such as Marvel Comics's Deadpool, who jokes about being a superhero in a comic book/film/video game; Maximilian Pegasus's card-conjured 'toon monsters from the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* manga and animé<sup>204</sup>; or indestructible 'toons such as the pink balloon-like creature Majin Buu from the fantasy manga/animé<sup>205</sup> *Dragonball Z*. Ipkiss's masked form exists in recalcitration to a hapless authority. Even in the 1995 children's television series entitled *The Mask: The Animated Series* Stanley Ipkiss/The Mask (Rob Paulsen) rails against authority by donning different garbs and pulling over Lt. Kellaway and his partner Doyle.<sup>206</sup> Here, Big Head, re-named "The Mask," is depicted more as a nuisance than a homicidal maniac. He alters his costume in a tornado of light, becoming anything from a pirate, to a Scottish Highlander, to a high school cheerleader. The Mask spends the running time of the series overfatiguing the "hyperactive mayhem

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203 Also called "metahumanity."

204 Episode 35, "Match of the Millennium, Part One."

205 Episode 232, "Buu Is Hatched!"

206 Episode 48, "Fantashtick Voyage."

gene” he refers to in the second version of the programme’s theme song. Ipkiss races police cars armoured as a charioteer and serenades his landlady whilst costumed as a Shakespearean actor, all in the course of an hour. The Mask is here a hector and a humiliator, over the murderous lunatic of the comics. Big Head/The Mask was indeed a precursor to what is known as an “internet troll”<sup>207</sup>: individuals who use their anonymity on the internet as a “screen of anonymity” behind which they may denigrate others. Ipkiss uses the anonymity and power provided by the mask not to become a superhero as he claims, but rather to enkindle havoc (in the films and the animated series) or exact vengeance for petty injuries (in the comics). The mask mediates both the interstices between this world and the next, and the differing aspects of Ipkiss’s psyche. These unifications form an invincible amalgam. Serfs in reality such as Ipkiss are kings in Toonworld. Indeed, those who appear mildest in their manners are the most typhonic whilst wearing the mask. Like the collision between Elmer Fudd and a fiend, the instance of Ipkiss and the mask suggests that everyone in the world is suppressing the compulsion to kill. Anonymity in modernity is the capacitor of empowerment. Those who “troll”<sup>208</sup> on the scape of the internet prove that screens and masks empower the meek.<sup>209</sup> Ipkiss’s mask facilitates the uprising of latent personae in cases in which the antipode of one’s personality is that of an unpredictable lunatic. The effect of the mask on the meek seems always to create a wrecker of revenges. The comics Ipkiss, in a visitation of vengeance, injures and violates his hectors in “Mayhem.” The cultural phenomenon of internet criticism is comparable to this as anyone can enter a forum, pose as an expert, and mislead their readers: “trolling.” We live then in a time in which much of a generation dons a mask. Masks then are not disguises, but the true faces of the *anima*. Jekyllian personages who purport to be a halo shy of beatitude are perhaps keeping the components of their Hyde sides in durance vile. In *The Mask*, it is whosoever lets his face fill the hollow of the mask who becomes a god of virid visage. Big Head/The Mask is the original “troll.” One’s persona

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207 Claire Hardaker assesses this phenomenon of an internet user’s “trolling intent” in relation to politeness, impoliteness, and human interaction in her thesis “Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication: From user discussion to academic definitions.” Hardaker ultimately concludes herein that the phenomenon of “trolling” makes “it seem clear that part of the human condition is to find a degree of entertainment in conflict ... where the individual typically only watches or simulates conflict, online, with the protection of anonymity and distance” (238). This brand of “trolling” therefore act as both the mask and the emotional outlet for a generation, just as the mask of Loki allows Stanley Ipkiss the anonymity and the distance to verbalise and act out his aggression in *The Mask*.

208 To anonymously insult, deceive, or denigrate.

209 Indeed, as Claire Hardaker writes in a different article entitled “Internet trolls: a guide to the different flavours” “trolls live in the twilight between what we think their attentions are, and what they really intend” (1). This again provides both the means and the forum by which to act out, like The Mask, one’s secret desires behind screens of anonymity and distance.

can be changed through the wearing of a physical *persona*. As I shall hereafter discuss: immortality, *mirimortality*, deformity, and the quest for omnipotence can all be surprisingly bromidic and banal.

This commences my essay on the Batman universe and Gotham City's *bête violette*, The Joker. I will henceforward characterise The Joker as a disinhibited villain, who needs no mask to act out his deepest desires. He is rather The Mask without the mask.

## Immortal Through Inaction: Gotham's Gwynplaine in *Batman*

*"I believe, whatever doesn't kill you, simply makes you ... stranger"*

-The Joker, *The Dark Knight* (2008).

The *Batman* mythos has a significant number of immortal or ostensibly immortal characters, from the seductive phytogyne Poison Ivy, to the living Lazarus Ra's Al Ghul. However, Batman's greatest enemy is immortal through inaction: the man whose psyche takes the form of a clown, The Joker.

Though The Joker is Batman's bête noire, he is more accurately a bête violette<sup>210</sup>, a beast in purple clothing. He is a mad-smiled clown who is depicted as either an ahistoric absolute<sup>211</sup>, or a petty criminal whose face was twisted in a chemical accident.<sup>212</sup> Christopher Nolan's 2008 film *The Dark Knight* takes the former route, rendering The Joker as a man without name or history who rises to counter the salvific force of Batman. Though The Joker is decidedly not the brightest beacon of immortality in the DC Comics mythos, his imprint upon the history of the superhero world is significant. I will therefore cross-examine the acts of anarchy of the Nolanverse Joker with the one-shot comic entitled *Joker/Mask* and two episodes of *Batman: the Animated Series*<sup>213</sup> entitled 1:46 "Almost Got 'Im" and 2:09 "Trial" to establish the harlequin mortalities of Batman's greatest foe.

### Slaughter is Salutory: The Joker, His Scars, and The Modern Fool

*"You wanna know how I got these scars?"*

-The Joker, *The Dark Knight*.

The Joker is indeed a pertinent parallel to the nonsensical anarchy of Big Head/The Mask, for both characters are chaos in a costume. Like the latter, clothing is The Joker's "Hammerspace": he is the sort of maniac who would conceal a blade even in his tie clip. His purple suit is his arsenal, from which he might pull anything from a knife, to an acid-squirting flower, to a hundred dollar bill to give unsolicited to a dumbfounded bystander. The Joker's every garment conceals a gag or a gun. He produces weapons from his shoes, pockets, and seemingly the ethers of toonworld. His pierrotish array, in his various incarnations, screams above the monochromatic clothing of other criminals. Indeed, The Joker of the Nolanverse perhaps based his costume and complexion on the character

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210 The French for "purple beast."

211 As in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

212 As in *Batman* (1989).

213 Hereafter referred to by the acronym *BTAS*.

Gwynplaine<sup>214</sup> from Victor Hugo's 1869 novel *The Man Who Laughs*.<sup>215</sup> He portrays the Pierrot through the wearing of a clownish costume, in a similar manner to Stanley Ipkiss/Big Head. This purple suit connects all of The Clown Prince of Crime's incarnations, from the kempt, immaculately-dressed Joker (Brent Spiner) in the 2011 animated series *Young Justice* (1:14 "Revelation") to the red-eyed and green-dreadlocked Joker<sup>216</sup> (Kevin Michael Richardson) in the 2004 animated series *The Batman*. Another commonality in all of The Joker's depictions is indeed this complexion of blood and decay. Like a marasmus consuming a body, his psyche is besieged as by a spreading infection, which is visible upon his face and flesh. His is a smile of sorrow, and a rictus of both misery and morbid cheer. He represents the smiling sorrowing, those whose visages belie their true emotions. The Joker's face is the visual representation of my concept of *psychomarasmus*<sup>217</sup>: the consumption of the psyche by mania and delusion. Society's chaos is etched upon his visage: the whites of absence, the reds of blood, and the greens of putrescence. He performs as the carnal form of anarchy, like Shakespeare's clowns as viewed in a fractured mirror. The Joker is the Feste<sup>218</sup>, Touchstone<sup>219</sup>, and the Fool<sup>220</sup> of nowadays, employing the Shakespearean trope of the clown as truth-teller as part of his execution. He performs as a modern Feste, honing truths into knives. The jester is society's critic most cutting: just as the fool in Shakespeare is no fool at all, the clown in Gotham is no clown, and is in fact the most well-informed in the urban demesne.

The Joker's<sup>221</sup> position as the sagacious clown is encapsulated in his second appearance in *The Dark Knight*. Here the clown crashes what he refers to as the "group therapy session" of the city's most notorious circles of organised crime. The sound of The Joker's laughter is heard long before he strides into scene, a series of mirthless "ha"s, "he"s, and "ho"s, that are punctuated by pauses. The Joker embodies the Shakespearean trope of jokes as simply retold truths: those who joke tell the

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214 The Joker even operates under the proprietary name "Gwynplaine Entertainment," demonstrating his knowledge of the Hugo novel. (*Justice League* episodes 48/49 "Wild Cards"). Also, the comic book *Batman: The Man Who Laughs* references the Hugo novel.

215 Published as *L'Homme Qui Rit*.

216 This Joker can be seen in his first "centric" episode, 1:01 "The Bat in the Belfry." The Joker is depicted here as straitjacketed and unshod, before changing into his more conventional costume later in the season. Jim Harvey, of *The World's Finest*, writes in his review of the episode that The Joker's "deeper tone of voice coupled with the more maniac design is definitely a departure from what we have seen before. The man in the purple straight jacket (sic) rarely needs a ... reason to cause trouble for ... Gotham ... The foundation (is) laid for Joker's obsession with ... Batman (1)."

217 Neologised from the Greek *soma*, flesh and *marasmos*, wasting.

218 The clown in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

219 The clown in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

220 The clown in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

221 Portrayed by Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*.

truth in a strange tongue. The Joker<sup>222</sup> fearlessly addresses the failures of the mobsters, asking them if their “balls drop(ped) off.” He offers to rid the criminals of their enemy by killing the Batman, plitudinously stating that “if you’re good at something, never do it for free.” Here money provides the semblance of motivation to The Joker’s constructed persona. The clown infiltrates the mobsters’ lair, claiming that he wishes to assist them in their destruction of Batman for financial gain. However, he uses an illusory desire for gain as a means of entrance into the mobsters’ inner sanctum. To gain their trust, The Joker learns their language, that of money. The Joker’s knowledge of human nature is such that he can adapt his personality to pique the interest of his subject.<sup>223</sup> Knowing that the mobsters worship only the pecuniary gods, the clown casts himself in the role of the mercenary angel.<sup>224</sup> He will restore the *status quo* in Gotham, at the price of half of the proceeds. When an irascible Gambol (Michael Jai White) declares that he has heard enough and attempts to eject The Joker, the clown gives a glimpse of his true nature. He opens his coat, revealing that his thumb is tugging gently on the detonator of a set of jangling bombs. The audience is left with little doubt that The Joker would pull the pin if anyone dared to challenge him<sup>225</sup>, such is his lackadaisical attitude towards his own self-preservation. The Joker describes himself later as “a dog chasing cars,” inferring that he has no control over his actions and that he is comporting himself on instinct. His entirely disinhibited psyche acts as the foundation for whichever persona he wishes to push to the forefront. He acts as the author of his own narrative. The Joker proves through his differing tales of how he came by his scars that he is not to be trusted as a narrator of his own history. Any history he conveys is likely a fabrication, or a distraction. Whether he gained his scars through an act of self-desecration, or a tragic accident, or through being brutalised (or none of these), is a marker of his dishonesty. He is the ultimate unreliable narrator, who uses obscurities and obfuscations to shroud his psyche.<sup>226</sup>

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222 After killing a flunkie in a “magic trick.”

223 Roger Ebert, in his contemporary review of the *The Dark Knight*, referred to The Joker as “a Mephistopheles whose actions are fiendishly designed to pose moral dilemmas for his enemies (1).”

224 Internet critic Captain Logan correctly states of the character of The Joker in “Superhero Rewind: *Batman: Under the Red Hood* Review,” he ... is an agent of chaos. He’s not interested in controlling organised crime, so much as he is in making it disorganised” (1). Dan Paradis of Watch Mojo concurs with this, stating in “Top 10 Greatest DC Supervillains” that “(The Joker is) dedicated to chaos and insanity ... his mission is to make the world over in his irrational vision” (1).

225 Though The Joker’s weapons have been known to be harmless props, more often he carries weapons of immense destructive power.

226 Leon Thomas says in his video review of these films “Morality and Modern Politics in *The Dark Knight* Trilogy” that The Joker “acts like a crazy criminal, but is really all about, as he puts it, “sending a message.” It’s not hard to draw a comparison between The Joker and Osama Bin Laden. It practically leaps off the screen- perhaps not as much as in the third *Iron Man* movie (in the figure of The Mandarin) - but it is still there (1).”

Through adumbrating his own history, he establishes both his pastless absolutism, and his role as chaos incarnate. He even inserts “uh”s and “um”s into his speech in an effort to simulate natural speech, and obscure the prefabrication of his every utterance. He is a man of semblances, whose diction counterfeits human speech. To exemplify, in the interrogation scene that takes place after the criminal’s capture he performs in an imitative intonation of one of Tom Cruise’s lines from the 1996 film *Jerry McGuire*, saying to Batman “*you ... complete ... me.*” He is unable to shape his own rhetoric, and instead emulates popular filmic personages. The Joker is a quoter, an orator, and asembler of natural speech.

The Joker’s different incarnations imbricate and interdepend, with each new form drawing from its predecessors.

### A Kinship of Abnormalcy: Batman and The Joker

*“No matches on prints, DNA, dental. Clothing is custom, no labels. Nothing in his pockets but knives and lint. No name, no other alias”*

-Lt. Gordon (referring to The Joker), *The Dark Knight*.

*“We’re linked you and I- like comedy and tragedy. Two sides, same coin.”*

-The Joker, to Batman, *The Batman*, Episode 1:01, “The Bat in the Belfry.”

*“Welcome to the madhouse, Batman!”*

-The Joker, *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

Batman and The Joker are kin in that their costumed forms are who they really are.<sup>227</sup> Like The Joker and his purple coat, Bruce Wayne is defined not by a tailored Versace suit, but his black bat-armour. The Joker and Batman (to a lesser extent) are more the costumes they wear than human beings with motivations, names, and identities. The Joker indeed identifies with Batman through a kinship of abnormalcy.<sup>228</sup> In *The Dark Knight*, Batman and The Joker eschew any reference to each

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227 Like Big Head/The Mask in the previous section, Bruce Wayne and Batman are modern analogues of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Critic Andreas Reichstein refers to Batman and Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde in “Batman- An American Mr. Hyde?” as “figures with *alter egos* which they change into more or less deliberately,” (329) operating in parallel dark zones: “the place we see as Gotham City is ... the London of Dr. Jekyll (343).

228 J.M. Tyree writes in “American Heroes” “As Heath Ledger’s Joker suggests near the end of *The Dark Knight* ... the hero and the villain require each other completely, so that one cannot exist without the other, and the cycle

other's names, almost as if they have known and warred against each other since the dawn of time. The villain even goes so far as to call the Dark Knight his "darling" and his "coeur des coeurs"<sup>229</sup> in the 2013 video game *Injustice: Gods Among Us*.<sup>230</sup> Batman's ability to match wits with, and at times outwit his foe is precisely that which allures The Joker so absolutely. The clown tells Batman in *The Dark Knight* "I think that you and I are destined to do this for ever." He portrays The Joker through the art of narrativising his past and prophesying his and Batman's future against Gotham's tableau. Whether The Joker is pastless, unacknowledging of his past, or whether he shrouds himself in enigmas of his own creation remains ambiguous. The villain rhapsodifies his own precedences, explaining in Alan Moore's 1988 origin comic *The Killing Joke* that if he "had a past, it would be multiple choice." The Joker's former identity chose the roles of clown and artist: in the 1989 film *Batman*<sup>231</sup>, Jack Napier (Jack Nicholson) becomes The Joker by falling into a vat of chemicals. Interpreting his deformity as art wrought upon his face, Napier takes it upon himself to become a sort of sanguinary Daedalus. "I make art until someone dies," he exclaims. "See? I am the world's first fully functioning homicidal artist." Here, The Joker is a brand. This version of Batman's famous foe is the product of a time in which a strange smile can become a corporate logo. To The Joker, deformity is next to deiformity. He aspires for his face to be on the American one dollar bill, and markets his "Joker products" with their "new secret ingredient: SMILEX." The Joker is best interpreted as an everyman who was deranged by the chaoses of mundane experience. Just as with The Joker's tales of his scars, his very existence is a narrative. He states in *The Dark Knight*: "this city deserves a better class of criminal ... and I'm gonna give it to 'em." The Joker is a criminal construct who wears a mask in lieu of a face. He converses not to convey, but to obscure any facets of his former life which his victims might intuit. Mobster Gambol tells The Joker that he is crazy, to which he replies "I'm not ... I'm not-t." It is a frightening thought that The Joker's only line of truth in the film could this be simple disavowal. The Joker might perhaps portray madness as a means to change the world. I will however argue the case as though the clown is indeed as deranged as conveys, as no writer would ever liberate the character from chaos. The Joker functions best as an inacquiescent agent of discord with no other name or alias, a counterbalance to Batman's championship of justice.

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of escalating acts of good and evil is a perpetual motion machine set to continue for all eternity, or at least a substantial run of sequels and spin-offs (28)."

229 The French for "heart of hearts."

230 Hereafter referred to as *Injustice*. The Joker is therein portrayed by Richard Epcar.

231 Directed by Tim Burton. Gueric Debona describes the film in "The Canon and Cultural Studies: Culture and Anarchy in Gotham City" as "one of the most legibly political films of the 1980s" as "it is a deeply ideological portrayal of an opposition between "culture and anarchy" (53). Batman is arguably culture, and The Joker anarchy.

As Andreas Reichstein writes in a citation of comic book artist Frank Miller in “Batman- An American Mr. Hyde?,” Batman is a “dionysian figure, a force for anarchy that imposes an individual order” (336). I argue that The Joker’s actions are equally revelrous as he fights to impose his own, more chaotic vision of anarchy.

The Joker illuminates the difference between what I refer to as *somatomarasmus*<sup>232</sup>, a consumption of the flesh, and *psychomarasmus*, a consumption of the mind. To The Joker, slaughter is salutary. Operating under the credo that “slaughter is the best medicine”<sup>233</sup>, he slays any whose deaths might send a vivid message. Killing is salutary to those whose minds are in marasmus. There is a binality between mind-wasting and flesh-wasting, *psychomarasmus* and *somatomarasmus*, in the case of The Joker. The supercriminal’s *psychomarasmic* mania is explored specifically in the 2010 animated film *Batman: Under the Red Hood*<sup>234</sup> in which The Joker beats Batman’s ward Jason Todd/Robin<sup>235</sup> to death with a crowbar in the opening scene. The dialogue therein delineates the dichotomy between the clown and the bat, and what The Joker of *The Dark Knight* refers to as the meeting of “an unstoppable force” and “an immovable object.” In *Hood*, The Joker (John DiMaggio) cajoles Batman into corrupting himself, asking “are you going to do it this time?<sup>236</sup> Or (will) you just ... put me in another body cast for six months?” The Joker then relents, simply stating “you ... think I would stir up so much trouble and not make sure you knew it was me?!” Batman and The Joker know aspects of the other’s psyche, but neither is omniscient. Each is ever demarcating the boundaries of their relationship. The Joker knows that he will never kill Batman because he is “just too much fun,” and Batman is adamant that he will never relent to the urge to kill The Joker to prevent further rampages. Both Batman and The Joker, therefore, are immortal through inaction. They both persist as neither will kill the other, despite the ease with which they could. It is also interesting to note that The Joker is never threatened with the death penalty at any stage in the *Batman* mythos. The American justice system would perceive no quandary in executing The Joker, as a measure against chaos. Both Batman and the judiciary system show strange leniency to history’s greatest homicide: The Joker is immured in Arkham Asylum again and again, only for him to escape, rampage, and be recaptured in a Sisyphean cycle. Batman refuses to kill or incapacitate The Joker in *The Dark Knight*, even when he discharges his firearm upon passing cars. The clown construes Batman’s leniency as love and compatriotism. Batman’s refusal to kill The Joker is an oft-altercated angle of their relationship. Each inspires the other, and induces his opposite to be better, smarter,

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232 Neologised from the Greek *soma*, flesh and *marasmos*, wasting.

233 A slogan that is scrawled in blood on the exterior of The Joker’s truck in *The Dark Knight*.

234 Hereafter referred to as *Hood*.

235 The teenage version of whom is voiced by Vincent Martella.

236 That is, kill The Joker.

and less yielding: eternal villainy set against eternal heroism. In 1997's critically-panned<sup>237</sup> film *Batman and Robin* Bruce Wayne's trusted butler Alfred Pennyworth (Michael Gough) offers his take on the eternity of the superhero, arguing "for what is Batman if not an effort to master the chaos that sweeps our world, an attempt to control death itself?" The Joker is the chief agent of this chaos, and will go to any length to perpetuate his influence. The immortality of an influence interests The Joker far more than the immortality of his flesh. Take for example the latest Joker storylines in 2012's *Death of the Family* by Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo, which expand upon previous canon in which The Joker voluntarily allowed Barton Mathis/The Dollmaker<sup>238</sup> to shear off his face. The continuation of this storyline was later teased by the sickening image of a shadowed Joker holding up his wet, limp, still-smiling face to the camera. No matter what atrocity Gotham's Gwynplaine has committed upon his body, his influence never seems to fail.

*BTAS* elucidates the Batman/Joker binary over many episodes, even a few in which The Joker is not the central antagonist. In the fifty-first episode "The Man Who Killed The Batman" a small-time criminal named Sidney Debris/Sid the Squid (Matt Frewer) appears to kill Batman through happenstance. Therein, The Joker laments the death of Batman with eulogistic eloquence, stating "there's a certain rhythm to these things ... I cause trouble, he shows up. We have some laughs and the game starts all over again," before ultimately concluding that "without Batman, crime has no punchline." The clown's comical encomium to Batman imparts that the death of one's nemesis can inspire panegyrics even in the psychotic.<sup>239</sup> The Joker is inextricable from Batman's identity, and vice-versa. In 1:08 "The Forgotten," Bruce Wayne develops amnesia after a blow to the head. The Joker's laughter is one of his first thoughts as his memories begin to return. Despite these cameos, more episodes depict The Joker as the *Moriartesque* spider at the centre of Gotham's criminal web. A significant exemplar of this is the Joker-prominent story 1:46 "Almost Got 'Im." In this episode, Batman's Rogues Gallery sits around a poker table, as each one shares their best "almost got 'im" story. This premise provides an opportunity for the rogues to interact and criticise each other's criminal gimmicks. The poker club scenario is revealed at the climax of the episode to be a trap set by Commissioner Gordon (Bob Hastings) and Batman (Kevin Conroy), who is impersonating Killer

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237 Roger Ebert stated of the film in his 1997 review that it did not "explore the bizarre world of its heroes, but ... settle(d) down safely into a special effects extravaganza" (1).

238 A minor DC villain who has risen to greater prominence after his first screen appearance in the CW series *Arrow*, in 2:03 "Broken Dolls." The Dollmaker is therein portrayed by Michael Eklund.

239 Internet critic Doug Walker states of the episode in "Top 11 *Batman TAS* Episodes" "there's an especially funny scene where The Joker ... throws a funeral for Batman, and of course it's totally keeping in character ... It's a classic case of a person who wanted fame and attention, but wasn't ready for the pain and responsibility that came with it. The story is great, and the scenes with The Joker are hilarious ... it's ... a tale of what happens when too much recognition comes to the wrong person at the wrong time" (1).

Croc (Aron Kincaid). Batman is perhaps a more superlative actor than The Joker, portraying one of his most brutish enemies with conviction. He, as Croc, allows himself to be hectored and beaten by Poison Ivy (Diane Pershing), and interjects idiotically in the conversation. Croc/Batman artlessly rhapsodises his story, stating “I threw a rock at ‘im!” Immediacy is restored to the narrative in the third act by The Joker’s plot to kill Catwoman (Adrienne Barbeau), his story being ongoing. Batman races to save Catwoman from The Joker’s henchgirl Harley Quinn (Arleen Sorokin).<sup>240</sup> The Joker’s unpredictability and his ceaseless testing of Batman are patent in this narrative, as is the Batman/Joker binary. The clown tests Batman tirelessly, ever elaborating on his previous scheme.

In the *BTAS* episode 2:09 “Trial” the Arkham inmates try a bitter and battered Batman in a courtroom setting. As the caped crusader is presumed to be insane by his equally unhinged foes, the crimefighter is tried by a jury of his peers, his own Rogues Gallery. Batman is tried in a place where madness is master, with The Joker himself presiding as judge. The clown’s mockery of the legal system that convicted and certified him is absolutely pantomimic. He performs as a lawman, finally banging his gavel with a Looney Tunes-esque “that’s all folks.” Likewise, the villains’ portrayal of jurors is an inversion of what is known of their roles as alphas in society. Formerly psychiatrists (Quinn and Scarecrow (Henry Polic II)), scientists (Poison Ivy and Mad Hatter (Roddy McDowall)) and a district attorney (Two-Face (Richard Moll)), the villains’ roles as mere jurors seem beneath their stations. Batman’s jury is indeed not composed of a cross-section of society. All of Wayne’s condemners are high-functioning alphas in both their lives as careerists and in their lives as criminals. The villains assign to Batman’s defence Janet Van Dorn (Stephanie Zimbalist), the woman who assumed the role of Gotham’s District Attorney after the breakdown of Wayne’s ex-compatriot Harvey Dent/Two-Face.<sup>241</sup> The Dark Knight’s condemner in another capacity, Van Dorn, must become his champion under duress. She is introduced as railing against Batman’s actions to the media, stating “not only does Batman create these so-called supercriminals; he takes it upon himself to be their judge and jury with no regard to the legal system.” At the climax of the narrative Van Dorn sees that it is the existence of evil that precipitated the rise of the Dark Knight, and not vice-versa. She states to Judge Joker, Prosecutor Two-Face, and the jury of Arkhamites that “the truth is, you created him.” Van Dorn’s shift in thinking is evident in her final thoughts on the existence of Batman. She concedes “I see ... there’s a need for the things you do. But I’m still going to work toward a city that doesn’t need Batman,” to which the Dark Knight laconically responds: “me too.” This idea of a Batmanless Gotham is indeed explored in the 2012 film *The Dark Knight Rises*.<sup>242</sup> At the

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240 A character created specifically for the series by Paul Dini. The character was so popular that Quinn is now a part of the DC universe.

241 Dent, a man who is literally in two minds about every decision, acts as Batman’s prosecutor.

242 Hereafter referred to as *Rises*.

root of the narrative there have been no attacks from costumed supervillains during Batman's eight year absence. Gotham is in a state of peace and complacency. Its overseers are indeed so confident that the city is in a state of indissoluble peace that they permit Joker-veteran Commissioner Jim Gordon (Gary Oldman) to retire. Gordon's proposed evacuation of the commissioner's chair coincides with the arrival of the mysterious super-being known as "Bane" (Tom Hardy) in Gotham City. Bane suffers from chronic pain due to being beaten almost to death by prisoners in the Pit, a Middle Eastern oubliette renowned as ineluctable. Bane wears a mask which provides a constant dose of analgesic gas to inhibit his nociception to tolerable degrees. He occupies a state in which he should be dead, but survives. Throughout the *Dark Knight* trilogy there are many intersecting (im)mortalities at play. Bane's appearance in Gotham resurrects the symbol of the Bat, a mantle which Bruce passes on to Robin John Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt)<sup>243</sup> at the climax of the narrative. Batman is immortal, whilst Bruce Wayne is not. To defeat Bane, a man who himself is close to death, Bruce must retrain his body after The Joker induced an eight year hiatus. The push and pull of Batman's immortality is influenced by his enemies: the greater the foe, the better Batman must become to bring that foe down. The Joker therefore has the effect of making Batman a better crimefighter.

The Joker is fictionally and narratively a master of influences. His role as a fan favourite renders him not only Batman's greatest enemy, but also as an adductible figure of the perversive, such that his image and even his name have joined the nomenclature of evil. In 2009 college student Firas Alkhateeb "Jokerised" an image of Barack Obama, photo-shopping Heath Ledger-style scars and make-up over the president's face over the simple title "Socialism." The Joker's hues<sup>244</sup> and features are so recognisable that anybody can be portrayed as evil, chaotic, or misguided through the Jokerising process. To cite another real-world example, the release of *Rise* was marred by the real-life incident of James Eagan Holmes<sup>245</sup>, a college student referring to himself as "The Joker" who opened fire at a midnight screening on Friday the twentieth of July 2012. The student killed twelve<sup>246</sup> and injured another fifty-eight.<sup>247</sup> Holmes was apprehended by authorities without incident in the cinema carpark minutes after. The Aurora shootings are an example of life imitating The Joker, as fiction and the present share a hostile interdependence. Fictions and realities are symbiotic: real events inspire the creation and evolution of The Joker, which is mirrored again by events in real life decades after the character's creation. Just as the cartoon and cinematic worlds are shown to

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243 Blake is a parallel of Batman's sidekick Robin.

244 Specifically the afore-written whites, reds, and greens.

245 As of January 2014, Holmes has not yet gone to trial. His proceedings are set to commence in February 2014.

246 The youngest of whom was six years old.

247 The youngest of whom was three months old.

permeate the interstices of ours in franchises such as *The Mask*, characters from comics, cartoons, and cinema can inspire to kill. Fiction and reality form their own Multiverse, which feeds and feeds from the events of our reality.<sup>248</sup>

The Joker has found a somatic immortality in many canonical and non-canonical texts, even once donning the mask of Stanley Ipkiss. I will proceed to an elucidation of these, and his role as a “homicidal artist,” to convey madness-making as an art form.

### **Anarchy Athanatised: The Joker as an Immortal, and as an Emulable**

*“That’s why I strive to eradicate gloom/ It’s from that itch I made the switch/ and chose my nom de plume! The Joker!”*

-The Joker, *Batman: the Brave and the Bold*, 2:19 “Emperor Joker!”: “Smile, Darn Ya, Smile.”

*“I’m not ... an art lover. I just like getting my hands dirty”*

-The Joker, *The Joker Blogs*, 1:07 “Artistic Merit.”

*“People are scared of change- even if it means changing into something better.”*

-The Joker, *The Joker Blogs*, “Axes and Allies (5).”

An immortal version of The Joker is depicted in *Joker/Mask*: a one-shot crossover-style comic that depicts The Joker coming into possession of the mask of Stanley Ipkiss. However, when The Joker dons the mask, his personality remains unchanged. He has no inhibitions or suppressed personae, and is therefore himself, yet immortal. The clown is his own *aggregorian* form. Bruce Wayne says of him that “he wears his deepest desires on his sleeve. The mask just makes him unstoppable.” The Joker uses his new cartoonified body in order to create chaos on his twenty-four hour a day television programme *Access Joker*. He finds however that the potency of the mask spoils his “shtick,” returning in one scene to his lair whilst dejectedly hefting a cartoonish safe on his shoulder. “Boring,” he laments to Harley the henchgirl, “I’ve robbed every bank in town ... twice. Batman’s dead. Nobody out there to even try to stop me. I’ll tell ya, Pumpkin Pie, Daddy really had to work for a laugh today.” The lack of an opponent and the non-existence of death both bore The Joker, to the point that he can be easily convinced to peel off the mask and reassume his role as “the clown prince of crime” at the denouement of the narrative. This scene encompasses the lived experience of

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<sup>248</sup> I will return to the nature of this interdependence in the next section “Murder in the Movies.”

all of the immortals and “immortals” analysed in this thesis thus far. All experience ennui to some degree, to the extent that even achieving their goals is to be viewed as insufferable. These immortals therefore elevate their designs to feel again, and to dispel this noisome ennui. However, The Joker’s mask beneath the mask is not so simple to remove. The Joker’s cicatrices act as an irremovable mask that influence his doings as readily as the mask of Ipkiss. At the outset of the narrative The Joker mutters of a museum piece “frowny clown mask. Positively blasphemous.” The Joker sees a clown wearing a mask as blasphemy, and yet dons with aplomb the mask of Ipkiss. Indeed, he wears a mask upon a mask: his “shtick” is already that of the semi-toon and therefore Ipkiss’s vizard only changes and empowers him exiguously. He begins the narrative masked, and consequently the mask changes his persona only minutely. He is a man whose smile is scarred on his face. The Joker’s scars act as a mask that he can never do off, just as his madness can never be cured. His mind exists in a *psychomarasmic* state in which art and homicide are synonymous, and evil is the equaliser. His perception of reality dictates that every arch must be equilibrated by an anarch, whether he is dying or undying, interested or bored, active or inactive.

Another Joker immortality story is featured in the 2008 animated series *Batman: the Brave and the Bold*, a series that embraces the campiness of the 1960’s *Batman* series in its construction. In 2:19 “Emperor Joker!” The Joker (Jeff Bennet) gains immortality and nigh-omnipotence through the accidental transfer of Bat-Mite’s (Paul Reubens) fifth-dimensional powers into himself. The Joker uses these potencies not to take over the world, but to kill Batman, bring him back to life, and kill him again *ad infinitum*. The anarchist’s kinship with Batman is based upon the despoliation of his enemy’s body and mind. The Joker even reacts in horror when Harley suggests that he might take this opportunity to unmask Batman. The clown has no desire to “reduce (his) primal enemy to a mere man,” yet killing Batman through crescendoingly more ludicrous methods is viewed as frequent to the point of banality. This is, in effect, a duplication of the safe scene from *Joker/Mask*. The Joker’s ennui after having killed Batman by a Rube Goldberg-inspired torture device, submersion in acid, crushing, cremation, and guillotining is tantamount to the ennui that can accompany the immortal’s experience. The Joker, already adroit at killing in his mortal life, eradicates his “primal enemy” in every possible permutation. However, the Dark Knight’s refusal to smile at any of The Joker’s japes after so many years is the immortal’s ruination. Batman tricks the criminal into entering his mind, wherein Batman shows his nemesis that the clown is perfectly sane in a world without costumed crimefighters. “You have no one to match wits with,” Batman says “... no symbol of goodness to corrupt. Without Batman, there can be no Joker. No loose screws, no lost marbles, no bats in your belfry. In this world, you’re ... *sane*.” The Joker yields to Batman’s logic immediately, exclaiming that he “can’t be average!” To The Joker, insanity is above deity. Batman and Gotham City are the constancies in the criminal’s ramifying fate.

Whether mortal, immortal, or straddling the mete between the two, the existence of The Joker is inked indelibly onto the streets of the city he dedicates his life to destroy. His presence is also felt long after his death. In the 1999 animated series *Batman Beyond*, for example, emulous young psychopaths take their inspiration from the long-passed Joker. They name themselves “The Jokerz,” and dress in clown costumes. Likewise, in the aforementioned video game *Injustice*, murals of the deceased Joker’s visage are visible in Gotham City’s twilight alleys. Criminality in Gotham is founded upon circles of emulation: the acts of his emulators perpetuate The Joker long after his death. In the 2011 video game *Batman: Arkham City* a diseased and dying Joker (Mark Hamill) is offered the use of a Lazarus Pit<sup>249</sup> by Ra’s Al Ghul’s daughter Talia (Stana Katic) in exchange for Batman’s life.<sup>250</sup> The Joker stages the scene of the game’s final “boss battle” at an abandoned theatre which bears the legend “Joker the Immortal.” There, he succumbs to the ravages of his disease before imbibing the cure, or submerging his flesh in Al Ghul’s Lazarus Pit. However, the end of the game and The Joker’s ostensible death are open to scrutiny. Harley Quinn (Tara Strong) could liberate The Joker’s body from police custody and deliver him to a Lazarus Pit before the clown’s *anima* ebbs from his flesh. In the Gothamverse, an antagonist as intelligent as The Joker is never really dead, whether he lives again corporeally, or through others emulating him, or simply through his writers deciding that Gotham is not Gotham without The Joker’s presence.

The Joker’s most notorious emulator is indeed his henchgirl Harley Quinn. Her name is a paronomasia of the word “harlequin,” indicating her allegiance to The Joker and subtly alluding to her variegated psyche, her past as a psychologist, and her present as a psychopath. The Joker/Quinn relationship is explored in fan-written web series *The Joker Blogs*<sup>251</sup> in which “Patient 4479”/The Joker (Scott McClure) is shown to corrupt his psychiatrist Dr. Harleen Quinzel (Kira Westberg) into the psychotic Harley Quinn.<sup>252</sup> The Joker, though mortal, still takes Gresh’s “long view.” This series

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249 A natural phenomenon in the Gothamverse which can restore the verdure and the valetude of a dying body.

250 Internet critic Captain Logan states in “Superhero Rewind: *Batman: Arkham City* Review” that the game’s writer, Paul Dini, “has embedded myriad ... quandaries about mortality, fate, civilisation, and the duty of a hero (in the game).” He continues that “(in the game, despite the existence of Lazarus Pits) there is no such thing as individual, literal immortality ... everybody dies ... Of the major players in this odyssey, only Batman can achieve true immortality,” for the Joker’s finding and using a Lazarus Pit is “a deliciously horrifying notion” (1).

251 Hereafter referred to as *Blogs*. This series is ongoing on Youtube.com. These videos have been well received by the *Batman* fandom. Alex Willging states in “Why So Serious(ly Well Done?): *The Joker Blogs*” that “these videos need to be seen to be believed. They’re a love letter to *The Dark Knight*, to Heath Ledger’s Joker, and to the *Batman* franchise as a whole. They’ll give you genuine chills and plenty of laughs” (1).

252 This series extrapolates from Harley’s canonical history which is chronicled in the comics, the *BTAS* episode “Mad Love” (105), and the Paul Dini-written episode 4:08 “Two of a Kind” in the 2004 animated series *The*

creates its own canon, chronicling facets of the criminal's life that are not often depicted in the DC mythos, specifically his treatments and his periods of down time in Arkham Asylum. Jenna Gordon of Paperdroids synopsis the series well in her web-series review, stating "the framing device used is ... grounded in reality: The Joker ... is being filmed in his therapy sessions to help determine if he's faking insanity to get out of prison time (1)." The Joker's treaters learn swiftly that, as fellow inmate Dr. Jonathan Crane/The Scarecrow states in 1:06 "An Apple A Day," the former is "not faking." The Joker is shown to both slowly and subtly vitiate those around him, and outright kill when the mood strikes. He states for the camera in 1:06 "An Apple A Day," that after he used another patient's blood for lipstick, the doctors never denied his cosmetics again. He even Jokerises his inmate's uniform in the same episode, changing a "What Would Jesus Do?" t-shirt into "What Would Joker Do?" Like the Napier Joker, he engages in his homicidal artistry in every aspect of his life, from painting his face and scrawling over his clothes, to daubing the wards of Arkham with his victims' blood. He humorously states in 1:07 "Artistic Merit" that "art frees people. After all you can't spell "an artist" without "anarchist."" Art and anarchy are inextricable from The Joker's *raison d'être*. Blood is his paint, and the knife is his brush. The Joker carves the canvas of human flesh into living works of chaos. Quinn's (in)sanity is The Joker's latest work of art, and the central story arc in *Blogs*. Herein Harley is portrayed as more than a curvaceous minx in carnival colours. Rather she is an empathic young psychiatrist whose genuine concern for The Joker's mental welfare ironically portends her own descent into madness. Verisimilitude is lent to the series from its seemingly unscripted reality and the rawness of its dialogue. The Joker claims throughout the first season that a contact outside of the Asylum is uploading his "blogs" to popular video-sharing web site Youtube<sup>253</sup>, this further supporting the "authenticity" of the series. *Blogs* depicts The Joker as having complete control over his surroundings as he escapes his cell whenever he desires, and kills any whose blood might paint a vivid message. Arkham is indeed The Joker's sovereign land: in the 2009 video game *Batman: Arkham Asylum* The Joker lovingly refers to Arkham as his "hacienda."<sup>254</sup> He declares himself to be the most arch psychopath lording over Hell's (ha)cienda. He adores the Asylum as it is a place to scheme and rest up, as well as a source of victims, contacts, and sanities to break.

Greg Cox's novelisation *The Dark Knight Rises* makes reference to The Joker's incarceration, stating "(Blackgate Prison) had replaced Arkham Asylum as a preferred location for imprisoning ... felons. The worst of the worst were sent here, except for the Joker, who, rumour had it, was locked

*Batman*. Doug Walker refers to the former episode in "Nostalgia Critic- *Batman* Season 4: Hit or Miss?" as "an interesting dive into an abusive relationship with Harley's backstory" (1).

253 The web-site whereon the series is hosted.

254 The Spanish word for a large estate.

away as Arkham's sole remaining inmate. Or perhaps he had escaped." From Gotham's perspective, it is sensible to segregate The Joker from all other people, as the clown is disempowered if he has no one to buy or manipulate. The Joker's fate echoes the historical example of Rudolf Hess, the deputy leader of the Nazi Party. Hess was imprisoned in Spandau Prison on the first of October 1946. The ex-deputy became the sole inmate of the prison from 1966 until his suicide in 1987. Indeed, Merrell Frazer, Jr. writes in "The Twilight of Nazism: The Controvertible Case of Rudolf Hess and the Law," Hess was "proved ... a mentally sick man," and "rebuffed as an envoy of peace" (729) by his captors. Cox's brief nod to The Joker in *The Dark Knight Rises* indeed evokes this historical figure and his ultimate fate, and society's abiding lack of preparation on what to do when those who are mentally ill commit (or are blamed for) atrocities. The Joker is so damaged and disturbed that he is likely beyond proper diagnosis, and thus Gotham dedicates an entire psychocurative complex not to his care, but to his imprisonment. The Joker uses this fear to make Arkham his hacienda again, yet his evil and his irredeemability are such that his narrative will never end by suicide in a cell. As he says himself in *The Dark Knight*, "it's all part of the plan." The Joker is not a mere man to be burned to ash by his own regrets. He is rather the carnal form of anarchy, who might exist forever literally through Lazarus Pits or godly masks; or more metaphorically in history's trepidatious remembrance, and through young psychopaths emulating him. Indeed, The Joker's pastless absolutism renders him a more perfect evil than such historical "villains" as Hess. His prescarred self cannot be observed in photographs of himself engaging in banalities. There is no history of a student of geopolitics who ascended the political hierarchy, and if there were, it would likely be false. The Joker cannot be judged, vindicated, or mitigated by his past as there is no evidence of his having existed as anyone or anything other than just "The Joker." All possible histories are likely just stories, wherever he was a failed comedian, a mobster who fell into a vat of chemicals, or a white-collar drone who had just "one bad day." He is pastless, and therefore he is inhuman. His portrayal presents anarchy as an absolute. The absolute anarchist is invincible, undying, and indeed beyond death. For The Joker, insanity is a condition that trumps godhead. To his insane mind, there is sense in conflagration, and epiphany in disarray, for as The Joker says in *The Dark Knight*, "everything burns."

To culminate my analyses of masks and mortalities, I will proceed now to counterbalance this disarray with the violation and the permutation of the rules of the horror genre in the popular franchise *Scream*, by the many versions of The Ghostfaced Killer.

## Murder in the Movies: *Ghostface*, *Cabin in the Woods*, and *The Mask* as a Mirror

“No, please don’t kill me Mr. *Ghostface*! I wanna be in the sequel!”

-Tatum Riley (Rose McGowan), *Scream*<sup>255</sup> (1996).

### Emulation and The Ghostfaced Killer

Postmodernist fictioneers have considered the violation or the permutation of the “rules” of the horror genre formula in film. The horror formula presents two kinds of undying: firstly, the undying of the antagonist, and secondly, the undying of the virtuous, clean-living protagonist. “Immortals” such as *Scream*’s Ghostfaced Killer are shown to embody and perpetuate human malignancy. Human transgression in the horror genre can be decocted to determinism versus free will. The immortality that comes about in the horrorverse is therefore immortality through the assumption of a role. One’s chances of escaping the horror tableau rise if one assumes (or indeed, is cast in) the role of the meek and studious virgin.<sup>256</sup> The *Scream* quadrilogy<sup>257</sup> exemplifies the indissociability of evil and undying. Evil is perpetuated through the imitation of the precedent Woodsboro murderers. Fame-seeking and a culture of emulation exist in movies as well as murders. Life can emulate fiction with vicious facility, as the Holmes-Joker interdependence referred to in the previous section reveals. Like *The Joker*, if an image inspires fear, imitators will seek to revive that image for as long as it is effective. *Ghostface* murders to refresh and to revivify his own legend. As I will later argue in the case of *Heroes*’s Sylar, immortals must eat the ephemeron, to survive the phoenix.

The *Ghostfaces* in *Scream* are indeed similar to *The First* and the various Big Heads in *The Mask*: all are mummer immortals who become a character through the wearing of a mask. The Ghostfaced Killer is immortalised through endless portrayals, resurrected from the dead time and again by whoever chooses to wear the twisted-scream mask. Indeed, the disguise and the voice of *Ghostface* homogenise his new incarnations to the extent that there seems to be one killer throughout the four films. The mask itself was a common and disturbingly simple Halloween item before the release of the film, which adds to the anonymity of the killer. *Ghostface* could be anyone, who one day “snapped,” bought a costume, and set out to kill. The modern horror genre embraces concepts of mirroring, and history repeating itself. The state of having the same face or mask as

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<sup>255</sup> Directed by Wes Craven.

<sup>256</sup> Roger Ebert writes in his 1996 review that “*Scream* violates one of the oldest rules in movie history: It’s about characters who go to the movies ... *Scream* is self-deconstructing; it’s like one of those cans that heats its own soup (1).” As I will later argue, movies about movies lead to an implosion of the “rules” of the genre.

<sup>257</sup> A series of four films.

another, and the state of having the same voice as another, encapsulate the consistency of Ghostface's portrayals. The killers' faces always support a mask that reflects the victim more than the deadly wearer. Ghostface's mask is a mirror held up to the murdered. It is a taunting reflection of his victims' shocked countenances as he springs and stabs from the shadows. The mirroring mask immingles the frightened expressions of his many victims into one mocking, Munch<sup>258</sup>-esque visage. In addition to this, the concept of characters dying in similar manners comes into play in the horror tableau. The aim of Ghostface's game is to dissociate oneself from such victims, and similar characters who die similar deaths. Horror-tableau immortality then is to be found through one's virginity or one's sexuality: if one is gay, or a virgin, then it is against the "rules" for this person to die in a horror film scenario. In *Scream 4* Robbie Mercer (Eric Knudsen) screams "you can't! There's rules! I'm gay ... I mean, if it helps." Robbie here tries to juror the killer on the sacrosanctities of the horror tableau. However, his chicanery comes to light through his lack of conviction. Robbie knows the rules, but cannot effectively dissimulate homosexuality to the killer. There is the implication here that even if Robbie were gay, this would not shield him from death. The "rules" of the genre then are fast becoming nullified. The temerous teen is slashed, carved, and rent by a killer who has come to care nothing for the regulations of the genre. In the modern horror tableau the rules favour the regulators, as the killers become as nihilistic as the victims.<sup>259</sup>

In the second subsection of this analysis I will move on to a dissection of these concepts in relation to affable villainy in the *Scream* quadrilogy, as well as another glance at *Buffy*, and a look at the recent subversive horror film *The Cabin in the Woods*.

### **The Villainous Affable, and The Re-casting of The Teenage Role**

*"Yeah, we write the game ... but in the end, if they don't transgress they can't be punished"*

-Sitterson, *The Cabin in the Woods*.

*"Yello, Evil Werewolf Syndicate, how may I direct your call?"*

-Gil (Barry Julien), *Big Wolf on Campus*, Episode 35, "The Manchurian Werewolf."

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258 Edvard Munch (1863-1944) was a Norwegian painter who brushed the famous "Scream" painting. Ghostface's mask is based upon Munch's depicted screamer.

259 Internet critic Mat Williams states in his retrospective review of the series that "*Scream* changed the horror landscape for its time (the 1990's). Before *Scream*, the norm was for the superman killer, or the stalker zombie. *Scream* ... reinvigorated the slasher genre, and the whodunit. *Scream* made (these tropes) cool again (1)."

One trope which has been inverted in such series as *Buffy* and the above-quoted series *Big Wolf on Campus* (1999-2002) is that of the effete yet affable antagonist whose motives to murder are questionable at best. This trope of banal evil is yoked with the horror genre as activating an inalterable sequence of events in which the victim(s) act(s) with abnormal foolishness. The 2012 film *The Cabin in the Woods*<sup>260</sup> explores these behaviours as being motivated by something more sinister. The premise of *Cabin* is to act as an explanation of why teenage characters act as they do in horror films. The film presents popular horror-genre archetypes: the Whore, the Athlete, the Scholar, the Fool, and the Virgin. These archetypes must be slain as a sacrifice to the “Ancient Ones,” imprisoned gods who will destroy the earth if not annually appeased. The film’s premise is that each horror film that presents these clichés is in fact a cycle of the Cabin, mollifying the Ancient Ones anew. Five teenagers must die each year, or these “Old Gods” will rise and rule. Every powerful country in the world runs these scenarios until one succeeds in appeasing the Gods’ voracity for gore. These successes defer the destruction of the planet for another year. We who form the audience of the horror film are these “Ancient Ones” who will “rise up” if the genre fails to follow a formula. Cinema-goers are complicit in the Cabin-world’s destruction through their own deconstruction of the horror world.<sup>261</sup> Internet critic Maria Aspan writes in *Old Faithful: Six Joss Whedon Stand-Bys Revived For “Cabin in the Woods”* that “Whedon ... juxtapos(es) the horrific and the ordinary: corporations are evil, and evil is often mundane.” Aspan here refers to the Whedonesque trope of making Big Bads banal, ineffectual, or just blandly-unvillainous. One such character is Richard Wilkins III, the Mayor<sup>262</sup> in the third season of *Buffy*. Wilkins fusses over profanities, personal hygiene, and politeness, whilst being an immortal sorcerer in debt to demons. Ghostface, Wilkins, and the Cabin technicians embody the trope of villains who are congenially and often mundanely malevolent. The villain’s voice is becoming defatigated, to the extent that evil is not just

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260 Hereafter referred to as *Cabin*.

261 As Roger Ebert writes in his 2012 review of the film, “(the filmmakers) establish rules only to violate them ... this (film) is like a final exam for (horror genre) fanboys” (1). *Cabin* plays with the genre with, as Ebert posits, “the detail and expertise ... of horror fans” (1) to conclude that in a world full of rigid regulations, the only way forward is to violate these rules, and allow the world of the horror genre to be trampled by the “old gods” who view the events of a narrative from the otherworld of a cinema chair. Peter Bradshaw of the Guardian offers an interesting counter-position on horror genre “expertise,” writing that the film’s director Drew Goddard “plays on ... postmodern (horror genre) connoisseurship ... (as) no matter how cynical and wisened-up everyone is about the horror film and all its various tropes, the genre triumphantly survives, to a great extent by absorbing that cynicism and feeding it back to its fanbase (1).” Bradshaw here suggests that fans are not the ancient gods who rule and dictate the genre, but rather they are more the food that powers the god that is the “programmatic” (1) horror film itself.

262 Whom I referred to as a form of The First earlier in this thesis.

mundane, but jaded. Masteries of the malign are therefore inextricable from affectlessness in the new millennium. These characters represent the trope of the pachydermatous villain who is imperturbable as he delivers his crushing masterstroke, and yet is irritated by trivia such as bad manners or poor hygiene. In keeping with the Mayor's evitiation of execrations, even Wilkins's final words whilst refreshed as the snake-demon Olvikan in 3:22 "Graduation Day: Part Two" are a Goofy<sup>263</sup>-like "well gosh." Antagonists who alternate between affability and callosity embody the concept of ambivalence maleficence, the state of being evil yet uninterested at once. To the ambivalent maleficent, armageddons are quotidian and mundane, as the world ends daily for those who die. The ambivalent maleficent cause the apocalypse daily for those whom they kill. Death is the ultimate everyday occurrence, and therefore evil has become progressively more routine and effete. Prime examples of the ambivalent maleficent, Hadley's (Bradley Whitford) and Sitterson's (Richard Jenkins) sensibilities are indeed so defatigated that they observe the teens' murders like dispassionate popcorn-chewers awaiting gore and nudity. The many versions of Ghostface in the *Scream* quadrilogy are furthermore an excellent example of the ambivalent maleficent in relation to this culture of emulation. Roger Jackson provides the voice of every incarnation of the killer: it is explicated that the culprits use voice-altering technology or "apps"<sup>264</sup> to create the same affable-voiced killer every time. This sort of uniform-voiced killer contributes to the fabricated and homogenised nature of each new Ghostface. Each new incarnation of the killer conducts conversations that seem to follow a script, its lackadaisical villainy growing more fatigued by the film. Similarly to the Mayor of Sunnydale, each Ghostface is enraged by poor telephone etiquette and teenage temerities. The Ghostfaces aspire to teach teenagers a lesson, only to annul the relevance of this by killing them. Ghostface perpetuates the trope of murderous, demonic machinators who ironically practise the argot of the wholesome. Those who employ such celibate patois labour under the delusion that theirs is the perfect method of comportment, and all others must therefore be in need of a lecture in letters. Humourously however, such crusades conduce to futility when one's opponent is a teenager. A commonality amongst the Ghostfaces is the presumption of each that because he (or she) is speaking to a teenager, that teenager must obviously be ill-mannered, imbecilic, and utterly devoid of worth and potential. The killer wishes to amend all adolescents by eviscerating, ejugulating, and excardiating a fraction of their number. Ghostface's quest is indeed to placate the "Old Ones" through brewing the same horror formula in the cauldron of the camera that we "gods" wish to see. Each killer adheres to a script that victimises those who genuflect to the horror formula. Potential victims must break the mould to

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263 The clumsy dog of Disneydom.

264 Cellular telephone applications.

keep their lives. As horror fanatic Randy Meeks (Jamie Kennedy)<sup>265</sup> roars to his hearers in *Scream* “there’s a formula to it! A very simple formula! Everyone’s a suspect!” This formula is based on homogenisation, for to do anything else would be to enrage the “Ancient Ones” of cinema. However, teens who recalcitrate death by defying these formulas achieve horror-genre immortality. When Casey Becker (Drew Barrymore), Ghostface’s first victim in *Scream* asks “is this some kind of a joke?” the killer retorts “more of a game really.” Here Ghostface cryptically reveals the key to escaping with one’s life. To win Ghostface’s game is to best subvert the tropes of the horror genre because, for as the killer states, in his “film” “that’s the original part.”

The *Scream*verse depicts teenagers being persecuted for being thus. Adolescents are what Meeks refers to as “carnage candy” to be consumed by the Old Gods/horror film audience. To lose one’s life based on film trivia indeed evokes an ineluctable labyrinth in which those who are placed in the horror tableau have a null chance of survival. However, in the recent *Scream 4*, Ghostface is surprised by millennial adolescents no longer playing their roles. The new Ghostface says to Jenny Randall (Aimee Teegarden) “you’re the dumb blonde with the big tits!” Jenny replies “I have a 4.0 GPA and a 135 IQ, asshole!” Ghostface’s victims, as of *Scream 4*, begin to recalcitrate against the “role” of the teenager, and its accompanying clichés. Those who break the mould have the best chance of survival in the horror tableau. Adolescents who embrace the fact that they have been thrust into the heart of a horror film are those who are best equipped to escape it. In *Scream* the character of Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich)<sup>266</sup> emulates Jacques’s “all the world’s a stage” speech in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. Billy states “it’s all a movie. It’s all one great big movie. And you can’t pick your genre.” Here Billy speaks of his frustration with the mundal stage, in which people are characters who, as Jacques puts it in *As You Like It*, have “their exits and their entrances” (2.7.141). On this stage, dispossessed teenagers languish under the questionable aegis of their powerless parents. *Cabin* also delineates paragonic and well-rounded young people being re-cast as corrupt individuals worthy of death. Take for example Jules Louden (Anna Hutchison), whose new blonde hair dye suppresses her intellect and increases her libido. Jules is cast in the role of the whore despite being a learned and mature pre-med student. She is the prime example of the facility “work(ing) with what (they) have.” Jules’s personality is altered over the course of the film as her hair dye erodes her wit. She has no chance of surviving the horror tableau as the facility operatives intervene whenever she begins to question her safety and the nature of the situation. Her death is therefore premeditated and undeserved. Jules is repeatedly sprayed with a pheromone mist in the environment of the Cabin-

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265 Mat Williams, in his retrospective of the *Scream* series, refers to Meeks as “the Obi-Wan (Kenobi) of the *Scream* series,” due to the character’s guru-like knowledge of the horror genre, and the tropes and clichés that inhere in this form of cinema.

266 Loomis is named after Dr. Samuel James Loomis, Michael Myers’ psychiatrist in the *Halloween* horror film series.

zone, leading her to osculate a taxidermied wolf's head, and to have sex with her boyfriend Curt (Chris Hemsworth) in the artificially-heated woods that surround the Cabin. She is a victim of the facility's Chem Department to the extent that she is effectively (and meta-referentially) an attractive actress cast for the Old Ones' delectation. As Meeks says in *Scream* "if it gets too complicated, you lose your target audience." Jules's wits are discarded as offal, whilst her shapelier meat is used to captivate the attentions of the Cabin-world's technicians and ancient masters both.

*Cabin's* explication of evil then vindicates humanity in its entirety. The facility operatives glaze away costumed and humanoid killers as creatures of the Other. All Otherform malignants are the servitors of the Old Gods. These are inked up on the facility's betting whiteboard early in the film, which enumerates its arsenal of supernaturals which can be called forth to antagonise the sacrifices. This host of monsters includes "Doctors"<sup>267</sup> and "Dolls."<sup>268</sup> One creature who is inked up on the whiteboard and yet is not seen in the Purge is a being known simply as "Kevin." Kevin is described by the film's co-writer Drew Goddard as "a sweet-looking guy who ... might work at Best Buy- until he dismembers people."<sup>269</sup> Tim Lebbon's novelisation *The Cabin In The Woods* further elucidates the character as a normal-looking guy with a small smile on his face who then proceeds to "exanguinate (a guard) in a second," leaving the body "untarnished, but ... never more dead" (207). *Cabin* and the *Scream* series are at an impasse on the concept of human evil, and people<sup>270</sup> "just snapping." In *Cabin* the killers who are imprisoned for invocation are in fact agents of the Other in human shape: even members of the Klu Klux Klan are shown in the chaos of the Carnage. There are no evil humans in the *Cabinverse*, as all from racists to serial killers are Othermen. In the *Scream* series the Ghostfaced killers are conversely fame-seeking humans who wish to "direct" their own real life horror film, and in this, exact petty revenges. This tableau is populated by a slew of sacrificial teens whose deaths are uninvoked by their own voices. The Cabin sacrifice scenario is supposedly activated by human transgression, but the monsters shown in the cuboid cages towards the end of the film convey that human transgression is minimal, if not non-existent. Human transgression is revealed to be fictional and fabricated in a world of gods and monsters.

(Im)mortality is living in a movie. Millennial undiers are so based on a dimly-inked set of "rules," one of the most prominent of which is the "final girl" trope. Dana Polk (Kristen Connolly) is *Cabin's* "final girl": the female protagonist who survives by merit of her virtues. Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell) is the final girl in the *Scream* franchise who survives the plots of an army of

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267 Referencing the *Hostel* horror series.

268 Referencing the 2008 film *The Strangers*.

269 Kevin could also be a reference to the character of Kevin, a serial killer in Frank Miller's series of graphic novels entitled *Sin City*.

270 As Trudie says in *Scream 4*.

Ghostfaced killers four times. Sidney survives the horror tableau due to her omniscience of its mechanics. She constantly counteracts Ghostface's orchestrations. When the killer calls and says he is outside her door in *Scream*, Sidney fearlessly responds "oh yeah? Well, I call your bluff" and throws the door open. Having learned from 1990's homogenous horror, and indeed its precursors, she knows that red herrings are planted to deceive victims into springing the killers' traps. Sidney's dialogue seems to be as much a professional lament as idiosyncratic speech. She sighs in *Scream* "why can't I be in a Meg Ryan movie? Or even a good porno?" The horror tableau blurs the line between romance and pornography. The director/killer selects the genre and (re)delineates its boundaries.

The *Scream* quadrilogy therefore highlights the concepts of immortality and recalcitration in the horror-tableau. Sidney Prescott's boyfriend, her boyfriend's mother, her cousin, and her half-brother all wear the mask of Ghostface throughout the series. Ghostface stars opposite Sidney, who is cast as the heroine, survivor, and final girl, all in one. The killer is the author of his own being, and the editor of lives. His various forms "write" the film, and select and dismiss its tropes. The trope of the phone call indeed acts as the portent for a trap in the horror tableau. The trill of the telephone is a death knell for the sexually active, the bullying, and the bland. Terror tableaux are indeed founded upon such evolution and escalation. The killer leads his film from trope to trope to reach a climax, in which the narrative abruptly becomes natural and unscripted, free to end as it will. The killer finally relinquishes the director's chair as the narrative ends. This is a broader metaphor for mortality and having control over one's existence. Ghostface, like The Doctor, is the director of his own legend, as many of these fictional immortals strive to be. The horror movie, therefore, is a metaphor for the mutability of mortality. All will die; the intrigue is in the "how."

I have heretofore established several of the more popular modes of immortality that occur in postmillennial fiction: *mirimortality*, *tardevism*, longevising through mystical forces, and resurrection through emulation. It is also, however, through ensconcing oneself in the minds of others, a concept that I will refer to as *memorial vivefaction*, that an alter vitality may be found. I move now to illuminate this concept with reference to two popular characters of nebulous morality: the deathless moribunds of *Saw* and *Breaking Bad*.

## Chapter Four: The Immortal Moribunds of *Saw* and *Breaking Bad*

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### The Angel Who Taught Us Gore: Dyschronia, and *Memorial Vivefaction* in the *Saw* Septilogy

*“Live a good life. If there are gods and they are just, then they will not care how devout you have been, but will welcome you based on the virtues you have lived by. If there are gods, but unjust, then you should not want to worship them. If there are no gods, then you will be gone, but will have lived a noble life that will live on in the memories of your loved ones”*

-(Attributed to) Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor, 121 AD-180 AD.

*“The latest fashion in fear or politically toxic mortality tales? Make your choice”*

-Critic Christopher Sharrett, “The Problem of *Saw*: “Torture Porn” and the Conservatism of Contemporary Horror Films (2009).”

### The Jigsaw Legacy, and *Memorial Vivefaction*

Immortality is not solely to be gained through imbibing potions, magicking oneself, or through other longevising of the flesh. One may become immortal even with one’s parchment unsigned by Hecate. States of undying can be won through the indelible inscribing of one’s self onto the memory of others. This process of existing posthumously in the minds of those who live shall be hereafter referred to as *memorial vivefaction*: that is to say, posthumous “immortality” as gained through the living who vivefy or revivefy through memory. One exemplar of *memorial vivefaction* is John Kramer/Jigsaw, the protagonist of the *Saw* horror septilogy.<sup>271</sup> This series focuses on former civil engineer John Kramer (Tobin Bell) who is diagnosed with an inoperable frontal lobe tumour arising from colon cancer. After surviving a suicide attempt, he uses his impending death as an impetus to ameliorate the world before his passing. He plans to kill or change the corrupted by putting them through trials, replicating his frail, failing flesh on the bones of the hale. Kramer<sup>272</sup> comments in the 2003 short film *Saw* that “most people are so ungrateful to be alive.” As in Aurelian cogitation, if there are no gods,

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<sup>271</sup> A “septilogy” is a series of seven literary or filmic works.

<sup>272</sup> Here in the guise of Billy the Puppet.

then thought is the only heaven for the deceased. The lack of gods signifies that our only hope for posthumous perpetuity is in the minds of those upon whom we have impressed. The only life after life is in memory, a concept which I will refer to as *memorial vivefaction*. Kramer's end is to gain a longevity in the remembrance of his two protégé(s) Amanda Young (Shawnee Smith)<sup>273</sup> and Mark Hoffman (Costas Mandylor)<sup>274</sup> and in the minds of those who survive Kramer's traps. Though the three Jigsaw killers are not somatically immortal, they believe that their actions will purchase a place for themselves in history. This enshrinement in history will encourage others to copycat the "Jigsaw Killer," and convince those they capture of the value of their lives. Indeed, the theatrical poster for *Saw VII* depicts a taskforce building an effigy of a naked John Kramer in an industrialised future. This image is tens of feet tall and dwarfs the structures depicted in the background. This edifice conjures up deiforms: imagoes of unclothed gods that were raised in ancient societies. Like the mega-effigies erected by The Master in *Who*, these images of a deified Kramer are a depiction of a dyschronia: a (future) time in which murder has been sanctioned and the eradication of misfits and criminals is law. Although this image is not used in the actual film, this effigising is emblematic of the *Saw* septilogy's central themes of *memorial vivefaction*: an undying within the heaven of memory.

The *Saw* septilogy emphasises that the dying define, or at least claim to define, death and life. Kramer operates in the knowledge that the law may not adjudicate on the actions of those about to die. Kramer invokes the inculpability of *morituri*<sup>275</sup> which I shall refer to as "moribunds."<sup>276</sup> He, in his position as a moribund, sees himself as fit to write (or re-write) the "rules" for life and death. Kramer is as just as Willow Rosenberg in his position that the dying (or undying) have special knowledge to which the living are not privy. I will refer to this position as *the moriturus principle*: the belief that those not about to die have no grounds to judge the actions of the moribund. Declaring in *Saw* that "I'm sick of people who don't appreciate their blessings," Kramer resolves to either teach

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273 Hereafter referred to as "Amanda" or "Young." Amanda is one of the most popular and nuanced characters of the series. Edward Douglas writes in his review of *Saw II* for ComingSoon that "Shawnee Smith, she of the famous jawtrap from (*Saw*), gives the strongest performance" (1). Smith brings humanity to Kramer's new religion.

274 Hereafter referred to as "Hoffman." Eric Goldman elaborates on Hoffman's character in his review of *Saw VII* entitled "Game Over For Real?", stating that Hoffman "is more like a hulking henchman than a criminal mastermind," and "an odd choice" for Jigsaw's successor, as "Mandylor doesn't have the delivery to sell the thoughtful "You will learn from this," tone that Tobin Bell brings (1)." Internet critic Mat Williams agrees, stating in his review of *Saw V* "Costas (Mandylor) ... would just show up (to the set), know his lines, and deliver the performance. Which is another reason that the Hoffman trilogy seems to lack the heart of the Amanda trilogy (1)."

275 The singular *moriturus*, and the Latin for "those about to die."

276 That is to say, those on the cusp of death.

his subjects to optimise their existences and atone for their sins, or kill them in the process. He gives his “victims” the opportunity to meet death without falling fully into its clutches, stating in *Saw II* that “you must meet death in order to be reborn.” Kramer gains life in the thoughts of others, and immortality through being revered. From The Shredder<sup>277</sup> of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* franchise to the Phantom<sup>278</sup> of the eponymous comic book series, mantling oneself as one’s predecessor immortalises both the mantled, and the mantle-giver. All of these pop-cultural figures meet death, yet are reborn in those who imitate them.

Kramer’s stances also gain an ironic, meta-referential “life” in the horror genre. This exchange from the outset of 2011’s *Scream 4* exemplifies the effect of Jigsaw and the *moriturus principle* on the horror genre:

Sherrie: I like Jigsaw ... he kills people very creatively.

Trudie: But you don’t give a shit who dies because there’s no character development.

There’s just body parts ripping and blood spewing.

Here the character of Trudie (Shenae Grimes) rails against the so-called “torture porn”<sup>279</sup> present in *Saw IV*. There are multiple facets to this opening scene: the first, a pair of crudely-characterised girlfriends discussing the horror genre, *Saw*, and the depth of the Kramer character. However, the entrance of the Ghostfaced Killer complexifies the narrative, as he slashes the two girls to death. The trained audience then expects the *Scream* titles to flash across the screen as they did after the first

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277 There are, for example four Shredders in the 2003 animated series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, who all influence each other. The Utrom Shredder; his pupil Karai who becomes Lady Shredder; The Cyber-Shredder, a digitised clone of The Utrom Shredder; and The Tengu Shredder, the original demonic form from whom all other Shredders take their name.

278 The Phantom line began in 1536, and has been perpetuated since by successors. This gives the Phantom the illusion that he is immortal, or a “Ghost Who Walks.”

279 This term is used in both *Scream 4*, and by critics of horror genre series such as the *Saw* septilogy. Christopher Sharrett writes in “The Problem of Saw: “Torture Porn” and the Conservatism of Contemporary Horror Films” (2009) that “torture porn” in series such as *Saw* that critiques on modern society (such as zombie outbreaks in horror director George A. Romero’s *Dead* films) are lost to both modern filmmaking, and to a modern audience. Sharrett writes that “the consequences of violence for the individual and society, for all the bogus moralizing (sic) of (the *Saw* septilogy) is nowhere in evidence,” such is the “excruciating forms of torture and free-form bloodletting (that) seem to be their chief draw (32).” I argue however that the *Saw* septilogy’s moralising and critiques on society may not be as “inane” (32) as Sharrett suggests, for the *Saw*verse is a bloody dystopia that society must strive to avoid, lest not fitting the societal mould should become punishable by death.

murders in the first three films of the quadrilogy. However, the title for the fictional franchise *Stab* appears across the screen, as the scene cuts to another pair of girlfriends, Rachel (Anna Paquin) and Chloe (Kristen Bell), who opine upon what a hackneyed opening to the film the aforementioned sequence made, re-using the “whole self-aware, post-modern, meta-shit.” The girlfriends speak of how trite the trope of “articulate teens deconstruct(ing) horror movies” within horror movies has become, whilst doing just this themselves. As explained in the previous chapter, the *Scream* franchise aims to subvert horror tropes through both the presentation of their opposites and through playing with the trope of “endless regression.”<sup>280</sup> Kramer is referred to in *Scream 4* as an interesting character who kills nameless others for their various improbities. The ex-engineer’s role in his dying days is therefore to correct the mal-moralled mortals who come to his attention. The more moral, the less mortal, in his thinking. Kramer’s quest is to find immortality in morality and mortality in immorality. It is the latter that he seeks to extirpate in his victims: those who refuse to atone through blood, and sacrifice their *soma* for the salvation of their *anima* are those who fail Kramer’s trials. He deems himself the most moralled in a rotting reality, and therefore dispenses “justice” to those who supposedly undervalue their lives. He sees those in pain as paragons of probity: in the land of the immoral, he closest to death is closest to sanctity. In Kramer’s thinking, to suffer pain is to become ever wiser, and those who have never suffered are callow fools.<sup>281</sup> The moribund man shares a conversation on the nature of pain in *Saw II* with Detective Matthews (Donnie Wahlberg), to whom Kramer says “I don’t intend to mock you ... but I’m a cancer patient. How could YOU possibly put me in more pain than I’m already in?” Kramer’s attitude evokes the saints of Christianity, individuals operating under arcane guidances and sacrificing their days to ameliorate God’s creation. His actions suggest those of proselytising zealots who convert the dispossessed to religion’s cause. His mission is one of enforced conversion: one must either become like Kramer, or lose their life in defiance. As he

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280 Mat Williams states of the sequence in his retrospective of the *Scream* series that “six minutes in, the film has managed to have a dig at the “torture porn” genre with the *Saw* films, it’s had a dig at *Scream*’s own opening, *Scream*’s legacy, and the endless train of horror sequels that horror seems to be associated with” ... There’s a nice comment on the fans who over-analyse everything ...” (1).

281 Author Kyle B. Stiff even goes as far as to say in “The Mythology of *Saw* and the New Religion of John Kramer” that “The point I mean to drive home is this: *Saw* is more than a film franchise. It’s the template for a new religion. The blade that can cut away bad habits is a philosophy that can heal this world” (1). Such is the divisiveness of the *Saw* franchise. Some critics dismiss the franchise as simply schlock being written to sate a bloodthirsty audience, such as Roger Ebert, who glibly states in his 2004 review of *Saw* that “(Kramer) exists not because he has his reasons or motivations ... he exists because he ... goes to great trouble and expense to fabricate a situation that the movie can exploit for 100 minutes”; whilst others see a blueprint for a future religion built on trials of torture, or as Stiff pontificates, “a reminder of joyful purpose and meaningful living written in rusted metal and clockwork executions (1).”

perceives putrescence in every cell of reality, any and all are potential students of the moribund's teachings. Kramer therefore presents a different desire to that of, say, Willow Rosenberg. She, in her raising of the altar at Kingman's Bluff in 6:22 "Grave," did not wish for pain and suffering, but rather for annihilation in a severed second. Kramer, however, desires to educate through agonies, and illustrate the disjunction between the *soma* and the soul. To cleanse the soul, Kramer flays the flesh which incorporates it. Pain is science, to the Jigsaw Killer.

Kramer, like Vampwill, thereby shares a marriage with death. He believes that his condition has taught him so many of the arcana of being that he cannot do anything but share them before his demise. Kramer also fosters this sort of reverence and emulation in his protégé(e)s. The teaser poster for *Saw V* depicts a bare-chested Mark Hoffman wearing Kramer's severed face strapped tightly to his own. The posters for the *Saw* franchise convey the nature of becoming when one assumes a role. The role of the Jigsaw killer is inextricable from becoming: when one Jigsaw dies, another must both take his place, and ready his own successor. To become and to be a Jigsaw is not to quest for personal immortality, but rather to quest for the immortality of the role of Jigsaw. Death to Kramer is to be disremembered, or have his work discontinued. True death takes the form of forgetting, or being forgotten, or becoming the forgetter. The oblivious night of death claims more than just the dier, but also the precious tenets by which the dier lived. Kramer guards against this outcome by instilling his death-dogma in younger, fitter beings who can work to legitimise his brand of change-or-die trials.<sup>282</sup> Dystopia is therefore not depicted as fanes afire, but rather as the law made monstrous. Dystopia is often simply a Utopia that has been misshaped by its constructors. The North America that is depicted in the *Saw* septilogy is a society that is descending into dyschronia, or "untime."<sup>283</sup> Dyschronic visions of public slaughter<sup>284</sup> and Kramer-inspired, government-remunerated executioners<sup>285</sup> are counterbalanced by scientific predictions of the very dystopia, a

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282 Kyle B. Stiff continues in "The Mythology of *Saw* and the New Religion of John Kramer" that "John Kramer holds the survival of his legacy over the survival of his body (but is even willing to put his legacy to the test and allow it to die if it is unworthy)" (1). However, unlike Stiff, I posit that Kramer's trials are not forging a new religion, but rather beckoning a dystopia that portrays itself as a utopia. Kramer is not the "Messiah" (1) that Stiff claims him to be, but rather a man railing against death by taking the lives of others, and teaching other damaged individuals to do the same after he succumbs to his cancer.

283 Mat Williams states in his *Saw* Retrospective that "The killer is completely unique ... (and) it maintains true to the world it's set in. *Saw* does not exist in our world. It exists in its own universe, and at no point in the entire franchise does it ever betray this world (1)." This dyschronic vision of North America and the world, however, acts as an admonition against allowing the world to fall into such a dystopian state.

284 As depicted at the beginning of the franchise's final film *Saw VII*.

285 As per the *Judge Dredd* franchise of films and comic books.

world in which everyone is immortal, and immune to malady and degeneration.<sup>286</sup> Indeed, in the absence of deity, false gods rise to fill the void. Kramer exemplifies the philosophical and psychiatric concept of “*unsterblichkeit*,”<sup>287</sup> expounded upon by such antiquarian psychiatrists and psychobiologists as Hanz Lungwitz (1881-1967). Kramer’s trials are peans to pain and its power to change. His trials guard against oblivion, which arises from death and being forgotten. He is soon to become (un)living proof of life’s stochastic nature, yet his tenets may outlive him. Kramer does not go gentle into that good night, and rages against the dying of the light.

### **Lungwitz, Metempsychosis, and Dyschronia**

*“Killing is distasteful to me!”*

-John Kramer, *Saw V*.

The writers’ deifying of Kramer is evident in both the characters’ reverence for him, and the films’ marketing and taglines. Kramer is even referred to using the theic “He”: the theatrical poster for *Saw VI* features the phrase “He helped me.” Similarly, the trailer for *Saw V* features the phrases “His Message Is Righteous,” “His Love Is Everlasting,” and “His Gift Is Life” before cutting to another screaming victim within a trap. Kramer is likewise depicted on a different poster for *Saw VI* as a holy iconograph given shape by the bodies of his many masked disciples. The base of this striking poster features the phrase “His Disease Is Spreading.” The heaven of which Kramer is “God” is in the memories of his successors. The perished man is not scattered across oblivion, but rather assumes a throne within the thoughts of those he (or He) “helped.” The exemplar of Kramer is pertinent to certain metempsychic positions in philosophy: that is to say, that the athanatos soul finds an egress from the body that it animated, and becomes bound to another human vessel. However, in the case of Kramer, metempsychosis occurs before death. He takes something of himself during his dying days, and sows it within the fecund soil of another soul. He exemplifies death as a sort of playground state in which one’s desires are fulfilled by those who survive us. Deity, ironically, is to be found not only in death, but in nihility. Young says in *Saw II* that “by creating a legacy, by living a life worth remembering, you become immortal.” The immortality of which Young speaks is certainly not a corporal immortality, but an ever-living in memory. My concept of *memorial vivifaction*, however, differs from Platonic or Neoplatonic immortality (alternatively referred to as metempsychosis and palingenesis by critics and scholars), which is the transmigration of the soul into another capsule. Kramer’s passkey to all of the doors of undying is to desacralise life, and to sacralise

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<sup>286</sup> A concept that I will explore in relation to *Heroes*’s Sylar in my next chapter.

<sup>287</sup> The German noun for “immortality.”

death. Declaring in *Saw II* that “those who don’t appreciate life do not deserve life,” Jigsaw’s punishments degenerate into a series of grotesque comeuppances that penalise ambition and antipathy more than any actual sins. Kramer’s definition of an appreciation for life is living in a manner that in no way affects one’s fellow man. It is a sin, for example, to work for a medical insurer,<sup>288</sup> and deem that a client with an existing medical condition is a financial liability. Such activity, in Kramer’s thinking, is to impignorate one’s soul to vice. Kramer beckons dystopia in his killing of the so-judged immoral.

One such punishment is depicted in *Saw II*, which begins with informant Michael Marks (Noam Jenkins) waking semi-naked in one of Jigsaw’s subterranean rooms.<sup>289</sup> Marks’s head is squeezed in an iron death mask on a spring timer. A video starts to play, in which Billy the Puppet judges Marks, stating “I call you unworthy of the body you possess, of the life that you have been given.” Kramer’s avatar reveals that the key to the trap is surgically implanted behind Marks’s right eye, and that Marks must shed blood in order to stay alive. As the timer taunts him, Marks lifts a scalpel to his sealed eye, but panics each time, and screams to be released. Unable to bring himself to cut the key from his own head, his skull is quickly crushed. Jigsaw knows that his victims are unlikely to be able to escape his traps, and therefore only those most willing to change will survive. As a cancer patient, Kramer is best acquainted with fear and the stultifying effects of suffering. His cancer is a crucible of the flesh that he wishes to replicate in the corrupt, his “subjects.”<sup>290</sup> In his thinking, should they fail, they fall, and society is rendered a service. Like God, Kramer tests humanity. Kramer’s knowledge of human nature therefore allows him to amputate the appendages of society he views as rotten. Death’s imminence can indeed beget such an alter morality: as one’s body succumbs to disease so can that subject’s morality. The sick and the degenerant often experience a shift in the self. When physicians wave the caduceus over a patient and deem that patient pilled, potioned, and cured, often the very opposite happens. The patient can become jaded and disillusioned with the system and with life, a disillusionment which can consume the patient’s everyday interactions. In the case of Kramer, he comes to view society as cancerous, like his own body. A medicated patient can

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288 Such as the members of “the bull pit” in *Saw VI*.

289 Matt Cale writes in his contemporary review of the film for “Ruthless Reviews” that this opening scene is all about “games, clues, and nasty, brutish ends to miserable human lives ... (in which) there’s a great deal of mirth to be found ... (The scene) is a keeper ... original in (its) twisted glee” (1). Cale occupies the camp of reviewers who view the septilogy as a powerful depiction of these sorts of crucibles of the flesh giving hope to the hopeless. Steve Newton of EarOfNewt concurs, stating in his appraisal of *Saw IV*: “Who says torture porn isn’t a valid art form reflecting the mores and mindset of society?” (1).

290 Internet critic Mat Williams suggests of Kramer in “Welshy Reviews: *Saw* Retrospective Part III (*Saw II*)” that it was “from surviving his attempt at suicide (after being diagnosed with cancer) ... that he sought to begin ... his work ... John the man died, and Jigsaw, the tester of human spirit was born” (1).

also undergo a shift in his or her mentality. The patient's family and associates can become inured to this shift in mentality, and come to see the minds of those affected by medication as the true self of the patient. Amanda and Hoffman see only the drugged, sedate, dying Kramer, and recall him as such. Amanda even views this post-cancer version of Kramer as something of a visionary, proclaiming in *Saw II* that "it is I who will carry on John's work after he dies" for "the cure for death itself – the answer ... is immortality." Amanda worships a version of Kramer that would not be so without addling pills and potions, and the precipitant of Kramer's cancer and his experiences thereafter. Therefore, if thought revives the dead, Jigsaw's mentees are remembering a false form of Kramer: a Kramer that would not be so had cancer never stricken him. Amanda and Hoffman recall and venerate Kramer's most corrupted form, that of a man stupefied by analgesics and anti-cancer catholicons, and motivated by delusions of changing the world. They revive a false form. Like The Joker and his scars, cancer motivates Kramer to affect change. Kramer's state and his imprinting on his protégé(e)s calls to mind the philosophy of "*das unsterblich*": the immortal. I cite here Hans Lungwitz's antiquarian psychiatry paper entitled "*Über Unsterblichkeit*" ("On Immortality"), in which the author posits that although we use words such as "immortality, eternity, infinity etc." (118), there is no *unsterblichkeit* as such, but "only immortal objects" (118). Lungwitz argues for scientific immortality and dissuades the reader of notions of God and angels "sitting on heavenly thrones and conducting from there the course of earthly things" (127) for the "true unequivocal belief is knowledge" (127). Lungwitz pushes for an immortality outside of God, a psychobiological immortality such as that of Kramer. Though such papers may seem as outmoded and as needlessly poetic as the term "antiquarian psychology" might lead one to believe, such works demonstrate the evolution of concepts of immortality and their relation to other pursuits of the day. Such papers are overfocused on God, by effect of the societies in which they are written, as the above passage evinces. The writings of Plato, also, are centred on the divine, and Greek thanatic mythologies. That which Plato posited to be the divine and separable substance of the soul is in today's scientific thinking the facets and hemispheres of the human cerebrum. I argue therefore for a removal of the divinity and the deity of the soul in relation to concepts of immortality in the twenty-first century. Let us place deities and the divine in hells of disremembrance. The seat of the soul, or the *anima* as I refer to it, is the brain. To relate this to the *Saw* septilogy, Kramer metaphorically transmigrates his soul into the bodies of his protégé(e)s. This imprinting is a form of immortality. Another form of undying is scientifically longevising the flesh, thereby longevising the brain or soul. Kramer also employs the opposite method, killing the corrupt, "ungrateful" *anima* through breaking the flesh that capsules it. He is a master of both moralities and mortalities. Kramer's mastery of the thanatic encompasses the inherent ethical dilemmas involved with any scientific discovery of undying. If science can immortalise us, we will never meet our Maker, and we will exist eternally distinct and disjunct from any "heaven" or "God"/"gods." We therefore need to disregard our thanatic

mythologies, whilst considering the dystopian aspects of science's immortalising humanity: a discovery that enables universal *unsterblichkeit*. Though immortality for all has the appearance of (U/u)topia, the immortality of the human race would certainly presage the extinction of the earth. As Prospero replies to his daughter Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, such things that are subjectively wonderful are only "new to thee" (5.1.185). Viewers of utopia(e) must therefore be mindful to not become Mirandas marvelling at the brave new world, that is, in fact, a more dystopic version of the world as it was. We must question everything as science ascends. Kramer's quest is for a utopia that is dressed as dystopia, and unlaw that is garbed as law. His vision of society makes Mirandas of us all. "You-sin-we-slay" legislation renders meaningless our definitions of the sanctity of life. In brave new worlds of scientific advancement and designer *i-Mortalities*<sup>291</sup>, then, we must weigh discoveries by the scales of the sanctuary. Immortality, as Prospero might admonish, is only new to us.

I will now turn my attentions to another pop culture moribund, Walter White of *Breaking Bad*, and assess the Ozymandian empire White raises during his final days on earth.

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291 A term to which I will refer again in Chapter 5 "Too Special to Succumb."

## The Deathless Moribund: Walter White and the Alchemy of *Breaking Bad*

*“Never give up control. Live life on your own terms. Guess what? Every life comes with a death sentence”*

-Walter White, 4:08 “Hermanos.”

*“If God listened to the prayers of men, all men would quickly have perished: for they are forever praying for evil against one another”*

-Epicurus, Greek philosopher, c. 341-270 BC.

*Breaking Bad*<sup>292</sup> is a 2008 teledrama series that airs on American channel AMC. It stars Bryan Cranston as Walter Hartwell White, a repressed high school chemistry teacher who, after being diagnosed with a terminal strain of pulmonary cancer, elects to earn as much money for his pregnant wife and disabled son as is possible in his remaining days. *Bad* presents a figure existing at the door of death, who despite dying, is more alive than he has been for years. Walt occupies a position in which the closer his cancer brings him to death, the further his deeds shield him from dying through any other means. Walt operates at the point of the reaper’s scythe, under constant threat of succumbing to his cancer before he assures his family’s financial future in the form of an empire. Walt knows that the law has no power to recriminate the dead, and his family will be beyond reproach should his misdeeds come to light. Series creator Vince Gilligan described *Bad* as “Mr. Chips becomes Scarface.” I will argue hereafter that the Damoclean sword of an imminent death represents a sort of pre-extenuation to Walt as he delves deeper into evil.

### Walter White, The Portrait Persona, and The “Grammar of Evil”

*“My dear boy, you ... are beginning to moralise. You will soon be ... like the converted, and the revivalist, warning people against all of the sins of which you have grown tired. You are much too delightful to do that”*

-Lord Henry, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (163).

*“You will always be fond of me. I represent ... all the sins you never had the courage to commit”*

Lord Henry, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (69).

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292 Hereafter referred to as *Bad*.

Calvin O. Schrag writes in “Otherness and the Problem of Evil: How Does That Which Is Other Become Evil?”<sup>293</sup> that “the grammar of evil ... is not ... easy to sort out” (150) and evil devolves into a confusing “polysemy of lexical signifiers” (150). Evil is neither accurately nor fully conveyed through sememes, and an incontrovertible definition of such can not be philosophically choralled. Evil is in the eye of its witness, or its perceiver. To apply Schrag’s “grammar of evil” to Walter White, I look to first his personality, and second his deeds. In Walt’s case, the lacuna in his life is the marked absence of evil. At the outset of the series (1:01 “Pilot”), Walt is a quiet and undervalued genius who endures the shame of washing his students’ cars to supplement his meagre income. He outwardly demonstrates no “malignancy” or “sinfulness” (150), the descriptors that Schrag uses to define evil. A burdened teacher is not marked by the malignancies of “wrath” (150), or shown to cause “calamity, disaster (or) misfortune” (150). Walt’s evil is therefore not a radical evil, or at least not apparently as the series commences. This is the crux of any analysis of Walter White: if he is not evil, how does he become so, and more relevantly to my thesis, if he is mortal, how does he become immortal? To analyse Walt, one must flesh over the skeleton of the “grammar of evil” that Schrag presents. Schrag’s position in “Otherness” is that one’s perception of evil is conjoined with religion, whether or not the perceiver gives credence to God “as a cosmic architect and overlord” (150). To comprehend evil, in Schrag’s thinking, one must ruminate upon the existence of God. I posit rather that one needs no belief in or out of God to perceive and define such evils as those that evolve within Walt. Evil must be defined by both the deed and its doer, and must be extricated from any myth of God or indeed, embodiments of evil such as Satan. Evil is definable in a grammar that exists outside of Schrag’s “theistic framework” (150); a grammar that is disburdened from conceits of deity. Myth, doctrine, and dogma should not enter into one’s personal perception of evil. Evil is rarely the radical “rotten-to-the-core” variety to which Schrag refers. It is more difficult to define in the individual, as evil is more recognisable by its paradigms rather than its instances.

Indeed, Walt himself thinks of morality more scientifically than Schrag. In 1:02 “Cat’s in the Bag ... ,” the second episode of *Bad*, Walt lectures to his students on the subject of molecular chirality. He refers to chemistry as the “study of change” and chiral molecules as like one’s hands: mirror images of one another that are unable to be superimposed or have their parts precisely aligned. However, a distracted and uneasy Walt, having just killed a man, speaks of chirality not only using the example of one’s hands, but also good and evil. He proposes that good and evil are like chiral molecules: mirror images of one another that behave in different ways. Walt here considers that morality and mortality are both subject to change. The chemistries of morality and mortality share a chirality in Walt’s fading existence. Good and evil are better defined as like one’s hands: mirror images of one another that are the same in appearance, yet appreciably different. There is, to

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293 Hereafter referred to as “Otherness.”

exemplify, a “chirality” between Walt and his alter persona “Heisenberg.” Walt begins the series as somewhat of a milquetoast, who, after seeing the horizon of his mortality, abandons one chiral molecule of morality, and assumes its mirror. This definition of good and evil is superior to Schrag’s, as evil is good as defined by another metric. To view the malign as secular plays an integral role in exiling God from our perception of evil. Schrag’s religious agenda simply obfuscates the reader’s apprehension of mortal, human evil that is born of good intentions, such as that which Walt cultivates within himself. Evil and immortality are concepts that pertain only to humanity: discredence in deities simplifies one’s apprehension of evil. Walt perceives good and evil, mortality and morality as chemistries rather than perfectly definable concepts. To men and women of science, humans can abandon the molecule of mortality, and assume its chiral mirror, immortality. Malignancy, sinfulness, and evil are viewed by the moribund man as apprehensible truths that can be conceptualised through chemistry. His metamorphosis therefore exemplifies the concepts of mirror moralities and mirror mortalities: alter states impelled by events in one’s existence. Walt, once unacquainted with navigating his own fortunes, endows himself with the power to shape his family’s future. His recalcitration against death begins as a desire to guide his family’s fortunes before his demise. However, his newfound proximity to death induces him to live more fully than he has in years. The light that is reflected by the reaper’s scythe illuminates his days and gives him a purpose. Walt’s good intentions engender a greater evil.

This Walt/Heisenberg binary evokes a parallel literary example. The concept of a mirror mortality is perhaps best encapsulated in Dorian Gray, the eponymous personage from Oscar Wilde’s only published novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*<sup>294</sup> (1890). Gray is a handsome young man who, in realising that the light of his beauty will dim some day, resolves to sell his soul that his portrait might wither in his stead. He demonstrates that the immortal’s body is seldom a divine saltation shared between ichor<sup>295</sup> and yliaster.<sup>296</sup> Oftentimes the immortal’s body is no more than decaying blood and pulverulent atoms bound by pacts and promises. This trope is even extended into a sort of talismanic interdependence (or indeed, chemical “chirality”)<sup>297</sup> in the critically-panned

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294 Hereafter referred to as *Picture*.

295 The rarefied, golden-coloured fluid that runs in the veins of Greek gods.

296 Also know as “iliaster” *et. alii*. Literally “star-matter.” The neologism used by the Renaissance physician Paracelsus, who used the term to denote cosmic compounds and the prime materials of the universe.

297 Literary critics see the parable of Gray in terms of mirroring, doubling, and as I put it, “chirality,” as well. Christopher Craft writes of the literary Gray in “Come See About Me: Enchantment of the Double in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*” that “Only with two reflections can Dorian’s enjoyment counterpose images of his enduring beauty against those of his emerging ugliness” (109). Jan B. Gordon concurs with this notion of doubling within the narrative, writing in ““Parody as Initiation”: The Sad Education of Dorian Gray” that “the use of a double (within the narrative) is ... a phenomenon that will come to demand increased attention from the psychologist as

2003 film *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*.<sup>298</sup> Therein, the character of Dorian Gray (Stuart Townsend) is shown to be unaging and undying for as long as his portrait remains intact.<sup>299</sup> Upon sight of his painting, Gray is crushed under the weight of his years, and perishes in a cascade of swirling dust and broken bones. *Picture*, like *Bad*, is a lapsarian parable. Though not stated to this extent, Walt's sins act as a form of "portrait," a talisman into which he imbues his misdeeds. His "Dorian's portrait" is his alter ego Heisenberg. The black-hatted Heisenberg is the "picture" of Walt's soul. He believes that his offences might be viewed as venial in light of his extenuating circumstances. The prospect of money and excitement poisons Walt, just as Dorian is "poisoned" by what is believed to be (or at least a fictional analogue of) the French novel *À rebours*, by Joris-Karl Huysmans.<sup>300</sup> Walt, as Wilde's Dorian, pays in "the consciousness of degradation" (69). He feels however that he will be exonerated by his cancer should his family or the authorities ever deduce his doings during his final years. Walt's "portrait" is therefore his debility. He projects his sins onto his cancer-eaten self. Indeed, as Walt rewrites the pages of his morality, the tales of Heisenberg that circulate the criminal underworld inspire more fear. Heisenberg is hailed as both an artist of meth, and a man who is able to kill completely without compunction. He therefore crafts a longevity through deception, and averts death through the creation of a sinister alter ego who sits at the apex of an empire. Walt intimidates his competition and would-be assassins through the promulgation of misinformation. He shapes what I refer to as a "portrait persona" through rumours, which depict him as someone with whom only the inane would palter. The Heisenberg persona is thereby created through what I refer to as *cacomimesis*:<sup>301</sup> literally "evil-imitation." Through emulating his persecutors,

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well as the student of Pan-Celticism" (355). Within the theatre of his existence, Gray and his "picture" share a talismanic interdependence.

298 Hereafter referred to as *League*.

299 Matthew Buck and Kyle Kallgren state in their video review of the film entitled "Brows Beat Down: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*" that the film is a "gigantic missed opportunity" (1) and that "(Dorian Gray is) one of the characters added to the League for the movie. He's only here because he's a well-known character, and he can't die" (1). They go on to outline the differences between the Dorian of the source novel, and the Dorian of the film, stating "A lot of (the novel version of) Dorian Gray's most emotional scenes were spent looking at the painting, (whereas the Dorian of the film cannot gaze upon the painting, lest its magic be undone) (1)." Likewise, Roger Ebert observes in his review of the film that "these team members have skills undreamed of by the authors who created them ... Mina Harker is an immortal vampire ... but I wonder if Oscar Wilde knew that Dorian Gray ... cannot die (or be killed!) as long as he doesn't see his portrait (1)."

300 This supposition is agreed upon by most Wilde scholars. For example, Joyce Carol Oates writes in "*The Picture of Dorian Gray: Wilde's Parable of the Fall*," "Poor Dorian charges he has been ... "poisoned by a book," ... by Huysmans' rather silly novel" (419).

301 Neologised from Greek *kakos* (evil) plus *-mimesis* (imitation).

from the spoilt students at the carwash to his first antagonist Tuco Salamanca (Raymond Cruz), Walt fabricates a fearsome alter ego whose influence will exist long after its creator's demise.

### **Satanic Sagacities, and Cacomimesis**

*"The faster they undergo change, the more violent the explosion"*

-Walter White, 1:06 "Crazy Handful of Nothin'."

*"And on the pedestal these words appear:*

*"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:*

*Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"*"

-*Ozymandias*, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Though Walt himself may not be (somatically) immortal, his "portrait persona" will certainly survive his flesh. However, in his killing of series antagonist Gustavo (Gus) Fring (Giancarlo Esposito) in Season Four, one must decide if Walt is a righteous avenger, or if he is dethroning one demon to exalt another. I argue the latter: Walt is dispatching evil that he might become it immortally. In 4:13 "Face Off," the season four finale, Walt finally dispatches his nemesis through preying upon Hector Salamanca's (Mark Margolis) grudge, and Hector's desire to see Gus dead. One must question: is it evil to dispatch that which we view as evil and exist in its place? I argue that one must become evil before destroying evil. To become a dispatcher of the wicked, one must embrace the "chiral molecules" of both. As with John Kramer, when a strong, sane mind is housed in an insane body, the corporal corrupts the mind. Walt represents the abhorrent supermortal, who must overcome the evil that besets him by becoming a greater evil himself. Fring is a vision of Walt's future should the latter choose to become the king of Albuquerque meth manufacture. He stands at chaos's crossroad, permitting circumstance to dictate which path he should choose. Any analysis of this breaker of bad should assess the extent to which Walt's actions are mitigated by his cancer, and by the evil of Gus Fring. The fourth season opener 4:1 "Box Cutter"<sup>302</sup> is the episode in which Gus bares his true nature. He slits his subordinate's throat with the

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302 Paul Martinovic, of Den of Geek, writes in his review of the episode that "(The sequence in which) Gus finally arrives at the lab to confront Walt and Jesse is one of the tensest and most brilliant set pieces the show has ever done ... The show can pull off virtuosic long, wordless sequences ... (in which) everything is conveyed either through a thoughtful shot composition, or through the nuanced gestures and performances of Bryan Cranston, Aaron Paul, and Jonathan Banks (1)."

implement presaged by the episode's title. Fring throws Victor's (Jeremiah Bitsui) bleeding body at Walt's feet as a statement against presumption: any who act outside of Fring's counsel will face severe and immediate punishment. Is the killing of the evil individual permissible then in this case when Walt and his family face death at Gus's whim? This may be permissible in this instance, however this is Walt's pretext. He relishes the intellectual duel, and triumphing over someone so powerful. Gus, Hector, Victor, and Tyrus (Ray Campbell) are but obstacles to be overcome. Here we see Walt's descent into darkness as he renders that which we recognise as good as perverse. Using one's wits to orchestrate the deaths of others is inarguably evil by this metric. Using one's friends and family as one's bishops, knights, and rooks is emblematic of Walt's burgeoning malevolence. He orchestrates the poisoning of Jesse's (Aaron Paul)<sup>303</sup> girlfriend Andrea Cantillo's (Emily Rios) son Brock (Ian Posada) and convinces Hector to detonate the bomb at the Casa Tranquila<sup>304</sup> retirement home which kills both Gus and Tyrus. The bell which the stroke-silenced Hector uses to communicate is also the method by which he takes his own life, and the life of Gus. Indeed, in 4:08 "Hermanos," the repeated ding of the elevator foreshadows Fring's death when Hector rings his bell for the last time. Though it is entirely unrealistic that one could stroll from a room with one's head half-hollowed, this scene encapsulates Gus's personage: no matter the face, so long as the tie is straight. Fring, who conducted drug deals with a Mr. Rogers-like swagger, has become literally two-faced. Fring's hand moves instinctively to his clothing before his face, lest the public persona that is represented by his work tie has been knocked askew. Fring does not wish to be connected with such strange events as rest home explosions. One's life as equated to one's public perception inheres in Gus's character, and to some extent, Walt's. The shadows on Fring's face presage his death, and demarcate his future wounds. He indeed shares the same burns as the portentous pink teddy bear that floats face down in Walt's pool during the second season.<sup>305</sup> This burnt and faceless bear is the emblem of all of Walt's acts of destruction, from the murder of Fring, to allowing Jesse's girlfriend Jane Margolis (Krysten Ritter) to choke on her own vomit whilst she is on a heroin trip. The bear's fur being the same shade of fuchsia as Walt's sweatshirt shows that the moribund man is being burnt by his own actions and inactions. His deeds are the cause of more than just a few addictions, or lost lives. Walt's decision to manufacture meth ramifies eternally, until it affects even those with whom he has had little to no contact. Indeed, the most integral moment in any episode of *Bad* features in the ironically-named episode, 2:12 "Phoenix." Therein, Walt makes a fraction-second decision to allow

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303 Jesse Pinkman is Walt's former student, and partner in meth manufacture.

304 The Spanish for "tranquil house."

305 These future events are depicted monochromatically throughout the season (with the scene turning to colour in 2:13 "ABQ" to signify that these events are at last aligning with the present). This teddy bear is the eerie emblem of all the people Walt has harmed, and will harm, through his deciding to manufacture methamphetamine.

Jane to die.<sup>306</sup> This decision ruins not only the lives of Jesse and Jane's father Donald Margolis (John De LaCie), but also initiates the sequence of events that will lead to the seemingly disparate incident of the aviation disaster in the season finale, 2:13 "ABQ." Walt's inaction is his first conscious resolution to allow someone innocent to die for the good of his ends. This inaction leads to the collision of two commercial aircraft in the skies above Walt's residence in Albuquerque in 2:13 "ABQ." Margolis is distraught over his daughter's death, and loses his concentration at his job as an air traffic controller. His lapse in attention precipitates the loss of hundreds of lives. Walt recognises no connection or culpability between himself and the incident, and views the event as a strange anomaly. When he later hears of Margolis's attempt on his own life on the radio in 3:04 "Green Light," he switches it off, and pretends to focus on his driving. Walter White exemplifies Claudius's line in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "when sorrows come, they come not single spies/but in battalions" (*Hamlet*, 4.5.78-79). Walt's battalion of sorrows encompasses his shallow-buried guilt over the people he has harmed, the degeneration of his relationship with his family and his partner Jesse, and his feelings of inadequacy over having sold his share of start-up company Gray<sup>307</sup> Matter before it evolved into a multinational corporation. Like Dorian, Walt deflects his immoralities onto a "portrait," that of his good intent. His falsehoods divide mitotically until lies outnumber truths, and all good intent is crushed under arrogance. Walt's orbit from milquetoast to mastermind evokes the speech of Lord Henry in Chapter Nineteen of *Picture*, who states "crime is to them (the lower orders) what art is to us. Simply a method of procuring extraordinary sensations" (160). Walt indeed begins to crave such chaos: manufacturing meth and making money is his art which procures for him these extraordinary sensations.<sup>308</sup> Such occurrences sing to the chaos in one's soul. Lord Henry's laughing

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306 Seth Amitin, of IGN, writes in "*Breaking Bad*: 'Phoenix' Review" that "(the episode) furthered the Walt-Jesse tension, (and) made Jane a wedge in it ... They say if you introduce a gun in the first act, you better use it by the third. Jane, at about the halfway mark, mentioned to Jesse that he should sleep on his side in case of vomiting ... and by the end of the episode, she spits up after Walt pushes her onto her back. Jane dies ... Walt standing idly while she chokes ... He ... gets a little more evil with each episode" (1). Donna Bowman, of The A.V. Club concurs with Amitin's belief that Walt is culpable. She writes in "*Breaking Bad*: 'Phoenix'" "(Walt) killed her in a snap judgment attempt to save Jesse by playing God" (1). I add to this: Walt's desire to save Jesse from Jane's influence is secondary to Walt's desire to continue to build an empire without Jane bringing it tumbling down. Walt effectively commits murder for the immortality of his empire.

307 (Sic).

308 Indeed, as Jeff Nunokawa writes of the fatigued body in "The Importance of Being Bored: The Dividends of Ennui in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," "Not even boredom's most captivating testimony (in *Picture*) can win its release from the enervated body to which it is fastened" (358). Walt's impulse to secure his family's future in *Bad* also procures the "extraordinary sensations" to which Lord Henry refers, and dispels Walt's deep-seated dissatisfaction with living. As Nunokawa states, "the contrast between desire's affluence and boredom's poverty ... (is) apparent ... (in *Picture*)" (359). As with Dorian, Walt's life is impoverished by boredom, a poverty which

wisdom that “anything becomes a pleasure if one does it too often” (160) is also apposite. There are indeed echoes of Dorian Gray in Walt’s construct. Walt’s Heisenberg hat becomes increasingly frayed and matted as the series progresses. In the show’s fiftieth episode, the ironically-titled 5:04 “Fifty-One,” Walt ponders a loose thread on the hat before ordering that meth production not be “ramped down.” This hat too is evocative of Dorian’s portrait: it seems older and more threadbare as Walt’s arrogance ascends.

Evil then, is not theic or demonic, bestial, or spiritual in reality. To apprehend evil, we must gainsay God. As I will argue for the remainder of this thesis, evil is solely the province of the human. Take for example the two-hander episode, 3:10 “Fly.” Walt becomes obsessed with a contaminant, the fly of the title, attempting to squash, kill, or otherwise destroy the fly at the expense of his time, focus, and sanity. This contaminant represents Walt’s guilt over allowing Jane to die. Like the fly, his guilt spoils all moments of peace. Here, Walt begins to realise that his good intentions are becoming subordinate to his desires to succeed. Walt and John Kramer carry out their good intentions using different methods. Walt craves chaos, and Kramer is desirous of order. Walt’s newfound capacity as a meth cook highlights science as viewed by the artist. His chemical artistry produces a substance of purity and semi-perfection. Walt’s last days testify to the tragedy behind the lives of artists who begin as a Stephen Dedalus<sup>309</sup> and end as a Ken Barlow.<sup>310</sup> Walt abandons his Ken Barlow-like resignations and evolves into an opsi<sup>311</sup>-Stephen Dedalus.<sup>312</sup> He is indeed a Daedalus of meth, manufacturing a product as destructive as metamphetamine into something of sublime perfection. Walt’s “flying too close to the sun” is his arrogance in creating a drug so desirably pure that his “blue meth” surpasses the popularity of its competition. Walt’s meth is ninety-nine per

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is rendered as affluence when Walt is diagnosed with cancer, and desires beyond all else to ensure the security of his family. Ennui is an enabler, in these texts, and the spark that blazes out into the phoenix of immortality. Ennui, as with The Master in *Who*, is not the result of immortality, but rather that which precipitates living forever, and perpetuates the desire to keep up such a state. The immortals of this thesis use the threat of boredom to repel death. To them, there is no point in living if this life is not to be irrevocably eternal.

309 The young protagonist/anti-hero of James Joyce’s perennial novel of artistic experience, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

310 The last remaining original character in ITV’s long-running soap opera *Coronation Street*. Portrayed by William Roache. Ken is noteworthy for being a bright young student who wound up living dissatisfiedly in a small house on the same street for most of his life. Ken is also invoked as the quintessential exemplar of a stuffy old man.

311 That is, late.

312 Dedalus’s namesake is the mythological artificer Daedalus (Latinised from the Greek “Daidalos,” meaning “cunning worker”). Daedalus’s son Icarus acts as a parable about hubris: upon gaining wings he ignored his father’s admonition to not fly too close to the sun. The wings’ wax melted, and Icarus fell to his death.

cent pure and the apotheosis of the art, or as he refers to his product in 5:07 “Say My Name”: “Classic Coke” compared with his competitors’ “tepid off-brand ... cola.” Walt is a modern day Daedalus, and metamphetamine structures are his *daidala*.<sup>313</sup>

Walt too experiences Daedalian denial that his work causes death. He turns aside the conjecture in 1:04 “Cancer Man” that the laboratory chemicals with which he worked in his career are the cause of his cancer. He refuses to give credence to the fact that his life’s work could be responsible for abbreviating the span of his existence. Daedalian denial accompanies Daedalian work. Comparing Walt to Dorian and Daedalus is apt, as to daedalise one’s work is to daedalise one’s life. Walt becomes a Dorian through being a Daedalus. The abjectitude of the dier is diminished when art sustains the name of the artist. Walt is therefore in the business of not only daedalising life, but death as well. Death to the Daedalian artist is devising one’s own ending, lest his name and deeds should fall into an Ozymandian obscurity. Walt’s desired end is to die upon the throne of his self-raised empire, an outcome that seems increasingly likely as the series concludes in late 2013.

Conversely, my next immortal, Gabriel Gray, wishes only to exalt the flesh, and raise an empire of the body.

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313 The Homeric plural *daidala*, meaning finely-shaped objects, or works of Daedalus.

## Chapter Five: From Science to Struldbruggs: *Heroes* and *Gulliver's Travels*

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### Too Special to Succumb: Sylar and *Heroes*

Sylar: *"You'll get bored, after ... a hundred years of trying to off me. You may ... come to forgive me.*

*Maybe you'll even love me."*

Claire Bennet: *"I'll keep trying to kill you – for the rest of my life."*

Sylar: ... *"Everyone needs a hobby."*

-3.25 "An Invisible Thread."<sup>314</sup>

### The Gossamer God

*Heroes*, a television show which aired from 2006-2010<sup>315</sup> on North American network NBC, featured numerous somatic immortals. The series was heavily criticised from its second series onwards for introducing too many new characters and not expanding upon those introduced in the first season<sup>316</sup>; as well as resetting antagonist Sylar's (Zachary Quinto) journey to becoming an alpha anthrope by erasing all of his abilities. Sylar demonstrates that omnipotence is hard to write for, as he is reset or reshaped whenever he grows too powerful. He does not however wrest his everlife from the grip of gargantua as so many before him. He becomes immortal through using his one remaining offensive ability, telekinesis, to saw through the head of a terrified Claire Bennet (Hayden Panettiere), a young female student with the power to regenerate. Sylar thereby represents life as acquired from death.

Gabriel Gray<sup>317</sup> (alias: Sylar<sup>318</sup>) elucidates the lengths to which the ostensible ordinary go to wrest an everlife from its keepers. Gray was once a meek man who worked as a watchmaker in a

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314 Hereafter referred to as "Thread."

315 It was announced in February 2014 that the series will be resurrected with a new thirteen episode miniseries in 2015.

316 IGN's Robert Canning writes in "*Heroes*: Season 2 Review. Was the strike-shortened second season plagued by a sophomore slump?" that the 2007-2008 Writers Guild of America strike disturbed the flow of the narrative, and that "from the get-go, storylines became monotonous, and the pacing dragged" (1) and that "instead of expanding on what they established, the *Heroes* writers played it safe and kept things familiar (2)."

317 Hereafter referred to as Gray/Sylar. Sylar is perhaps named after two immortal figures: the archangel Gabriel from Christian mythology; and the aforementioned Dorian Gray, from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

318 Sylar's name is a reference to his past and his power, in which he repaired "Sylar"-brand watches.

shop filled with discordantly-ticking clocks. Gray's attunement to these sounds led to the proto-manifestation of a supernatural ability that would lead to the deaths of many empowered individuals. This ability is described in 1:10 "Six Months Ago" as the intrinsic knowledge of "the way things work." Abilities in *Heroes* are in fact genetic aberrations in the brain. Sylar may therefore thief an aberrative ability from the brain of an empowered individual. He saws away the skull of his victims, and touches the aberration in the victim's cerebrum to replicate this abnormality in his own brain. Sylar thereby gains the abilities of those whose lives he takes away. The murderer spends the first season of the series killing for the obtention of disparate powers, such as eidetic memory<sup>319</sup>, metallo-liquification<sup>320</sup>, enhanced auditory function<sup>321</sup>, and self-induced radioactivity.<sup>322</sup> These incongruous abilities unite to ameliorate Sylar's aggregate, and raise it to evolutionary perfection. However, bodies such as Sylar's are the bodies of what I refer to as "gossamer gods": beings of potency who have one exploitable weakness which brings them down every time. Sylar possesses a vulnerability that evokes Superman and his kryptonite, or the mythical Achilles and his one heel undipped in Stygian waters. Sylar's weakness is an area of his brain that, once transfixed, immobilises him until the object of transfixion is removed. He eventually eliminates this weakness through his theft of the ability of corporeal metamorphosis from James Martin (Bill Hooper) in 3:21 "Into Asylum." Every time he shifts his shape, the "Achilles's Heel" in his brain is relocated. Sylar is therefore a true somatic immortal: if even a cell of his brain remains unobliterated, his telomeres will repair themselves unbidden, and he will rise anew.

Sylar, and his immortaliser Claire, lend literality to the phrase "eternal grudges." In relationships such as Sylar's and Claire's, their rancours are as immortal as they are. To Claire, the light of sanctity is not in forgiveness, but in retribution, as she views herself responsible for immortalising her foe. Their grudges are only to be cultured by time, and exacerbated by circumstance. Indeed, after having absorbed Claire's ability, Sylar exhibits the sort of deathscorn that a teenager might exhibit. He taunts Claire in 3:25 "Thread" that both her biological and surrogate family are all fated to perish, while she will remain eternally and, in his view, malfeasantly alive. He states,

Sylar: "Everyone dies. Well, almost everyone. Papa Petrelli, Mama Bennet, Mr. Muggles ... what's your brother's name again? Larry?"

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319 Absorbed from Charlie Andrews (Jayma Mays) in 1:08 "Seven Minutes to Midnight."

320 Absorbed from Zane Taylor (Ethan Cohn) in 1:15 "Run!"

321 Absorbed from Dale Smither (Rusty Schwimmer) in 1:16 "Unexpected."

322 Absorbed from Ted Sprague (Matthew John Armstrong) in 1:22 "Landslide."

Claire: “Lyle.”

Sylar: “Right ... he’s gonna die too.” (3.25)

Sylar eats the ephemeron, that he might survive the phoenix. Once deathless, he sneers at the concept of human passing and feels only able to live a normal life after having slain and become immortal. Sylar’s newfound swagger after having stolen the power of rapid cellular regeneration is interestingly more akin to a teenager’s than a god’s. Sylar is the opposite of *Bad’s* Walter White inasmuch as the fact that the former is above death, and the latter decays in death’s palm. However, the two characters and their goals are comparable. Both are Ozymandiases who toil in the edification of empires. Sylar works toward the empire of the superpowered body, and Walt works toward the empire of financial stability for his family. To look back, Walt’s and John Kramer’s minds inhabit a heaven while their bodies inhabit a hell. Both Walt and Kramer are paragons in their fields, possessing scholarly minds and intimate knowledge of the universe. However, their bodies are cloaked in all the fires of Abaddon in the form of one affliction or another. Sylar is liberated from all such adversities, and denigrates all those who remain subservient to the flesh. Gray even taunts Claire in 3:25 “Thread,” stating “(do) you ever ... think about how much we have in common? You were adopted, I was adopted. You can’t die, I can’t die.” Claire responds “... you can die. I’ll make sure of it.” Claire’s and Sylar’s relationship is similar to the Doctor-Master opposition, in which two diametrically-opposed immortals culture their grudges in (T/t)ime. The fates of juvenile gods such as Claire and Sylar, however, are still to be woven for good or for ill. The narrative furnishes the audience with an explanation for Gray’s insatiable desire to evolve. In 1:21 “The Hard Part,” Sylar demonstrates his acquired powers of telekinesis<sup>323</sup> and cryokinesis<sup>324</sup>, converting his mother Virginia Gray’s (Ellen Greene) living room into a facsimile of the snow globes that adorn her apartment. Sylar’s attempt to connect with his mother is disrupted by his losing control of his psionic abilities. The nexus between mother and son is one of dominance and misplaced inspiritment. Sylar’s mother pushes him to become the president of the United States; such is the potential she views in her wayward son. Sylar takes this to heart, despite his lack of qualification to hold such a position. Gray’s role as a telekinetic is a recalcitration against his feelings of having no control in his life. He moves from having no sway over himself or others, to becoming that which The Doctor’s nemesis would

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323 Absorbed from Brian Davis (David Berman) prior to the beginning of the narrative (retroactively depicted in 1:10 “Six Months Ago”).

324 Absorbed from James Walker in 1:02 “Don’t Look Back.” “Cryokinesis” is the ability to move and to freeze liquids.

call the master of all matter.<sup>325</sup> Gray becomes the author of his own body, selecting his abilities and reworking his genome.

### **i-Mortality: Editing the Corporal, and Embellishing One's Genome**

*"Evolution selects its agents ... at a cost ... evolution ... is not sentimental"*  
-Mohinder Suresh (Sendhil Ramamurthy), 1.03 "One Giant Leap."

Sylar highlights one's genome as a malleable and a mutable construct that can adopt the "power" of regeneration. This ability allows the clockmaker to augment his immortal body over the millennia, until he is effectively the terran incarnation of God. He can seek individuals possessing the powers he lacks through the ages until he becomes omnipotent. Sylar's state hypostasises the modern day issues of body-editing, and rewriting one's biology. Such *i-Mortalities* as genetic engineering, prosthetisings, and corporal bionics accent the rapidity with which the crisp page of human corporeality is being overscrawled with the bright ink of artifice. In an age in which alpha anthropy and i-Mortality are merchandisable, perfection is for purchase. Every advance in our anatomical understanding further monetises human DNA, to the point that wonderings of purchasing immortality in the not-too-distant future seem credibilised. Strides in point mutation induction<sup>326</sup>, intron and exon removal<sup>327</sup> *et alii* portend that the human helix is becoming something we can manufacture and control. Thus if one's body is indeed a text, immortality must be construed as a foreign addendum. Immortality raises a multitude of ethical questions: who should be immortalised? By whose criteria? Should malefactors be immortalised? If not, what if they were to pay the unscrupulous to undergo the immortalising procedure? How should the law deal with individuals who turned to crime after having "earned" their immortalities? How might immortals be imprisoned, and for how many years? How can "life" sentences be passed down to immortals, and for how many human lifetimes should wrongdoers be imprisoned? Such queries ramify: is present day humanity a draft of the terran text? Do we need science to edit our biology? If evil is neurological, then why should the evil have to die due to the tychism of evolutionary adaptation? I have argued that evil is not predestination or being debauched of soul. Evil is encephalic, and does not share causality with

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325 Again, as The Master referred to himself in 14:03 "The Deadly Assassin" (1976).

326 For example, a technique to use the induction of point mutations to increase the efficiency of recovering certain locus point mutations in zebrafish is outlined in David J. Grunwald and Bruce B. Riley's article entitled "Efficient Induction of Point Mutations Allowing Recovery of Specific Locus Mutations in Zebrafish."

327 Such gene splicing processes are outlined in detail in the following articles: "A general role for splicing enhancers in exon definition" by Bianca J. Lam, and Klemens J. Hertel, and "Exon Recognition in Vertebrate Splicing" by Susan M. Berget.

the artifices of false fiends. If only nature's paragons are to be immortalised, what roles will the death-destined betas, gammas, and deltas of society serve? Such stratification would lead to an uprising, but how could the dying dispatch the immortal? The factor of immortality presents these questions, and nigh-countless others. Sylar begins the narrative as something of a gamma, a Professor Yana-like figure tinkering away on old timepieces. When Sylar's abilities begin to manifest, he becomes more like The Master having awakened from his slumber in the fob-watch. Sylar's ability rewrites his neurology into that of the predator. Sylar pontificates on instinctive predation to Mohinder Suresh in 1:18 "Parasite"<sup>328</sup> as a justification of his actions. Sylar states "I'm a ... progression of the species. Evolution is a part of nature, and nature kills. Simple, right?" He posits here that his is the brain of a human in the body of a beast. Sylar is the "agent" of evolution who has been selected without sentiment. Gray can design his own organism and import only abilities that enhance his collective, and claim that he does this at the behest of evolution. He uses Darwin as his vindicator: he argues that his compulsion to murder is an "evolutionary imperative," stating in 1:21 "The Hard Part" "I understood ... before the killing, I had a reason – to take what others didn't deserve. It was natural selection."<sup>329</sup> Sylar views his genome as a construct, which "evolution" wills him to perfect. Sylar's quest echoes qualms about genetic engineering, body perfecting, and embellishing one's genome. He alters his body to the point that the tick-tocking he hears in his brain no longer signifies death, but eternity. Time and the inability to lose one's life permit Sylar the millennia required to amass the components of deity. Immortality also grants one the ability to hatch multi-millennial plots to alter the fate of humanity. Gray seizes paragonism at any cost, and seeks immortality in his youth. He sublimates his impulses to kill, eat, and acquire into goals of which his (adopted) mother would be proud. Sylar's neurological difference is an anatomical manifestation of his rapacity. His ambitions devolve into a primal esurience for abilities. This illuminates the insentiment of nature in its creating "agents" who hunger for enhancement. Evolution's imperative, in my thinking, is "eat the ephemeron, to survive the phoenix." It is therefore prophesied that Sylar, the eater of the ephemeral, is destined to become a human cataclysm after absorbing too many destructive abilities. The prophecy "save the cheerleader, save the world" lodestars *Heroes's* first season. This prediction pertains to saving Claire Bennet from Sylar, before stopping the latter from detonating in New York City and killing its populace. Sylar is a scorndead who, in destroying the world, irrefutably substantiates his ascendancy over his extinct kindred. Divinity is here an

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328 Robert Canning, of IGN, writes in his review of 1:18 "Parasite" that "the ... confrontation (between Mohinder and Sylar) played out as one might expect, with Mohinder thinking he has the upper hand, but Sylar proving he's far too powerful" (1). Nature's champion, Sylar, uses his gift to absorb abilities to kill and foil any who might delay his mission to become perfect.

329 1:21 "The Hard Part."

alchemisable element, to be found in genocide and killing point zero seven per cent of the world's population in a nuclear conflagration. Sylar sees nature as an exalter who has empowered the "special" over the centuries to improve the world. Nietzsche's "Übermensch" is here realised by nature. Gray designates nature as his chooser and his predestiner, an entity with a conscience and intent, who selects its favourites to live forever. Nature is Sylar's false *Ba'al* to whom he pays homage in his reasonings. Nature itself is an immortal in Sylar's cogitations. Indeed, in the *Heroesverse* encephalic aberrations are not a neophenomenon. The neurodiverse have existed since at least the time of the samurai. Adam Monroe (David Anders) is shown as having the same regenerative ability as Claire and Sylar in the second season. He has been active since the seventeenth century, plotting to recreate the Deluge and destroy humanity, and thus giving the few remaining (and empowered) people a bare Earth upon which to cultivate change. Monroe's plans are thwarted when Arthur Petrelli (Robert Forster), a power thief, steals the regenerator's ability in 3:06 "Dying of the Light."<sup>330</sup> Monroe's death is very Dorianesque: four hundred years of healing vanishes in seconds and he disintegrates into dust. Sylar, Claire, and Monroe embody in fiction such concepts as "negligible senescence," a term coined in the 1990's by cell biologist Professor Caleb Finch. He writes in *Longevity, Senescence and the Genome* that he has studied "the life histories of many species" in order to "expand the view of mechanisms that limit lifespans" (1). Characters such as Sylar bring this science to life, with aberrations in the brain rendering the present day regenerator as more like a crustacean or a hydra than the human as which he or she began. Finch's inquest is into the operation of the human genome and its influences on senescence and the very parameters of mortality. Gray, as the writer of his genome, can overcome these mensurable factors of his own humanity, alter them, and render himself close to perfect through the selection and peculation of beneficial abilities from his fellow "specials." Gray can circumnavigate millennia of evolution by diligently culling the abilities that most enhance his aggregate. For example, if Gray desires an eidetic memory, he can find and steal this ability. If Gray wishes for wings with which to fly, or to dream the future, or to yoke the tides, he needs only to find the humans who possess these abilities. Far from the man who killed to feed his hunger for power(s), Sylar can use the phenomenon of empowered individuals to render himself their "god," and enact his own Greshian "long view." Sylar is therefore the most scientific of the immortals presented in this thesis. His ability to regenerate is based upon existent theoremata and scientific inquisition. He incorporates the sciences of the athanatous that will be either elaborated or discarded over the coming centuries into his present day body. Sylar is therefore, in fiction, the author and the architect of the terran text. He is irrevocably a god after having culled and incorporated the best abilities for himself. Although he may be put into a sort of stasis, it is impossible for him to die. He is a powerful immortal, who ever ameliorates his aggregate.

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330 A reference to Dylan Thomas's 1951 villanelle *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*.

I will now culminate my analyses through a look at the Struldbruggs, the undiers of Jonathan Swift's 1726 satire *Gulliver's Travels*, who conversely have no authorship over their own undying.

## Nightmare Perpetuity: The Gullible Traveller, and Struldbruggism in *Gulliver's Travels*

*"Memento mori"*

-The Latin for "remember you must die."

### Lambasting Laputa: Swift vs. The Royal Society

Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century literary work *Gulliver's Travels*<sup>331</sup> is a social satire that comments on both (pseudo)science and the complexions of undying. Swift delineates difference through his conveying the multitude of societies to which Gulliver travels, as the author's own means of comparative exemplification. Swift compares one world with another, rather than overtly comparing the planes of the fantastic with our world. This text acts as a satire on science and exploration in the time of the Enlightenment, an era associated with knowledge, reason, and a certain foresight of the ascension of human potential. *Travels* was therefore written in a time in which there was a leaning towards gaining knowledge and pushing boundaries for the amelioration of society. Everything from the swifter cultivation of crops to the prolongation of human life was being worked on empirically. However, those obsessed with knowledge acquisition are lampooned in *Travels*: even the name of the protagonist Gulliver is perhaps a portmanteau of "gullible" and "traveller." He is the credulous wanderer whose pretentious amazement and laudation of the impractical is to be mocked by the reader. One of the most interesting locales to which Gulliver travels is the magnet-flighted island of Laputa. The name of the island reflects Swift's disdain for men of incredible science: "la puta" is the Spanish term for "the whore." The denizens of Laputa represent the ridiculous "science" of Swift's era. Swift presents the ludicrous science of the Laputans in order to lambast the Royal Society. The arts wherein the professors employ themselves at the Grand Academy of Lagado are empirically viable, yes, yet patently without any potential for gain. The study of science requires critical thinking and the maximisation of time and resources, not eliminating every possibility through postulation and an unending empiricism. The Laputans' prostitution of sense and science includes such methods as essaying to transform human excreta into the food as which it began, and attempting to extract heliac energy from cucumbers. The Laputans are thereby characterised by the extremity of their cerebral natures, and are depicted as unable to carry out practical tasks without overintellectualising the task at hand, even in something as simple as tailoring a suit of clothes. The Laputans are also especially mortal, being so invested in their own thoughts that they live in peril of falling off the land

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<sup>331</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Travels*.

on which they live. Gulliver conveys that “because (they are) so wrapped up in cogitation, ... (they are) in ... danger of falling down every precipice” (128). Swift is therefore not spurning science, but rather impracticable abstract thinking and “excelsior” science: improving science by increasingly more ludicrous means, and studying something not systematically, but rather through the process of elimination. Although spiders could perhaps be tamed to weave silk for the Laputans’ use, it is certainly not worth wasting a scientific mind on such an experiment simply to tick it off a list. The island of Laputa exposes the flaws in the empirical methods of Swift’s era.

This scientific satire is juxtaposed by the presence of the Struldbruggs, Swift’s vision of the undier. The Struldbruggs are equitably deathless in Swift’s concept of immortality. They fail to die, yet feel every dolour of their extended existences. In *Travels*, the nightmare perpetuity of the Struldbruggs in the nation of Luggnagg acts as a *memento mori*<sup>332</sup> for Gulliver and the reader. Gulliver is initially elated to hear of a group of “immortals” who are “born exempt from that universal calamity of ... nature” (167), death. However, Gulliver’s ardour for eternal life is quickly cooled by the sight of the Struldbruggs, who cannot die, and yet have no eternity of youth, vigour, or strength of mind. The Struldbruggs are doomed to live until their bodies are consumed to nothing. Struldbruggs do not make death their dog like other immortals. The preposterously-long-lived, in Swift, are not youthful machinators, but are rather desiccated husks whose faculties have long since failed them. The Struldbruggs represent an equitable immortality, in which the immortal must exchange his or her bodily integrity, and all that composes the self, for eternal life. Swift depicts immortality itself as ludicrous, for no one should want to live in a state of increasing degeneration. This degeneracy encompasses the evils to which the heretofore-discussed characters have resorted in order to live forever. These Laputans fade into an immortal pulp, a scion of undesirable immortality which has been pop-culturally dubbed “Struldbruggism.” The Struldbruggs are confirmed by Gulliver to have a shorter life of happiness than their mortal counterparts, for they “commonly acted like mortals, till about thirty years old, after which ... they grew melancholy and dejected, ... till ... fourscore” (171). Death is presented as a preferable alternative to eternal life, and the inability to die is presented as an affliction, or an obscene biological deviation. Critic Robert P. Fitzgerald writes in his article “The Allegory of Luggnagg and the Struldbruggs in “Gulliver’s Travels”” that “Gulliver’s disillusionment with the chimera of immortality has ... been taken to be the point of the episode” (658). A “chimera” is a fabulous beast comprised of a lioness with a snake for a tail and a goat’s head affixed to her spine. The chimera is therefore a representative figure for any amalgam, or object of amorphous form. Fitzgerald here deems immortality to be undesirable in all its forms and disguises. Even though immortality may look harmless or even wondrous from one perspective, it could be classed as a curse from another. The Struldbruggs are as physiologically cursed as the chimera itself.

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<sup>332</sup> Literally the Latin for “remember you must die.”

Gulliver initially sees only the attractive visage of undying without considering the scheming serpent that lurks just out of sight. In hearing of immortality, or in this case Struldbruggism, he himself wants to become a Struldbrugg.<sup>333</sup> He fails to consider that immortality could take a form other than that of the immortality in his imagination, and it is in this episode that Gulliver reveals himself (not for the first time) to be myopic, and the quintessential gullible traveller. He is a Tempestian Miranda by another name. The wizened Struldbruggs and the prospect of undying are a greater metaphor for Utopia conceits in themselves. As I established in my section on *Saw*, that which wears the visor of Utopia may in fact be a false-faced Dystopia. Swift conveys that we as readers should ever question the world in which we live, lest good intentions should lead to dystopia. The grotesquerie of eternal life without eternal youth is therefore ironically a *memento mori* to Gulliver and the reader, and acts as the reverse of life's coin. To live forever is as much as a curse as to be so enamoured of cogitation that one's mind is free from a moment's peace. The Struldbrugg episode highlights the dangers of seeking omniscience, omniscience, and omnipotence. The Laputans and the Struldbruggs indeed seemed to be presented by Swift as polar opposites: the Laputans live in danger of dying by falling such is the magnificence of their minds, while the Struldbruggs live forever whilst having their minds and selfhoods degrade into nothings. Swift therefore presents many dystopiae dressed as Utopiae in *Travels*. The Struldbruggs should moreover be thought of as embodying the aforementioned concept of heterotopiae. A heterotopia is defined by French critic Michel Foucault in his article "Other Spaces" as a system of binaries that operate to define, for example, the sacred is defined by its opposite, the profane, in our human comprehension. Heterotopias can also be related to epochs or slices of time; and the concept of the "Other." Foucault writes that the "space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams ... hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space or again a dark, rough, encumbered space" (62). This definition of space can be borne in mind in an analysis of the Struldbruggs. The Struldbruggs exist in a sort of isolation outside of time, a shadowy and semi-vital state. It as though, in being born a Struldbrugg, one is cast outside of one's own biology and one comes to exist only to be withered by time. The condition of the Struldbruggs is therefore in itself a heterotopia. It is an Otherplace, in which the mind and the flesh betray their natural physiology and become the gimcracks of Time and physicality. Life is mirrored by Struldbruggism. It is indiscernible as to whether it is the Struldbruggs' biology or the land in which they live that makes them so immortal: though through the author's

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333 As John B. Radner writes in "The Struldbruggs, the Houyhnhnms, and the Good Life" "as soon as (Gulliver) suspects that there are truly superior beings- "living Examples of ancient Virtue," people happy "beyond all Comparison"- he wants to live with them forever" (420). Merely to mention undying, however much of a curse it may be, ensnares the attentions of the Gulliver, the gullible traveller.

calling them *luser naturae*<sup>334</sup>, the latter is likeliest. The Struldbruggs, like *Who's Master*, are aberrations who emblemise the “Other” and the Foucaultian concept of Otherspaces or heterotopiae. The Struldbruggs’ minds and selfhoods shrivel, while their bodies remain half-inflamed by a small spark of sentience. The Struldbruggs are therefore cambions by another name. The Struldbruggs’ existences indeed form an Otherplace of difference and isolation that antinomise human life, that is to say, Foucault’s “dark, rough, encumbered space” of death. To meta-referentialise these concepts, Struldbruggism is further opposed by the longevity of the character of Gulliver, who has existed in an ever-young textual form for centuries. The character of the male Miranda Gulliver therefore has the immortality for which he perhaps foolishly wished, whilst the figures of the Struldbruggs are ever deprived of their selves.<sup>335</sup> Struldbruggic immortality is vacuous existence: being, because not to be frightens. Immortals, like Hamlet, repel sleep if there is even the sparsest chance of dreaming. Superlongevity appeals to the youthful Struldbrugg before he is ultimately consumed by the melancholies of eternity. Swift wishes to make us warier of curses dressed in the finery of boons, such as the plight of the long-lived damned, afflicted by immortality. Critic William Freedman writes in “Swift’s Struldbruggs, Progress and the Analogy of History” that the Struldbrugg episode “has been read as an assault of humanity’s intellectual inadequacies and unearned pride, and as a ... lesson that humanity is always the same, and that there is no escape from our vices and ... trivialities” (457). From anti-progress doctrines and assailing the immortality of the Church, to addressing Swift’s supposed “disgust with the human body” (458), Freedman posits in this piece that the meaning of the Struldbruggs, immortality, and Struldbruggism is open to the conjecture of the gazer. Our progresses in science function as imperfectly to humanity as the Struldbruggs’ degenerate eternities. Freedman continues that “Laputa ... undermine(s) the Moderns’ perfervid belief in mathematics and science as sources of progress” (458). I counter Freedman: Laputa is an exemplar-realm for perceiving and debunking pseudoscience. Swift presents the Laputan method as so patently ludicrous that only a Miranda or a Gulliver would see such methods as worthy of pursuit. The modern and perfervid credences in (false) sciences could indeed be as barren a harvest as any credences in alchemies, magecraft, and divination. Veracious progress is to be found in gainsaying God and eliminating pseudoscience. Acupuncture, homoeopathy, astrology, aromatherapy, and chiropractic could one day be seen as vacuous alchemies practised by physicians who metaphorically turn lead into gold. Swift’s general message is that we must view all patent pseudoscience as Laputan in its

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334 Literally the Latin for “games of nature.”

335 J. Leeds Baroll III writes in “Gulliver and the Struldbruggs” “the temporizing (sic) and fear involved in a desire to live “sometime longer” is an aspect of the irrational in man ... The Struldbruggs are a *reductio ad absurdum*, since they represent the logical consequences attendant on the granting of such a wish (44).” Gulliver’s embodies the foolish desires of humanity in *Travels*, and acts as the prey of the parodist.

ludicrous: science, at its heart, is pecuniary before it is epistemophilic. As human science progresses, then, we must discredit these pecuniary alchemies as lucre-motivated pseudoscience. As human immortality seems more possible, we must avert our becoming the archetypal credulous consumers, who react as though a sphinx has spoken every time a celebrity endorses the latest product. We should all endeavour to adopt what Freedman refers to as “the satirist’s jaundiced view” (458) and view celebrity endorsers of the aforementioned pseudosciences as effusing Gullivers, ignorantly promoting modern alchemies. Laputa is an early modern commentary on perceiving and debunking pseudoscience. This will allow humanity to think critically, in an age in which immortality-for-sale may come to be.<sup>336</sup>

Swift’s Laputa illustrates a conjunction between immortality, longevity, and pseudoscience. The Struldbrug episodes serve as both a decrial and a denial of desires for superlongevity and immortality. Freedman posits that Swift directs the episode “against a wish for ... irrational ... worldly immortality” (459). *Phoenical* humanity and perpetuity of life, in Swift’s thinking, are profanations of life. The existence of the Struldbruggs near an island populated by impractical visionaries juxtaposes worldly immortality and pseudoscience. It is therefore apposite to consider the Laputans as like *Who*’s Time Lords: an island of mattoids and morosophs lucubrating the eternal conundrums. Struldbruggs are Time Lords without the ability to regenerate. Indeed such Laputan lucubrations as extracting heliac energy from cucumbers are similar to the Gallifreyans’ invention of chronoforges (photoproductive weapons of temporal extirpation that appear in Mark Clapham’s novel *Doctor Who: The Taking of Planet 5*). One can imagine the Laputans inventing psychic paper<sup>337</sup>, Validium<sup>338</sup>, a Chameleon Arch<sup>339</sup>, a Time Scaphe<sup>340</sup>, or a fully-functioning TARDIS whilst indulging in the ludicrous. Yet scientific endeavour should not be a stumbling through the caligoes of incognisance. Students of science must be mindful to not be lured by the sound of (conun)drums. Scientific satire must therefore be a bifurcation from our society, and act as its opposite, even if that opposite is ludicrous and hyperbolic. Oftentimes the best way to elucidate an argument is to satirically advocate its opposite. Given that Laputan lucubration is likely not luculent, Swift conveys his disdain for worldly immortality through his juxtaposition of the Struldbruggs with scientific

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336 I will offer a scenario for this in my recapitulation.

337 A special variety of paper which allowed its possessor to mentally imprint words and images onto it, such as is used by The Eleventh Doctor in 5:01 “The Eleventh Hour.”

338 A living metal created by Rassilon, and a Time Lord known as Omega, as can be seen in 1988’s “Silver Nemesis.”

339 A piece of technology which could permit a Time Lord to alter his or her species, as can be seen in the aforementioned 3:08 “Human Nature,” and in The Master’s fob-watch in 3:11 “Utopia.”

340 A non-dimensionally-transcendent prototype of the TARDIS as is seen in *Cat’s Cradle: Time’s Crucible* by Marc Platt.

ludicrosities. The author's presentation of a veritable gallimaufry of ludicrous sciences in parallel to a cabal of mythical immortals punctuates the repugnancy of both. Undying, to Swift, is the fell diminisher of human being. It is as inimical to humanity as false alchemies and preposterous science. Swift therefore presents immortality and *Strulbruggism* as a fate that is inferior to every demise.

Swift's Struldbruggs conclude my prime argument on the modes of mortality in pre- and postmillennial fiction. I move now to recapitulate my concepts of baleful ever-living, with a look forward to what I see as the future of merchandisable mortality.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

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### A Chaos of Fortitudes: Recapitulation, and a Look to the Future of Undying

*“Millions long for immortality who don’t know what to do on a rainy afternoon.”*

-Susan Ertz, *Anger in the Sky*.

*“It’s tough to be a god/ tread where mortals have not trod/ be deified when really you’re a sham.”*

-Tulio and Miguel, *The Road to El Dorado* (2000).

*“Because I could not stop for Death*

*He kindly stopped for me;*

*The carriage held but ourselves*

*And Immortality.”*

- Emily Dickinson, *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*.

*“I have become what many men have dreamed of: an immortal. And yet, there hasn’t been a day, an hour,*

*a minute, I haven’t thought about death.”*

-Mr. Freeze, *Batman Beyond*, 1:05, “Meltdown.”

Candidates for immortality must make the choice of which is the more heinous curse: to die tomorrow, or to live forever. Immortality therefore illuminates the vacuities of being and ever having been at all. The possibility of undying becomes a choice comparable to dying, for both are *nihilous* states. Death to the undying is a condition in which the immortal’s eyes become blind to atrocities, and his ears become deaf to his victims’ pleas. Whether as a masked killer or as a masked god, these personages comprise the “terminally challenged”: recalcitrants against death whom the universe will not permit to perish. However, whether the world is born of an alchemy of chance and circumstance; or whether the world is but grit on the eye of God, the existence of immortals is a profanation of what it is to live. Life purports to nothing when it is immutably infinite. Immortality dispels any other desire than to simply exist, and protect one’s undying with all of one’s resources. Immortality is

therefore vital vacuity. The immortal is indeed depicted as the ringmaster of his own cosmic circus in many of the afore-analysed texts and therefore one, in any study of undying, seems bound to conclude that living becomes pointless if one is not to live forever, even if one's perpetuity should be as a Struldbrugg, or as a man in a magical mask. Life, however, burgeons brighter when it is brief and meaningful, whether the desire for immortality arises from misfortune, or from a mawkish-minded love of being. Immortality is a phantasm that is pursued by the nescient, the decadent, and the dying. We are better to live in the knowledge that when one's cinders augment the earth, and our souls move to the spectres' hectare, we did not spend our time pursuing the shade of immortality. Indeed, beings whose lives are victualled for eternity illumine the vanity of being at all. Individuals who refuse to go gently into the oblivious night of death must coax and cozen every Mephistopheles until their immortality or *mirimortality* is assured. The mortal makes a plea for exchange to the universe, and through Faustian pacts or bonds of blood, becomes strangely-undying. The immortal is therefore a chaos of fortitudes and vulnerabilities, whose existence can indeed act as an attraction for death.

Immortality is the difference between fustian and Faustian. The immortal may speak japingly of death whilst holding existence in his or her ever-tautening grasp. However, the literal impossibility of this ultimate undying is precisely that which dulls the significance of its pursuit. When science abandons, magic(k) is the solitary recourse of the mortal and the moribund. The dying develop a disconnect with the physical, and gain an adjunct with the "ethereal": recalcitrances against death move from popping pills to imbibing potions. The aura of the *anima* of the man who exists in his own corporeal Tartarus like the moribunds Walter White or John Kramer is that of the secular-spiritual who find undying in the absence of God. The aforementioned resolve that the time before one's terminus is to be spent for the amelioration of those who will survive them. Kramer, to exemplify, believes that his eradication of the nebulously-amoral is both rational and required. He mentors his protégé(e)s in the ways of killing through placing the "unworthy" into traps which are probabilistically ineluctable. Walter White, similarly, eliminates both the innocent and the self-serving amoral through killing all those who stand in his way. Walt, for the sake of his enterprise, even goes as far as to poison a child, and let Jesse's lover Jane choke upon her own emeses. Both Walt and Kramer alchemise the matter of their own souls, and rewrite their former formulas for morality to create a new element for existence. Walt punishes both the innocent and the deserving to protect his empire. The morality of the moribund, in these narratives, is an ever-changing element that suits the situation at hand. These moribunds are omniscient of pain and have come to depute themselves as pain's arbiters. These narratives portray the afflicted as not-men radiating pleas to every conscience in the cosmos that someone, anything, might hear them. Walt and Kramer typify the sheer malign fortune behind affliction, and the chaos of its becoming. This leads me to compare the actions of those who are complacently immortal, with the actions of those maintaining not so much a grasp on life, but a stranglehold. The contrarities between the strangely-undying and the immortal abhorred

encompass the interagency of evil, masks, and nihilism in studies of immortality. The immortal abhorred wish to go from fustian to Faustian, and inhabit our world immortally. These “immortalities” are won through the signing of scrolls, and the immuring of selfhoods. This sign-in-blood immortality elucidates the dichotomy that exists between such senescent Faustus, and the unanxious semper-youth. The persona of the vernal deathless is blithe and buoyant, such that these millennials are almost teenage in their dictions and outlooks. Men whose bodies survive the phoenix possess minds that are more ambivalent than maleficent; and more vernal than ancient. The immortal then, is a scared slug wrapped in the robes of God. The latterly-eternal go from maggot to Mephistopheles, achieving the facile victories of the deathless. These strange undiers inhabit a specular state of being: the immortal is dream in flesh, and is often diametrised by a doppelganger, such as in the case of Willow Rosenberg and Dark Willow/Vampwill.

Chaos is often the catalyst that gives rise to these fictional immortals. The Mephistophelean Joker says in *The Dark Knight* “you know the thing about chaos? It’s fair!” The pastless criminal’s definition of chaos is, however, a strange anthropomorphisation of the concept. Chaos is not an arbiter slow to gavel on all matters in the universe. Chaos is the hypernym of the stochastic forces of the universe, and is therefore neither anthropomorphic, nor fair. It is difficult then to comprehend a chaos that has been compared and conflated with notions of “deity.” To place conscience into chaos is to construct this “deity”: concepts of “God” are this chaos incontinent. To understand evil, and to survive the phoenix, we must gainsay God. The *Superanima*, God, is the fiction, and therefore we, as humans, are the Superanimate. It does not suffice to speak and write stochastically about “God” in an age of certitudes. We should all try to live by the Aurelian dictate I included at the beginning of my section on *Saw*, and should God or gods exist, we can pray that He, She, or They forgive us our trespasses. When given the opportunity to either gain God or to gainsay God, therefore, gainsay. It is egoistic to believe that one is so goodly-destined that one must have been shaped and ensouled by the sovereign plasmator, God. The *anima* is not an art plasmated by Deic forms. The *anima* is an aggregate. We are our experiences, these alchemic elements that are cremated in the athanor of one’s *anima*. These elements are an adjunct of our own particular components. We are not who we are by antecedent decree. We are of dust, and one should not ascribe deity to dust. Divine undying ultimately amounts to less than a brief, temporally-contingent existence, whether as a *mirimortal*, or a *Superanima*, or existing in any other strange mode of undying.

If humans are *Superanimate*, therefore, can these exemplars who have gained immortality be said to have attained godhead? These human phoenixes indeed illuminate the trivium of oblivion, when oblivion is equated with eternity. If immortals are the most arch of alphas then the rise of such semper-beings as Struldbruggs, vampires, chaos-witches, and prim(a)evils in these narratives should give the dier pause. The lives of parochial humans amount to a picayune in the palm of an immortal. To these beings, Existence is finding the “god” of life and ripping his heart out. This “god” is

generally the merriment or the array of one's mortal fears: the Hamletian fear of dreaming when one goes to "sleep." It is best to overcome fears and defeat oppressive "gods." Foster your faiths instead in yourself and in your self, and in the power of the one. Gainsay God and gods, and above all else, gainsay yourself as a god. Never apotheosise the self or others. The Sylars, the effigied Kramers and Masters: all "gods" are false gossamer wefts. From gossamer gods to gallimaufry gods, *unsterblichkeit*, as Hanz Lungwitz referred to immortality, is a life under blight. Even *mirimortality* is a curse in the correct circumstances. Observe as exemplars these Time Lords who paint the chronocanvas as the day darkens towards "*unsterblicherdämmerung*" - the immortals' crepuscular hour. The Doctor eternally relaxes his resolutions to never again take on another companion in *Who*, as to be immortal and alone is to live in a hell. Life, pried from Goliath's palm, is empty without companionship. Contrary to the actions of The Doctor, however, I argue that if gods were to exist, they would not make themselves known to humans. They would be of an Aurelian sort, judging without damning. There is a position in religious debate that by advocating science, one eludes Elysium. We must endeavour to counter this fear of speaking out for science, as we approach a world in which technology could facilitate undying. We must also resolve to question all hedge wizards who claim that they have discovered panaceas until their results are irrefutable. We must weigh all *i-Mortalities* by the scales of the scientific sanctuary.

Should superlongevity be discovered, my analysis prompts me to anticipate in its subtext that the fathers of immortality may become our new gods/"gods." I speculate that in the late twenty-first century, a company called Orgulus-Humilis Incorporated is the primary manufacturer of pharmaceuticals in the world. The company is a sure bet in the stock market, and its products are unanimously trusted by the populace. Its founders and heads are two lauded scientists named Orgulus and Humilis, who, over the course of a year, discover the infallible methods by which to longevise humanity: manufacturable immortality. Humilis wishes to immediately disseminate these findings amongst the scientific community, and sets to compose an article for publication in the popular journals. He envisions immortality as becoming one of the inalienable rights of civilisation, and dreams of a time in which humanity uses their newfound superlongevities to uncover all of the secrets of the universe. Orgulus, however, argues that the means to immortality should be shrouded in secrecy, and offered and sold only to those who pay unprecedented sums of money for the privilege. He believes that if the technology remains veiled, luminaries such as himself will gain the power to control the world from within its shadows. Orgulus exhorts Humilis to relinquish the pen, and co-institute a council of immortals funded by those wealthy individuals the pair deem to be worthy of undying. Their company, he argues, could rule the world forever. Humilis, however, is undesirous of deity and foresees the end of war, famine, and suffering, when all men are immortal. He also envisages the end of all religion when humans are disjunct from dying. He rejects his colleague's proposal and states that with or without Orgulus's blessing he will proceed with his article on their

joint discovery. Orgulus angrily dismisses Humilis as a fatuous dreamer, and resolves to murder his associate before this wondrous new erudition can be promulgated; and more importantly to Orgulus, before Humilis immortalises himself. To assess the ends of these motivations: Humilis here would become a God in the minds of men through his gift to the masses of ultimate undying. Orgulus would become a physical god, yet not a “God” as no-one would be enlightened of Orgulus’s technotheic state. Deity too would become bourgeois, as Orgulus wishes to create a pantheon around himself. This Orgulus-Humilis analogy accents the difference between becoming a god and becoming a God. The prospect of immortality brings death and change. Every God needs his Deluge. From the primordium of Time immortality is the remembrance of fame and infamy in history’s annals. The logotecture of this thesis has heretofore posited Gods, gods, “gods,” and deiforms as unreal and unproven as ghosts and gwyllions. The true immortals are traffickers in words and men and women whose minds flower to the page: the Shakespeares, the Byrons, the Ibsens, the Tolkiens, and the Dickinsons. This tells us that if you wish to be immortal, speak, write, and do. However, though artificers may be immortal in their works, they should not be designated as sainted, or theic. The arbiters of the afterlife are those who read. We are the deifiers of dead wordsmiths. The immortal is a phoenix in a land of pheasants. Immortals are Daedali within their spheres and often assume both willingly and unwillingly the roles of Othermen. Dorians and Daedali must reconcile a *phoenical* spirit with the flesh of the afflicted. At a time in which many are deriding the end of the world, the world is indeed ending for the moribund. Observe those who endure crucibles of the flesh such as cancerous oncoses. To repel the ghastr of death, these nearly-deads imprint onto the dispossessed. Enders of the world are increasingly immaculate everymen who combine phobias and neuroses with demoniac conjuration. Nihilism and banality suffuse the Schraggian “grammar of evil.” Evil is often banal, unknowing, and believes itself to be good. Do not become the mortal who gains a modicum of power and declares himself the *sanctum sanctorum*. Do not adopt the “we are the baleful” airs of gods. Immortals are rather sages of the street, closer to the gutter than the stars. Immortals must needs be those whose thrones are stationed at both the zenith and the nadir of being. Fictional quidams from Angmar, to Earthsea, to Oz, to Zothique, all yield to the manticoorean nature of immortality. From Tolkien’s Dwimmerlaik to my most powerful immortal, Big Head, right down to the least, John Kramer. The best undiers have the illusion of irreality on their sides. Immortal irregulars sired of the protoplasms conflict with these who become immortal, evolving from *homo sapiens* to *homo sapiens sempiternus*. The *aggregorian* immortal forms a being with a simorgh’s brain, and a phoenix’s blood. *Aggregorianism*, my term for the aggregational state of these immortals not born of the protoplasms of the actual, signifies the potential of humans to aggregate themselves with the preternatural. Eternal life is well within the ambit of their ability. Immortals are guileful gods who are at times strategically inactive. They wait with their plans unenacted for millennia, like The Master, setting snares across Time and Space into which for The Doctor to fall. God and Lucifer too

are the ultimate fictional immortals. Deprive God then of His immortality. The notion of a God existent from before the Cosmogony till after the Cosmoclastm should be expelled from human thought. Live you then not till some god decrees, but until the Cosmoclastm scatters you across and among the stars.

Finally, I look to the potential repercussions of gaining these immortalities in a God- and Lucifer-less universe. The true immortals are the Lucifers and Luciferas who rise around us. As Hereclitus of Ephesus writes in *Fragment 62* “Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the other’s death and dying the other’s life” (9). To unpack this aphorism, it is the nature of man to strive to attain immortality or “godhead,” even though humans are corporeally and substantially mortal at the moment. Conversely, the “gods” of mythology live in a state of intrinsic, immutable immortality. They cannot exceed themselves, and are, to oxymoronicise, limited by their own limitlessness. They are to never exceed themselves, as deity is the most exalted state of being in our cosmos. Though humans are more bound than these personifications of cosmic forces, we have the capacity to outsoar them. The gods perceive perfection as themselves, and therefore have no conceit of any being more sublime than a god. The mortal’s limitations act as the impetus for he or she to fight for a terran immortality. There is majesty in mortality: the gods are too complacent in their deities to ascend any higher than Olympus. Humans, however, begin their ascensions on the earth. Man conceives a divinity of a more sacred splendor than that of the orgulous mythological gods. The orgul of the ostensive divine circumscribes them to but deity. Humans can rise higher. Somatic or mnemonic, we can become immortal, should we desire such a state. Let this act as your impetus to aspire. If confronted by the choice of physical or memorial immortality then, choose memorial. As humans, it is our province to be nearer to the gutter than the stars. To humanity, life is a most tenuous telaranea that can be swept away in an instant. To immortals, being shot presents more the problem of spoiled clothing than fading into death. Hegemons of continuance, then, rank worldly insignificances above matters of life and death. The most powerful immortals, however, are those who never forget what it is to perish. As the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus writes, “it is possible to provide security against other ills, but as far as death is concerned, we men live in a city without walls.” Immortality is indeed, as Robert P. Fitzgerald describes in “The Allegory of Luggnagg and the Struldbruggs in “Gulliver’s Travels,”” a chimera with one igneous head and one venomous head assailing from both sides. It is a curse that strikes the afflicted with fire and fang. An ostensive immortality portends a premature death. For example, one’s becoming a vampire betokens a stake through the heart, or incineration by the sun, or death by other methods. Undiers are either arch-alphas, earth-gods; or cynosures for silence. Indeed, immortals such as The First wish to master the terran, whose souls exsanguinate from disease, pain, and privation. The fleshen form of immortality is not God, gods, “gods,” demi-gods, or deiforms. Immortals are but men plumed as

phoenices, suffering hope, faith, and other futilities. As to Hamlet when he sees the shade of his father, immortality illumines dying more glisteningly than it ever illumines living.

Immortality exists behind an illusion of infeasibility. It is the sphinx's scirpus, the irreciprocable question. It is apt therefore that only the imaginers and the ideators are heirs to immortality. A phoenix's longevity is for those who create. Writers, artists, and artificers are these phoenix-blooded humans, these Masters, who will live so long as men can breathe, and eyes can see.

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