WHAT
A Transdisciplinary
Journal of Queer
Theories and Studies
EVER
whatever.cirque.unipi.it

J.G. Adair, S. Berry, G. Bigongiari,
M. Hogan, A.C. Corradino

What do we talk about when we talk about queer death?

5/ Writing and filming queer deaths

Abstract: This is part 5 of 6 of the dossier *What do we talk about when we talk about queer death?*, edited by M. Petricola. The contributions collected in this article sit at the crossroads between thanatology, critical animal studies, and the posthumanities and tackle questions such as: how can we re-interpret literature, film, and media products through the lens of queer death studies? And how can we rethink death, dying, and disposal through literature, film, and media?
The present article includes the following contributions: – Adair J.G., The corpse comes out : spectral sexualities and the biographer's impulse; – Berry S., The queer death binary of *Giovanni's Room* remodeled as space for navigating oppression; – Bigongiari G., Queering the life/death dualism through barely alive literary characters; – Hogan M., The promise of a queer afterlife: a counter-proposal to preserving normative singularities in the cloud; – Corradino A.C., Notes on female necrophilia.

Keywords: Death Studies, Queer Studies, Media Studies, Memoir, English literature.

The corpse comes out:
Spectral sexualities and the biographer's impulse

I mine memoir to talk about queer death; biography too often betrays.

For his mother, he wasn't queer until he killed himself. She didn't acquire this knowledge through conversation – we who knew didn't feel inclined to call him out – but rather by way of the clues he carelessly (carefully?) left behind. An assemblage of my letters, micro-Speedos, photos, and an engraved ring left her the unwelcome impression that her son had never truly been straight with/for her. In the absence of a formal declaration that she considered her due, she claimed the right to ventriloquize her dead and newly queer (to her anyway) kid.

When we speak of its death we kill the chimera that is queerness. No longer a slippery, sneaky subjectivity masquerading as a self, death does for some what queer life cannot: solidify. Never mind that the ventriloquist

cannot – and often wishes not to – know the incoherencies, the inconsistencies, the impossibilities of performing our pretended personhoods. And, if a certain sector of the audience didn't see or experience the performance for themselves, can said subject be called queer anyway?

Not that he actually did; he always wriggled away from demands to self-identify, to solidify. That's not to say he didn't own the lack of coherency his mother had always commanded. He reveled in making little sense in the world she engineered by ignoring or willfully misinterpreting nearly everything she encountered experienced. She worked to make each day exactly as the last; to live in a dust-free house; to iron bedsheets into an expansive perfection unsuitable for sleeping, procreating, or perverting.

She wanted a son as unsullied as her sheets; not so much someone as some *thing*.

She objectified others by insisting they stay forever static, as biographers often do. In her mind, he was still the child who had appreciated his *Transformers* toys enough to know they were best left preserved in their packages. To take them out – let alone transform them – ran the risk of danger, damage, even destruction. Anyway, she didn't care for those toys' innate ability to become totally unrecognizable; she couldn't find comfort in a world where tape cassettes transmogrified into troopers without warning.

She never felt closer to him than five years after that gunshot when she collected nearly $10k in a single day from all those perfectly preserved *Transformers* toys in pristine original packaging selling on eBay. Her perfectly predictable son did her proud that payday by demonstrating his grasp of her zeal for life survived under hermetic seal. Of course the price for him had been a debilitating case of OCD that culminated in self-murder, but at least she profited from her original investment.

When we talk about queer death we frequently omit cause – it discomforts. That which refuses to make so-called sense doesn't usually survive the story others construct about us. Memoir and its brother biography, in their current configuration, render othered existence orderly by way of exorcism and excision.

She intuitively understood how to be one such surgeon; she'd operated by that instinct her whole life. By the time that cash came in, she had already cleaned up his causes – and his queerness. She had tried to inhabit his incomprehensibility from 2002-2004, but it proved a sheet too wrinkled to iron out.

He hadn't been feminine. He wasn't even that fancy. In fact, he had even once had a female fiancé, however briefly, and that fact felt more fixed. She felt fixed – and she imagined he did too – by that f(act).

Though this ventriloquism might not have been vindictive, it certainly left only her feeling vindicated.

She didn't know what to do with his ominously "doubled life" so she refused to leave him divided, divisive in death – people and/as possessions ought to be absolutely predictable, their states of being not necessarily separable. In that way, the casket becomes a closet in which the coherency and razor-straight linearity idealized and loved by so many of the living may be imposed upon our unruly queer dead.

Biography, in its traditional form, un-queers us by quieting our contradictions and complexities; in death we need much more than a linear narrative. In its place, we must propagate possibilities, pluralities, and problems. Queerness and death necessitate narration in the interrogative – even the subjunctive – mood. Our deaths, despite current commemorative paradigms, cannot become declarative or definitive.

Why can't the story of his lives span hundreds of years like Woolf's Orlando? Shouldn't we all be read through the lens of the life to come, as Neil Bartlett read Wilde in the context of the AIDS crisis? I, for one, hope someone has the sense to ask my possessions – both literal and figurative – what they have to say about me, as Richard Klein does in his anti-memoir, *Jewelry Talks*. And, of course, Wayne Koestenbaum could surely teach a master class in how to capture – and then release – queer subjectivity in life and death.

When we talk about queer death, we must talk about who *and what* died – and all those remains. He died by self-inflicted gunshot sometime after midnight and before dawn on August the thirteenth. He left behind a slew of honest, authentic contradictions that two decades have not reconciled. I hope they never do; life is no balance sheet.

He failed to make sense; he assaulted my senses. He served as a constant reminder of the rich, generative possibilities inherent in incomprehensibility, the rewarding realization that linear narratives of life and lives lived are always lies. Congruity does not *become* queer, even in death.

What we lose in queer death, and that I am attempting to regain in some small part here, is senselessness. In death, by default, we cede our ability

to interrupt the ways we are narrated by the people who surround us. We forfeit all that is silly, incomprehensible, unpredictable, incongruous and defiant to become a straightforward story someone else tells. The part of his story in which he acted – because of course it continues now with a few other narrators – ended in suicide. To me, that particular mode of queer death seals his refusal to assimilate into his story because no matter how seamlessly she recounts it, she can't avoid that conclusion without delivering an outright lie.

What we talk about when we talk about queer death is always, in part, our own demise(s). I first died along with him; I spent two years as a specter that had to learn about the life of a widow before we had any rights. I could not inherit because he killed himself a week in advance of his will-writing appointment; I could not lay claim because marriage then (as now) was still totally straight. His long-estranged father claimed half his estate thanks to the indifference of the law, his mother took the rest. She disposed of the artifacts that came across as queer and took what fit the narrative she intended to tell. She Ziploc-ed and Post-It-noted them with her version of his events; then she Rubbermaid-toted those satisfying remains into the crawlspace under her split-level staircase where they are sealed to this day.

I walked away with a few relics and a strong sense of disillusionment. I discovered death isn't that deadly; queer re-creation comes in time as do other deaths, small and large. I resurrect him in my writing and with my words; we others construct him just as we continually (re)construct ourselves. What we talk about when we talk about queer death is the way that control of our construction belongs as much to those observing the performance as those doing the dance. We're all left to wonder how we will be talked about in our own queer death, just as we recognize the relative worthlessness of words to capture, even adequately (if feebly) something with an absolute absence of stability.

When we talk about queer death, we talk to make illusory sense of something utterly insensible. It's all a question of perspectives – probabilities and possibilities – wherein no positionality or potentiality necessarily receives primacy over another. I have written his death – biographed him – many times in the last nineteen years. Each time I revisit and write anew, I find different subjectivity and objectification.

I write today from the perspective of a narrator who now knows, for example, how his grandmother died. His life puts forward new lessons

– unknown even to him – when we consider that the great Covid-19 pandemic would kill her nearly two decades after his death. She had said there was no point in persevering after his exit; some will say she found new purpose postmortem. Others, of course, might just quip about the sincerity of her desire to quit this life over love.

Queer corpses may be buried, but that fact does not stop them from continuing to come out. They continue to become even as we work to foreclose their futures in favor of fixity. They are specters that haunt; subjectivities more suited to Choose Your Own Adventure-style studies than anything so stolid as biography. Perhaps Carla Freccero (2013) asks it best when she ponders, "[What would we] see and hear were we to resist identitarian foreclosures and remain open to ghostly returns[?]" (339).

Each time he – reappears – at every conjuring – I find him reinvented and reinvigorated. In turn, I see the specters of myself from ten, twenty, thirty years ago and find myself unable to make much sense of some of those stages, prismatic in their possibilities. In that way, queer death proves little more than a hypothesis, a problem in need of new representation rather than its all-too-pervasive appropriation.

Joshua G. Adair

jadair1@murraystate.edu
Murray State University

The queer death binary of *Giovanni's Room* remodeled as space for navigating oppression

> I never had a childhood. [. . .] I was born dead
>
> James Baldwin[1]

Queer death in literature and film, since the end of the 19th century with the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, has been characterized by the Bury Your Gays trope, which then permeated popular culture through 1950s and 60s lesbian pulp novels. The predictable routine includes some of the following: a same-gender romantic couple falls in love; they have sex; and, shortly after, one of

[1] From the unpublished 1974 interview *Je n'ai eu jamais d'enfance James Baldwin: Entretiens* by Christian de Bartillat as quoted in James Campbell's *Talking at the Gates*.

them dies, often leaving the living partner contemplating their temporary lapse of judgment in attraction (Hulan 17). These narratives are hardly a reflection of real life, where research suggests that "mortality risks among sexual minorities and heterosexual individuals may be highly similar, contrary to beliefs that minority sexual orientation shortens lives" (Cochran). While more authentic representations of queer life in literature and popular media are on the rise, this queer death stereotype persists within heteronormative systems -- real-world systemic oppression that contributes to higher mortality rates for minority groups (see, for example, Bridges 2020).

Yet, staying alive is as essential as death to the queer narrative. James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* is an example of queer literature because it tells a story about homosexual and bisexual characters, including the complexities of their relationships and the spaces in which they work and live. It is also a story told by a renowned queer author, which could promote a sense of irony as the protagonist David rolls through the expected steps of the Bury Your Gays trope. While in Paris as an American ex-pat, David questions his heterosexual relationship. He meets and falls in love with a man, Giovanni. Shortly after sleeping together, David flees, questioning his motives and future, and attempts to patch things up with his fiance, Hella. She is finished with him and returns to America. David then rejects Giovanni, who enters a relationship with his former boss and the owner of a gay bar. Later, Giovanni is accused of killing this man and is then sentenced to death by guillotine. David suffers a similar queer death fate -- left alone, he is adrift without a country to belong to, and he feels responsible for the death of his lover and the loss of his fiance.

As much as the narrative provides an opportunity to examine queer death, it is also about the search for places and spaces to belong and with which to identify. David initially leaves America for Paris to run from the family and cultural rejections of his queer identity. He finds a place to belong in Paris in the gay bars, gay friends, and Giovanni's room, the titular space-as-metaphor of both queer love and queer death. But, whether in America or Paris, he can never fully embrace himself as a bisexual or homosexual person. He cannot participate in anything other than the cycle of rejection he has learned from home. He knows no other narrative to enter into, which is made evident by his disgust and mocking of Giovanni after their break-up as having "fairy's mannerisms" and behaving "giddy, and girlish" (147). Earlier in the novel, David describes the feminized behavior

of the les folles that Giovanni has joined:

> I confess that [their] utter grotesqueness made me uneasy; perhaps in the same way that the sight of monkeys eating their own excrement turns some people's stomachs. They might not mind so much if the monkeys did not – so grotesquely – resemble human beings. (27)

The binary of being either masculine or feminine--good or bad--leaves David searching for someplace to belong. He cannot find this place in Giovanni, or his room, because he sees that space as grotesque. He cannot be satisfied with his relationship with Hella, whose body he also describes as "grotesque" (158). Within the binary, David does not belong in either space, because he "decided to allow no room in the universe for something which shamed and frightened" him (20). His disgust and mocking come from the shame and fear he experienced growing up as a queer boy in America. Baldwin described this aspect by saying rather than being about homosexuality, the novel is about "what happens if you are so afraid that you finally cannot love anybody" (Baldwin 205).

The fear and inability to love oneself and others that Baldwin's novel presents is key to unpacking what we *actually* talk about when we talk about queer death. Rather than participating in a stereotype or a trope, Baldwin's novel provides evidence of what happens when people are systematically marginalized. As their relationship dissolves before him, Giovanni says to David, "If you cannot love me, I will die" (137). Oppression works by pushing the inhabitants of a system to the edges and extremes. In David's case, he leaves his country for Paris, where he also finds himself living on the edges of the heteronormative society. Giovanni similarly flees his country of Italy, after his child is delivered stillborn. Being pushed as far to the edge as possible by their families and cultures, Giovanni and David end up pushing each other away. Trapped within supramaximal systems of oppression and without a way to change themselves or the systems, they cannot imagine a way to love one another or themselves. They simply cannot stay alive. Giovanni and David both experience a queer death, one physical and one metaphorical, which is the only escape that their systems allow. As readers, their deaths provide us with a warning. To stay alive, the oppressed individual must figure out how to navigate the systems in order to change them or to create new ones.

Queer death in *Giovanni's Room* and in the Bury Your Gays trope is ultimately a paradox, an unavoidable pattern from which characters never stop running. Queer death is both a result of and a way out of oppressive systems, which is one of its long-term appeals to the dominant culture. As a source of analysis, queer death stands as an antidote to systematic change, drawing on what Baldwin called the "wet eyes of the sentimentalist" to incite feelings of pity rather than motivation to action (14). The trap of the either/or perspective has caused criticism of the novel, placing its failures on the character of David as a "negative, confusing, embodiment of the homosexual experience" (Sylvander 85). Applying a postcolonial feminist/poststructuralist lens to this queer death narrative reveals that David's binary perspective leads to an incomplete reading of the novel. For example, Chela Sandoval theorizes in *Methodology of the Oppressed* that to achieve wholeness and survival one must experience the "fragmentation" caused by the oppressive system from a "critical distance" (32.3). To achieve critical distance, Sandoval describes five oppositional stances that have distinct ideologies and goals: equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, separatist, and differential. She argues that the most effective way to create change in oppressive systems is by adopting differential consciousness or the ability to move through any and all of the other four while using and adapting them as necessary. Sandoval argues that this state of oppositional consciousness is vital to survival. In the light of this theory, David is not the embodiment of a negative and confusing queer experience. He is an example of someone who has not mastered the differential and therefore cannot navigate all of the contexts that push him to the margins.

David and Giovanni cannot transcend the binaries of their worlds. They are trapped by their systems of oppression and limited by their binary ultimatums. As readers, we enter a relationship with Baldwin's narrative, with the characters, the places, and with queer death itself. Baldwin's novel breaks down the first four states of oppositional consciousness. David flees America for Paris seeking equality. Instead, he finds that his shame at being in love with a boy is part of the "dreadful human tangle occurring everywhere, without end, forever" (62). Publication of a novel with homosexual content in 1956, 13 years before the Stonewall riot, was revolutionary, and Baldwin was advised to burn the manuscript (Weatherby 119). David's character exudes white American masculine supremacy, which we experience through his constant judgment of others, especially regarding their

behaviors and appearances. Giovanni points out this quality of supremacy when he says that if David had encountered him in Italy, he would have passed on by "shitting on us with those empty smiles Americans wear everywhere" (144). In Giovanni's room, David attempts to separate himself from the forces of the outside world. At first, the separation works, and he describes the space as being on a different plane of existence filled with joy, but "beneath the joy, of course, was anguish, and beneath the amazement was fear" (81). The narrative illustrates how each of these oppositions work to create oppression, fear, and shame. On their own, these oppositional forces lead the characters to destruction rather than to power. As readers, we maintain the critical distance necessary to see these systems at work throughout the novel and to enter the differential consciousness that is unattainable to our fictional characters.

The critical distance also allows us to theorize a third meaning for queer death that extends its purpose outside of the stereotype or the sentimental. The queer death narrative acts as a potential catalyst propelling the reader into oppositional thought and activism where the possibility exists to reclaim, reform, and rename queer death in our real-world systems. This lens needs to be applied in queer death studies to break the pattern of the Bury Your Gays trope and to make possible new interpretations of queer texts that appeal to contemporary audiences.

Stacey Berry

stacey.berry@dsu.edu
Dakota State University

Queering the life/death dualism through barely alive fictional characters[2]

> So then, he wants to die, so that's what he wants. I wouldn't wonder much about that, if only he were alive. Look, such an emaciated body and such powerless limbs and such dull eyes, and he thinks he has something left to kill. Do you think you have to be lying stiff and cold, nailed under a coffin lid, to be dead? Don't

[2] I thank Davide Burgio and Maria De Capua for reading a first draft of this piece.

you think I can see how dead you are, Gösta Berling?
Selma Lagerlöf, *The Saga of Gösta Berling*

Talking about death through a queer lens leads to questioning the existence of a rigid categorical divide between the living and the dead. In fiction we sometimes find this divide challenged by the existence of 'undead' characters. But there is another sort of characters, which I will call the 'barely alive' ones, who are not dead nor alive. They find themselves halfway between death and life, thus queering the dualism: but they are also 'queer', socially marginal characters whose death might take up a scapegoating, sacrificial function.

In *The Simpsons*' episode "A Star is Burns" Barney Gumble, who is usually the butt of the joke, films a movie about his tragic experience of alcoholism. At the end of the film, he addresses the audience with the line: "Don't cry for me, I'm already dead". The protagonist of Quentin Dupieux's film *Le Daim* is so alone that he can dump his phone into a trash bin, perhaps one of the ultimate signs of social death. The last person he calls is his ex-wife: "you don't exist anymore", she tells him. He will go on an absurd murdering spree shortly after, thus blurring the boundary between social and physical death. In Fennell's *Promising Young Woman*, the protagonist Cassie apparently commits 'social suicide', dropping out of medical school and going back to live with her parents after her friend Nina commits suicide in the aftermath of rape. Both characters have in truth been murdered, socially and/or otherwise, but they will haunt the murdering living until they get justice.

Though the examples above can be described as 'social deaths', on a general level I employ the expression 'barely alive' to maintain a distance with the concept of social death as it has been developed in social sciences (see Králová 2015 for an overview of the field). The categories isolated in this field – Králová describes instances of "loss of social identity", "loss of social connectedness", and "loss associated with the body's disintegration" – are a very useful theoretical toolbox for mapping these characters, but fiction, and especially speculative fiction, can explore kinds of death and of subversion of social categories in ways that feel fantastic, not strictly realistic. While I am not saying that this cannot happen in reality, fiction can explore possibilities that are usually outside the 'realistically' thinkable

and, by doing so, bring them into the area of the thinkable.[3] Moreover, through the study of the reactions assigned to the implied reader (Iser 1978) we can try to trace what reaction barely alive characters are supposed to elicit – sympathetic or otherwise, for example –, and ask ourselves why this happens. For these reasons, I think that it is best to employ another term to refer to the study of fictional characters, while keeping in mind that research in social sciences is extremely helpful for the study of fictional characters.

In a lecture in which he examines telephone calls made by suicidal people, sociologist Harvey Sacks argues that "I am nothing" is what people say when they lack the things that members of the social categories they belong to are supposed to have at a certain stage in life: "So there's a notion of a stage in life in which you're entitled to say whether or not you have nothing on this or that value. When persons 25 years old say in assessing themselves that they're unmarried, they're told, "No, you can't say that yet." That's not anything that counts as ' nothing' at this point. These things are standardized; it's a matter of certain formal properties, that your age has to be X before Y counts as ' nothing. '(68). If the conviction of "being nothing" can lead to suicide, it is possible to imagine that it implies a feeling of being 'already dead'.

In some pieces of fiction, the character tempted by death, not at ease in the community of the living, can take up a role that resembles that of the scapegoat, in the terms in which it was defined by Girard. According to Girard, society relies for its correct functioning upon the existence of differences in degree amongst its members. A society in which this system of differences is put into question will precipitate in a condition of crisis. Since all members feel equal, and therefore entitled to have the same things, each of them starts desiring the same objects: but these are not available to all, and violence becomes pervasive and reciprocal. The crisis is solved, at least temporarily, by the choice of a scapegoat that catalyzes universal violence upon itself alone. Girard talks about the return of the dead amongst the living as one of the possible configurations of a differential crisis. Normally, the dead and the living belong to separate realms. In times of crisis, the two realms blur:

3 This way of thinking about the fantastic is inspired by a forthcoming work by Carmen Dell'Aversano.

> In certain cultures the gods are either absent or insignificant. In such cases mythic ancestors, or the dead, take the place of the missing divinities and are seen as the founders, guardians and, if need be, disrupters of the cultural order. When incest, adultery, and other social ills begin to proliferate, when family relationships begin to crumble, the dead are displeased and visit their displeasure on the living. They bring nightmares, madness, contagious diseases; they provoke discord among relatives and neighbors and instigate all sorts of perversions. The crisis assumes the form of a loss of difference between the living and the dead, a casting down of all barriers between two normally separate realms. We have here the proof that the dead incarnate violence; exterior and transcendent violence when order reigns, immanent violence when things turn bad and maleficent reciprocity walks abroad. The dead do not want the total destruction of an order that is after all basically their own. After they have brought about a paroxysm of sorts in the community they are willing once more to accept the homage of their descendants; they cease to haunt the living and withdraw to their usual retreats. If they do not go into exile of their own accord, they allow themselves to be led into exile by the community's ritual observances. The difference between the living and the dead is thereby restored. (254)

Girard regards the dead as ambiguous, both benevolent and malignant, when the society of the living is working properly, and malignant in time of crisis – to become again benevolent when their expulsion reinstates pre-crisis social order. This ambivalence is typical of the scapegoat according to Girard.

Literature offers many examples of outcasts that long to be absorbed by the community of the dead, or that see such absorption as a liberation from the society of the living, or that, perhaps involuntarily, feel drawn towards it. These characters cannot be said to belong to the dead entirely; they are not dead at the beginning of the action, nor undead. By dying, these liminal figures might be performing an important role in the sacrificial event that eventually reinstates the difference between the living and the dead. The thought that they might always have been unsuited for life might be reassuring to 'us', the murdering living. My hypothesis is that the judgment of being 'socially' dead, whether uttered by an external authority or internalized and self-assessed, might not be just chronologically preliminary to actual death, but can perform the task of preparing the scapegoat for the sacrifice. This is in line with the findings of research undertaken in the social sciences which maintain that ostracism can increase thoughts of death (Steele, Kidd & Castano 2015). This might be the case of characters

who are openly instigated to suicide, but as a mechanism it might also be working in subtler ways – maybe nobody tells these characters to kill themselves, but we might have the sense that they are universally antagonized or considered worthless. Girard states: "Whatever the cause and circumstances of his death, the dying man finds himself in a situation similar to that of the surrogate victim vis-à-vis the community" (255). It is possible that 'socially' dying people can be pushed to act like, and therefore to become, biologically dying people. 'Barely alive' members of the society of the living might be a casualty to the reinstating of a rigid difference between the dead and the living. If, on the other hand, the barely alive characters continue acting upon the community of the living, they can perhaps be considered as subversive of the social pressure that would like to posit them amongst the dead: scapegoats who strike back. The importance that the idea of the contagiousness of violence in times of crisis has in Girard's theory can also help us make sense of 'socially' dead people who become killers, as happens in the abovementioned film *Le Daim*.

Another example of this kind of character that comes to mind is Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. Himself sharing in many of the characteristics of the scapegoat, he inhabits a society which presents not few of the traits that Girard sees as typical of crisis, above all generalized reciprocal violence. Eventually, he will die, leaving the heirs to the Heights the possibility of breaking the circle of violence in which they are caught. But this expulsion has some peculiar elements. Nobody kills Heathcliff. he dies affected by a mysterious illness, unable or unwilling to eat, and having lost interest in torturing his relatives. He says of himself:

> With my hard constitution, and temperate mode of living, and unperilous occupations, I ought to, and probably *shall* remain above ground, till there is scarcely a black hair on my head – And yet I cannot continue in this condition! – I have to remind myself to breathe – almost to remind my heart to beat! And it is like bending back a stiff spring … it is by compulsion, that I do the slightest act, not prompted by one thought, and by compulsion, that I notice anything alive, or dead, which is not associated with one universal idea… (269)

Heathcliff is 'above ground', not living. From a Girardian point of view, it is interesting to notice that Heathcliff dies after two of his victims, Catherine Linton and Hareton Earnshaw, form a bond which excludes him, and

which might lead to the instauration of a new society at the Heights, in which Heathcliff will no longer have absolute power. He dies so quietly that my reading is that he just chooses the company of the dead Cathy, who haunted him – whom he had exhorted to haunt him – over that of the living. Furthermore, one might ask, if Cathy "is" Heathcliff, as she so famously states in a pivotal moment in the novel, was not Heathcliff himself 'already dead' all along, after her death? The pattern of hauntings in *Wuthering Heights* is too ample to be discussed here, but to my aims it is relevant to point out that, on the one hand, Heathcliff seems to choose the company of the dead; on the other, he and Cathy were so deeply entwined that perhaps after her death Heathcliff was already dead all along.

Another example of a character who feels drawn from 'our' world to another is Eleanor Vance in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, with her decision never to leave the titular haunted, and haunting, house. Eleanor has nowhere else to go, she has no home, no friends, no job, and only relatives she despises. She will eventually die by voluntarily crashing her car. Another example of a haunting house, inhabited by socially isolated characters doomed to death, is to be found in Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*.[4]

Examples proposed above do not claim to be analyses, as many other factors that should cooperate in determining the function absolved by the 'barely alive' characters, nor we should assume all these characters to be scapegoats. The sketching of a taxonomy of barely alive characters, and the functions they absolve, might be an interesting project to pursue. Relevant questions which come to mind are: who passes the judgment on characters' being 'already dead'? Why? Are there recurrent features, and are they depicted as social, or natural, or supernatural? Do we side with or against the barely alive character, and why?

Giulia Bigongiari

g.bigongiari@gmail.com
University of L'Aquila

4 I thank Mattia Petricola for this suggestion.

The promise of a queer afterlife: A counter-proposal to preserving normative singularities in the cloud[5]

There are many men motivated by their own fear of aging and dying who dedicate much of their late professional years to countering the inevitable. Most often this is done as Science – within media and technology industries, or academic disciplines – and most often under the guise of advancing healthcare, optimizing wellness, or precision medicine. As a kid, I distinctly remember hearing a rumour that when Walt Disney had died, he had been frozen. Being cryogenically preserved, I now understand, is hoping to be revived in the future, based on the theory that the brain can hold memory and personality intact until defrosted. Men like Disney, do not want to die forever; rather they wait in death for technology to catch up and to redefine the living.

Cryopreservation still exists, and feeds off of and into a very specific understanding about the embodiment of human life. Decades later, there are experiments harnessing brain waves, uploading them to inter-communicating computers. This is done by scanning, mapping, and digitally reconstructing the trillions of synaptic connections of the embodied brain. But, as Jeffrey Sconce observes: "this quest to evacuate the meat puppetry of the pre-anthropocene may have a few detours in store for us" (2015: 3). Specifically, Sconce (2015) outlines the few imagined options for digital avatars: there is the repurposed 'brain-in-a-vat' model (at the bottom of the hierarchy), and there's the 'hologram-like avatar' (at the top), with the 'artificial brain' being somewhere in the middle. All models, however, demonstrate the centrality of the individual's brain in the creation of digital avatars. The western-settler (or, allopathic) scientific understanding of the body – i.e that the mind and body are separate, and that the brain largely constitutes the individual's individuality – means that the body is an appendage to the mind (which lives exclusively in the brain) rather than constitutive of the body (and vice versa). Since the late 90s, only the dogma of the gene competes with (or completes) this vision; our genomes become a deterministic blueprint, software for the body. Brought together – the magnetic signals of the brain, and the easily sequenced human genome – make for the perfectly re-encoded human model. All attention

5 Big thank-you to Crystal Chokshi, Sarah Sharma, and Andrea Zeffiro in helping me with this piece.

is placed on the faithful reproduction of the individual. This reproduction of the individual is key, and it forms the basis for a counter-proposal, against storing normative singularities, in favour of centering a complex network of and for queer intimacies.

While critical scholarship of Science (such as Stengers 2000; Latour 2004; Hayles 2008) has demonstrated that the brain and the rest of the body are better thought of as environmentally co-produced, symbiotic, dynamic, ever-changing, etc., dominant views of science and technology persist, rooted in settler-western dualities, and continue to push forward the fantasy that life is best extended, or slowed down, and controlled by big data. Examples of this abound: Dr. Aubrey de Grey, co-founder of AgeX Therapeutics aims to "completely eliminate aging" (The Quantified Body Podcast 2015). Similarly, co-founder of PayPal and Facebook investor Peter Thiel set out to find "the key to eternal life" (Cha 2015). Amazon's Jeff Bezos is backing Silicon Valley scientists working on "a cure for aging" (Zaleski 2018). Google is spending billions on projects "solving death" (TOTT News 2019). And, Microsoft recently announced that it would "resurrect the dead" into chatbots (Kneese 2019; Linder 2021). There are many more manifestations of these anxieties in Big Tech, and on various cusps of scientific exploration (Hayworth 2012). However, "[m]any digital immortality startups are in fact vaporware, or novelties that are more theoretical than utilitarian", as digital death scholar Kneese (2019) reminds us.

Vaporous or not, one of the most persistent industry voices on this topic of digital immortality has been Ray Kurzweil, author of several books on transcendence into machines, and Director of Engineering at Google (Kurzweil 2000; 2005; 2012). According to Kurzweil, the singularity is:

> […] a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed. Although neither utopian or dystopian, this epoch will transform the concepts that we rely on to give meaning to our lives, from our business models to the cycle of human life, including death itself. (Kurzweil 2016 in Wolny *et al.* 2018)

He imagines this time of 'singularitarian transcendence' to be 2045… 24 years from now. This is also why there is a foundation called "Global Future 2045" (2045 Initiative).

While anxieties about aging and dying have motivated scientists and CEOs alike, science has in turn given fodder for popular cultural representations of this 'singularitarian transcendence'– the idea that people can be at once human and wholly duplicated and uploaded to a machine in order to either straddle the two worlds, or live seamlessly in and out of a virtual rendition. We might think of this as a 'digital afterlife'. This model, however, focuses so much on the individual avatar being faithfully replicated, that it deeply complicates 'the social' by not factoring complex relations into the design. Sociotechnical imaginaries of the digital afterlife are literally self-centered. How might a queer reading redress this normative anxiety-driven future? (Edelman 2004) What do relations, connections, and love mean in the afterlife? How are these to be archived in all their complexities? (TallBear 2020) How might our connections to others – human and non-human – thwart the hype of the singular? And why is this kind of derailment important?

There are a few key insights from popular culture that might help us think beyond the digital afterlife as it's currently being presented to us; be it through *Upload*'s (2020) Lakeview, or *Forever*'s (2018) Riverside, or *Black Mirror*'s (2016) San Junipero. All three television series are about 'passing over' to a boutique – and seemingly eternal – virtual afterparty (though *Forever* functions slightly differently). The worlds of Lakeview and San Junipero are always tethered to a reality (i.e. what we think we are living in now, but in 20+ years) by data centers. In *Upload*, the entirety of the digital afterlife is maintained in the server room of an old-timey industrial building, one that is (remarkably) smaller than what currently serves Facebook (for example). In contrast, San Junipero is generated in a vast data center; location-less, automated, and sleek. In *Riverside*, we're not told exactly what the afterlife is, or how its magic is maintained, and this serves a necessary reminder that seamlessness is also an ideal outcome of the afterlife experiment.

Beyond questions of technology and infrastructure, the 'living dead' in each of these digital afterlives are also tethered to normative notions of what a post-living life retreat might include, usually as imagined for upper/middle class white folks: a small, quiet community, beaches, hotel service, access to nature, convertible cars, nightclubs, good weather, endless buffets, and so on. These are markers of physical and material comforts, but – intentionally or not – they invoke little more than enduring boredom.

Fig 1 – Screen grabs of Lakeview Data Centre and server room (*Upload*, 2020).

Fig. 2 – Screen grab of San Junipero Data Centre and Tucker Systems servers (*Black Mirror*, 2018).

The characters seem eternally lonely, though less as a plot point and more as a byproduct of the paucity of imagination that constitutes those worlds – to have created an afterlife with neoliberal capitalist ideals, only to realise that (we) the living are never fulfilled by these either. Eternal boredom plays an important role in the affective registers of the afterlife.

This affective register – which could be likened to a "projection space for nostalgia" (Niemeyer 2014: 19) – instantiates and mobilizes psychic relationships to 'the past' for a wide range of ends. This is perhaps most obvious in Upload and Forever, but it is through San Junipero that the importance of this point is made about the eternity of that boredom, nested in nostalgia. We learn that San Junipero is a computer simulation functioning as 'immersive nostalgic therapy' for old, dying people. One (Yorkie) of the two main ciswomen characters (the other being Kelly) ends up in a simulation because she died in a car crash at the age of 21, right after coming out to religious, abusive parents. She didn't live to enjoy being a lesbian in the 'real world', so the simulation is all she has to render this future for all times. She falls for Kelly, a woman who has lost her husband and daughter, and is therefore ready to explore her attraction to Yorkie in this simulated world. The boredom, in that case, is in part about being trapped in this kind of interpersonal dynamic – a suffocation of lesbian desire, to the cuttings room floor – but also about nostalgia itself, said to

be the emotional engine of the simulation, a consequence of and a defense against time itself (Tanner 2021).

In the digital afterlife, the living dead are designed to be perfect replicas of their living selves, but usually, or ideally, arrested at their 'prime.' Disabilities are 'corrected' either by erasure or recoding. Youth is assumed to embody the perfect forever body. Queerness, especially, is indulged on the other (dead) side, but in real (living) life – as we're reminded with laboured dialogue – supports the real labour of heterosexual marriage. The lesbian romances in San Junipero and in Forever are possible only by living out a fantasy in death. Gender and race are also flattened because these worlds were not created with collectivities or relations in mind. Bodies, avatars, and 'uploads' belong to the companies that sequence, host, and archive their data, and ownership falls into regular patterns of earthly inheritance, only gently subverted for our entertainment. Basically: if you have money in real life, and you own your self, you can pass over. You don't have to die forever. The technofix has you covered.

The central battle at the heart of each character's death, however, isn't grieving or dealing with death itself. It's love: their ability to love and be loved. And the litmus test for love, it seems, is the ability to grapple with and tame the promised foreverness of the afterlife in the digital realm. Each show ends with a sense of that impossibility, the failed programming that imprisons them into a world where they cannot afford love; where love simply cannot be in a world created for perfect individual replication and nothing else. In each case, desire and temptation belong in a different place from love – away from it, a seedy underbelly (the Quagmire of San Junipero/the Grey Market of Upload) or luxurious debauchery (Oceanside of Forever) – a place to travel to and away from. Boredom is a feature, not a bug, in a program that focuses solely on replicating the self rather than on extending the deep bonds and complicated intimacies that we form and contend with, if we are to be in relation with others.

One of the (many) problems with singularitarian transcendence is that it's motivated by heteronormative patriarchal anxieties. As Sarah Sharma writes: "The white patriarchal penchant for exit rears its ugly head at any hint of having to live with one's supremacy in question. For most populations on Earth, you might say that living in a world of human constraint and limited conditions is just part and parcel of living" (2017: np). In other words, those who stand at the margins are better able to imagine the

limitations of our current (social, political, technological) imaginary from which they are either excluded or exploited, while those around which the imaginary has been centered and constructed are unable to face the slightest discomfort or inconvenience; the apparatus was conceived to persistently avoid this very thing.

On the other hand, as a counter-proposal, radical queer reimaginings put into question such a focus on the future, at least in so far as this future aims to contain and reproduce sameness for its own sake, and that sameness is equated with being worth preserving, and reproducing again and again (Lewis 2019; Hobart & Kneese 2020). Rather than violent future visions that perpetuate heteronormative patriarchal anxieties in this way, radical 'archival' approaches can offer alternatives to the rigid infrastructures of data centers that host these fantasies. The radical gesture, then, is not to debate the timing or potentialities of digitally replication, nor to opt out in hopes of an analogue 'heaven', but to recentre connections to the myriad contexts – elemental, energetic, animal, political, environmental, spatial, spiritual, etc. – that constitute our interselves, and keep our deaths away from all heteronormative capitalist quests that determine future imaginaries just as poorly as they do the present.

Mél Hogan

mhogan@ucalgary.ca
University of Calgary

Notes on female necrophilia

This brief contribution aims at introducing some contemporary critical perspectives on female necrophilia and, at the same time, suggesting possible future developments in this field of enquiry. Far from claiming any unquestionable truth, the present paper should be read as a starting point for deepening further investigations on the subject, by unveiling some of the main still open questions related to necrophilia in general, and to female necrophilia, specifically.

One of the issues related to the representations of female necrophilia is their potential to undermine many of the cultural assumptions which construe normative horizons of meaning in nowadays societies. For instance, the active and desirous instance of female subjectivity (which is central in

female necrophilia) is seen as deviant within a normative, still widespread, cultural paradigm that assigns to women the role of objects of desire in sexual relationships. Also, there is an overall misrecognition of other practices aside penetrative sex, that are often considered 'non-sexual'. According to this last claim, sexual intercourse with a dead man without a penile erection is not accepted as such. This is also due to a broader assumption regarding the ways in which female desire and sexuality are represented as relegated to perpetual absence. Overall, it seems that female necrophilia has the potential to disturb and disrupt such claims, and can therefore be used as a hermeneutically valid tool for the analysis of the ways in which female desire is both positively and negatively represented.

It is widely known that necrophilia, as other so-called 'perversions', has been systematically condemned and stigmatised as deviance in order to downplay its subversive potential since the very beginning of its occurrence. The term 'necrophilia' was first used by the Belgian physician Joseph Guislain in a lecture presented in 1850 and published two years later (cited in Downing 2011: 210). However, it was only in 1901 that the first extensive medical treatment of necrophilia as a disease was elaborated in a treatise by Alexis Épaulard, a former student of the French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne. His thesis was a medical report inspecting several cases of interaction with the dead: *Vampirisme*, *Nécrophilie*, *Nécrosadisme*, *Nécrophagie*. The text is a nosography that catalogues and classifies the case studies based on the different interactions with the victim: cases of non-violent sexual activity with corpses (necrophilia/la nécrophilie); cases in which the victim is killed in order to be turned into a corpse and therefore mutilated (necrosadism/la nécrosadisme); and lastly, cases in which mutilated body parts are ingested (necrophagia/la nécrophagie) (*Ibid.*). Épaluard reports eight cases of necrophilia, all of which are cases of male necrophilia. As this study confirms, unfortunately, female necrophilia does not seem to feature in psychiatry and has overall been absent from the cultural horizon of understanding, until recently. This is also due to the fact that as other perversions, female necrophilia has always been seen as exclusively and strictly a male phenomenon.

Underlying this observation, there are many other considerations that can be added. First of all, necrophilia *tout court*, seen as any kind of erotic and/or sexual relationship with a corpse, intersects with and at the same time exemplifies many of the most deeply rooted cultural taboos

in Western cultures. One taboo is that of the dead body perceived as an untouchable object. Such a taboo is also validated by religious beliefs surrounding life after death and the handling of corpses. A common sexual taboo prescribes that valid relationships occur only between living beings, although, in the prospect of male dominance, no reference is ever made to mutual consent. One last taboo relates to gender roles: as Lena Wånggren (2012) highlights, "[f]emale necrophilia then might be seen as not only transgressing boundaries of life and death [...] but also as transgressing prescribed gender roles" (71).

Therefore, it can be stated that not only necrophilia is considered the most monstrous of perversions, as Krafft-Ebing (18894: 223 - 4) pointed out, but that it is also strongly marked at the level of gender performance. Numerous are the studies on male necrophilia that often confuse necrophilia and necrosadism and analyse the most violent aspects of sex-death connections as part of a broader discourse on the violence inherent in the representation of male sexual relations. Similarly, much space has been occupied by male necrophilia in horror, snuff and gore films, as well as in horror literature, starting from Poe's famous quote "[t]he death [...] of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world". Here, the representation of necrophilia revolves around the "perverse mesmeriser" who places his reifying gaze on "controlled" and "obedient" female bodies. Consequently, necrophilia is not framed merely as a sexual practice but also as a practice involving the gaze in the first place. In fact, much feminist research has connected male necrophilia to the objectifying male gaze on the female body. It is worth mentioning, in this sense, Elisabeth Bronfen's book (1992*), Over her dead body*, that has greatly contributed to the studies on male necrophilia, alongside Lisa Downing's research, an essential starting point for investigating necrophilia in the context of French *fin-de-siècle* literature (2003).

Although female necrophilia is yet to be fully addressed in critical studies due to the above-mentioned taboos still affecting research in this field, however, some references should be made. Among these, in film criticism, the study by Patricia MacCormack, *Necrosexuality* (2011), and the isolated records of soft-core necrophilia in contributions by Downing on women's writing (2003b) and on some explicitly necrophilic films (2002). None of the above, though, attempts to explore systematically all the representations of female necrophilia in its various manifestations, broadening the

spectrum from visual practices, such as figurative representations of dead male bodies eroticized by a female spectator, to forms of necrophilia as possession and domination over a totally passive or passivised body. Curti and Laselva (2015 3ed.) pointed out that a localised and rapid appearance of necrophilia in horror film productions is that provided by Jörg Buttgereit in Nekromantik (1987) and *Nekromantik 2* (1991) for female necrophilia especially, although necrophilia soon became a side element in horror film plots. This is the case, for example, of Nicolas Winding Refn's *The Neon Demon* (2016) where female and lesbian necrophilia intertwine with forms of necrosadism and cannibalism.

Because of its interstitial nature, necrophilia is a very complex practice involving a series of connected sub-practices, all of which rely on the body-death-eros connection. Such a '*ménage à trois*' can be fully grasped by means of a thorough analysis of the concept of necrophilia itself and its multilayered forms. For instance, necrophilia could be ascribed to the sphere of pornography. In this regard, performances of bodily obscenity and the so-called "body genres" in films, as Carol J. Clover (1987) and Linda Williams (1991) first theorised, come to mind. Such performances have also narrowed a *summa divisio* between the modes of male porn and the modes of female porn, creating a constant tension between visual necrosadism along with genital and bodily dissection, on the one hand, and the maintenance of bodily integrity in its sacredness, on the other. In the latter case, the necrophilic act occurs with no explicit violence. Lynne Stopkewich's *Kissed* (2006) provides an example of a nonviolent, highly erotic, though not explicitly pornographic form of female necrophilia, lacking necrosadic connotations.

The issues raised by research on female necrophilia are varied and lead to some interesting questions that can be profitably addressed through a queer perspective for several reasons: on the one hand, female necrophilia overturns some very specific polarities in gender performances and subverts the normative erotic desire; on the other, it questions the boundaries between body and desire, and their correlated meanings, since the dead body becomes the product of secularised and depathologised subject dissolution.

A number of questions also arise in order to effectively analyse female necrophilia today. What firstly needs to be addressed is a still debated question regarding the very concept of necrophilia and female necrophilia

and what these phenomena mean nowadays, at a time when the clear-cut pathologisations provided by Épaluard or von Krafft-Ebing no longer seem to offer valid taxonomies. Necrophilia is often associated with other 'pathological' perversions, resulting in new forms of eroticism that involve bodies and dead bodies, along with their changing definitions and understandings. We might, therefore, wonder to what extent forms of interaction with bodies that we consider dead can be labeled as necrophilic practices. At the same time, we might question the pathological limits of necrophilic desires.

Another urgent question concerns how necrophilic desires intersect with the construction of gender identities and how these identities are interrogated by erotic perversions. Such issues require further assessment and delineation of the connections linking desire, identity, gender, and sexuality, along with their boundaries.

Lastly, the study of female necrophilia can be a useful tool for understanding certain representations of masculinity, especially when it comes to heterosexual female necrophilia, and the connected instances of power that underlie it. For instance, a sexual intercourse between a woman and a dead man body overturns the normative representation of masculinity that therefore shifts from an active into a passive role, thus deviating from the commonsensical reality that associates femininity with passivity and masculinity with activity. These passive masculinities partly overlap with what Kaja Silverman (1992) classified as "male subjectivity at the margins". Such subjectivities recognize castration, otherness and specularity as constitutive elements of their own identity, and, moving beyond these categorisations, are necessarily passive and totally objectified.

To conclude, female necrophilia is a hybrid space that ends up questioning its own nature. As a matter of fact, we may wonder whether the adjective "female" still makes sense, and if necrophilia can be separated from its pathologisation so as to be used as a hermeneutic tool in the broader analysis of subject-object, active-passive relations, as well as of living-dead body relations. In so doing, it might become a useful rhetorical device also to analyse these radical changes, act as a spectrum of anti-normative erotic relations in the history of culture, and ask new questions about very sensitive issues, in ways that are also controversial. Necrophilia symbolises the reshuffling of gender polarities that have assigned to men the role of sole active agents of erotic desire. Our hope is that this brief contribution

may broaden the ongoing critical debate on necrophilia and encourage the inclusion of the above issues.

Anna Chiara Corradino

annachiara.corradino@unibo.it
University of Bologna, University of L'Aquila,
Institut für Kulturwissenschaft, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

References

2045 Initiative, 2013, "YouTube "Ray Kurzweil – Immortality by 2045" Mar 4, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f28LPwR8BdY&ab_channel=2045Initiative (accessed May 2021).

Baldwin J., 1957, *Notes of a Native Son*, Beacon Press, Boston MA.

Baldwin J., Standley F.L., 1996, *Conversations with James Baldwin*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson MS.

Baldwin J., 2000 [1956], *Giovanni's Room*, Delta, New York NY.

Bartlett N., 1988, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*, Serpent's Tail, London.

Bridges K., 2020, "The Many Ways Institutional Racism Kills Black People", in *Time*, June 11, https://time.com/5851864/institutional-racism-america/ (Accessed May 2021).

Bronfen E. 1992, *Over her dead body. Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic,* Routledge, New York NY.

Brontë E., 1994 [1847], *Wuthering Heights*, Penguin, London.

Campbell J., 2002, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA.

Cha A.E., 2015, "Peter Thiel's Quest to Find the Key to Eternal Life", in *Washington Post,* April 03, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/on-leadership/peter-thiels-life-goal-to-extend-our-time-on-this-earth/2015/04/03/b7a1779c-4814-11e4-891d-713f052086a0_story.html (accessed May 2021).

Clover C.J. 1987, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Thrive also in Their Ability to Recast the Nature of Slasher Film", in *Representations*, 20: 187-228.

Cochran S.D., Mays V.M., 2015, "Mortality Risks Among Persons Reporting Same-Sex Sexual Partners: Evidence From the 2008 General Social Survey – National Death Index Data Set", in *American Journal of Public Health*, 105, 2: 358-364.

Curti R., La Selva R., 2015, *Sex and Violence. Percorsi nel cinema estremo,* Lindau, Turin.

Dietter S., 1995, (dir. by), "A Star is Burns", in M. Groening, Matt, *The Simpsons,* TV series.

Downing L., 2002, "Between Men and Women; Beyond Heterosexuality: Limits and Possibilities of the Erotic in Lynne Stopkewich's 'Kissed' and Patrice Leconte's 'La Fille sur le pont'", in *Romance Studies, University of Swansea*, 20, 1: 29-40.

Downing L., 2003, *Desiring the Dead: Necrophilia and Nineteenth- Century French Literature,* Legenda, Oxford.

Downing L., 2003b, "Death and the Maidens: A Century of Necrophilia in Female-Authored Textual Production", in *French Cultural Studies*, 14, 2: 157-168.

Downing L., 2011, "Eros and Thanatos in European and American Sexology", in K. Fisher, S. Toulalan, eds., *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present,* Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke: 201-20.

Dupieux Q., 2019, (dir. by), *Le Daim.*

Edelman L., 2004, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Duke University Press Books, Durham NC.

Fennel E., 2020, (dir. by), *Promising Young Woman.*

Frecerro C., 2013, "Queer Spectrality: Haunting the Past" in E. Peeren, M. del Pilar Blanco, eds. *The Queer Spectralities Reader*, Bloomsbury, London: 335-359.

Girard R., 1972, *La Violence et Le Sacré*, Grasset, Paris; Eng. Tr. P. Gregory 1977, *Violence and the Sacred*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD.

Hayles N.K., 2008, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL.

Hayworth K.J., 2012, "Electron Imaging Technology for Whole Brain Neural Circuit Mapping", in *International Journal of Machine Consciousness*, 4, 1: 87-108.

Hobart H., Kneese T., 2020, "Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times", in *Social Text*, 38, 1: 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-7971067.

Hubbard M., Yang A. (created by), 2018, "Forever", TV Series. IMDB: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7720790/

Hulan H., 2017, "Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context", in *McNair Scholars Journal*, 21, 1: 17-27.

Iser W., 1978, *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD.

Jackson S., 1959, *The Haunting of Hill House*, Viking Press, New York NY.

Lagerlöf S., 1891, *Gösta Berlings Saga, Frithiof Hellberf förlaf*; Eng. Tr. P. Norlen, 2009, *The Saga of Gösta Berling*, Penguin, New York.

Klein R., 2001, *Jewelry Talks: A Novel Thesis*, Vintage Books, New York NY.

Kneese T., 2019, "Death, Disrupted", in *Continent*, 8, 1-2. http://continentconti-

nent.cc/index.php/continent/article/view/319.

Králová J., 2015, "What is social death?", in *Contemporary Social Science,* 10, 3: 235-248.

Kurzweil R., 2000, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human* Intelligence, Penguin, New York NY.

Kurzweil R., 2005, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, Penguin, New York NY.

Kurzweil R., 2012, *How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed*, Penguin, New York NY.

Landd S., 2021, Podcast #234 "Human Immortality, Aging and Life Extension - Dr Jose Luis Cordeiro", https://pca.st/2t1xervy (Accessed May 2021).

Latour B., 2004, "How to Talk About the Body? The Normative Dimension of Science Studies", in *Body & Society*, 10, 2-3: 205-229. DOI: 10.1177/1357034X04042943.

Lewis S., 2019, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, Verso Books, La Vergne TN.

Linder C., 2021, "After You Die, Microsoft Wants to Resurrect You as a Chatbot", in *Popular Mechanics,* January 13, https://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/robots/a35165370/microsoft-resurrects-the-dead-chatbots/ (Accessed May 2021).

MacCormack P., 2006, "Necrosexuality", in *Rhizomes,* 11-12. http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/maccormack/index.html

Mayor A., 2020, "Gods and Robots", in *NOEMA*, June 18, https://www.noemamag.com/gods-and-robots/ (Accessed May 2021).

Majumdar N., 2020 "Labor and Love Under Capital.", in *Jacobin*, January 30, https://jacobinmag.com/2020/01/full-surrogacy-now-sophie-lewis-review (Accessed May 2021).

Niemeyer K., 2014, *Media and Nostalgia : Yearning for the Past, Present and Future*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Silverman K., 1992, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins,* Routledge, New York NY.

TallBear K., 2020, "Dr. KIM TALLBEAR on Reviving Kinship and Sexual Abundance, / 157" in *For the* Wild, Feb. 5, https://forthewild.world/listen/kim-tallbear-on-reviving-kinship-and-sexual-abundance-157 (Accessed May 2021).

The Quantified Body Podcast, 2015, "Episode 14 – Aubrey de Grey: A Framework to Increase Longevity and End Aging", https://thequantifiedbody.net/framework-increase-longevity-end-aging-aubrey-de-grey (Accessed May 2021).

TOTT News, 2019, "Google's $1.5 Billion Research Center to "Solve Death"", March 14, https://tottnews.com/2019/03/14/google-calico-solving-death (Accessed May 2021).

Sacks H., 1995, *Lectures on Conversation,* G. Jefferson, E.A. Schegloff, eds., Blackwell, Oxford.

Sandoval C., 2000, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis MN.

Sconce J., 2015, "The Ghostularity", in *communication +1*, 4, 1, DOI: 10.7275/R5445JD2.

Sharma S., 2017 "Exit and the Extensions of Man", in *Transmediale*, May 8, https://transmediale.de/content/exit-and-the-extensions-of-man (Accessed May 2021).

Stengers I., 2000, *The Invention of Modern Science*, Eng. Tr. D.W. Smith, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis MN.

Steele C., Kidd D.C., Castano E., 2015, "On social death: Ostracism and the accessibility of death thoughts", in *Death Studies*, 39: 19-23.

Sylvander C.W., 2007, "'*Making Love in the Midst of Mirrors'*: Giovanni's Room *and* Another Country", in H. Bloom, ed. *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: James Baldwin*, Infobase Publishing, New York NY: 81-96.

Tanner G., 2021, *The Hours Have Lost Their Clock: The Politics Of Nostalgia*, Repeater, London (forthcoming).

von Krafft Ebing R., 1889, *Psychopatia sexualis, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der conträren Sexualempfindung, eine klinisch- forensische Studie*, F. Enke, Stuttgart.

Wånggren L., 2012, "Death and Desire: Female Necrophilia as Gender Transgression", in M. Foley, N. McRobert, A. Stephanou, eds, *Transgression and its Limits*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne: 71-82.

Weatherby W.J., 1989, *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire*, Dutton Adult, New York NY.

Williams L., 1991, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess", in *Film Quarterly*, 44: 2-13.

Wolny J., Ashman R., Solomon M., 2018, "The Quantified Self: Self-Regulation in Cyborg Consumers", in M.R. Solomon, T.M. Lowrey, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Consumer Behavior*, Routledge, New York NY: Chapter 14. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315526935-14

Woolf V., *Orlando: A Biography*, Mariner Books, New York NY, 1973.

Zaleski A., 2018, "Why Jeff Bezos Is Backing This Silicon Valley Scientist Who is Working on a Cure for Aging", in *cnbc.com the Edge*, August 29, https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/29/jeff-bezos-backs-silicon-valley-scientist-working-on-a-cure-for-aging.html (accessed May 2021).