

Vivek Venkatesh
presents



**Sexual Violence and Misogyny in Literary and
Lyrical Frameworks: Intersecting the Humanities
and Social Sciences in the Context of Niche
Music, Film and Visual Art Scenes**

Interactive Public Engagement Event with Daniel Butler,
Leila Abdul-Rauf, Beth Winegarner, Bradley Nelson, and
Jason Wallin

Moderated by Justin Norton

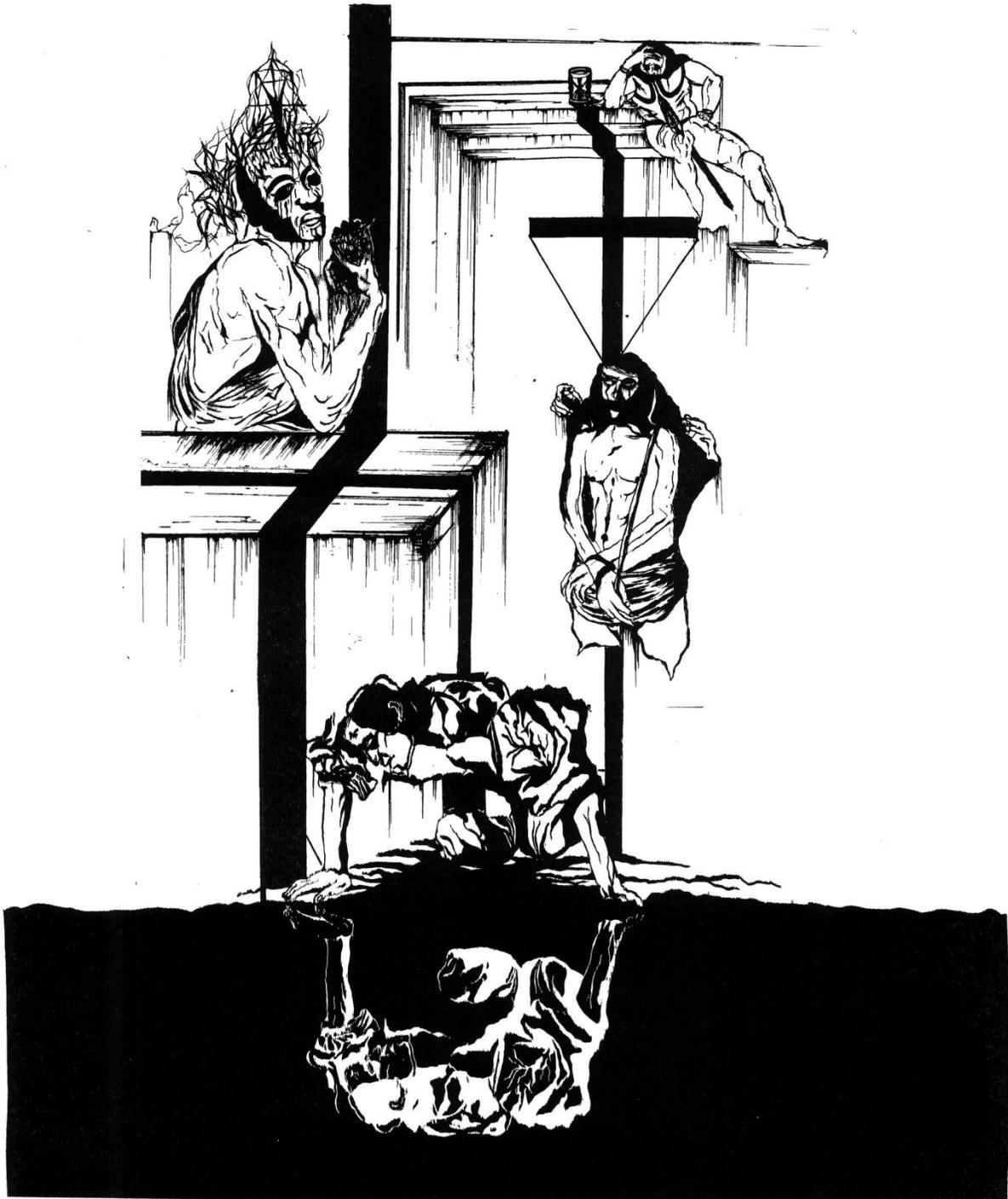
**Necrophilia and Sexual Violence: Reflexive
Viewpoints in Death Metal Music, Zombie Culture,
Scandinavian Cinema and Early Modern Spanish
Literature**

Improviseational Reading by Vivek Venkatesh, Jason
Wallin, and Bradley Nelson

Guitar by Nathan Verrill

Artwork by Daniel Butler and Jason Wallin

**January 6, 2016 7pm
aQuarius recOrds
San Francisco**



Text for Improvisational Reading

1. We treat necrophilia in death metal through a series of two ideological propositions, the first of which focuses on its rejection and then its extension of the concept of death; and the second of which reveals its complex relationship with sexuality and misogyny. Our analyses attempt to untangle three core features of the niche genre of necrophilic death metal, namely, the juxtaposition of the polluting nature of death with a morbidly amorous sentiment for the afterlife; the reification of enacting a love of the dead through a musical artform; and the near-omnipresent role of the female corpse in fulfilling sexual debauchery. Inspired partly by the anthropological work conducted by Mary Douglas, in 1966, on multiple representations of taboo, and the fluidity of pure and impure behaviours amongst different strata of African and Asian tribes and societies, we propose that necrophilia in death metal is an unabashed attempt by the scene to "reject" the construct of death (p. 171) - especially as a finality to life - by extending the deferment of death through sexual fulfillment and a regeneration of life. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



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2. Zombies, as past and post-human entities, offer us an opportunity to engage, amongst many other things, in a reflection about the inhuman, and how we might co-inhabit, with these un-dead, an apocalyptic alter. Zombie culture has afforded the public with a framework to discuss socio-political apathy, and allow a mainstream co-opting of metaphors associated with death without a confrontation with the horror of death. That is, close observation of zombie culture reveals less a cultural fixation on death than the attempt to defer it. Zombie culture is, in its strange way, also predicated on a commitment to the deferral of death. While ostensibly counter-intuitive, Larsen (2010) argues that the contemporary moment is not one obsessed with death, but rather, the overrepresentation of its demise, that is to say that nothing dies. Things simply enter into temporary cryostasis for their inevitable exhumation and recirculation as capital. Neoliberal and rampant crony capitalism, coupled with a global increase in materialism, has produced the conditions for the death of death. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)

. PATRICIDAL LUST .



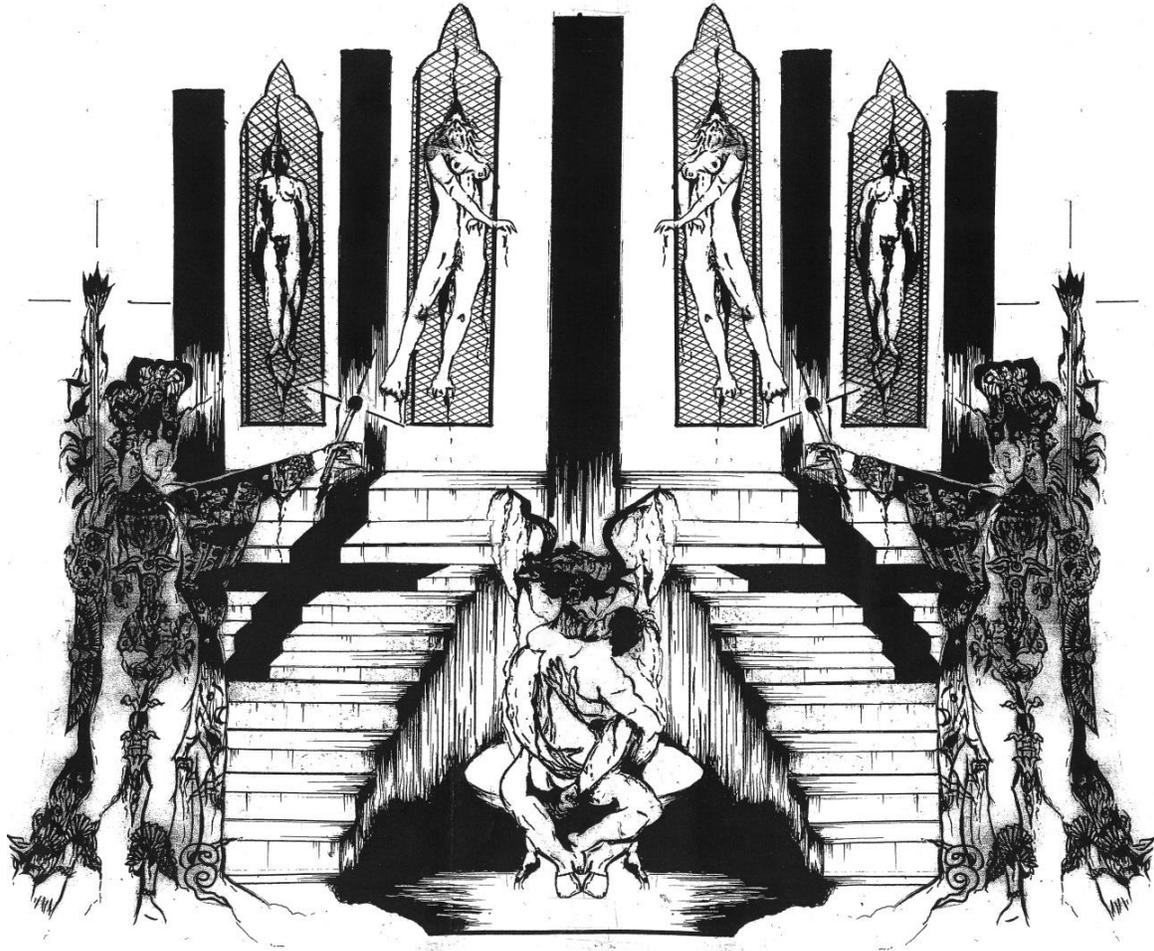
3. Unbeknownst to Bjurman, Salander has recorded the rape with a hidden camera. In her second visit to the apartment, the sadist thinks he has defeated her resistance; however, when he bends over to kiss her, Salander pulls out a Taser, electrocutes him, ties him to his own bed, sodomizes him with the same instrument he used on her and, finally, brutally carves a crude tattoo onto his stomach that reads: "I AM A SADISTIC PIG, A PERVERT AND A RAPIST" (203-09). She also hacks his computer so that she can see everything he writes, installs cameras in his flat, and threatens to send the recording of the rape to his superiors and the news media if anything happens to her, or if he ever sees another woman. One of the most interesting aesthetic structures of these two scenes is the way in which Larsson develops and intensifies the perspective of the two victims of rape. Both scenes are arguably pornographic in their portrayal of sexual violence and victimization, but the perspectives from which the violence is regarded are more in line with Angela Carter's definition of "moral pornography," since, as readers, we experience the helplessness and rage of both Salander and Bjurman. Perhaps most disturbing, from an affective point of view, is that while the reader is outraged at the perversions committed on Salander's innocent body, we experience a disquieting enjoyment at the violation and torture of Bjurman, which reframes discourses of victimization in a radical way. (Nelson, "The Aesthetics of Rape" 68)

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.patricidal lust.



4. Necrophilia in death metal creates a narrative which could be couched in the socio-anthropological framework of tension between the male - traditionally seen as the dominating apex member of a family or even a society - and an independently-minded female who is not playing the intended role of servitude to the male, in other words, what Douglas (1966) refers to as "sex pollution" (p. 141). Douglas describes how a variety of societies, castes, and tribes deal with transgressive behaviours of either gender and attempt to calibrate the roles of males and females so as to attain a state of mutually acceptable balance. We approach sex pollution in necrophilic death metal from the standpoint of a violent, misogynistic power relationship wherein the polluting offender is most often a woman upon whose living and dead form atrocities are performed by one or more male antagonists. We contend also, herein, that a parallel object of defilement in necrophilia within death metal is the esoteric conception of death, which is used as a cornerstone for the original development of the genre of death metal. Extending our first proposition, necrophilia in death metal allows the subjugation of the metaphysical aspects of death, its philosophical underpinnings as well as the imagined landscape of the un-dead and replaces it with an impure, unchaste form of love - a perverted sense of sexual activity - and a criminally violent approach to demonstrating these carnal pleasures. Recording artists who use necrophilia in their brand of death metal favor placing the listener in an uncomfortable position of the perpetrator of at least three sequentially-linked crimes - horrific acts of torture, a murder and, then the defiling of a corpse. Necrophilia in death metal therefore favors a stark criminal reality over the more opaque construction of conceptions of death and destruction that are more prevalent in the broader genre of death metal. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



5. Figuring alongside the process psychosexual identity development advanced in psychoanalytic theory, death metal produces a confrontation with the primal scene of repression intimate to the production of subjectivity itself. We continue herein to build on Kristeva's contention that the formation of the bounded subject is predicated on the disavowal and management of such bodily abjects as feces, menstrual blood, pus, and vomit, insofar as such bodily effluent signals the breakdown of categorical distinctions separating subject and object. In this vein, Kristeva's theory of abjection evokes the primal scene of repression necessary to the psychosexual division of self and m/other, or rather, the repression of that which is not "us" as a condition for the emergence of the bounded subject itself. Such division, Kristeva argues, is not

limited to the formation of subjectivity, but extends to corollary divisions of man from animal, life from death, and culture from primal sexuality and murderous animalism. It is along these lines that death metal's confrontation with and perverse reverence for vile effluvium, the threat of bodily decay, and the ever-present precariousness of material life marks a confrontation with what disturbs identity, order, stratification in society, and legislated social boundaries. For akin to its referent in horror cinema and literature, death metal places its listener in delirious proximity to an uncanny world erased of clear symbolic demarcations and hence, those conditions whereby the "I" might itself be preserved. Along these lines, the necrophilic passion of death metal might be thought of as a means to disalienate the listener from the other, while wedding it to a world awash in the necrotic flows of vile discharge and decay that we are taught to police as social beings proper. Yet more nefariously, the necrophilic desire of death metal might concomitantly be thought of as a psychological ground for taking revenge on the traumatic moment of symbolic severance by both dominating and fornicating with the abject before its ultimate disavowal (Finbow, 2014), thereby resembling a form of "sex pollution", wherein the struggle between the separation between the living and the dead is treated in an evocatively sexual fashion (Douglas, 1966, p. 141). (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



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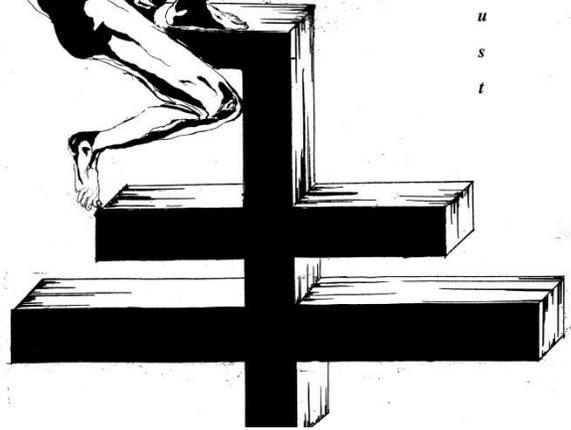
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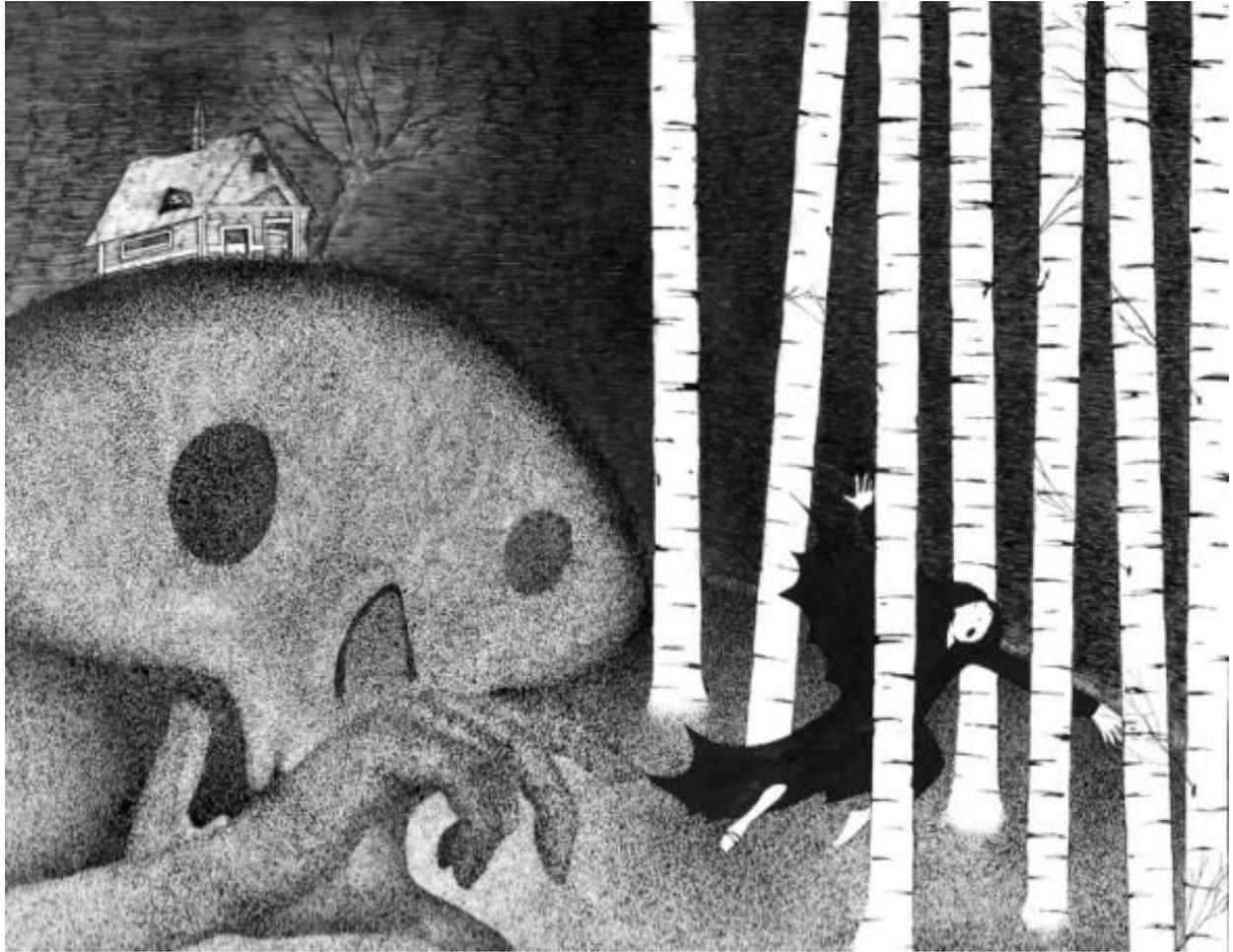
6. In the scenes most germane to this essay, the Eucharistic motif of the (last) supper, in addition to connecting the two murders within the play, also connects the diegetic world of the fable to the extradiegetic world of the party. In the first scene, Don Alonso, aided and abetted by his friend Marco Antonio, brings his innocent victim to a hidden and enclosed garden, where the servant of Marco Antonio has set a table with "una empanada y otras cosas" (394). Doña Ana has hardly taken a bite from the empanada when "[Don Alonso] went around behind her and with a large knife he'd brought for this very purpose and had had sharpened that same day, he slashed her across the throat with such force that her head crashed down onto the table" (296). If the erotic subtext in which a man with a phallic instrument approaches a young woman from behind is missed by the reader, the more obvious juxtaposition of an intimate rendezvous between man and wife in a garden with such a violent decapitation suggests more explicitly the perverse relationship between the aesthetics of romance and the grotesque entrées that are served up throughout the party. In this case, the motif of the biblical patriarch Abraham, his knife raised for a sacrifice required by the law of the Father—Alonso kills Ana because his father, Don Pedro, threatened to cut him off financially for marrying poorly—leaves little doubt as to the sacrificial or, better stated, Eucharistic intertext of the scene, as the victim, with bread still in her mouth, sprays blood from her neck. (Nelson, "The Aesthetics of Rape" 72)



7. Necrophilia in death metal deconstructs the original intent of death metal by fusing life to the object of death through a filth and excrement-smearred enactment of an erotic and guilt-ridden sexual mutilation of a corpse. The coexistence of sex - a potentially life-giving act - and death in necrophilia is not an irony that is necessarily lost on its scene members. Necrophilia exposes a dark human side, one that physically and emotionally extends conceptions of love and sex to immoral depths which allow death metal to retain, regain and rejuvenate its core feature, namely, death. We contend herein that necrophilia as a rejection of death, and its reformulation as a living dead entity through an act of violent procreation emerges from within the scene - in that necrophilia is a way for producers of death metal to extend, re-emphasise, re-position and realise a depiction that transcends the original death metal lyrical and visual themes, including gore, death, zombies, horror and religion, all of which surround some facet of ambiguity in both cultural and religious contexts. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



8. With death's end, power - as a sociological, political and economic construct reaches a fever pitch, for now even life's strange and singular 'outside' is rehabilitated into systems of control. In a scenario anticipated by the dark proselytization of Baudrillard (2002), the dead live on, necromantically parasited as data, market research, media fodder, and so on. Long before this however, contemporary living is extended and imbricated with the sociopolitical and economic power of banks (through which one saves for retirement), insurance companies ('life' insurance), pharmaceutical corporations (to prolong physical and mental 'health'), and the proliferation of leisure and physical fitness markets oriented to 'healthy living' (50 is the new 20). Herein, power exerted by both governmental and corporate forces function to negate death and in a culture fixated on vitality, to colonize the nervous systems of the living through their interminable connection to the restless, schizo impulses of cognitive and immaterial capitalism. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



9. In this way, taste is unveiled as an aesthetic structure based on the slaughter, dismemberment, and tasteful preparation of the female body, all channelled towards provoking and feeding the perverse hunger of the aristocratic consumer. The tragedy of the victims is not what is underlined here in the first instance, but rather the rabid hunger at the foundation of a culture of ostentatious and grotesque consumption that serves the interests of social and economic elites. Exploiting Castillo's apt application of Gilles Deleuze's concept of the fold (Baroque Horrors 112-15), one can envision a rippling fabric containing the various faces of sexual violence waving in the face of Zayas's reader. On one fold we may see conventional aesthetic dismemberment and idealization; on another the corporeal sanctity of the martyr; on another the horrific tortures of female protagonists; on yet another the forbidden sexual attraction of the budding (and mortified) adolescent body. In the end, however, what the folds all conceal and reveal is the structural necessity of sexual aggression and violence in early modern society and culture. (Nelson, "The Aesthetics of Rape", 73)



10. Necrophilia within the context of death metal is, in fact, pushed into the underground culture, discussed amongst fans at concerts and bars, and on online forums or social media feeds devoted to followers of the genre. It should not be surprising that necrophilia remains as much of a taboo to the general public as it was nearly 25 years ago when death metal began its thematic incorporation. Media discussions - again, in the context of the entertainment industry - about the re-emergence of life after death via the zombie concept can now be couched as an attempt to better understand a post-human society through the emotional angle of losing your family members to a mysterious illness and then having to separate their lifelong identity with that of their un-dead version, not only delinking from familiar social arrangements, but also, importantly, genus and species. However, the media - and perhaps even society, inasmuch as it can be reflected in the media - certainly does not seem to be prepared to tackle stark questions of illnesses, mental or otherwise, which compel some human beings to fornicate with corpses. The element of taboo is clearly present in the portrayal of necrophilia, which precludes it from becoming part of a broader cultural discussion given the negative connotations that society attaches to the act of coupling with the dead, perhaps because society also doesn't want to admit to the proliferation of non-normal desire and libidinal investment discursively dubbed 'unnatural'. (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



11. Throughout death metal runs recurring odes to meticulous bodily dissection, the intimate and careful articulation of the body's ruin, the patient and thorough exploration of the cadaver's perverted bodily processes, and painstaking presence before the most thoroughly abject scenes of horror and mutilation. From its inception, death metal has involved experiments in taboo and social transgression. Thought along these lines, the necrophilic passion inherent to some death metal functions to pervert orthodox social regulations and the institutional governance of desire itself. Herein, the necrophilic predilection of some death metal finds the affective conditions to think desire, sexuality, and the body anew. Where social institutions seeks to regulate the body's functions or otherwise, to submit the body to dominant regimes of signification, the necrophilic impulse of death metal unleashes the body, its skin, fluids, genitals, and feces from its otherwise imprisoned social mortification. Where the school, the church and State function to anticipate and manage the subject's relation to its own body, death metal palpates a vector of freedom by refusing the repression of the body's transgressive power and affirming alternative images of desire founded in neither social or psychosexual injunctions of what the subject ought to find pleasurable, thereby creating a reaction to a pollution as per Douglas (1966). (Venkatesh, Wallin, et al., "Necrophilic Death Metal", in press)



12. It will be my claim that the myriad ways in which Zayas introduces God, religious symbolism, and ritualistic tropes into her stories offer a different set of propositions, if not conclusions. On the one hand, the presence of ritualized sexual violence against women provides strong evidence that God's providence is a monstrous historical and eschatological form; a less revolutionary reading, and more sustainable, I would argue, is that the systematic oppression and abuse of women because they are women, i.e., femicide, although permitted by God, is a portentous (monstrous) sign that Spanish social institutions have transformed divine providence into a tragic and monstrous parody. Divine providence, in other words, is a tool and means to an illegitimate end, and not an end in itself. (Nelson, "Zayas Unchained" 48)

West Side Gory title: David Hall
Grimposium logo and Baphomet: Filip Ivanovic
Grimposium Manager: Kat Urbaniak
Designer: Alex Pelchat-White

Works cited:

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