

Zombie Trouble: A Propaedeutic on Ideological Subjectification and the Unconscious

Joshua Gunn & Shaun Treat

In order to help frame a current theoretical impasse, in this essay we forward the figure of the zombie in Western cinema as an allegory for the reception of the concept of ideology by communication scholars. After noting parallels between (a) an early academic caricature of ideology and the laboring zombie, and (b) the subject of ideological interpellation and the ravenous, consuming zombie of more recent cinema, we suggest that rhetorical scholars have yet to move beyond an obsession with the laboring zombie. To escape the connotation of a totalizing determinism that haunts ideology critique, we urge an acceptance of the category of the unconscious and a focus on ideology as a force of subjectification.

Keywords: Ideology; Interpellation; Living Dead; Psychoanalysis; Subjectification; The Unconscious; Zombie

An “ideology” is like a god coming down to earth, where it will inhabit a place pervaded by its presence. An “ideology” is like a spirit taking up its abode in a body: it makes that body hop around in certain ways; and that body would have hopped around in different ways had a different ideology happened to inhabit it.

Kenneth Burke¹

The wandering specter of Marx haunts Burke’s “definition of man” when he asks the question, “Do we simply use words, or do they not also use us?”² Although the question is rhetorical and the affirmative is implied, Burke’s tacit understanding of

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the ideological function of the symbolic remained largely subtextual in his later work. Just beneath the surface of his zombie metaphor, however, lurks the orthodox Marxist view of ideology: “*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*” (“They do not know it, but they are doing it”).³ A related and second theoretical touchstone that yoked rhetoric and ideology is Michael Calvin McGee’s essay, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Method” (1980), in which McGee revived the concept of ideology. Ideology, claimed McGee, seemed “to have gone the way of the dodo,” ironically eclipsed by Burke’s “dramatistic alternative” to ideology critique.⁴ Recasting Burke’s notion of ideology as zombification, McGee reanimated the concept as a “trick-of-the-mind that deludes individuals into believing that they think with/for/through a social organism.”⁵ With attention to powerfully cathected ideograms or “ideographs,” McGee and his supporters argued that one could track the interanimation of ideological work and symbols in the production of false consciousness.⁶ Finally, a third and most important touchstone, Maurice Charland’s “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Pueble Québécois*” (1987), extended McGee’s observations by arguing that rhetoric is an ideological agent that “constitutes” subjects through the identification rituals of “interpellation.” For Charland, the “trick” of rhetoric-as-ideology is that its product, the subject, is falsely understood as pregiven or “extrarhetorical.”⁷

Unfortunately, as rhetorical scholarship becomes increasingly interdisciplinary, the category of ideology is again threatened with extinction.⁸ Although the call to abandon the concept was made long ago in related disciplines,⁹ it has been heeded more recently among rhetorical scholars in terms of the defense of the classical rhetorical agent, the embrace of hegemony and the “active audience” thesis, and the adoption of Foucauldian modes of criticism that tend to replace ideology with “power/knowledge.”¹⁰ We suspect that the abandonment of ideology is partly a consequence of the underdevelopment of the concept in rhetorical studies literature. The so-called “ideological turn,” presumably a disciplinary moment in which ideology critique became a legitimate perspective, actually eclipsed the already simplistic zombie metaphor with a mere critical gesture: the acknowledgement of the critic’s “interestedness.”¹¹ For example, a fourth theoretical touchstone that forged a link between rhetoric and ideology, Philip Wander’s “The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism” (1983), begins with a reference to Marx’s characterization of ideology as an alienation of knowing from doing in a manner that relegates the category to self-conscious, moral wrangling.¹² For Wander, a critical focus on ideology would “bore in, at some point, on the connection between what scholars in a given field call ‘knowledge’ . . . and professional interest.”¹³ “What an ideological view does,” he continues, “is to situate ‘good’ and ‘right’ in a historical context, the efforts of real people to create a better world.”¹⁴ In short, the ideological turn in rhetorical studies has been framed as a reinvestment in the political and ethical complexities of criticism, shifting attention away from the processes of subjectification suggested by Burke, McGee, and Charland.¹⁵

In this essay we argue for a return to the issue of ideological subjectification and the continued utility of ideology as a critical category by stressing the role of the

unconscious. As the work of Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt suggests, the missing element of the received, rhetorical notion of ideology is that of the unconscious, the dynamic locus or field of ideological work.¹⁶ We argue that the general reluctance to assign ideology an unconscious role has led to its ossification as a mere reflexive gesture or airtight determinism in the disciplinary imaginary.¹⁷ We suggest that understanding ideology in psychoanalytic terms, particularly in respect to the unconscious, protects the concept from the death knells sounded by a number of scholars.¹⁸

To this end we begin by advancing an allegory for how the concept of ideology has been received by communication scholars. More than any other archetypal character in the popular imaginary, we suggest the figure of the zombie best illustrates the underlying anxieties that communication scholars in the early and mid 20th century harbored in respect to ideology. The evolution of the zombie from a mindless source of labor to a ravenous agent of consumption helps to illustrate how the general understanding of ideology has shifted from the so-called “magic bullet” model to that of a structuralist “interpellation.” Such an approach to understanding the concept of ideology is useful because it produces an introduction to the complexities of ideology critique that is inclusive of the anxieties fueling critical invention. Further, the zombie allegory provides a conceptual map and a vocabulary for identifying and diagnosing our contemporary theoretical impasse in respect to ideology. After providing an overview of the reception of ideology with the example of zombie films, we then argue that contemporary rhetorical studies has a “zombie complex” deeply rooted in a fear of ideological determinism. A better understanding of the category of the unconscious, we conclude, can help us to revivify ideology as the continual process of subjectification.¹⁹

A Plague of Zombies: Ideology as a Force of Animation and Agency

In general, those concerned with the study, criticism, or critique of ideology tend to subscribe to the notion that “ideology has to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class.”²⁰ Such a view is often coupled with Marx’s description of the illusory or mystifying character of ideology, which functions to elide its own legitimizing effects in “false consciousness.”²¹ Although there are multiple, useful definitions of ideology as such, Terry Eagleton suggests that all of them could be put to the service of ideology critique, which is commonly understood as “an inquiry into the ways in which people may come to invest in their own unhappiness.”²² General critique began with the emergence of communication or cultural studies in Europe, which evolved largely in response to the rapid development of industrial capitalism and the subsequent “technological reproducibility” of culture.²³ With the onset of late capitalism, ideology critique shifted to accommodate the apparent disjunction and relative autonomy of superstructural or cultural phenomena from basic, economic arrangements, thus breaking with an orthodox or “vulgar” Marxist perspective. Below we sketch the uptake of these

elements in communication studies with the figure of the laboring zombie and the consuming zombie respectively.

Determinism and Mass Culture

In his widely read monograph *Culture and Anarchy*, published initially in Britain as a series of six articles in *Cornhill Magazine* between 1867 and 1868, Matthew Arnold called for the cultivation of an ideal, elite culture and the pursuit of “sweetness” (beauty) and “light” (intelligence) to help guard against the anarchy just around the corner.²⁴ The coming anarchy was catalyzed, he argued, by “our bondage to machinery, on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself,” a kind of false consciousness that results in the Englishman’s “right to do what he likes.”²⁵ F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis extended such views in the U.K. in the 1920s and 1930s by arguing that the accelerating reach of the machine had contributed to the emergence of a tasteless and increasingly homogenous “mass culture.” Mass audiences, the Leavises forcefully argued, were subject to the manipulation of their “primitive impulses” by commercial interests, especially those of the entertainment industry.²⁶ Films were particularly dangerous because:

[They] provide now [1930] the main form of recreation in the civilized world; and they involve surrender, under conditions of hypnotic receptivity, to the cheapest emotional appeals, appeals the more insidious because they are associated with a compellingly vivid illusion of actual life. It would be difficult to dispute that the result must be serious damage to the “standard of living.”²⁷

Stateside, similar anxieties fueled mass communication research into the nature of propaganda and filmic violence. The Payne Fund Studies, which sought to detail the attitudinal effect of media violence on adolescents, and the studies concerning audience gullibility with respect to Orson Wells’ famous *The War of the Worlds* broadcast on CBS in 1938, are two well-known, characteristically “behaviorist” attempts to grapple with the dominating effects of mass media technology.²⁸

Although both the emerging study of culture and communication in Europe (which evolved into cultural studies) and the behaviorist study of communication in the U.S. (which evolved into mass communication) indirectly concerned ideology as a force of domination, the thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School for Social Research best crystallized the terms of the mass culture debate: is it possible for the “masses” to think critically in an increasingly instrumentalized and commoditized world? While the answers developed by figures like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and later Stuart Hall were more hopeful and less committed to a totalizing determinism,²⁹ the U.S. behaviorist trend initially resembled the views developed by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno: there is a direct correspondence between material arrangements of the base (e.g., relations and forces of production) and mass culture (e.g., superstructural social formations), a structuring relationship between commercial interests and (mass) consciousness.³⁰ In order to jettison completely any

“grass roots” or “folk” connotation the notion of “mass culture” might harbor, Horkheimer and Adorno replaced it with “the culture industry.”³¹

For Horkheimer and Adorno, the concept of the culture industry is both a critique of vulgar Marxism and an extension of Marxian principles.³² The culture industry represents, on the one hand, an explanation for why the proletarian revolution did not occur as a consequence of the general economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s (a revolution that Marx held was the inevitable outcome of a general crisis). For Horkheimer and Adorno, capitalism is so totalizing that its logics produce culture, circumscribing the possibility of almost every cultural expression external to it—including revolution. On the other hand, however, the culture industry is the fullest explanation of Marx’s notion of ideology as mass deception thus far, particularly in terms of the ideological work of Enlightenment “reason,” which has realized its most extreme form in fascism:

The culture industry fuses the old and familiar into a new quality. In all its branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to a plan. . . . This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration. The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above.³³

Adorno continues:

The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which, as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination of nature, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves.³⁴

The important qualification of “consciously” for making decisions represents the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis, a crucial component of the school’s theoretical project that is too frequently ignored by scholars who appropriate the categories of critical theory for social criticism.³⁵ For many of the thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School, particularly Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, the category of the unconscious helped to provide a partial explanation for the ways in which ideology causes individuals to “invest in their own unhappiness.”³⁶ The culture industry, a homogenizing, cultural machine, perpetuates an oppressive ideology of instrumentality among the masses by means of the promotion and repression of desire in the field of the unconscious.

Today many scholars find the pessimistic views of Horkheimer and Adorno a bit extreme, if not elitist.³⁷ As Walter Benjamin worried, they seemed relatively closed to the possibility that popular culture objects, precisely because of their reproducibility, might harbor resistant, political potential (a point that was later developed by Gramsci in terms of ideology as a thing of struggle).³⁸ Yet the idea of the culture industry as an oppressive culture-machine should also be understood in the context of its emergence: the defeat of Nazism was not yet in sight when Horkheimer and Adorno began writing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a number of people were swayed by

the ecstasy of imperial might, and war remained the only answer to human conflict. The concept of the culture industry should also be understood as “deterministic” only in the sense of its tendency to restrict choice and its ability to convince people to think of themselves as masses, particularly in respect to various ordering factors or norms.³⁹ However, Horkheimer and Adorno’s ideas are often misunderstood as advancing some absolute, overly-simplistic thesis of ideological determinism, which is frequently how the approach of the Frankfurt School is received after reading glosses such as ours, even despite ample qualification.⁴⁰ In his *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, for example, Dominic Strinati presents Adorno as a pompous elitist who demanded that “critics like himself adopt elitist intellectual positions” against an “equally conformist and mind-numbing” dominant ideology, and faults the various different kinds of work associated with the Frankfurt School for failing to provide empirical evidence for their totalizing claims, especially those concerning mass media effects.⁴¹

Likewise, early communication research in the United States is characterized as falling into an overly simplistic notion of ideological determinism, which is most strongly reflected in the ways in which early media effects theory is characterized and dismissed. In his textbook, *Theories of Human Communication*, Stephen W. Littlejohn notes:

[T]he theory of mass-communication effects has undergone a curious evolution in this century [the twentieth]. Early on, researchers believed in the “magic bullet” theory of communication effects. Individuals were believed to be directly and heavily influenced by media messages, since media were considered to be extremely powerful in shaping public opinion. According to this model, if you heard on the radio that you should try Pepsodent, you would.⁴²

Similarly, in his textbook *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, Richard Campbell notes that the earliest and “least persuasive media theories attributed powerful effects to the mass media.” The magic bullet or “hypodermic needle model” suggests that “the media shoot their potent effects directly into unsuspecting victims.” Campbell notes that although the model “has been disregarded or disproved by social scientists, many people still attribute such direct effects to the mass media, particularly in the case of children.”⁴³

In part, we can account for the magically deterministic connotations of the rhetoric of early scholarly understandings of ideology in terms of the rise of Nazism on the one hand, and the uncanny effects of telepresence in the early to mid 20th century on the other. Regarding the latter especially, we can only dimly imagine what it must have been like to use a telephone or hear a radio broadcast for the first time during that period; the sense of immediacy and the presence of another’s voice from afar must have seemed miraculous.⁴⁴ But how does one account for the dismissiveness of more recent readings of earlier research on ideology? How are we to understand our own, contemporary “terministic screens” when we approach this literature? As a consequence of Freud’s researches into the unconscious on the one hand, and the radical transformation of communication technologies on the other, we submit that a particular concept of mindless determinism has been evolving in culture since the late

19th century that expresses itself in many places, most especially in the popular imaginary. This caricature of ideology also appears in the scholarly imaginary, and is routinely tapped to describe (as “curious,” “strange,” or “elitist”), and sometimes to dismiss wholesale, research suggesting that audiences, popular and scholarly, are unconsciously influenced by exterior forces or phenomena. We suggest that this caricature of ideology as an unconscious, totalizing magic serving the dominant interests of capitalists is best represented by the Western figure of the zombie in popular culture.

Ideological Determinism and the Laboring Zombie

They work faithfully and are not worried about long hours.

Bela Lugosi as Murder Legendre in *White Zombie*

No other fictional character in the Western imaginary better exemplifies the idea of ideological determination than the zombie. Unlike vampires or werewolves, Steve Shaviro has argued that “zombies present the ‘human face’ of capitalist monstrosity.”⁴⁵ The zombie, a figure whose origins are located in the Vodoun religion of Haiti, is typically characterized as a deceased individual who is brought back to life by a Vodoun priest or “master” to labor for him or her without complaint. The traditional zombie is a slave. S/he is speechless, incapable of emotion, slow moving but diligent, and utterly beholden to his or her “master.”

Although the idea of a zombie was first introduced to U.S. audiences in William B. Seabrook’s 1929 chronicle of his travels to Haiti entitled *The Magic Island*,⁴⁶ the Western world in general was probably first introduced to the idea of such a figure in what many dub the first zombie film, *Das Kabinet des Doktor Caligari*, the 1919 centerpiece of German expressionism. *The Magic Island* and the film *Das Kabinet* both articulate hypnotism to economics in a manner that echoes the Leavises’ fear of the cinema: the ends of capitalism are achieved by narcotizing the labor force. In *Das Kabinet*, an evil hypnotist and traveling soothsayer furthers his sideshow career by commanding a “somnambulist” or entranced slave named Cesare to ensure his predictions of future murder come true. The overt fantasy of the film casts the capitalist as a Svengali mesmerist with the power to exploit a man for his labor without his conscious knowledge. Similarly, in *White Zombie* (1932), the tyrannical sugar mill owner Murder Legendre populates his Haitian factory with the slave labor of his enemies’ walking corpses. Legendre uses a wax voodoo doll to “kill” newlywed Madeline Short so he can later revive her as a zombie for another wealthy capitalist, Charles Beaumont. Beaumont, however, is upset with Madeline’s emotionless state, but when he complains to Legendre, he discovers the evil hypnotist desires her as his own zombie companion. After he puts Beaumont into a semi-zombified state, Lugosi’s character whispers, “Now we understand each other a little better!” Madeline’s husband Neil, accompanied by local clergyman Dr. Bruner, interrupts Legendre’s zombification of Beaumont to reclaim Madeline. As Legendre’s magic

stuns the interlopers, the semi-zombified Beaumont wrestles Legendre over the edge of a high castle wall, followed by the evil industrialist's army of zombies marching like lemmings into the sea below. With Legendre's death, Madeline awakens from her trance in the arms of her beloved husband Neil, thus restoring the family structure threatened by the destructive, domineering lusts of Legendre and Beaumont.

Both *Das Kabinet* and *White Zombie* work to establish fear of the bourgeois capitalist in terms of his murder or narcotization of women, which not only reflects the conspicuous, sexist norms of the 1930s, but also synecdochically represents the threat capitalism posed to the traditional family unit. After the success of *White Zombie* in the early 1930s, a number of U.S. and British films were produced that sustained the genre as one involving the barter of women. In the movie *Blonde Venus* (1932), Marlene Dietrich plays a vampish-yet-chaste housewife who dons a white afro wig and sultry fur to sing "Hot Voodoo," while smiling, female Congo "natives" sway in time behind her. *Revolt of the Zombie* (1936) features a protagonist who travels to Cambodia to destroy a zombie formula used in the Great War, but then decides to use it to mesmerize villagers and to enchant his future wife. When he realizes that, zombified or not, his love interest will never love him back, he frees his zombie slaves and leaps to his death. Many films that followed, such as *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943) and *The Voodoo Man* (1944), repeatedly revisit titillating possibilities of female sex-slaves as a standard plot. Given this representation of women in zombie films, it is not surprising that capitalism's role in the production and dissolution of the family unit was also of primary concern to communication researchers in the first half of the 20th century.⁴⁷

Not only do U.S. zombie films parallel an academic interest in the family, but also the general, growing interest in and fear of fascism in the 1930s and 1940s. Beginning with *King of Zombies* (1941) and later *Revenge of the Zombies* (1943), a subgenre of zombie film emerged in which the forces of zombification shift from the greedy capitalist to the nefarious Nazi, and the focus moves from voodoo magic to science in the service of fascism; or rather, voodoo and science morphed into an almost interchangeable plot device. For example, in *Revenge of the Zombies*, the "first movie to assume the audience knows what a 'zombie' is and not provide an explanation," Larry Adams, Scott Warrington, and their servant Jeff call on Dr. von Alterman in Louisiana to explain the death of his wife Lila.⁴⁸ Lila, it turns out, has been zombified and is part of Alterman's attempts to build an army of zombies secretly for the Third Reich—an army that does not need water or food and that will continue to fight despite damage. The subgenre of Nazi zombies would persist well into the 1980s with films like *Shock Waves* (1977), the benchmark of the subgenre, *Zombie Lake* (1980), and *Oasis of the Zombies* (1982).

As the object of anxiety in zombie films shifted from the threat capitalism posed to families to the magic labor of zombies for fascism, two elements remained constant. First, the notion of a hypnotic, totalizing, determining force that lobotomizes the subject into a mindless, laboring zombie persists throughout. Second, the zombie is a laboring subject (manual or sexual) that is put into the service of a fascistic authority.⁴⁹ For popular audiences, the comfort that early zombie films provided was

the violent death of the exploiting, profiteering voodoo capitalist or anally-retentive fascist via his own black magic. After World War II, however, the zombie master was replaced by uncontrollable lusts from within, which helps us to illustrate how ideology is theorized beyond the control of a minority to the structuring of selfhood as such.

Consumption and the Living Dead

They kill for one reason: they kill for food. They eat their victims, you understand that Mr. Berman? That's what keeps them going.

David Crawford as Dr. Foster in *Dawn of the Dead*

Thus far we have argued that early studies of the mass audience are often received as advancing a deterministic notion of ideology, and that the most salient figure for characterizing this reception is the laboring zombie. Like the subject who mindlessly buys Pepsodent because the radio told her to, zombies were lethargic sleepwalkers, previously autonomous agents magically transformed into the mindless property of the authoritarian master. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, filmic bad magic yielded to new fears of a pseudo-religious apocalypse caused by bad science in ways that help to characterize more recent scholarship about ideology. In structuralist and poststructuralist theory, the subject has transformed from a drone animated by ideology to an individual whose self-consciousness and understanding depend on ideological structuring or, in Louis Althusser's terms, "interpellation." To help explain Althusser's innovation and its reception in the academy, however, this time we begin by describing the changes in zombie films.

In the late 1950s zombies began to adopt a more sinister purpose than providing free labor. Films such as *I Eat Your Skin* (1961) and *The Plague of Zombies* (1965) featured zombies whose posthumous existence depended on the consumption of human flesh. In *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies* (1963), a fortune teller zombifies those who dare to defy her sexual advances by throwing acid in their faces. This new era of aggressively graphic horror, which eventually came to be known as the "golden age of zombie films" (1968–1983),⁵⁰ was officially ushered into the popular imaginary when George Romero's *The Night of the Living Dead* (1968) became a cult hit, ensuring that zombies became synonymous with cinematic gore to the present day. Romero's profitable reinvention of the modern horror genre over a series of films featured graphic disemboweling, brain matter exploding, limbs being torn off, and the flesh-starved cannibalism of the undead. Further, Romero's films injected cultural criticism into the zombie genre, beginning with a critique of the racism fueling early zombie films, and continuing with critiques of commercial consumerism and militaristic fascism. After Romero, the genre shifted from a fear of becoming a zombie beholden to "The Man" to the threat of being eaten by a ghoul with no master or ulterior purpose. Although the ghoul figure is still somewhat lethargic and slow-moving like the zombie, it also possesses something that was previously absent: an uncontrollable desire to consume.

Unlike early zombie films, Romero's *Living Dead* located evil within the repressed impulses of a flawed humanity rather than in some other tyrannical agent or supernatural beyond. The film begins when a slow-moving ghoul stalks a brother (Johnny) and sister (Barbara) visiting the grave of a loved one in a cemetery somewhere in the Pennsylvania countryside. The ghoul kills Johnny in a struggle, but Barbara escapes, eventually ending up in what seems like an abandoned farmhouse. She is joined shortly thereafter by an African American hero, Ben, who boards up windows and doors as a number of the living dead converge on the house (Romero admits that putting a black man and white woman together in a domestic setting was his way of commenting on racism and the fear of miscegenation in the 1960s). Soon after they discover the devoured cadaver of the home-owner, Ben and Barbara are introduced to two couples who were hiding in the cellar. They then learn through radio and television programs that the ghouls eat the flesh of their victims who, in due course, will also become ghouls themselves. Scientists explain that the epidemic of flesh-eating ghouls seems to have been caused by a strange radiation emitting from a satellite re-entering the earth's atmosphere en route from Venus. It is also revealed that the ghouls can be destroyed with a bullet to the head—an innovation in the zombie mythos that has become a standard. The older of the two couples elects to stay in the cellar of the house to watch over an ill daughter, while the rest remain upstairs. After a failed escape attempt, which results in the death of the younger couple, the living dead siege the home and eat Barbara, while Ben escapes to the cellar. Unfortunately, when Ben locks himself in the cellar he learns that the feverish girl downstairs has become a ghoul, having killed her mother with a trowel. Ben shoots the ghoul-child with a bullet to the head, and then kills the father in a struggle over a rifle. The film ends on a somber note when Ben is discovered and shot by "redneck" policemen who mistake him for a ghoul.

Romero would reprise his genre innovations in two more films: *Dawn of the Dead* (1979), which takes place in a shopping mall, and *Day of the Dead* (1989), which takes place in an underground, military compound. Like the original, central to both sequels is the idea of an uncontrollable body of mindless consumption—the libido gone amuck. In distinction from the zombie animated by the possession of the master's spirit, then, Romero's living dead are de-possessed, the exact opposite of the laboring zombie. While Romero's films are unquestioningly within the zombie genre, his living dead are, technically speaking, not zombies (the latter unavoidably tethered to filmmakers' manipulation of racial anxieties in the early 20th century; Romero turns that ideological move on its head).⁵¹ Romero's ghouls are incapable of production (including social reproduction) because they lack ideological normativity. For this reason, we suggest that Romero's living dead helpfully illustrate the pre-ideological subject developed by Althusser, the individual who has yet to become self-conscious or called into the service of larger social organization, community, or state.

Althusser's Innovation: Interpellating the Living Dead

Rather than understanding ideology as being put into someone, as that body being made to “hop around in certain ways” that early zombie films illustrate so vividly, Althusser's crucial move is toward understanding the subject or rhetorical agent as constituted by ideology; as Charland has shown, it is in this sense that ideology renders the subject a subject, and therefore an agent.⁵² The subject of ideology is not a zombie, a dispassionate, dead corpse living among us, but rather a subdued hysteric, a desirous, living subject whose prior existence as a pre-symbolic being of purely biological needs is “dead.”⁵³ Concrete individuals are literally dead to the world (like a baby with no understanding of division from its mother) until they succumb to discursive structures that orient them as social subjects.⁵⁴ In this respect, the ravenous creatures dying to eat the people inside the Pennsylvania farmhouse are post-discursive agents, or rather, subjects lacking agency, the counterpart to the human infant.⁵⁵ This is to say that for Althusser the content of human selfhood is already determined in the sense that social forms and structures of representation provide conditions and limits on human expression. The most obvious structural determinate is language itself, which limits what can be expressed at any given moment in time. In this sense, language is an iteration ideology, a Lacan-influenced conception that is different from that of a totalizing determinism. Ideology is what makes the subject a self-conscious agent by establishing the limits or coordinates of social being, precisely the function of “law” in the abstract.

For Althusser, ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their Real conditions of existence.”⁵⁶ At the onset a number of distinctions based on the terminology of this definition should be noted. First, Althusser does not say ideology “is,” but rather ideology “represents.” This distinction allows Althusser to describe ideology in multiple ways that characterize it as a conceptual object, but in ways that do not reduce the concept to a “cause” implicated by “X is Y” logic. This characterization is important because direct causality is impossible to determine, as causality is the impossible-to-answer question of origins in disguise. Second, he forecasts the term “individual” as opposed to subject. By this Althusser is signifying that concrete, flesh-and-blood individual humans exist, but what they mean or how we think about individuals is a fantasy or construction (indeed, to give up the concrete individual is to forsake Marxism altogether). The un-Real meaning of a concrete individual is, in fact, “the subject.” Third, by articulating ideology as constitutive of an “imaginary” relationship, Althusser forwards a Lacanian suspicion of the imaginary order as a repository or dimension of illusory and fictive images that promise an impossible unity or perfection. The ideation of an autonomous self—the transcendental subject of the Enlightenment deployed by Kant—is such an image. Finally, Althusser qualifies the conditions of existence with the term “Real.” What he means by this term is not clear, although we do know that Althusser was reading the work of Lacan at the time he developed this definition of ideology. Consulting Lacan, we can understand the Real as a concept that speaks to a number of things: (a) the Real is that which we cannot capture in language

and that which constantly eludes us, an “excess [that is] generated by a failure in the Symbolic order”;⁵⁷ (b) the Real can be many things, but all of these things are similar in the sense that they are beyond our grasp (one version of the Real, for example, is that it is the “true” cause of psychosis in a psychotic); and (c) humans always presume a Real and often speak as if it can be known, but in the end it is unknowable.⁵⁸

If it is the case that Althusser presumes a distinction between the concrete individual and the subject, then how does one characterize this relationship? Althusser’s answer is that self-consciousness or the recognition of oneself as a “self” or individual is the primary function of ideology:

I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of “constituting” concrete individuals as subjects . . . you and I are always already subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the “obviousness” with which the “truth” or “error” of my reflections may impose itself on you.⁵⁹

In other words, the principal function of ideology as such is to call or “hail” the self into conscious being—into subjectivity. Althusser terms this notion of self-recognition “interpellation,” the process by which ideology “hails” the concrete individual into an illusory being-for-self or a particular performance of selfhood. “I shall then suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among individuals,” he says, by the “precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing,” which can be imagined simply as “Hey, you there!”⁶⁰

The work of hailing or bringing the individual into the recognition of selfhood thus implicates a primary tendency of ideology in general, which has permutations in so many ideologies (e.g., “Christianity,” “liberalism,” “existentialism,” “Marxism”) in particular: It articulates the subject into consciousness itself, into a realization of the self as a unique, sovereign individual free to act in the world by making choices; ideology offers the individual a fantasy of self-transparency, an image of the self as a discrete, autonomous, and unified whole. In other words, ideology does not zombify subjects, but precisely the opposite. For this reason, the shift to ghouls or the living dead in the golden age of zombie film is a helpful allegory for thinking about ideology. Like the infant of pre-interpellation, the living dead is a post-interpellated subject, a being of pure drives, an id in need of a superego, which ideology provides. Ideology marks the emergence of self-consciousness in a being of needs and desires. Romero’s living dead films represent the dialectical negation of the laboring zombie with the consuming ghoul. Unfortunately, despite numerous calls, an analogous negation has yet to take hold in U.S. rhetorical studies.

Rhetoric's Zombie Trouble

Up to this point, we have argued that the transformation of the zombie in popular film from a mindless laborer into the living dead is a useful allegory for talking about ideology. Communication scholars first understood ideology as a kind of determinism that animated the subject, much like a zombie who labors for "The Man." Drawing on George Romero's figure of the living dead, we then showed how Althusser's more sophisticated understanding of subjectification as an effect of ideology obviates the totalizing deterministic view. In this section, we demonstrate that a fear of determinism, represented by the laboring zombie, haunts rhetorical studies literature on ideology, thereby forestalling a more rigorous investigation of the concept. We then argue for adopting a (post)structuralist notion of ideology as a force of subjectification, represented by the figure of the living dead, which requires an embrace of the category of the unconscious.⁶¹

The Zombie Complex

In the widely-read *mêlée* over ideological criticism published in the *Central States Speech Journal* in 1983 and 1984, Farrel Corcoran noted that "the view of ideology as merely the rhetorical weavings of 'established interests' is a position that has been surpassed long ago, both inside and outside the Marxist tradition."⁶² In the same issue McGee similarly characterized rhetorical studies as having a "curiously parochial, anachronistic attitude toward" ideology and *Ideologiekritik*.⁶³ Given this attitude among some scholars since the ideological turn, it is not surprising that in the disciplinary imaginary the category of ideology has yet to assume Althusser's focus on subjectification, retaining instead the association with determinism on the one hand and critical reflexivity or the "personal politics" of the critic on the other.⁶⁴ Despite Charland's widely read and cited explication of Althusserian interpellation as "constitutive rhetoric," a book-length treatment on rhetoric, psychoanalysis, and interpellation by Henry Krips, and an entire special issue on ideology of the *Western Journal of Communication* in 1991, the concept of ideology has strangely retained the connotation of conscious awareness.⁶⁵ Conceptions of ideology that are premised on the unconscious are therefore tacitly resigned to the production of mindless, wholly determined zombies who labor for a dominant minority.

The category of ideology in rhetorical studies seems to be stuck with the figure and fear of the early, laboring zombie for three reasons. First, after the debate over ideology in the 1980s, there has simply been a general lack of discussion. For example, in their 1991 article, "Integrating Ideology and Archetype in Rhetorical Criticism," Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenz note that "ideological approaches have been more and more frequently employed in communication criticism,"⁶⁶ yet when one refers to the footnote providing evidence for such an assertion, one discovers the absence of references to actual critiques! The authors cited only call for ideological criticism. Ironically, among those studies that announce themselves as ideology critiques, ideology is often taken for granted as a given category without explanation

or definition.⁶⁷ This is not to say that ideological criticism is absent in rhetorical scholarship, for certainly the valuable works investigating and critiquing the categories of race, class, sexuality, and gender are interested in ideology. What we mean to stress, however, is the way in which ideology as a category has escaped rigorous investigation or direct and explicit theorization in our journals. When ideology is defined, it is frequently reduced to a dominant narrative or myth with little or no attention paid to the century-long, academic legacy of the concept we have merely hinted at above.⁶⁸ McGee rightfully predicted that ideology would escape discussion because the concept would be worked into a method—"ideological criticism"—replete with a series of "steps" to follow.⁶⁹ Because the concept was eclipsed by the discipline's obsession with method and method-making, ideology as such is often assumed as a given, and we worry that this longstanding assumption has led to its decreased utility.

A second reason why rhetorical studies has yet to move beyond the laboring zombie concerns the emphasis rhetoricians tend to put on surfaces, exteriors, and effects—"symbolic action"—and the general avoidance of interior or mental events.⁷⁰ In keeping with a focus on textual surfaces, rhetoricians have elected to skip Althusser's innovation in favor of the Gramscian notion of "hegemony," which subsumes ideology as a category. In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci replaced the connotation of hegemony as world domination with the idea that ideological dominance occurs consensually.⁷¹ In general, hegemony refers to the way in which an oppressive ideology is perpetuated among a people or community without direct coercion or force, particularly in ways that seem like "common sense."⁷² For a number of communication scholars, hegemony better explained how the dominance of certain groups was achieved "through a combination of the maintenance of the cultural power of the minority and the active or inactive consent of the powerless majority."⁷³ A certain, modified concept of hegemony, either filtered through a more cheerful Gitlin or reworked as an "accommodationist model of concord," has been particularly attractive to rhetorical scholars because "the hegemonic system is not cut-and-dried, not definitive. It has continually to be reproduced, continually superimposed, continually to be negotiated and managed, in order to override the alternative, and, occasionally, the oppositional forms."⁷⁴ To wit, hegemony provides for the possibility of opposition and resistance, and struggles over ideology can thus be "mapped," as it were, across (rhetorical) surfaces or among institutions.

Not surprisingly, just as with the rhetoricians' appropriation of critical theory, most rhetorical approaches to hegemony make little room for the roles of desire and the unconscious.⁷⁵ We suspect this is, in part, because desire and violence are yoked in the antagonism central to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, an antagonism that Dana Cloud argues is persistently avoided by rhetorical and political liberals.⁷⁶ Yet we think the absence of desire and the category of the unconscious in discussions of hegemony is also a consequence of the wider, academic response to what we might term "vulgar psychoanalysis," which refers to the scientistic reductionism that is rife in, for example, Freud's work. This is especially the case with respect to the reception of the articulation theory of Stuart Hall and others, which features the notion of an

active audience struggling over meaning and an alternative understanding of hegemony that admitted unconscious dynamics (e.g., repression), but that resisted anything resembling a structuralist universalism (a tendency, e.g., in the theory and criticism coming out of the influential journal *Screen*).

It is important to stress that Hall and others working from a hegemonic approach did not abandon psychoanalytic concepts but, like Raymond Williams, they insisted that one could not theorize about a given population independent of real people living their lives. Unfortunately, the appropriation of (British) cultural studies by rhetorical scholars stateside almost completely expunged the sophisticated ways in which the limits of determinism were discerned, which has led to the mistaken impression that Hall, Morely, and others who called for audience reception studies were only interested in exposing the resistances and oppositional readings of audiences. Indeed, Hall's essay, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies" (1982) argued for a renewed attention to the unconscious work of ideology to combat the impression that those associated with the Birmingham school were either dismissive of psychoanalysis (a charge levied at anyone critical of *Screen*-style film studies) or down with the kind of pluralistic, pop culture fantasyland promoted by the work of John Fiske.⁷⁷

When one reads the presentation of articulation theory in U.S. rhetorical studies journals, the negotiation of determinism (e.g., the Althusserian notion of overdetermination and interpellation) is missing and, therefore, so are the psychoanalytic inflections. For example, Celeste Michelle Condit's widely read essay, "The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy" (1989), begins with the assertion that Fiske, Hall, Morley, and Radway "oversimplify the pleasures experienced by audience members" of mass media programs.⁷⁸ In light of Hall's call for a renewed investigation of the unconscious work of ideology, such a statement is misleading, if not part of a straw person argument (if the target was Fiske alone, however, there would be less to quibble with). Nevertheless, in the "Polysemy" essay the concept of pleasure, which is a robust one in psychoanalytic work as well as that done in the name of cultural studies,⁷⁹ is ironically oversimplified to the glee of identification and joy of momentary "escape."⁸⁰ For Condit, pleasure seems to be a simple concept that amounts to little more than "feeling good." A recognition of the unconscious might have better specified where exactly the rhetorical limits of polysemy are located, as well as the complex character and source of pleasure. Other theoretical, unconscious-less "interventions" made in the name of articulation are not difficult to locate.⁸¹ One curious example is Kevin Michael DeLuca's theoretical assembly in his *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (1999). In this book-length examination of social movement imagery, DeLuca draws on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theory of hegemony and articulation to "overhaul" social movement theory and develop a postmodern retrofitting is a re-casting of Laclau and Mouffe's notion of "elements," which is deliberately ambiguous to stress a Lacanian, psychoanalytic notion: the Symbolic order is never closed up, but is structured around a gap, which accounts for the ever-shifting movement of meaning and the "fixing" work of ideology (the "quilting" or "anchoring" point).⁸² Instead of

acknowledging the psychoanalytic debt of elements—or Laclau and Mouffe’s psychoanalytically informed understanding of overdetermination—DeLuca “adds specificity” to the notion of the elements by filling them up with McGee’s concept of the ideograph. Regardless of the creativity or success of this move, this gesture of specificity represents one of the more subtle ways in which the psychoanalytic gets sliced out of articulation theory by rhetoricians.⁸³ Although we do believe that there are a number of psychical structures that are universal and useful in critical analysis, our point here is that when theories of ideology, such as that of articulation, are imported into our journals by rhetorical scholars, they are evacuated of interiors.⁸⁴ Rhetoricians tend to focus exclusively on what Thomas S. Frenz has termed a “rhetoric of the exterior,” or the address of publics and public texts, to the exclusion of rhetorics of the interior, or suasive forces addressing the subject and soul.⁸⁵

Although the general lack of discussion about ideology and the exterior focus of rhetorical studies are two significant reasons for the neglect of ideological subjectification, the third and most important reason for this neglect, and the reason underwriting the previous two, is the fear of ideology as a totalizing, determining force. The embrace of Gramsci, whose thought represents the exterior work of ideology, and relative erasure of Althusser, whose thought represents the interior work of ideology, reflects this fear.⁸⁶ Even the concept of hegemony has suffered the charge, and those scholars who employ the concept must frequently qualify it as an anti-deterministic, or change it to avoid the connotations of determinism.⁸⁷ For example, in what is widely regarded as one of the most exemplary texts of ideographic criticism, Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites’ *Crafting Equality: America’s Anglo-African Word* (1993), the authors are quick to distance themselves from ideological subjectification, which is aligned with the so-called “dominant ideology thesis” (DIT).⁸⁸ Although DIT is basically shorthand for a “vulgar,” monolithic view of ideology that virtually no contemporary scholar actually holds, it was nevertheless a concept that was frequently used in the 1980s and early 1990s to dismiss work from an Althusserian or Gramscian perspective.⁸⁹ From Condit and Lucaites’ vantage:

[T]here is no dominant ideology that inexorably governs social and political action. Instead, there is the rhetorical process of public argumentation in which various organized and articulate interest groups negotiate the problems of resource distribution in the collective life of the community.⁹⁰

Surprisingly, this sentiment is the only statement on ideology throughout a book presumably funded by McGee’s version of *Ideologiekritik*. The exception is a footnote in which the authors state that although their understanding is similar to “hegemony,” they avoid the term because “of the ways in which hegemony has been conflated in popular discourse with ‘brainwashing’ and ‘manipulative ideologies.’”⁹¹ In other words, even despite the exteriorized view of ideology Gramsci’s conception of hegemony represents, the concept has been warily approached or sometimes avoided because it betokens zombification. Perhaps nothing is more threatening to

the auto-affection and self-presence of liberal pluralism than the idea that individuals may not know what they are doing.⁹²

In response to zombification and the fear of reductionism, communication scholars have tended to defend the classical rhetorical agent, embrace an active audience devoid of interiors in the name of hegemony, or avoid the theoretical thicket altogether, thereby abandoning the problem of ideological subjectification.⁹³ Consequently, in the pages of our journals our current understanding of ideology has ceased to evolve from the straitjacket of a totalizing determinism, even despite the numerous attempts to move toward the less deterministic concept of hegemony. We believe that the general avoidance of mental events in relation to ideology has only intensified the difficulties we face discerning the limits of determinism.⁹⁴ This impasse is actually the unwitting source of much contemporary hand-wringing about the possibility of rhetorical agency. In other words, it is the assumption that ideology is a “possession” from outside, the laboring zombie fantasy, that generates a defense against working through the concept for a deeper, more complex, and rhetorical understanding.

We submit that the disciplinary imaginary is currently caught within the performative of what we term “the zombie complex”: a fantasy that ideology animates bodies and robs them of agency. We do not mean to suggest that scholars will or should recognize their own understandings of ideology as deterministic; rather, we are suggesting that the specter of determinism haunts the discipline in spite of the attempts to move beyond it, and that this specter helps to explain the current obsession with agency on the one hand, and the move toward the cartography of exteriors and the abandonment of subjectification on the other. We argue that this specter lingers because of a simultaneous admission and rejection of the concept of the unconscious. The zombie complex thus refers to a moment of theoretical stasis resulting from an unconscious admission of the unconscious as a category and the simultaneous, conscious rejection of the category—a hallmark of ideological work itself.⁹⁵ The complex, in other words, is a paradoxical, ideological performative particular to rhetorical theorists: “We do not know it, but we are doing it.” The consequence of the conscious rejection of the unconscious is that ideology is tacitly understood as either the forceful imposition of the political interest of this or that group, the route rhetoricians have tended to pursue, or somnambulism, the route everyone avoids like a plague of zombies. Ultimately, the flight from zombification and the failure to investigate the unconscious role of ideology has perpetuated rhetoric’s zombie trouble. We suggest that coming to terms with the category of the unconscious—the central idea of psychoanalysis in all its varieties—helps to fortify ideology as a concept useful for rhetorical criticism.

Ideology, Repression, and the Dynamic Unconscious

Like the concept of ideology, the category of the unconscious has escaped sustained discussion among rhetorical scholars. Freud himself suggested that one reason the academy was slow to take up psychoanalytic theory concerns the multiple ways in

which the term is used in psychoanalytic literature. On the one hand, there is the adjectival sense of the unconscious, which simply refers to “acts which are merely latent, temporarily unconscious, but which differ in no other respect from conscious ones.”⁹⁶ These acts, thoughts, or ideas are, however, capable of being known and present no difficulty to the subject. In this adjectival sense, all rhetorical criticism trucks in the unconscious insofar as the point of criticism is to bring latent rhetorical elements into the conscious awareness of readers or hearers. Indeed, interpretation as such betokens the dialectic of the manifest and the latent.

On the other hand, the unconscious also refers to a psychical “topography,” the contents of which we cannot know except in terms of its effects on conscious life (Freud often used the abbreviated “Uncs.” to distinguish the topography from the adjective).⁹⁷ For Freud, proof of its existence is drawn from three experiences: first, when a fully-formed idea or thought occurs to one suddenly—such as “the solution of some difficult intellectual problem which has previously for a time baffled one’s efforts.”⁹⁸ Second, it can be discerned in so-called “slips of the tongue” whereby one unintentionally verbalizes a previously unconscious thought. Finally, evidence of the unconscious topography is found in the phenomenon of post-hypnotic suggestion, whereby a previously hypnotized person performs a behavior for reasons she is not consciously aware of as a result of a prior suggestion by the hypnotist (e.g., the humorous antics performed by “volunteers” in a stage hypnotist’s show).⁹⁹ The latter form of evidence has led to the mischaracterization of the unconscious as a zombie master, thus serving as an erroneous yet dominant ideogram in the service of the zombie complex.

Indeed, the spectacle of post-hypnotic suggestion that has fascinated and frightened publics since the days of Swedenborg and Mesmer, reaching its widest distribution as entertainment in early zombie films like *Das Kabinett* and *White Zombie*, yokes ideology and the unconscious in the disciplinary imaginary as much as it does in popular culture. Insofar as rhetorical studies has celebrated the autonomous, conscious rhetor as a model for centuries, admitting the unconscious into rhetorical theory threatens the figure of the consciously skillful rhetor with that of the coercive, zombifying hypnotist. For example, in defending the rhetorical perspective most commonly associated (however falsely) with psychoanalysis,¹⁰⁰ Ernst Bormann denied the analysis of fantasies any recourse to Freud, because fantasies would thus represent “irrational and unconscious forces that push and pull people around. Rhetorical criticism on this model would become therapeutic and the critic would have to be able to read the messages and interpret their deeper symbolic meaning.”¹⁰¹ This common perspective does not deny the existence of the unconscious as a thing, nor even the unconscious as an adjective, but, rather, attempts to slice away, à la Alexander the Great, any kind of rhetorical approach that would “chart methodically the ‘non-rational’ and ‘irrational’ aspects of language,” as Burke put it.¹⁰² This perspective seeks to align—if not collapse—the “conscious, intentional, and rational elements” of discourse with the “rhetorical dimension.”¹⁰³

Like the notion of a dominant ideology thesis, the idea that the unconscious harbors forces that push and pull people around in some totalizing, zombifying sense

is a view shared by virtually no one.¹⁰⁴ Yet understanding the unconscious does require that the subject, and therefore the rhetorical agent, is split between three different psychical registers or “systems,” and that one of them is inaccessible to the subject. In the psychoanalytic register, this inaccessible arena of the psyche, the unconscious or “Uncs.,” is one of the systems in which repressed materials (ideas, thoughts, desires, and so on) reside, continuously denied access to the other systems of the preconscious and consciousness by censoring agencies. Repressed material in the unconscious is not, however, passive, as is sometimes assumed. Rather, repressed material is constantly and ceaselessly attempting to re-enter consciousness (termed “the return of the repressed”), but can succeed in doing so only in disguise. The “primary process” of disguising repressed material consists of its condensation, or a laconic reduction of a whole matrix of symbolic associations, and its displacement, or a separation of the affective and symbolic meanings associated with an idea.¹⁰⁵ In other words, that which is most deeply repressed only and necessarily returns to consciousness in a different, distorted form akin to a rebus, puzzle, or riddle. Although the way in which the repressed returns is exceedingly complex, Freud asserts that “*the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious*” (his emphasis).¹⁰⁶ Without a split subject and a dynamic, yet hidden, unconscious, one is at a loss to explain epiphanies, slips of the tongue, or post-hypnotic suggestion, all of which require keeping something at a distance from consciousness. Furthermore, insofar as ideology is unconscious, we can understand it as consisting of those elements of subjectification that are repressed, yet which constantly strive to make themselves known to consciousness in one disguise or another. For a number of ideology critics, the disguises and distortions of ideological work are located as “contradictions.”

Contrary to the assumptions of the zombie complex, that there is repressed material or structures in each of us does not mean that we are completely governed by them, nor does it mean such material is completely inaccessible. One important psychoanalytic principle is that

*[S]omeone else might see the truth of a person’s unconscious life more readily than the person her or himself. That is, I might realize you are “lying to yourself” more readily than you do; and the evidence for this might come from inconsistencies in your behavior, such as incongruity between the way you say something and the content of what is said.*¹⁰⁷

Much of one’s life is led and governed consciously, and our ability to reflect on our lives and make conscious choices certainly means that rhetoric, traditionally conceived, plays a rather large role in society. Yet it is precisely because another person, or an other, can discern latencies in us that proves the existence of unconscious desires and motives that may have more to do with our conscious choices than we would like to admit.

It is the possibility of seeing something in another that she does not see in herself that bespeaks the necessity of the unconscious for ideology critique: few individuals would consciously invest in their own unhappiness but, rather, succumb to external

forces, largely unaware of the ways in which they do so.¹⁰⁸ This means that subjectification does entail a degree of determinism, yet as Althusser has argued, it is not totalizing or complete, which is why the work of ideology can be brought to conscious awareness.¹⁰⁹ Armed with a psychoanalytic understanding of ideology, criticism thus becomes an analysis of those elements and structures that elude the conscious awareness of a given population, particularly those elements which are repressed. This also means that the critic is necessarily blind to the effects of the ideological work that make his or her critique possible (perhaps the best lesson to take from Wander's work on ideology). We think that a good example of ideological criticism from this perspective is Judith Butler's sometimes misunderstood theory of gender performativity.

In her widely read *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler argues that gender operates in a way that is homologous to the restless work of repression: one is not a "gender" but, rather, is constantly becoming or performing gender in a never-ending and continuous process of interpellation, which admits of no prior "essence" before the action:

[G]ender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes [because] the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. . . . [G]ender is always a doing, though not by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. . . . There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.¹¹⁰

Performativity is homologous to repression because it is a movement, a doing, that is ceaseless and that occurs largely unconsciously.¹¹¹ Because the ideological norms of gender are, in fact, those which constitute the subject, thereby yielding agency and identity, they are consequently terribly constraining and oppressive. The constraints imposed by subjectification speak to the deterministic character of gender. However, gender performativity cannot be a zombifying force because it generates the very agential maps that enable us to locate its contradictions and constructedness. Just like the return of the repressed, the constraining norms of gender are not totalizing:

Paradoxically, the reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*, that is, as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of "agency" that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed. For identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary. . . . Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible.¹¹²

In other words, there is nothing prior to the continuous and largely unconscious process of ideological subjectification. As Butler writes elsewhere when reckoning with Althusser, "the mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative. It seeks to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one."¹¹³ Consequently, the notion of "false consciousness" ceases to be meaningful insofar as there is no "true" consciousness prior to interpellation. There is no meaningful "outside" to the symbolic coordinates subjectification provides for us.¹¹⁴ Again, it is important to

stress that although this does mean that subjectification entails a degree of determinism, this determinism is not total, as “interpellation is an address that regularly misses its mark.”¹¹⁵ Ideological subjectification is overdetermined, but not determined absolutely. To be sure, there are what we might term “gender zombies” out there, individuals completely if not blissfully dancing sexual identity in life-long perserveration (the difference between, say, Anna Nicole Smith or Tom Selleck and Madonna or Johnny Depp). To be sure, there are some individuals who are completely oblivious to the fact that “they are not the originators of the discourse they convey.”¹¹⁶ Yet Butler’s point is that without performativity (or interpellation), there would be no self-consciousness, and further, it is precisely because gender is an effect that makes room for its transformation. In other words, while the ideological norms are determining in the sense of providing limits, they are neither totalizing nor ever finished. If this were the case, only human zombies would walk the earth.

Concluding Remarks: The (Post)Modern Critique of Unity

The psychoanalyst . . . seeks motives that he anticipates will be contingent, will pertain to the particular case because they are discovered in the particular case. The psychoanalyst’s training and experience instruct him in where to look, but not in what to see.

Edwin Black¹¹⁷

In this essay we have advanced a zombie allegory drawn from popular films in order to sketch the subject of ideology and frame a current theoretical impasse in rhetorical theory. First, we illustrated parallels between early understandings of determinist ideology and the laboring zombie, and then showed how the ravenous, living dead of the golden age of zombie films illustrated the Althusserian theory of ideological subjectification. We then argued that among rhetorical scholars, the concept of ideology remains stuck at the first stage of elaboration, largely because a more sophisticated understanding of ideology requires an investigation of interior rhetorics, and principally those of subjectification and the soul. Finally, with the goal of reviving the concept of ideology as one useful for criticism, we explained the meaning of the unconscious and its relationship to ideology, and described Butler’s theory of gender performativity as an illustration. Although Butler’s theory is only one example of the kind of ideological criticism that is made possible with an understanding of the unconscious, we think it sufficiently allays the fears of determinism.¹¹⁸ The effect of ideology in general, subjectification, operates largely unconsciously, but this does not mean that ideology is totalizing or beyond our grasp. If this were the case, criticism and critique would be impossible. Ideological subjectification is deterministic, and showing how this is the case is part of our critical project as rhetoricians, but subjectification is also a continuous process that is always prone to failure and contradiction.

An alternative way of summarizing our project is that we have attempted to provide a map of the field in respect to ideology by providing an allegorical vocabulary for a central subject of disciplinary anxiety, namely, the rhetorical agent.

In a sense, we have identified a number of scholarly groups: those scholars who continue to work with the classical and modern transcendental subject; those who have embraced hegemony in media theory and criticism; and, of course, scholars like us who recommend a psychoanalytically informed (post)structural approach. There remains, however, a fourth group of scholars working toward an immanentist perspective sometimes associated with Deleuze (inclusive of a Deleuzian reading of Foucault), whose approach does assume and utilize psychoanalytic concepts, especially that of desire, in theorizing the subject.¹¹⁹ Although there is not space enough to detail this more radical, postmodern approach to subjectification, insofar as it resituates the unconscious and jettisons the notion of repression (and therefore ideology as we have described it), one might say the immanentist approach opposes the subjectivity of the (Oedipalized) living dead with the schizoid as “series of lived subject-states.”¹²⁰ Regardless, although this fourth approach retains a strong interest in agency and, in certain respects, can fruitfully contribute to our understanding of performativity, it has no use for the kind of ideology critique we have attempted to rehabilitate in this essay.

While our primary task in this essay has been to frame a contemporary theoretical issue, we have also offered an ideological criticism along the way, surfacing the repressed figure of the laboring zombie latent in the disciplinary imaginary. In bringing the essay to a close, we would like to articulate briefly the bases of our critique, which we modernists share with many postmodernists, but in terms of what Althusser referred to as the “philosophical form of bourgeois ideology”: unity.¹²¹ Unity, coherence, totality, completeness, indeed, the promise of fulfillment, was the Enlightenment fantasy that Freud (not to mention Nietzsche and Marx) sought to critique. The form of unity, argued Althusser, is the “common denominator [that] allows one to compare the hostility of that bourgeois ideology of man toward the theory of the unconscious to the hostility of bourgeois ideology toward the theory of class struggle.”¹²² This is because consciousness and unity are two sides of the same rationalist coin. “It is not useful . . . to recall that the great idealist tradition of bourgeois philosophy was a *philosophy of ‘consciousness,’* . . . since everyone knows it,” said Althusser.¹²³ But, as the work of Condit and Lucaites demonstrates,¹²⁴ in rhetorical studies our investment in the philosophy of absolute consciousness continues to loom as the vestige of an outmoded bourgeois disposition.¹²⁵

Although the disciplinary imaginary has been an obvious scene for the display of bourgeois hostilities (as the many heated responses to Philip Wander’s original thesis certainly attest),¹²⁶ the disunity long recognized as a feature of the text has yet to travel to the subject.¹²⁷ Curiously, we have suggested that this hostility was over a mindless, laboring zombie that many assumed to be toiling away in some other academic field—but not ours! Ironically, the haunting of the disciplinary imaginary by the figure of the laboring zombie tracks the recalcitrance of the unified subject as a mirror image, the obverse of Kant’s unified, transcendental subject, gloriously autonomous and independent of the socius. Although the laboring zombie is controlled by forces from without, it is nevertheless a discrete unit, singularly

unconscious, and it remains despite a grudging admittance of the decentered subject and the shrugging acceptance of posthumanism.

We have tried to argue that this zombie exists only as an imaginary specter, indeed, as a mirror image and as a fantasy, which serves to obscure the fact that, while not wholly determined, critics and the subjects whom they study are not unities and, therefore, not in full knowledge of what they do. Or, perhaps we know very well what we are doing, but we continue to do it anyway? Perhaps, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, “the emperor is naked,” and we “trumpet forth this fact, yet nobody seems really to mind—that is, people continue to act as if the emperor is not naked.”¹²⁸ Even if this is the case, we are assured that it is still only half of the story, for the existence of the unconscious means that there will always remain something that eludes critical awareness, something akin to an “absent cause” that we cannot grasp, an “untranscendable horizon” beyond which we cannot go.¹²⁹ Yet we can know its effects. What else is rhetoric but the material trace of a suasive process, the origins of which we cannot necessarily discern?

Notes

- [1] Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 6.
- [2] Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 6. For more information regarding Burke’s relation to Marxism, see Kenneth Burke, “Auscultation, Creation, and Revision: The Rout of Esthetes Literature, Marxism, and Beyond,” in *Extensions of the Burkean System*, ed. James W. Chesebro (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), esp. 97–111; Greig E. Henderson, “Aesthetic and Practical Frames of Reference: Burke, Marx, and the Rhetoric of Social Change,” in *Extensions of the Burkean System*, 173–85; Andrew King, “Disciplining the Master: Finding the Via Media for Kenneth Burke,” *American Communication Journal* 4 (Winter 2001): <http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol4/iss2/special/king.htm>; and Edward Schiappa and Mary F. Keehner, “The Lost Passages of Kenneth Burke’s *Permanence and Change*,” *Communication Studies* 42 (1991): 189–98.
- [3] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 28. Also see Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume One*, trans. B. Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 166–67.
- [4] Michael Calvin McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology,” in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 1995), 442. Also see Michael Calvin McGee, “Not Men, But Measures: The Origins and Import of an Ideological Principle,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 141–54.
- [5] McGee, “The ‘Ideograph,’” 452.
- [6] For a book-length example see Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, *Crafting Equality: America’s Anglo-African Word* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- [7] Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Pueble Québécois*,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133–50.
- [8] Edward Schiappa, “Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001): 260–74.
- [9] See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), esp. xi–xv, 1–31; Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 59, note 15; Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (New York: Verso, 1997), esp. 3–44.

- [10] This shift began with the introduction of cultural studies in the 1980s, but was most vocally announced by David J. Sholle in "Critical Studies: From the Theory of Ideology to Power/Knowledge," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5 (1998): 16–41.
- [11] Sharon Crowley, "Reflections on an Argument That Won't Go Away: Or, a Turn of the Ideological Screw," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 459.
- [12] Philip Wander, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Carl R. Burghardt (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 1995), 106–24. Also see Philip Wander, "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 25 (1984): 197–216; and Philip Wander and Steven Jenkins, "Rhetoric, Society, and the Critical Response," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 441–51.
- [13] Wander, "The Ideological Turn," 107.
- [14] Wander, "The Ideological Turn," 120. We also should not neglect to mention Raymie McKerrow's early call for ideology critique; his 1983 call for the development of a rhetorical concept of ideology, made in a review essay, seems to have fallen on deaf ears. See Ray E. McKerrow, "Marxism and a Rhetorical Conception of Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 192–219.
- [15] We are not ignorant of the significance of Wander's charge: the critic is part of the same social fabric as those whom s/he critiques. Indeed, it is often the case that the critic is party to the same oppressive ideological forces she decries (such is the paradox of any form of resistance: to call something into question also affirms its place).
- [16] Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz, "Integrating Ideology and Archetype in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 385–406.
- [17] For an exemplary, exhaustive bibliography of relevant literature, see Margaret Zulick, *Sources in Ideological Rhetoric*, <http://www.wfu.edu/%7ezulick/454/bibideograph.html>.
- [18] These scholars run the gamut from radical postmodernists to liberal pragmatists. Deleuze and Guattari, for example, jettison ideology in favor of immanent desire as an explanation for the agapic embrace of fascism: "Repressing desire, not only for others but in oneself . . . that is what arouses, and it is not ideology, it is economy." Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 346. From an alternate perspective, Richard Rorty argues, "it would be a good idea to stop talking about 'the anticapitalist struggle' and to substitute something banal and untheoretical—something like 'the struggle against avoidable human misery.' . . . I suggest we start talking about greed and selfishness rather than about bourgeois ideology." Richard Rorty, "The End of Leninism, Havel, and Social Hope," in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers, Volume Three* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 229. In rhetorical studies, the abandonment of ideology has rarely been called for directly, yet its evidence is clearly discernable in practice over the last decade.
- [19] This is the first of two essays devoted to the unconscious work of ideology. In this essay we attempt to frame the problematic in theory. In the second essay, with an analysis of the 2001 zombie film *28 Days Later*, we illustrate our solution and provide a method of psychoanalytic/ideological criticism keyed specifically to the ideological work of racism.
- [20] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 5. Also see Mark P. Moore, "The Rhetoric of Ideology: Confronting a Critical Dilemma," *The Southern Communication Journal* 54 (1988): 74–92.
- [21] Marx, *Capital*, 166–67.
- [22] Eagleton, *Ideology*, xiii. We are hesitant to offer a single definition of ideology, because each different definition could be said to do a useful kind of work. Our working definition of ideology, however, is the following: the collective beliefs, attitudes, and values of a given community or population that serve those who have the most power and resources. Later in the essay we will complicate this definition by incorporating its unconscious dimension.
- [23] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*,

- Volume 3: 1938–1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 101–133.
- [24] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
- [25] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 50, 52.
- [26] F. R. Leavis, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Cambridge, UK: The Minority Press, 1930).
- [27] Leavis, *Mass Civilization*, 9–10.
- [28] See Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects*, 3rd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers, 1995), 21–67.
- [29] See Stuart Hall, “The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies,” in *Culture, Society, and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch (New York: Routledge, 1988), 56–90; Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary,” in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Maulden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 10–24; and Raymond Williams, “The Masses,” in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, 42–64.
- [30] The most well known media effects theories in this respect have been dubbed the “magic bullet” and “hypodermic needle” theories. See Jeffrey L. Bineham, “A Historical Account of the Hypodermic Model in Mass Communication,” *Communication Monographs* 55 (1988): 230–46; and J. Michael Sproule, “Progressive Propaganda Critics and the Magic Bullet Myth,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 (1989): 225–46.
- [31] Theodor W. Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” trans. Anson G. Rabinbach, in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 2001), 100.
- [32] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94–136.
- [33] Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” 98.
- [34] Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” 106.
- [35] For example, in his article “Rethinking Critical Theory: Instrumental Reason, Judgment, and the Environmental Crisis,” *Environmental Ethics*, 23 (Fall 2001): 307–26, Kevin Michael DeLuca “rethinks” critical theory by expunging the psychoanalytic contribution to the notion of “instrumental reason” (largely by focusing solely on Horkheimer’s contribution), which partakes in the libidinal economy of fascism. DeLuca’s de-psychologized notion of judgment and instrumental reason, however, is a very common move among rhetorical scholars who are uncomfortable with the confounding variable of the unconscious; see, for example, Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91–111, which completely drops the unconscious from critical theory in favor of a Foucauldian idiom. Adorno’s commitment to psychoanalysis is no more powerfully illustrated than by his break with Eric Fromm, who Adorno believed had put him “in the paradoxical situation of defending Freud.” See Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 265–73; also see Theodor W. Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,” in *The Culture Industry*, 132–57.
- [36] For a brief overview, see Walter Benjamin, “A German Institute for Independent Research,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, 307–16; also see Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
- [37] See Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to the Theories of Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 51–85.
- [38] See Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 120–22.
- [39] Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” 103–106.

- [40] One excellent and notable exception of brief but careful writing is Jere Paul Surber's gloss; see Jere Paul Surber, *Culture and Critique: An Introduction to the Critical Discourses of Cultural Studies* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), 128–54. For a helpful discussion of the erroneous reductionism of critics of the concept, see Richard Leppert, "Introduction," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 42–61.
- [41] Strinati, *An Introduction*, 74–81. For a similar negative portrayal, see Will Brooker, *Teach Yourself Cultural Studies* (Lincolnwood, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing, 1999), 16–21. The accusation of a lack of empirical evidence is wrong for two reasons. First, while they critiqued social scientific approaches to research, many scholars associated with the Frankfurt School were involved in a number of empirical studies in support of their more speculative and philosophical researches. Second, insofar as some theories, like that of the culture industry, have drawn from the insights of psychoanalysis, then the empirical base is locatable in clinical experience and practice. The latter "fact" may be a weak support, but it is enough to demonstrate a basis for the "real world" relevance and rooting of critical theory.
- [42] Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Theories of Human Communication*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996), 343. Also see Sproule, "Progressive Propaganda," 225–46.
- [43] Richard Campbell, *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 464–65.
- [44] See John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Telepresence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).
- [45] Steve Shaviro, "Capitalist Monsters," *Historical Materialism* 10 (2002): 288.
- [46] William B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Marlowe and Company, 1994).
- [47] See Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972). The study of the family structure in relation to economic crisis was one of the major shifts in emphasis Horkheimer urged among Frankfurt School scholars in the early 1930s. See Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 137–56.
- [48] Peter Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2001), 148.
- [49] Concern about fascistic authority widely circulated during this time, and we think a study examining this figure would benefit scholars interested in the history of rhetorical agency. For example, the Frankfurt School scholars originally termed this authority the "fascistic character," but eventually settled on the "authoritarian character," a politically invested version of what Freud, and later Karl Abraham, termed the "anal character." Dr. Caligari, Dr. Legendre, and Dr. von Alterman possess the three qualities typical of the anal character (avarice, pedantry, and obstinacy) and are demonstrative of the type of "character structure" that typifies a susceptibility to anti-Semitism, at least according to the Fascism scale or "F-scale" developed by Frankfurt scholars. According to Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 414: "The fascist's ego went about on the crutches of stereotype, personification and discriminatory prejudice; he identified himself with power, and appeals to democracy, morality, and rationality only in order to destroy them; he satisfied his instincts while upholding moral condemnation of them and their suppression in out-groups and outsiders." See Sigmund Freud, "Character and Anal Erotism," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IX (1906–1908)*, ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 169–75; Sigmund Freud, "On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Erotism," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917–1919)*, ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 127–33; and Karl Abraham, "Contributions to the Theory of the Anal Character," trans. Douglas Bryan and Alix Strachey. *Selected Papers of Karl Abraham* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1927), 370–92.

- [50] Dendle, *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia*, 7.
- [51] Again, in a companion essay on the film *28 Days Later*, we take up this important part of the zombie allegory in order to demonstrate ideological criticism from our point of view. We recognize ideology at work in our repression of this thread.
- [52] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric."
- [53] For further discussion of this point, see Joshua Gunn, "On Dead Subjects: A Rejoinder to Lundberg on (a) Psychoanalytic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 501–13.
- [54] Hence the title of a chapter in Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*: "You Only Die Twice."
- [55] It is therefore overdetermined that the next step in the evolution of the creature formerly known as the zombie is the living dead baby, an innovation that finally occurred in the 2004 remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*.
- [56] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 162.
- [57] See Christian Lundberg, "The Royal Road Not Taken: Joshua Gunn's 'Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead' and Lacan's Symbolic Order," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 495.
- [58] See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), esp. 53–64. For an elegant explanation of the Lacanian bases of Althusser's formulation, see Henry Krips, *Fetish: An Erotics of Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 73–95. Also see Barbara Biesecker, "Rhetorical Studies and the 'New Psychoanalysis': What's the Real Problem? Or Framing the Problem of the Real," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 222–39.
- [59] Althusser, *Lenin*, 171–73.
- [60] Althusser, *Lenin*, 174.
- [61] We recognize how annoying cleverness with parentheses can be. Regardless, we qualify structuralism with "(post)" to underscore that old school structuralists and more hipster poststructuralists can mutually benefit from the category of the unconscious. We also mean to stress that poststructuralism is a form of structuralism, a persuasive argument offered by Peter Caws. See Peter Caws, *Structuralism: A Philosophy for the Human Sciences* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1997).
- [62] Farrel Corcoran, "The Widening Gyre: Another Look at Ideology in Wander and his Critics," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 55.
- [63] Michael Calvin McGee, "Another Philippic: Notes on the Ideological Turn in Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 43.
- [64] Krips, *Fetish*. Also see Dale Cyphert, "Ideology, Knowledge and Text: Pulling at the Knot of Ariadne's Thread," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 380.
- [65] See Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric"; Krips, *Fetish*.
- [66] Rushing and Frenz, "Integrating Ideology," 385.
- [67] For example, see Bonnie J. Dow, "Hegemony, Feminist Criticism, and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7 (1990): 261–74.
- [68] For example, see V. William Balthrop, "Culture, Myth, and Ideology as Public Argument: An Interpretation of the Ascent and Demise of 'Southern Culture,'" *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 339–42.
- [69] McGee, "Another Philippic," 45. For the steps involved in ideological criticism, see Karen Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 2004), 239–48. Not even McGee could prevent his views on ideology from becoming methodologized. See, for example, the "Ideographic Criticism" section in Carl R. Burghardt, ed., *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism* (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 1995), 441–77.
- [70] See Joshua Gunn and Barry Brummett, "Popular Communication After Globalization?" *Journal of Communication* 54 (2004): 705–21.

- [71] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, 1891–1937* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
- [72] For one of the better uses of hegemony in our field, see Dana L. Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in ‘Oprah’ Winfrey’s Rags-to-Riches Biography,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13 (1996): 115–37; and Dana L. Cloud, “Concordance, Complexity, and Conservatism: Rejoinder to Condit,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 14 (1997): 193–200.
- [73] Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Boston: Unwin Hymen, 1990), 208. See George Bagley, “The Television Text: Spectatorship, Ideology, and the Organization of Consent,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 4 (2001): 436–51; Dow, “Hegemony,” 261–74; Raymie McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 91–111.
- [74] Todd Gitlin in Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 11; and Celeste Michelle Condit, “Hegemony in a Mass-mediated Society: Concordance About Reproductive Technologies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11 (1994): 205–18 cleverness.
- [75] See Anne Makus, “Stuart Hall’s Theory of Ideology: A Frame for Rhetorical Criticism,” *Western Journal of Communication* 54 (1990): 495–514; and Charles Lewis, “Making Sense of Common Sense: A Framework for Tracking Hegemony,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 9 (1992): 277–92.
- [76] Cloud, “Concordance,” 194. We also agree with Cloud’s assertion that Condit’s version of hegemony is toothless; it is, perhaps, what we might term a “gummy hegemony.”
- [77] Stuart Hall, “The Rediscovery of Ideology,” 56–65.
- [78] Celeste Michelle Condit, “The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 (1989): 103.
- [79] See David Harris, *From Class Struggle to the Politics of Pleasure: The Effects of Gramscianism on Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), especially Chapter 7, in which the author outlines what was being taught at the Birmingham school (e.g., Barthes, Freud, and Lacan on pleasure).
- [80] Condit, “The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy,” 116–17.
- [81] Although she is certainly no enemy to psychoanalysis, even Barbara Biesecker’s contributions to articulation theory in rhetorical studies downplay the unconscious and skirt the pressing issue of determinism. See, for example, Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Différance*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989): 110–30. Given her argument in favor of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, perhaps the avoidance of interiors was (and remains) a deliberate and necessary strategy to get new concepts on the table?
- [82] The irony here is that Lacan’s notion of the quilting point or *point de capiton* yields much more specificity than the ideograph, and could be more fruitfully employed for ideology critique keyed specifically to subjectification: ideology overdetermines where the “normal” subject is quilted in the fabric of the socios. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955–1956*, trans. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993): 293–70; and Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 87–92. Our thanks to Chris Lundberg for stressing this point.
- [83] Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford, 1999). For yet another example, see Nathan Stormer, “Articulation: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and *Taxis*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 257–84. Also see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 2001). Laclau has written about rhetoric directly; see Ernesto Laclau, “The Politics of Rhetoric,” in *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory*, ed. Tom Cohen, Barbara Cohen, J. Hillis Miller, and Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001): 229–53.

- [84] Summarily dismissing the universal has also been an unfortunate move in rhetorical studies since the incorporation of post- theory. See Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (New York: Verso, 2000).
- [85] Thomas S. Frentz, "Reconstructing a Rhetoric of the Interior," *Communication Monographs* 60 (1993): 83–89.
- [86] The fear of determinism is, in part, the result of a misreading of interpellation as a mechanical, airtight determinism (a misreading no doubt encouraged by the scholarship of those associated with the journal *Screen*). Turner notes that it "is not unusual for cultural studies' adoption of Althusserian models of ideology in the 1970s to be represented as utterly deterministic, utterly mechanical. Within such accounts, the similarities between Althusser and Gramsci are glossed over and the differences are exaggerated to legitimate the adaptation of Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a necessary correction to Althusserianism." In *British Cultural Studies*, 198.
- [87] Hence the insistence on the part of a number of media scholars that hegemony tends toward domination, but this is never guaranteed. Owing to a disciplinary tendency to read the provision of zombies into anything "post," just as we do in this essay, rhetorical scholars who use the concept of hegemony are compelled to repeat the same, tiresome defense of the concept as undeterministic; see DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 93–95; Dow, "Hegemony," 261–74; and McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 91–111.
- [88] See Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (New York: Routledge, 1984). Because dominant ideology only holds sway over the elite classes, they argue, the class basis of ideology is false.
- [89] See Slavoj Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," in *The Žižek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 55–86.
- [90] Condit and Lucaites, *Crafting Equality*, xiv–xv.
- [91] Condit and Lucaites, *Crafting Equality*, n. 22, 255. Elsewhere Condit has not been so skittish; see Condit, "Hegemony in a Mass-mediated Society," 205–30.
- [92] See Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology," for a historical account of the pluralist paradigm in media studies.
- [93] This approach is clearly discernable in the program outlined by Michel Foucault in the English forward and the preface to *The Order of Things*, which has subsequently led to a number of Foucauldian approaches (we stress the manner of Foucault's up-take in the discipline, however, and not Foucault's work itself; see Barbara Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 [1992]: 351–364). Of course, Foucault's thoroughly materialist approach is an extension of Althusser's assertion that the ideational is material; however, unlike Althusser, who seemed to identify the ideational/imaginary realm with ideology, Foucault abandons any notion of false consciousness, and this is precisely because he denies a rhetoric of interiors. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).
- [94] Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985): 100.
- [95] For an explicit example of this problem, see Ernest G. Bormann, John F. Cragan, and Donald C. Shields, "Defending Symbolic Convergence Theory from an Imaginary Gunn," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003): 366–73.
- [96] Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIV* (London: Hogarth, 1995), 172.
- [97] See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. 330–412; Sigmund Freud, "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XII* (London: Hogarth, 1995), 260–66; Sigmund Freud, "Some Elementary Lessons in Psychoanalysis," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXIII* (London: Hogarth, 1995),

- 281–86; and Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990).
- [98] Freud, “Some Elementary Lessons,” 283–84.
- [99] Freud, “Some Elementary Lessons,” 284–86.
- [100] See Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, “Defending Symbolic Convergence Theory,” 366–73.
- [101] Ernest G. Bormann, “Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 290.
- [102] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 313.
- [103] Bormann, “Ten Years Later,” 291.
- [104] Perhaps Jean Baudrillard would fit the bill here; however, he does only insofar as consciousness and the unconscious have “imploded.”
- [105] See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 330–412; and Sigmund Freud, “Repression,” trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV (London: Hogarth, 1955), 146–58.
- [106] Freud, “Repression,” 147.
- [107] Stephen Frosh, *Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 2003), 11.
- [108] Of course, the psychoanalytic caveat to be made here is that there is some pleasure in pain, that some of us (if not most) enjoy our oppression. Alas, there is not space enough to detail the complexities of pleasure, desire, and enjoyment here. Rhetoric sorely needs to theorize desire.
- [109] This implies, of course, an epistemic dimension, which relates to an earlier preoccupation with propaganda that links the efforts of scholars like J. Michael Sproule with the Marxian agenda of Cloud and Aune. The concern over propaganda is that it warps minds and makes it impossible to realize something called democracy. Similarly, Marxian approaches to rhetoric have been interested in making sharp distinctions between “true” and “false” consciousness. Although we believe it is possible to bring ideological evils to consciousness, discerning and judging them is matter of politics (taking a stand) and always subject to debate; there is no objective criterion with which to adjudicate ideological work. See J. Michael Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- [110] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33.
- [111] Butler’s critique of Althusser is precisely that he requires the subject’s recognition for interpellation, which ignores the fact that “the linguistic constitution of the subject can take place without the subjects knowing, as when one is constituted out of earshot, as, say, the referent of a third-person discourse.” Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 33.
- [112] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 187.
- [113] Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 33.
- [114] This argument begs the question of whether or not we advocate idealism (also see Note 108). Although we resist the more recent attempts to de-Hegelize rhetorical theory (it seems to us that mediation is the primary function of rhetoric), politically we do not wish to disavow materialism—quite the contrary. We do not believe, however, that there is an objective plane of meaning or an ultimate essence to which one can appeal. There is no place from which one can discern the true and false interests of this or that population; there is only politics (taking a stand), and it goes all the way down. Perhaps a better way to characterize our position on epistemic issues is by recourse to ontology: while it is certainly unfashionable, we recommend that rhetoricians seriously reconsider the jettisoning of dualism. Of course, everyone knows that claiming dualistic positions is naughty and wrong-headed, and that Descartes really screwed things up for everybody. Yet this nugget of well-worn common sense is ideologically motivated, and we worry that too much rhetorical theorizing contorts to reach the proper, anti-dualistic conclusions. It may well be the case that defending a certain

form of ontological dualism is the only way to keep rhetoric from evaporating as a disciplined pursuit and a meaningful category into the thin (hot) air of the academy.

- [115] Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 33.
- [116] Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 34.
- [117] Edwin Black, "A Note on Theory and Practice in Rhetorical Criticism," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 44 (1980): 334.
- [118] Although space limits the development of this argument, we suggest that when one understands ideological criticism as the tracking of unconscious or repressed structures of subjectification, two rhetorical approaches to discourse collapse into the same method: fantasy theme criticism and ideographic criticism. These cartographic approaches read narrative elements as symptoms of some deeper, unconscious structure animating public discourse. Indeed, the findings of each type of criticism fail to make sense absent the unconscious.
- [119] The work of Ronald Walter Greene and Bradford Vivian are good examples. In Greene's unique application of a Deleuzian reading of Foucault, primarily in terms of apparatus theory, the "subject" is a fold of the exterior; for his agency, see Ronald Walter Greene, "Rhetoric and Capitalism: Rhetorical Agency as Communicative Labor," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37 (2004): 188–206. For an exemplary apparatus criticism, also see Ronald Walter Greene, *Malthusian Worlds: U.S. Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999). From a different angle keyed more directly to subjectification as a problematic, Bradford Vivian works from a perspective of immanence in his attempt to shed the autonomy and transparency of Cartesianism. See Bradford Vivian, "The Threshold of Self," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33 (2000), 303–18. Vivian's remarkable, book-length project draws more from Foucauldian and Derridian approaches to the subject, but a focus on immanence is sustained throughout; see Bradford Vivian, *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).
- [120] See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), esp. 20–27; and Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. 32–123.
- [121] Louis Althusser, "The Discovery of Dr. Freud," trans. Jaffrey Mehlman, in *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, ed. Olivier Corpet and François Matheron (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 114.
- [122] Althusser, "The Discovery," 114.
- [123] Althusser, "The Discovery," 114.
- [124] In addition to *Crafting Equality*, Lucaites and Condit's epilogue to their and Sally Caudill's *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999) is also demonstrative of a liberal pluralist brand of absolute consciousness.
- [125] Such questioning has occurred over and over in numerous guises, but collectively as a kind of "poststructural turn." For examples, Barbara Biesecker's work is particularly exemplary in content and style. See especially Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 140–59; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 153–59; and Barbara Biesecker, "Negotiating with Our Tradition: Reflecting Again (Without Apologies) on the Feminization of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 236–41.
- [126] See, for example, the forum sections of the last issue of Volume 34 (1983) and the first issue of Volume 55 (1984) of the *Central States Speech Journal*.
- [127] See Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of American Culture," *Western Speech Communication Journal* 54 (1990): 274–89.
- [128] Žižek, "The Spectre of Ideology," 71.
- [129] See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 100–102.