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Zombies and Immune Discourses in Hazael González's "Luna de sangre sobre Lepanto"

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Zombies and Immune Discourses in Hazael González's "Luna de sangre sobre Lepanto"

Cover Page Footnote

I am grateful to David Dalton and Sara Potter for their hard work in putting this volume together and inviting me to participate. I also want to thank Házael González for his willingness to speak with me about his novel.

In an episode lost to history, a carrier of the zombie plague bites Miguel de Cervantes on the night of October 6th, 1571. Anxiously awaiting the Battle of Lepanto, fear seizes Miguel. Is he already doomed? This fear of impending zombification leads him to fight like a madman and contribute to the victory at Lepanto. Whether zombism spreads via bite or environmental contamination, Hazael González's zombies function as spreaders of infection throughout his short story "Luna de sangre sobre Lepanto." This tale introduces Hazael González's *Quijote Z*, published by Dolman Books in 2010. The novel and this "found text" addition are an altered and zombified adaptation of Cervantes's classic novel, *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. González's version hits the same major plot points and adds zombies, much like Seth Grahame-Smith's 2009 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. González plays with the original text's "found text" format, including the paratexts: specifically, the prologue. He adds letters and an additional "rediscovered" story: a historical fiction set during the Batalla de Lepanto. In "Luna de sangre," a fictionalized Miguel de Cervantes (whom I will call Miguel) has a *converso* friend named Isaac, who is the medic on board the ship where he serves as a soldier. Isaac accompanies Miguel during an eerie night watch, in which sailors rescue Diego Mendoza, a man who claims to have escaped from the sultan Selim II. Isaac tells Miguel that he fears that Mendoza has been infected by zombies. Isaac relates the story of his unnamed teacher's teacher, who encountered a snake god, Nzambi, on the isle of Corisco and barely escaped alive. After the storytelling, Miguel gets bitten by Mendoza and becomes feverish, convinced that he is turning into a zombie. Regardless, he fights in the battle of Lepanto. While fighting what he believes to be zombies, Miguel receives severe wounds and loses consciousness. Later, Isaac informs Miguel that his visions of zombies were the result of a fevered mind.

Like all zombies, González's undead have their roots in Africa and Haiti. Nevertheless, the fear of the Other, the transatlantic slave trade, and multiple generations of transnational exchange and intergenerational retelling in the Caribbean and North America have transformed these figures into their current western pop-culture identity as shambling brain-devouring monsters (Llosa Sanz 189). González's novel's closest US predecessor is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009). *Quijote Z* belongs to the *Linea Z* series, published by Dolmen Editorial. *Linea Z* includes such titles as *Apocalipsis Z* by Manuel Loureiro, *Zoombi* (2010) by Alberto Bermúdez Ortiz, and *La isla del tesoro Z* (2012), (a parody of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*). Another zombified Spanish classic, first published in 2010 (Llosa Sanz 195) then republished in 2016 by Debolsillo, is *LaZarillo Z: Matar zombis nunca fue pan comido*, which also has an illustrated version published in 2017 by Punto de Lectura. Álvaro Llosa Sanz provides an excellent analysis of this last, including the found text format that it shares with *Quijote Z*. Other key works of criticism are Santiago López Navia's "Bajo el signo de la crisis o don Quijote con su tiempo: el *Quijote Z* de Házael G." and David R. Castillo's "Monsters for the Age of the Post-Human," which both provide analyses of "Luna de Sangre." As a relatively recent work of genre fiction, González's novel has not received a great deal of academic attention. The lack of scholarly work on the novel does not diminish its aesthetic and intellectual

merits, which evokes the style of the 1885 colonialist novel *King Solomon's Mines* by H. Rider Haggard, as well as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Using immune discourse to examine zombies in González's "Luna de sangre," I argue that his zombies function as embodied manifestations of physical, spiritual, and cultural contagion. The ideas of Roberto Esposito, Priscilla Wald, Mabel Moraña, Sarah J. Lauro and Karen Embry, put into conversation with González's tale, help illuminate how the author uses monstrosity to demarcate the Other and define it as those who exist outside of the human, the normative, and more generally outside of the Western social order. The historical and contemporary context of "Luna de sangre" is one of nationalism, bigotry, walls, and anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic sentiment. González says that "el marco histórico lo escogió Cervantes mismo, no yo." Within the narrative, the distinction between race and religion blurs, as the characters treat Turkish Muslims, Spanish Jews and "unconverted" Africans alike with similar disdain. González's work necessarily draws upon the baroque quality of Cervantes's original Quixote narrative, and his parody also reflects the similarly complex twenty-first century relationships and tensions between varying groups of "us" and "them," where those categories of community and belonging shift depending on the position of the speaker. Many characters in the story, including the protagonist Miguel, display strong anti-Semitic and nationalist attitudes.

In modern storytelling, zombies frequently serve as a metaphor for other invasive forces that intrude upon a community, often from within that very community. This trend was particularly salient in 1950s US film (Dendle 49). Roberto Esposito's work on community and immunity provides a theory of real-world infection which can serve to illuminate the relationship between zombies and the living as well as between the other communities in González's text. Esposito defines immunity in both a medical and a juridical sense. In biomedical terms, he explains, immunity is a resistance to disease, while in political and juridical language, it refers to protection from arrest or prosecution in a given jurisdiction, for example diplomatic. Political juridical immunity resides in "a temporary or definitive exemption on the part of the subject with regard to concrete obligations or responsibilities that under normal circumstances would bind one to others" (Esposito 24). Both types of immunity are exceptions to a norm or rule. Immune subjects are both like and unlike their non-immune peers. In addition, Esposito states that immunity is "not simply the relation that joins life to power [but also] the power to preserve life" (Esposito 24). Contrasting his definition of immunity with biopolitics, Esposito explains that "in this perspective no power exists outside of life, just as life is never given outside of relations of power" (Esposito 24). Extrapolated from Esposito's theory, zombies function as exceptional beings. Although they no longer belong to the community of the living, they have not joined the dead, either. Their liminal status marks them as immune to death. A living person bitten and yet un-zombified can thus read as immune to undeath.

Immunity and community have close theoretical ties to contagion, and Priscilla Wald's work on that subject provides a thorough grounding on the

cultural implications of real-world viruses. Wald's definitions of contagion, the outbreak narrative, and the carrier will serve as tools for my analysis of the boundaries between national communities in "Luna de sangre." She defines contagion as "more than an epidemiological fact. It is also a foundational concept in the study of religion and of society, with a long history of explaining how beliefs circulate in social interactions" (2). She explores the way contagion makes the risks of inevitable human interaction obvious. Wald explains the outbreak narrative as following "a formulaic plot that begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends with its containment" (Wald 2). This narrative has real consequences for both scientists and the lay public in how they understand disease. Finally, Wald relates the carrier, a healthy individual who carries and transmits a disease, like Typhoid Mary, as "the archetypal stranger both embodying the danger of microbial invasion ... and transforming it into the possibility for rejuvenation and growth" (Wald 10). This carrier-stranger belongs and does not belong to society. These individuals are exceptional, immune to death, but not to the transmission of death, relating back to Esposito's immunity. Such individuals are thus perceived as monstrous. Zombies exist as carriers of undeath. They belong and do not belong to their communities and as such they threaten national borders.

Zombies and monsters in general exist around and between borders. Monstrosity in general is a liminal state, not just for carriers and strangers. In her work, *The Monster as War Machine*, Mabel Moraña explores monsters as products of "zones occupied by subaltern segments of society[, which] were and continue to be *monstered* as residual spaces whose rationality assumes unrecognizable forms from perspectives that consider themselves to be epistemic sites of authority" (ix). Such zones, on the periphery of what considers itself "civilized" "produce their own monsters in their attempt to name the Other, the dominator, the persecutor, the master, the landowner, the invader, the torturer, granting it an abject form that allegorizes his attitudes, behaviors, and values" (ix). Monsters, then, can be reflections of the subaltern or they can be abject forms of the dominant. The monster, as ruiner of the status quo, disrupts boundaries and invites change (Moraña 4). As monstrous figures, the zombies in "Luna de sangre" violently disrupt the protagonist's world. Moraña specifically writes of the zombie as "an illustration of a long series of *subject positions* that are situated outside the productive and/or legal systems" (Moraña 176, emphasis original). The zombie has been theorized as both subject and non-subject. For Sarah J. Lauro and Karen Embry, the zombie's posthuman lack of consciousness means a lack of subjectivity in all variations of the zombie, and on first reading Moraña's view of zombies as representative of a series of subject positions contradicts. Both can be true: zombies may be subjects, but they, like so many of the displaced human subjects they stand as a metaphor for, are perceived as lacking subjectivity because they stand outside social and legal systems.

Zombies are beyond social and legal boundaries and they are border-crashing partly because of their posthuman nature, which Lauro and Embry also examine. Expanding on Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto, they "read the

zombie as a more effective imagining of posthumanism than the cyborg because of its indebtedness to narratives of historical power and oppression, and we stress the zombie's relevance as a theoretical model that, like the cyborg, crashes borders" (91). Lauro and Embry explain the difference between zombies and other monsters by the fact that the zombie body remains but loses consciousness (89). They also make a distinction between the zombi, the Haitian incarnation, which could only be created by a non-zombi (97) and which has the "dual potential ... to represent both slave and slave rebellion" (98); the zombie, the appropriated and commodified creature that has lumbered into pop culture with "a fluid body that transgresses its borders by infecting those it bites" (97); and the zombi a posthuman and postcyborg figure that represents "quite literally, a post(mortem) human" (92), a truly post-subjective state.

Esposito's ideas on immunity and community, Wald's work with contagion, Moraña's definitions of monstrosity, and Lauro and Embry's *Zombie Manifesto* serve to tease out the zombified monstrosity throughout González's tale. González's zombies, like so many others, infect with their bite. As infectious monsters, zombies carry not only the fear of death but also the fear that their victims could become like them. In their embodiedness and their contagious nature, they are like vampires and werewolves. However, zombies are beyond consciousness, as Lauro and Embry point out: "Whereas the vampire and even the intangible ghost retain their mental faculties, and the werewolf may become irrational, bestial only part of time, only the zombie has completely lost its mind, becoming a blank—animate, but wholly devoid of consciousness" (89). Isaac explains the "resurrection" of zombies to Miguel as "lo mismo que Cristo Nuestro Señor hizo con el pobre Lázaro. Pero con la diferencia de que esos hombres vueltos a la vida ya no eran hombres, sino demonios que atacaban a los vivos para beber su sangre y hacerse más fuertes" (González). The explanation of the zombies as "no longer men" emphasizes their non-belonging to the community of both the living and of "good Christian" Spaniards.

The setting of "Luna de sangre" is the Battle of Lepanto. This battle, on 7 October 1571, was a key victory in the war of the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire. The Holy League was led by Don Juan of Austria and formed by Spain, Venice, and the Papacy (Elliott 241). As J. H. Elliott rightly points out, the battle's outcome became a symbol of divine favor in Christendom's struggle against Islam. "It was an eternal source of pride to those who, like Miguel de Cervantes, had fought in the battle and could show the scar of their wounds, and of grateful wonder to the millions who saw in it a divine deliverance of Christendom from the power of the oppressor" (Elliott 241). The conflict between Christians and Muslims, as with many wars, was framed as an us-versus-them scenario. From a Spanish national perspective, Islam represented a threat to their very identity. Such treatment of the other followed the previous century's expulsion and/or forced conversion of Jews and Muslims from Spain and a culture of suspicion represented most obviously in the Spanish Inquisition, but also embodied in the fight of the *Comuneros* "to preserve the Castile they had known, a Castile *pure* in faith, and *uncontaminated* by the taint of alien influences" (Elliott 215, emphasis mine). The construction of the national community of

good, pure, and uncontaminated Spaniards appears in González's parody, in which the sailors on Miguel's ship perceive Isaac the *converso* as a threat because of his Jewish background. Race and religion were all too easily conflated in popular perception, and Jews and Muslims were (and are) often racialized, as Elliott points out: "alongside the obsessive concern with purity of the faith there flourished a no less obsessive concern with purity of blood" (Elliott 220). González gives us a narrative in which many characters fail to connect to others because of such concerns about purity and fear of contamination. Instead, his characters maintain strict boundaries between communities, like what Wald describes as "'Medicalized nativism,' a term coined by the historian Alan Kraut to describe how the stigmatizing of immigrant groups is justified by their association with communicable disease; it implies the almost superstitious belief that national borders can afford protection against communicable disease" (8). González's Spanish characters refer to their enemies as evil, allied with the devil, which rhetoric clearly separates their "us" from the Saracens' "them."

González complicates this othering discourse, however, when Miguel acknowledges that such black-and-white boundaries between groups are difficult to maintain: "Pero no, de sobra sabía él que las cosas nunca eran del todo blancas o negras, ni del todo cristianas o sarracenas" (González). Like any soldier, Miguel realizes he must be prepared to kill those in the opposing army. Killing is his job, though González paints Miguel as understanding more nuance in the characterization of his enemies than most of his comrades do. Miguel is one of the few on the ship who will associate with Isaac the *converso*. Besides Miguel, most of the other characters distrust Isaac's scientific knowledge because of his *converso* identity. Miguel identifies with Isaac based on their shared interest in science, for example, the scientific explanation of the moon's effect on the human bodily humors. This shared interest in science is what leads Isaac to trust Miguel with the truth about the existence of zombies. Isaac's medical knowledge and general learning also play an important role in the narrative. However, despite their friendship, Miguel takes immediate offense at the implication that he and Isaac share a *family*. Isaac immediately clarifies that he means the national family of Christian Spaniards, but Miguel resents the implication that his blood might not be "pure."ⁱ

As disgust-inducing others, zombies lend themselves to metaphoric use in us-versus-them scenarios. These monstrous figures, too, are often racialized in Western storytelling. Jon Stratton, in his article on zombies and bare life, describes this othering tactic as a symptom of fear: "The fear of what is perceived to be an external threat from the racialised, zombie Other helps those who live in Western states to repress the awareness of how easily their own existence can become reduced to bare life" (205). This repression of the Western subject's own vulnerability thus becomes externalized and placed onto the bodies of the Other. Isaac's Jewishness makes the soldiers and sailors uncomfortable. González paints Isaac as foreign, because of his Semitic background and his learning, with access to "exotic" knowledge, and semi-supernatural abilities of persuasion. The soldiers do not treat Isaac as a person who belongs to the Spanish nation. Jon Stratton writes that "excluded from the rights and privileges of the modern state ...

displaced people are positioned legally as bare life. Second, in this legal limbo, these people can be treated in a way that enables them to become associated with a condition mythically exemplified in the zombie” (Stratton 189). Isaac’s social status is liminal. He is neither fully accepted by the microcosm of society on the ship nor is he entirely rejected.

Isaac’s position is above that of the enemy Saracens and above the zombies he describes to Miguel, but he must continually earn his place in view of the sailors. Both Saracens and Zombies have no place to earn or defend within a Christian Spanish national community. The narrative paints both unconverted Africans and the Saracens sent by Selim II as entirely excluded from the protection of a sovereign Christian nation-state. They do not belong to the same social category as the dehumanized zombies, that of bare life, because the Spaniards perceive them as subjects. However, the rhetoric of nationalism paints them as savage heathens whom the Christian coalition must keep away and exterminate if possible. The Saracens, in particular, become the object of what David Solodkow defines as “just war,” based on his readings of Bartolomé de las Casas. He writes that “Las Casas again applied relativism to the state of infidelity, differentiating among its various causes. The worst kind of infidels were those, such as the Turks and the Moors, who, having knowledge of True Doctrine, rejected it, and furthermore, fought against it” (192). Of course, in nationalistic and religious terms, by fighting against Spain’s armies and their allies, the Moors fight against Christianity itself, and therefore against God. As Elliott points out, Spain sees Islam as a monolithic whole and as a source of contagious enmity in Spain’s war against the Turks (241). González, in an analysis of his own work, states, “una lectura atenta revela que en ningún momento el punto de vista árabe es realista u objetivo, sino que está completamente tamizado por la visión de los soldados de la Marquesa.” At no time in the narrative do we meet any individual representatives of the enemy fleet. They merely appear as nameless, demonic-faced monsters as the reader is submerged in Miguel’s point of view as the focalizing character. González continues, “Lo que yo quería era transmitir esa inquietud que debían de sentir las personas como Cervantes, quienes probablemente no habían visto a un árabe en su vida y debían de imaginárselos con cuernos y rabo, y oliendo a azufre” (González). González achieves this othering discourse within his narrative through a focus on Miguel’s thoughts and feelings about the others he encounters. In the text, Miguel often thinks of the enemy force as filled with monstrous figures, especially once the battle begins: “Se le antojaban en su confundido entendimiento que realmente estaban batallando bajo los vapores exhalados por el mismo Lucifer” (González). The narrator’s opinion differs from Miguel’s perspective, marked by comments like “su confundido entendimiento,” signaling to the reader that Miguel is an unreliable witness whose perception of the Saracen forces differs from reality. Though Miguel’s perspective differs from the narrator, it aligns with that of his countrymen who, again, see the Saracens as heretics and subject to the penalties imposed through just war. Unlike the Saracen forces, zombies would not be subject to just war, because they no longer occupy any subject position within the legal and social systems. They are not citizens of an enemy nation; they are

citizens of no nation. In fact, only a small number of people, like Isaac, even acknowledge their existence. Isaac, in close confidence, tells Miguel that zombies must simply be destroyed to prevent the infection of the rest of society. Being neither alive nor dead but somewhere in between, zombies' destruction neither constitutes a legal execution nor an act of war. Giorgio Agamben's work will shed more light on the legal status of zombies as bare life, beyond the protection of the law or of society.

Because a zombie or a carrier of the zombie virus is beyond legal protections, Isaac's suggestion that the Captain order Mendoza, a probably zombified soldier, to have his throat cut and be tossed back overboard would have been an act of defense of the nation against external contagion, not an act of murder against a fellow citizen. The sailors who rescued Mendoza nonetheless perceive Isaac's words as a threat. In Agamben's terms, they see Mendoza as *bios*, as a fellow-citizen, one who belongs to their same way of life (5). Isaac, by his perceived Jewish identity and his perceived threat against one of their fellow citizens, becomes marked as lesser life, if not bare life altogether. Isaac, however, is worried that Mendoza's contact with the enemy has caused him to become a carrier of zombification. Mendoza, to Isaac, is a stranger, a source of contagion (Wald 10). When he is first rescued, Mendoza appears out of his mind, a common theme in quixotic texts, and he claims to have escaped from the palace of Selim II, the sultan leader of the opposing naval fleet. The first articulate words the rescued man speaks are "Los ojos... Los ojos vivos del demonio" (González). Artists and critics have long treated the eyes as the window to the soul, as a representation of the entire personality. As the man speaks, the text says that his head appears as if it would fall off. Losing one's head is a metaphor for insanity in both English and Spanish, and the narrative goes on to provide much talk of decapitation and disembodied heads. In answer to the captain's demand for the truth, the man rescued from the sea cries that "¡Los ojos del diablo son la verdad!" (González). The narrator describes the man groaning like a condemned soul before continuing. Stratton writes that while the zombie is without language, "the zombie groan can be read as the expression of the pain of bare life, of the living dead" (Stratton 201). Mendoza's time in captivity has exposed him to the contaminating enemy, and Isaac fears that when Mendoza says that the disembodied head of the devil bewitched him, cursed him, and bit him, the unfortunate soldier is telling the truth. Though Isaac identifies as Spanish and Christian, not many accept his good intentions, especially when he suggests that Mendoza could pose a danger to the crew. The crewmen see this suggestion as a threat from a Jew against Mendoza, someone they accept as a fellow Christian and deserving of their help, rather than the attempt to protect the microcosm of the nation on the ship from contamination that it is. Only the fact that the captain of the ship accepts Isaac as a full member of the crew lends him protection and prevents the crew from identifying him as *zoe* or bare life.

Mendoza's appearance exemplifies and embodies the fear of multiple types of contamination. The soldiers perceive Isaac as dirty and contaminating because of his race. Isaac sees Mendoza as a contaminating threat due to the bite he received from the disembodied head. The captain fears the contamination of

rumors, knowing the contagious nature of superstition. Priscilla Wald writes of real-world contagion that “microbes, spaces, and interactions blend together as they animate the landscape and motivate the plot of the outbreak narrative” (2). A disease outbreak depends on the networks of humanity, “the perils of human interdependence and the triumph of human connection and cooperation, scientific authority and the evolutionary advantages of the microbe, ecological balance and impending disaster” (Wald 2). Despite his fears, the captain is unwilling to kill Mendoza, who appears to pose no threat in his weakened state, so he limits himself to confining the castaway to a cabin and placing guards by the door. Notwithstanding these precautions, Isaac is visibly worried and his concern is itself contagious, leading him to relate the source of his fears to Miguel. Isaac's tale begins with him asking if Miguel has heard of the walking dead, and then proceeds to relate a series of events on the island of Corisco, presented as the experiences of his teacher's teacher, who remains unnamed throughout.

Isaac's narrative treatment of Corisco and the native inhabitants of the island demonstrates that though he is othered by Spanish society, he has assimilated its prejudices toward other marginal groups, specifically the Saracens and Africans, whom Isaac refers to as a homogeneous group. Isaac, in Orientalist fashion, describes the African island as inhospitable and labels its inhabitants as savages: “entre todos aquellos salvajes, había algunos que practicaban extraños rituales de extrañas religiones, invocando a oscuros dioses y a legiones de demonios mucho más feroces y más terribles que los que sirven en las huestes de Satán.” The notion that the gods worshiped by the native people are *worse* than the hosts of Satan places these people and their customs farther outside the boundaries of the “civilized” than Satan himself and all his hosts. Within this discursive context, people of African and Middle Eastern descent have no place within the Western social order unless and until they are converted to Christianity. Isaac's teacher's teacher arrives in Corisco on a Portuguese ship and stays with a group of Jesuits who are teaching the native inhabitants in an attempt to convert them. Their efforts to convert read as a contagious force from the perspective of at least some of the Coriscans, and conversion transforms the people who embrace it into strangers to their own society.

The purportedly strange practices contrast sharply with the “sincere baptisms and profound and authentic spiritual exercises” in which the native converts participate. Isaac's narrative only treats the Western religion of Catholicism as a real, authentic spiritual experience, possibly as a rhetorical strategy to prove his own belonging as part of that social order. In contrast, Isaac positions native Coriscan practices as an interruption or a distraction from “true” worship, in much the way that monsters (like zombies) interrupt the social order (Moraña 4). However, Isaac's narration does not portray Coriscan beliefs as powerless. Instead, he treats them as truly powerful and certainly dangerous. One of the native Coriscans, a man whom Isaac describes in Othering fashion as large, black, and almost monstrous in size and appearance, literally interrupts the Mass one day by laughing at the worship service. As he laughs, he repeats the word “nzambi” several times. Nzambi “is the supreme being of the Bakongo people, a native tribe of the lower Congo River area. According to the Bakongo, Nzambi is

the creator of men and all other things, including traditional medicine, which the people believe was given to the first inhabitants at the time of creation and passed on from generation to generation" (Ògúngbilé 3573). Isaac tells Miguel that Nzambi means "god" and in his narrative, the word specifically refers to a snake deity that has power to bring people back to a kind of life or, at least, undeath. The narratively dehumanized priest of Nzambi, who is also not given a name, asks Isaac's teacher's teacher whether he has ever seen the Christian deity, and invites/challenges him to come meet Nzambi. Filled with curiosity, Isaac's protagonist accepts. He crosses the island, entering terrain that no white man has seen before, according to his guide.

Once they arrive, Nzambi's priest stirs a cauldron filled with pieces of human and animal remains in a sort of stew. While stirring the viscous paste, the man chants. A community of hundreds of other people accompany him in his chant and together they call up their god. Nzambi appears, a serpent as long as ten men and as thick as a tree, with glowing yellow eyes. His worshippers bring out the body of a dead white man who sold Black people as slaves to the Portuguese. The fact that this zombified body raised to unlife formerly belonged to a white man who enslaved Black people represents a power inversion, an appropriate comeuppance for his actions. They throw the body before Nzambi and the priest throws the contents of the cauldron over it while Nzambi whistles. The assembly of the dead body and the other dead body parts results in the reanimation of the corpse, for the man begins to tremble, then stands and walks. At this occurrence, the teacher faints. When he wakes up, he stumbles back to the colonized Portuguese section of the island of Corisco, only to find that the Jesuit Mission has become an apocalyptic wasteland, filled with zombified bodies. To his horror, he recognizes the Jesuit priest, still wearing his robes, but no longer alive nor properly dead. The priest and all his compatriots have become bare life, neither living nor dead. For Lauro and Embry, this state "goes *beyond the hybrid* by virtue of its inseparability into distinct terms. It is itself an incarnation of presence-absence, yet it complicates the subject/object position because it is the livingdead" (95). This "livingdead" state dissolves borders in much the way that Agamben describes when he writes that "the categories whose opposition founded modern politics (right/left, private/public, absolutism/democracy, etc.) ... have been steadily dissolving, to the point of entering today into a real zone of indistinction" (7). Agamben refers to political categories and the zombie has long been a sociopolitical metaphor which crashes against and dissolves such boundaries, even as it is expelled from the borders of society.

The zombie, as unholy simulacrum of life and carrier of undeath, *must* be killed to avoid the contamination of everything else around it. Isaac's narrative of the contamination of the Portuguese colony in Corisco serves as a cautionary tale for Miguel, whom Isaac is trying to convince to help him neutralize the threat that Mendoza poses. He thus portrays Mendoza as a probable carrier of the zombie disease. To drive home his point about the contagious danger of zombies, Isaac tells Miguel that his teacher's teacher encountered zombies again after he escaped from Corisco. Miguel assumes that the man must have gone back to Africa and Isaac corrects him, saying, "Los sesos que el maestro de mi maestro tuvo que

reventar no eran africanos... sino europeos” (González). The dramatic pause marks the gravity of Isaac’s statement. Miguel reacts with shock and the narrator reveals his thoughts to the reader: “Una cosa era pensar en *oscuros* países lejanos, y otra muy distinta pretender que realmente la amenaza había llegado hasta tierras cristianas” (González, emphasis mine). Danger and contagion are appropriate to dark foreign lands such as Africa, in Miguel’s worldview, but he seems to have “the almost superstitious belief that national borders can afford protection against communicable disease” (Wald 8). Still in shock, Miguel protests strongly that zombies cannot truly be real and that if they were, they could not have arrived in the ocean so far from the depths of Africa. Isaac replies with a question that implicates the Muslim Saracen forces as contagious as well: “¿Por ventura ignoráis, maese Cervantes, que son los musulmanes quienes controlan el negocio de los esclavos en todo el interior del continente africano?” He then goes on to state their lack of knowledge of that place: “¿Qué conocemos nosotros del África y de sus gentes, si hasta hace menos de cien años pensábamos que el Mundo conocido acababa un poco más abajo de las Canarias?” Such limits on their knowledge mark a “residual space... whose rationality assumes unrecognizable forms from perspectives that consider themselves to be epistemic sites of authority” (Moraña ix). This monstered, liminal space exists beyond knowledge.

Isaac’s reasoning convinces Miguel to investigate further, and he, accompanied by his trusty sword, which he clutches to reassure himself, goes to the room of the shipwrecked man. He talks his way past the guards the Captain has placed and finds himself in a space described as “Mal ventilado y oscuro como la *boca* del lobo” (González, emphasis mine). The mouth of the zombie is another liminal zone, a site of contagion. It marks the boundary of zombification. As Lauro and Embry write,

However, if the contemporary zombie body is an indeterminable boundary, no site is perhaps more emblematic of that omnipresent permeability, and insatiable hunger, than the zombie’s mouth. For it is always at the mouth that the zombie feeds, and it is where the physical boundary between zombie and not-zombie is effaced, through its bite. (99)

The room as a wolf’s mouth, dark and dank, also becomes a liminal space of the unknown. Miguel approaches the man and speaks to him, receiving no response. Finally, as he sighs in relief, believing his fears to be unfounded, he reaches forward and something bites his left forearm. Miguel, angry, cries out. He flees the room and Isaac comes running to bind his wound, demanding that the guards lock the door well.

Miguel, through a feverish fog, fears what will become of him, as Isaac swears he will not let his friend become a zombie. Then Miguel faints. His fear and Isaac’s at the possibility of zombification is two-fold: “There is the primary fear of being devoured by a zombie, a threat posed mainly to the physical body, and the secondary fear that one will, in losing one’s consciousness, become a part of the monstrous horde” (Lauro and Embry 89). This fear fills and drives Miguel when he again wakes, this time to the sounds of the battle truly beginning. Despite

Isaac's protests, Miguel rushes to the deck where he insists on joining the battle and fighting what he now believes to be zombie hordes.

The Saracens, as "infidels" who had denied the "true faith" and fought against it, were now subject to just war, in which the Holy League should try to exterminate them, given their enemy status (Solodkow 192). Miguel conflates the Saracens with the zombies, one of whom has just bitten him. The fog of battle and the fever from his wound leads Miguel to charge on his boat with the other infantry and fight like mad, in every sense. Though the Saracens would be seen as subjects of a different sovereign nation and zombies, as I said earlier, are no longer subjects nor properly human, Miguel now treats the enemy infantry as if they were both Saracen and zombie and kills as many enemies as his sword can reach.

He is beyond rationality, in a monstered and monsterring space. The technicality of Otherness and who deserves life is no longer in play. Whereas before he hesitated to slay Mendoza, given his uncertainty about his zombie identity, Miguel is convinced of the necessity of fighting and killing those who now come against him and his fellow soldiers. Miguel believes that he is already dead or zombified and this belief contributes to his disregard for his own well-being as he throws himself into the battle on the front lines. "We are all, in some sense, walking corpses" (Lauro and Embry 102). Miguel's belief that he is already among the walking dead puts him in a liminal state of death/undead. Miguel doesn't get to choose to be bitten, but he asserts his subjectivity when he insists upon fighting. However, he rapidly descends into a feverish nightmare in which he becomes part of something larger than himself and nearly loses subjectivity. His frequent fainting, beginning after the bite, marks the risk he runs of losing consciousness in a more permanent sense.

Miguel's view of the Saracen's was never friendly. Stratton writes that "while in the American, and indeed Western, imaginary, terrorists are thought to be controlled by some evil master, usually personified as Osama bin Laden, they are also thought to be a mindless threat coming from outside the West, from outside any Western country" (192). The Saracens here, sent by Selim II and led by Admiral Ali, represent such an external, threatening force. Not merely to the nation state of Spain but to all of Christendom, defended and defined by the Holy League. At the same time, however, Miguel sees them as a group or horde of identical zombie soldiers, rising up in waves from the depths or the depths of Hell: "Todos y cada uno de aquellos sarracenos que parecía surgir del mismo fondo del mar tenían *para él* idéntico aspecto, siendo muertos andantes de bocas desfiguradas y ojos velados y sanguinolentos" (emphasis mine). In this passage we see an emphasis on the subjective nature of Miguel's experience of the battle, as separate from the 3rd person omniscient narrator, who contradicts the protagonist's perspective. For Miguel, these soldiers form a mindless threat, bent on destroying him and his fellow fighters. González's characters, then, never having met an Arab, would have created a mental picture from their imagination. Miguel does just that, even as he faces them in his fevered condition, and he fights this imagined, monstrous being. His imagined enemy, combined with the haze of gunpowder, prevents him from seeing what the Saracen soldiers truly look

like. The floating battlefield becomes a site of mixture and violent encounter between the opposing naval armies, an extension of the cauldron of zombification soup. It contains small boats and the blood shed by the soldiers flows into the water. The narrator, speaking of the boat on which Miguel fights, declares: “tal vez no hubo en toda la batalla de Lepanto un lugar más teñido de sangre que las aguas que rodeaban aquella frágil embarcación.” Finally, the battle ends and Miguel’s vision continues: He sees a being that he believes to be God, but which the narrator clarifies is don Juan of Austria, accepting the surrender of the Saracens. As part of the conquest, the Holy League has obtained the decapitated head of Admiral Ali, but Miguel sees the zombie head which bit Mendoza, and the source of the zombie infection that he fears runs through his own veins. From his boat, Miguel watches as don Juan/God orders the head of the Admiral-devil-zombie tossed overboard, where it sinks to the bottom. The doubly-signified head, seen by Miguel’s fellow soldiers as that of the enemy admiral and by Miguel as a devilishly contaminating zombie, becomes part of the the sea of blood, recalling further the soupy zombifying concoction from Isaac’s tale. Miguel’s perspective, while different from the narrator’s and his fellow soldiers, remains fixed. He is convinced that the zombies he saw were truly there. What Miguel thinks and imagines shapes what he sees, in much the way that Wald’s outbreak narrative shapes popular and scientific belief about disease (3), and he cannot believe otherwise.

When Miguel wakes up after fainting at the conclusion of the battle, he tells Isaac, “Yo... yo peleé... contra ellos... en el Infierno” and that there were “Cientos... miles de muertos... muertos andantes... siervos de Satanás.” Isaac questions his judgment, believing him to have been hallucinating due to the bite from Mendoza. Whereas the night before Isaac related his narrative to convince Miguel of the truth about zombies, now Isaac seems more skeptical, not willing to accept Miguel’s word about what happened in the battle. Isaac’s narrative has proved infectious and Miguel remains convinced that zombies are real and that he fought them. This commitment to his own subjectivity and his belief in what he has seen fuel his stated determination to become a writer, as he tells Isaac that his withered left hand will pose no obstacle for the future, because “aun puedo escribir” (González). This desire to write proves surprising to Isaac, but to become a writer is to become a narrator, not merely a listener, and will allow Miguel to place experiences within his own narrative, giving them meaning and re-placing them within his own view of the Western social order and his own place therein.

González’s portrayal of Miguel de Cervantes uses Miguel as the viewpoint character and centers the complex relationships between various communities of people. When Isaac relates the tale of the contaminated island of Corisco and again when the infected Diego Mendoza bites Miguel, it highlights the nature of zombies as embodied contagious forces, through their physical bite, through the spread of knowledge about their existence, and through their metaphorical representation of border-crossing transcultural contamination. Esposito’s immune discourse, based on medical and political definitions, sets up communities that can be infected from without or within, and creates the possibility for exceptional

beings who stand outside of social and legal communities, as do zombies. Priscilla Wald's definition of the carrier as a stranger relates to the exceptional individuals in Esposito's theory and leads me to read zombies as carriers of disease. Mabel Moraña's analysis of monster producing zones studies the monster as a liminal being. Zombies, between life and death, crash borders and ruin the status quo. Sarah J. Lauro and Karen Embry study the zombie as posthuman and postcyborg and their analysis of the zombie as non-subject works here to emphasize the exceptional, contagious and beyond-boundary status of the zombie. These theories, put into conversation with González's tale, illuminate how the author deals with otherness and monstrosity within his text, using the zombie as a source of contagion and a representation of the other.

Notes

¹ Américo Castro points out in his work on Cervantes that the author's lifelong marginalization points to a likely identity as a *Cristiano nuevo*. Michael McGaha provides a survey of the work of Dominique Aubier, María Rosa Menocal, Leandro Rodríguez, and Ruth Reichelberg, who all explored Jewish themes in the *Quixote*, and he ties their work as non-Cervantes specialists back to the field of Cervantes studies.

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