

**V91.0870**  
**The Unquiet Dead:**  
**Imagining the Afterlife in Film and Fiction**  
**Spring 2011**

**MW 12:30-1:45**  
**Silver 206**

**Prof. Eliot Borenstein**  
**19 University Place, Room 212**

**Office Hours:**  
**T 12:30-1:30**  
**W 2-3**  
**By appointment**

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**<http://homepages.nyu.edu/~eb7/index.html>**

**Course Description:** Human life and artistic narrative can both be presumed to share one crucial defining feature: each always comes to an end. This course explores the persistent connections between various forms of storytelling (particularly fiction, poetry, film, and television) and imagined scenarios for life after death. While many of the most famous afterlife genres have strong roots in folklore (stories of vampires, ghosts, and zombies), one also finds stories that do not fit such conventional classifications. We will pay particular attention to the phenomenon of the posthumous narrator, a storytelling device that is deployed more often than many might think.

As we examine a large variety of narratives that make use of these "afterlife" devices, our goal will not be simply to provide a typology, or to show the evolution of a particular character type over time. Rather, we will ask ourselves about the nature of the fascination with the "unquiet dead" (the dead who cannot or will not rest). How do tales of the unquiet dead affect the very nature of narration (which usually assumes a final stopping point)? What is the political and ideological potential for the deployment of the unquiet dead in popular and elite storytelling? In particular, we will examine the possible connections to socioeconomic anxieties (zombies and haunted houses), cultural and sexual purity (vampires), and collective guilt (ghost stories, and the perennial American trope of the desecrated Indian burial site). We will also be looking at the roles that race and gender play in the imagination of undead "monsters." Finally, we will pay close attention to the problem of the sovereign corpse: the body of the leader left in state to both reassure and haunt the body politic (Lenin will be our primary example).

Though we will pay particular attention to the Slavic world (as the source of some of the most compelling tales of the unquiet dead), our primary sources will come from a wide range of times and linguistic traditions, including folk tales, novels, short stories, films,

and television episodes. We will also read a number of critical works that will help illuminate the material.

**Blackboard and the Internet.** Blackboard, which is accessible through the "Academics" tab of NYU Home, is an important part of course, facilitating announcements and the distribution of course materials.

Please keep in mind that, by default, Blackboard uses your NYU email account. Many of you may have other email accounts that you use. If so, it is a quite simple matter to arrange for your email from one account to be forwarded automatically to the other. I strongly urge you to do so. It is **your responsibility** to make sure that you are receiving official email sent to your NYU account.

**Writing Assignments:** There will be two short analysis papers, a midterm paper (5-7 pages), and a final paper (8-10). In addition, there will also be unannounced, in class writing assignments of a less structured nature.

The *short analysis papers* may be no longer than *three* pages, and they can be about any of the works we are reading. These papers are a tool to help you think about an aspect of the text that interests you, and any ideas you generate in the course of these assignments would be welcome contributions to class discussion. You must turn in the short paper by the beginning of the last class during which the text is being discussed, and you must show up for that class. That is, if you want to write a short paper about "The Queen of Spades," you must turn this paper in no later than **February 16**. If we are only spending one class period on the work, then you must turn in the short paper at the beginning of that class. No late short papers will be accepted under any circumstances, nor will short paper be accepted from students who did not attend that day's class.

These papers are not response papers. They are to be analytical, text-based arguments backing up a thesis that you state in your first paragraph. They are not personal essays. **Please refrain from talking about yourself in any written work for this class.**

You may not wait until August to turn in two short papers. The semester has been divided into two parts, and you must write one short paper by each of these two deadlines. That is, your first short paper must be turned in no later than **February 28**, and your second is due no later than **April 20**. Though you are not allowed to wait to do all the short papers until the end of the course, if you feel you would rather do your short papers earlier (turning two short papers during the first segment of the course), you are free to do so.

The topics of your *midterm paper* and *final paper* are yours to choose, but you must talk to me about them in advance. It is hoped that the short papers will lead you toward topics for your longer papers. Both your mid-semester and your final papers can be based on two-page papers, as long as you are not tapping the same paper for both longer works.

The midterm paper is due on **March 9**, and the final must be turned by **May 9**.

I welcome full or partial drafts of any of these writing assignment. Drafts of the papers must be shown to me no later than one week before the due date..

**Electronic submission of written assignments.** You are welcome to submit hard copies of your short and long papers. However, I prefer to receive students' papers electronically. Blackboard has a "digital drop box" feature, but I have not found it to be particularly reliable. Therefore, please send me your assignments by email, as attachments. The preferred format is any version of Word (97 or above, any platform)--such documents usually take the ".doc" extension. Failing that, .rtf files (which can be generated by most word processing programs) are also fine. I can open most other formats as well, including Word Perfect (.wpd), but this requires some extra effort on my part. Please feel free to consult with me about file format questions.

When you submit a paper electronically, please give it a descriptive filename. I have dozens of students, and if all of you send me files called "Science Fiction Assignment" or "Asimov Paper," this will be confusing and frustrating. After the first time you make this mistake, I will not accept another paper with an unidentifiable file name.

The preferred (but not required) format for file names is <Student last name> <Type of assignment> <Assignment number> <Topic >. Examples: if Bonnie Tyler has written a second short paper on Stoker, the file should be something like "Tyler Short Paper 2 (Stoker).doc". If Eric Roberts has written a midterm paper on Shirley Jackson then the file should be something like "Roberts Midterm (Jackson).doc". A final paper on Nabokov by Scott Baio would be "Baio Final (Nabokov).doc".

Finally, please note that I have two different email accounts ([eb7@nyu.edu](mailto:eb7@nyu.edu) and [eliotb2002@me.com](mailto:eliotb2002@me.com)). The NYU account automatically forwards mail to the me account. Please do not send email to both accounts at once ("cc"); if you do, I will end up with three copies of your message.

**Final Grade.** Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Two-page papers:	30%
Midterm paper:	20%
Final paper:	30%

**Class participation.** Most class periods will be a mix of lecture and discussion; only occasionally will I spend the entire class giving a lecture. Everyone is encouraged to participate in discussion, which will be facilitated by questions that I will be distributing in advance over electronic mail, and by the short papers.

Active and constructive class participation can significantly improve your final grade. Frequent absences can have a negative effect on your final grade.

**Required Texts, Part One  
(NYU Book Store)**

Brooks, Max. *World War Z*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007.  
Eagleman, David. *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives*. New York: Vintage, 2010.  
Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. New York: Penguin, 2006.  
Lem, Stanislaw. *Solaris*. Translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox. New York: Mariner Books, 2002.  
Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York; Knopf, 2004.  
Nabokov, Vladimir. *The Eye*. New York: Vintage, 1990  
Roth, Philip. *The Counterlife*. New York: Vintage, 1996.  
Sebold, Alice. *The Lovely Bones*. New York: Back Bay, 2009.  
Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. New York: Dover Publications, 2000.

[**Please note:** The full text of *Dracula* is also available on Blackboard.]

**Required Texts , Part Two  
(On Blackboard)**

The rest of the readings for this class will be available in two formats on Blackboard: Rich Text Format (.rtf), which can be read and printed using virtually any word processing program on any platform, and .pdf, which treats the articles as images rather than texts. Occasionally, the files are in .html format rather than .rtf.

Please also note that the first two readings on Blackboard are not assigned for specific days; rather, they are ancillary materials designed to help you perform well in the class. I expect you to familiar yourself with them before you turn in any written assignment.

Finally, please note that you must **bring the texts with you to class**.

A-1 Advice for Student Writers.

A-2 Citation

Selected Folk Tales

Akutagawa, Ryunosuke. "In the Grove." *Rashomon and Other Stories*. Translated by Taskashi Kojima. London: Liveright, 1999.

Ashliman, D.L. (Translator and/or editor). "Human Sacrifice in Legends and Myths." <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/sacrifice.html>. Last Accessed January 1, 2011.

Brockmeier, Kevin. "The Brief History of the Dead." *The New Yorker*. September 9, 2008.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. "Chapter 1"; "Chapter 4." *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 1992. 1-14; 59-75.

Brothers Grimm. "50 Briar Rose." *Household Tales* (1857) Translated by Margaret Hunt (1884). <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5314/pg5314.html>

- . "53 Little Snow-white." *Household Tales* (1857) Translated by Margaret Hunt (1884). <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5314/pg5314.html>
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. "Bobok." *The Eternal Husband and Other Stories*. Translated and Annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Bantam, 2000. 214-232
- . "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man." *The Eternal Husband and Other Stories*. Translated and Annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Bantam, 2000. 278-300.
- Fedorov, N.F. Parts I, II, and IV of *The Philosophy of the Common Task* (33-64, 89-104); "Parents and resurrectors" (191-194); "On the unity of the meteorological and cosmic processes" (195) in *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Selected works translated from the Russian and abridged by Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto. Lausanne: Honeyglen Publishing, 1990. [From the first posthumous Russian edition: 1906]
- Gaiman, Neil. "Snow, Glass, Apples." *Smoke and Mirrors: Short Fictions and Illusions*. New York: Avon Press, 1998
- Gogol, Nikolai. "Viy." *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*. Translated and Annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage, 1999. 155-193.
- Groome, Francis Hindes. "No. 5.--The Vampire. Chapter II: Roumanian-Gypsy Stories." *Gypsy Folk Tales*. London: Hurst and Blackett, Limited, 1899/  
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/roma/gft/gft065.htm>
- Jacobs, W.W. "The Monkey's Paw." (1902) *The Lady of the Barge* (6th ed.) London and New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers: 1906
- Kis, Danilo. "The Encyclopedia of the Dead (A Whole Life)." *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*. Translated by Michael Henry Heim Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997. 37-66
- Lovecraft, H. P. "Herbert West—Reanimator." Written in September of 1921 to 1922. Published in 1922 in *Home Brew*.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. 1848.  
<http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>
- McClelland, Bruce. "Chapter Three: Conversion in the Balkans: A Thousand Years of the Vampire." *Slayers and Their Vampires*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.
- Melville, Herman. "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-street." From *Four Short Novels*. New York: Bantam Books, 1959. 1-41.
- Palahniuk, Chuck. "Prologue"; "Chapter 5." *Lullaby*. (2002)
- Pamuk, Orhan. "I Am a Corpse." *My Name Is Red*. Translated by Erda Göknar. New York: Knopf, 2001
- Poe, Edgar Allen. "Annabel Lee" (1849)
- Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Tell-Tale Heart." (1843) <http://www.poemuseum.org/works-telltale.php>
- Pushkin, Alexander. "The Queen of Spades." Translated by Natalie Duddington *The Queen of Spades*. Ed. Natalie Duddington. Progress Publishers
- Ralston, W. R. S. *Russian Fairy Tales: A Choice Collection of Muscovite Folk-lore*. New York: Hurst & Co., 1872. 33-37, 112-127, 312-329.

[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22373/22373-h/22373-h.htm#Page\\_32](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22373/22373-h/22373-h.htm#Page_32)  
Rappall and Leonard Bacon (Editors and Translators). "The Building of Skadar." *Heroic Ballads of Servia*. Boston: Sherman, French and Company, 1913. 16-24.  
Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. <http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dracula>  
Verdery, Kathleen. "Introduction"; "Chapter 1." *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. 1-54.

### **Recommended Texts (On Blackboard)**

Ellmann, Maude. "Explanatory Notes." Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Maude Ellmann. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. 380-389.  
Koutaissoff, Elisabeth. "Introduction." 1-32. In *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task*. Selected works translated from the Russian and abridged by Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto. Lausanne: Honeyglenn Publishing, 1990. [From the first posthumous Russian edition: 1906]  
Recommended, but not required. Can be found in the Fedorov reading section.

### **Required Texts, Part Three: The eBook Options**

Some of you might prefer to read the required texts as eBooks. You should feel free to do so. Many of the books ordered at the NYU bookstore are available as eBooks from various Internet vendors (Amazon, eReader, Fictionwise, iBooks, etc.). To my knowledge, these include the books by Brooks, Eagleman, Morrison, Sebold, and Stoker.

In addition, I have made all of the Blackboard readings available in the "Course Documents" tab as eBooks. They are combined into files called "Course Packs," which are an amalgamation of all the assigned texts on Blackboard.

I have made them available in three different formats:

- 1) PDB format. This is the native format for the eReader/Fictionwise/Barnes and Noble/Nook applications. It can also be read in Stanza.
- 2) Mobi format. This is the format that Amazon acquired for the Kindle, and can be read natively by any Kindle application.
- 3) Epub format. This is the format that was designed to be an industry standard. It is the only format read by Apple's iBooks app, and can also be read in Stanza.

### **Required Texts, Part Four (Films)**

**[Please note: not all films will be assigned in their entirety. Some will be screened in class (as excerpts), while others are to be viewed at home. Please consult the syllabus for the details]**

Abuladze, Tengiz. *Repentance* (1984)  
Babbit, Jamie (dir.) *Sleeping Beauties* (1999)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4itLXzWeI0>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsQ7IBw\\_NFs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsQ7IBw_NFs)  
Hooper, Tobe (dir.). *Poltergeist* (1982)  
Jackson, Peter. *The Lovely Bones* (2009)  
Keaton, Diane. *Heaven* (1987)  
Lange, Michael (dir.). "Pangs." (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season Four, Episode Eight) (1999)  
Romero, George A. *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)  
Vertov, Dziga. *Three Songs about Lenin* (1934)

Various versions of *Dracula*.

**Required Texts, Part Five:  
World War Z Readings**

Brooks, Max. *World War Z*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007 (ordered at the NYU bookstore, as noted above)

While you are encourage to read the entire book (it goes by quite quickly, you are only required to read selected excerpts. Here is the short explanation of the reading assignment, which should be easy for anyone reading a paper copy of the book:

Read Brooks, (1-3, 32-44, 54-59, 63-67, 73-89, 105-109, 121-46 199-203, 227-233, 264-289, 315-342)

However, some of you might be reading the eBook. In that case, there are no page numbers, so you may need more detailed instructions, which I am including below.

**Brooks Readings (by section title)**

"Introduction" (1-3)

Warnings

"Tel Aviv, Israel" (32-36)

"Bethlehem, Palestine" (36-44)

Blame

"Vostok Station: Antarctica"(54-59)

"Troy, Montana, USA" (63-67)

The Great Panic

"Topeka, Kansas, USA" (73-76)

"Khuzhir, Olkhon Island, Lake Baikal, The Holy Russian Empire" (76-83)

"Bridgetown, Barbados, West Indies Federation" (83-89)

#### Turning the Tide

"Robben Island, Cape Town Province, United States of Souther Africa" (105-109)

"Sand Lakes Provincial Wilderness Park, Manitoba, Canada" (121-130)

"Udaipur Lake Palace, Lake Pichola, Rajasthan, India" (130-136)

#### Home Front, USA

"Taos, New Mexico" (137-146)

#### Around the World, and Above

"The Demilitarized Zone: South Korea" (199-203)

"Cienfuegos, Cuga" (227-233)

"Ancud, Isla Grande de Chiloe, Chile" (264-269)

#### Total War

"Denver, Colorado" (315-327)

#### Good-byes (328-342)



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### January 24(M) Introduction

### January 26 (W) Happily Ever After (1): Where the Bodies Are Buried

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Ashliman, "Human Sacrifice"
  - ♣ Rappall and Bacon, "The Building of Skadar"
  - ♣ Ralston, "Koshchei the Deathless" in *Russian Fairy Tales*, 112-127
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 1

### January 31 (M) Happily Ever After (2): The Dead and the Restless

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Groome, "The Vampire"
  - ♣ McClelland, *Slayers and Their Vampires* (excerpts)
  - ♣ Ralston, *Russian Fairy Tales* (finish)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 2

### February 2 (W) "The Blood is the Life" (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Gogol, "Viy"
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 3

### February 7 (M) "The Blood is the Life" (2)

- In Class:**  
Watch various *Draculas* (excerpts)
- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Stoker, *Dracula* (Chapters 1-15)
  - ♣ Ellmann, Explanatory Notes (recommended)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 4

### February 9 (W) "The Blood is the Life" (3)

- In Class:**  
Watch various *Draculas* (excerpts)
- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Stoker, *Dracula* (finish)
  - ♣ Ellmann, Explanatory Notes (recommended)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 5

### February 14 (M) Dead Girls (1)

- In Class:**  
Watch Babbit, *Sleeping Beauties*
- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Brother Grimm, "Little Snow-white"
  - ♣ Brother Grimm, "Briar Rose"
  - ♣ Poe, "Annabel Lee"
  - ♣ Gaiman, "Snow, Glass, Apples"
  - ♣ Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body* (excerpts)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 6

### February 16 (W) Never Let Me Go

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Read Pushkin, "The Queen of Spades"
  - ♣ Read Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 7

### February 21 (M) Dead Presidents' Day NO CLASS

### February 23 (W) Unreal Estate (1)

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (Chapters 1-4)
  - ♣ Palahniuk, *Lullaby* (excerpts)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 8

### February 28 (M) Unreal Estate (2)

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (finish)
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 9

### **Final Deadline for First Short Paper**

### March 2 (W) The Marxist Undead

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
  - ♣ Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 10

### March 7 (M) Autothanotography

- ▼ For Today:
- ♣ Read Nabokov, *The Eye*
  - ♣ Eagleman, Chapter 11

**March 9 (W) Dead Letters**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Dostoevsky, "Bobok"  
✪ Dostoevsky, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man"  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 12  
**Midterm Paper Due**

**March 14-March 20**  
**Spring Break**

**March 21 (M) Conversations with Dead People**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Akutagawa, "In the Grove"  
✪ Pamuk, "I Am a Corpse"  
✪ Lem, *Solaris* (Chapters 1-7)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 13

**March 23 (W) Space Ghost**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Lem, *Solaris* (finish)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 14-16

**March 28 (M) (Post-)Colonial Ghosts (1)**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Watch *Poltergeist*  
✪ Morrison, *Beloved* (through p. 122, up to the section that begins with the words "Out of sight")  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 17

**March 30 (W) (Post-)Colonial Ghosts (2)**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Morrison, *Beloved* (through the end of Chapter 1)  
✪ Buffy the Vampire Slayer, "Pangs"  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 18

**April 4 (M) (Post-)Colonial Ghosts (3)**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Morrison, *Beloved* (finish)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 19

**April 6 (W) Dead Girls (2) The Democratic Dead**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Sebold, *The Lovely Bones* (Chapters 1-11)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 20

**April 11 (M) Dead Girls (3): The Democratic Dead**  
▼ For Today:  
**In Class:**  
Watch *The Lovely Bones* (excerpts)  
✪ Sebold, *The Lovely Bones* (finish)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 21-22

**April 13 (W) Step 1: Abolish Death**  
▼ In Class  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Read Koutaisoff (recommended, not required)  
✪ Read Fedorov (excerpts)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 23

**April 18 (M) Sliding Doors (1)**  
▼ In Class  
✪ Watch *Heaven* (excerpts)  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Read Roth, *The Counterlife* (Chapters 1-2)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 24

**April 20 (W) Sliding Doors (2)**  
▼ In Class  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Read Roth, *The Counterlife* (finish)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 25-26  
**Final Deadline for Second Short Paper**

**April 25 (M) The Walking Dead**  
✪ Jacobs, "The Monkey's Paw"  
✪ Romero, *Night of the Living Dead*  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 27

**April 27 (W) The Political Economy of Zombies**  
▼ For Today:  
✪ Lovecraft, "Herbert West—Reanimator"  
✪ Brooks, *World War Z* (excerpts--see pp. 7-8 of the syllabus)  
✪ Eagleman, Chapter 28-31

**May 2 (M) Lenin Lives!**

**In Class:**

Vertov, *Three Songs about Lenin*  
(excerpts)

▼ For Today:

✪ Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (excerpts)

✪ Eagleman, Chapter 32-35

**May 4 (W) Spectres Haunting Europe**

▼ For Today:

✪ Abuladze, *Repentance*

✪ Eagleman, Chapter 36-38

**May 9 (M) The Reading Dead**

▼ For Today:

✪ Brockmeier, "A Brief History of  
the Dead"

✪ Kis, "The Encyclopedia of the  
Dead"

✪ Eagleman, Chapter 39-40

**Final Paper Due**