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No other fictional creature is as ancient, as durable, and as versatile as the zombie. The possibility of a zombie army is mentioned as far back as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and as recently as *Game of Thrones*.[1] Some recent zombie television series promote a new category of zombie that is neither mindless nor predatory: that is, a zombie that has been humanized. Four such shows under consideration here share many commonalities: the British *In the Flesh* (2013-2014); the French *The Returned* [*Les Revenants*] (2012-2015); the Australian *Glitch* (2015-2019); and the American *Resurrection* (2014-2015).[2] These shows appeared during the same period on three different continents and reconfigure the familiar narrative by focusing on the perspective of the zombies. This is a radical inversion of the pattern of series such as *The Walking Dead* (2010-) or *Black Summer* (2019-), which are told from the perspective of human survivors; these shows might be identified as "outbreak narratives" (Schweitzer 1). Furthermore, all four shows are set in localized, often intimate communities, and the cause of the resurrections remains inexplicable and seemingly metaphysical. There is no doubt that the television popularity of the zombie owes much to *The Walking Dead*, which represents the classic, formulaic depiction of zombies as brain-eating, somnambulistic menaces to humanity, squarely focused on "what kind of human community will be built on the ashes of the pre-infection world" (Vint 139). In contrast, these shows depict the struggle of the undead to reinsert themselves back into their former lives, families, and localities. An essential element of this conflict is the degree of acceptance or antagonism they receive from their former hometowns; they encounter mistrust, suspicion, and the reality that their loved ones have sometimes moved on, physically and emotionally. In other words, the entire murderous rationale of zombies has been overturned as the zombies become dramatic characters with feelings, opinions, and belief systems. At the same time, television zombies attract new audiences because of their availability on streaming platforms, thereby transforming the fictional creature from a rarified cult-movie status to a mainstream cultural mainstay, perhaps best illustrated in the fact that not only is there a prequel zombie show, *Fear the Walking Dead* (2015-), but this has also been released alongside the original series.

The zombie has long served as a figure of social commentary, as a sentient being who is neither completely dead nor fully living, and these series have the motifs of integration and alienation at their core. No longer situated in apocalyptic or postapocalyptic society but instead in places of imminent societal upheaval, these protagonists are distinct from the typical zombie, which "is a loaded cultural figure that symbolizes a number of social fears about disaster, ruin, and dehumanization" (Fojas 80). Simon Orpana contends that zombie

walks owe their popularity to their performance not of eternal perdition and judgment but rather of "anxiety over a more mundane and existentially unintelligible death that haunts the social imagination in the form of overcrowded urban living conditions, viral epidemics, random accidents, terrorism, and environmental catastrophe" (309). The reanimated humans in these four series likewise critique the failings of neoliberalism in Western democracies, pointing to the inadequacy of this dominant paradigm to address the material and cultural effects of contemporary mass migration and multiculturalism. Since these new zombie incarnations are no longer infectious, nor are they "non-conscious consuming machine[s]," they no longer as clearly symbolize "the monstrous figure of global capitalism" (Lauro and Embry 99). In this sense, sentient zombies are open to new figurative meanings. Gerry Canavan speculates that zombie apocalypses "repackage the violence of colonial race war" (420). In parallel logic, narratives about the cognitive dead coming back to live alongside us may reflect the social and socioeconomic migrations of formerly colonized peoples to the geographical remnants of colonizing powers. The shows set in Australia, a former outpost of the British Empire, and in Missouri, a historical locus of the slave trade, contain the most discernable commentary on societal diversity, and both depict characters directly implicated in or affected by institutional racism. I will therefore discuss these two shows, *Glitch* and *Resurrection*, in greater detail.

Radical Reconfigurations of the Undead. *Glitch*, directed by Emma Freeman and Tony Krawitz, is set in the Australian Outback town of Yoorana in the state of Victoria. The show's main character is James Hayes, a personable police sergeant called to a disturbance at the local cemetery in the middle of the night. He arrives to discover six mud-covered figures running around aimlessly. He assumes that they have taken illicit substances but learns that they have been resurrected from their graves, a fact he believes when one of the reanimated corpses proves to be his wife, Kate, who died of cancer two years earlier. Each of the revived people has memory loss but they gradually recall their past lives. James struggles to keep details of this extraordinary event secret, and the second season reveals the involvement of researchers at a pharmaceutical company, Noregard, in particular the doctor with whom James has worked closely, Elishia McKeller, herself a returnee. Noregard seems to have no regard for the sanctity of human life, judged by the experimentation its researchers perform. The third season reveals that the company's experimentation with human resurrection has upset a cosmic equilibrium between life and death, leading to instability and the destruction of the planet.

Resurrection, developed by Aaron Zelman, is loosely based on Jason Mott's novel, *The Returned* (2013); it begins with an eight-year-old American boy, Jacob Langston, awaking in a rural Chinese river with no memory. When he is returned to his home in Arcadia, Missouri, it transpires that Jacob died three decades earlier in a drowning accident in 1982. His parents, who had no additional children, are now in their sixties and undergo a series of reactions

from shock to relief. Jacob's return heralds the resurrection of several other deceased townsfolk, at an increasing rate. Some have living relations; others, who died in the 1920s and 1930s, only have living descendants. The town struggles to cope with the unexpected return of so many of its citizens. During the second season, the local resurrections herald a massive global phenomenon, linked to the birth of the child of one of the returned, Rachael Braidwood, who was pregnant when she committed suicide twelve years earlier. An itinerant minister, Pastor James, another returned, warns that any child born to the resurrected will result in the end times, that implicitly this child will bring the anti-Christ into the world. After the birth of the baby, the show transitions to an apparently idyllic scene in the near future and we become aware of the existence of a newly created US federal agency, the Bureau of the Returned. In a sinister hint that Rachael's baby portends some supernatural catastrophe, cicadas gravitate to the infant's bedroom window.

The reanimated dead of the two shows are metaphysical rather than medical zombies and the discord they bring causes their respective communities to approach them via reintegration rather than extermination. There is also a notable lack of the gore and carnage usually associated with cinematic zombies, who in such films "are the most unsympathetic of all monsters, perhaps the worst of all monsters, whose destruction is not only to be sought, but to be celebrated in a gorefest of blood, body parts and twitching organs" (Phillips and Mendoza 108). This is not to say that the shows lack in violence but rather that the violence is generally psychological. Moreover, this violence reverses generic expectations for it is invariably humans who commit the most ferocious acts.

These new zombie shows rely strongly on imagery of sexuality and spirituality. In the parallel through which both represent modes of desiring and consuming flesh, we can posit a connection between sexuality and resurrection in Christian doctrine in that Christ's resurrection is symbolized by consumption of his body, although this iconography is not typically explored in zombie narratives. *Resurrection* has the most evident Christian subtext. At the close of the first episode, the second returned is reunited with his son and daughter. Caleb Richards died at a young age of a heart attack and his children are now in their twenties. His daughter, Elaine, slowly reaches out her hand and touches her father's beard in a gesture that evokes Thomas feeling the risen Christ's side. Earlier in the episode, in the local unnamed but Protestant church, the minister, Tom Hale, addresses his congregation: "Well, even John had doubt. When he was in prison. And how did Jesus respond? By personally reassuring him? No. He told John's disciples, 'Go to him. Remind him of the miracles you've seen.'" At this precise moment, as soon as the word "miracles" reverberates, Jacob appears, followed by his mother, a sight that causes Tom to falter in his delivery, signaling a theological dimension to the child's enigmatic homecoming. As the show progresses, it becomes more apocalyptic, linking the return of the dead to a general resurrection that will swamp humanity's resources, anchored to the Book of Revelation's prophecies of the last days. The religious element of *Resurrection* emphasizes the

unspoken racial tensions in Arcadia. The returned have their own impoverished church, founded by Tom Hale, who leaves his previous parish because of his acceptance of the returned, an example of the ghettoization of minorities.

Sarah Cleary connects zombies' craving for flesh with carnal desire for the flesh (75), although it might also be argued that zombies are historically sexless since they are unable to consent and crave flesh for sustenance rather than from concupiscence (Waller 280). The zombie has been "largely an anti-erotic object" (Elliott-Smith 151) and, indeed, "few of these creatures have been held as objects of desire or conveyed as love interests" (Jackson 118). There is also the practical consideration that the classic zombie is a rotting corpse, encouraging the showcasing of innovative special effects and make-up to depict the corporeality of the zombie.[3] This is not to suggest that these shows about sympathetic zombies have been completely eviscerated of the elements of fear and horror. Television zombies remain monstrous, even if not murdering and marauding. For one thing, their very appearance marks a breach in the natural order of things: "The abnormality and excess inherent in the monster is often seen from the perspective of evolutionary theory to reflect a break from the chain of evolution that inevitably marks the end of the deformed organism" (Beville 5). The return of people we saw buried in the earth is profoundly unsettling and raises questions not only about the meaning of life but more crucially about the nature of reality. It stands outside of the natural order of events, meeting Thomas Aquinas's definition of the miraculous.[4] As gentle, as loving, and as loveable as the new wave of television zombies might be, they still are harbingers of change and chaos: "Monsters, when understood as transgressive beings, produce an ambivalence that often introduces both subversive fantasies about chaos and conservative desires to restore social order" (Hutchison and Brown 9). Zombies are defined by this function of social critique according to Peter Dendle, who points to "the enduring power and relevance of a mythological creature that has proven itself consistently resonant with shifting cultural anxieties for over seven decades" (45). These new series reorient the relationship between humans and zombies, positing them as two communities that must learn to understand and live with each other. Unlike older cinematic and televisual incarnations, these shows' zombies are living entities, agents who think and act. Every contact a zombie has with the living is a *memento mori*.[5] Although typically zombies are situated on the very bottom of Mori's Uncanny Valley, the zombies of these recent shows would be on the crest, and thus they are endowed with a greater capability to provoke an unsettling reaction in a viewer.[6]

Migration vs. Invasion. Zombies are almost always precursors of doom, imbued with nihilism. Eric Boyer bleakly uses zombie narratives to gloss twenty-first century society:

> We are living in a zombie invasion narrative of our own creation, but we are all placed in a complicated role: we are always already both human survivor and part of the zombie menace. Although this conflicted role destroys the space needed for the political realm of dialogue and understanding, humanity's shared

> status as human-zombie hybrid illuminates the contours of both the problems we face and the solutions available. (1149)

No less darkly, William Eggington claims that the root of our renewed fascination with the undead lies in our dependence on new technologies, making us "zombie consumers of media—zombies because we are animate without anima, we believe we are alive, real, autonomous, while in reality we are already dead, plugged into the relentless machine of capital hell-bent on our destruction" (114). Zombies have been used symbolically both to work through and to reproduce uncertainties surrounding terrorism, immigration, contagious diseases, and apocalyptic events. James Thompson notes that "the zombie *en masse*" are mindless figures, "unthinkingly attacking and devouring humans as they encounter them, incapable of speech and impossible to reason with, destroying the social fabric and replacing it with a deadly irreversible hopeless chaos"; they are thus "the perfect sublimated symbol for the increasing polarization in human society, particularly American society" (23). In contrast, the series I discuss here inject this figure with hope because they show individuals confronting a deep-seated fear of the dead rising up but without requiring the destruction of one side as the only possible dénouement. David Schmid chronicles a shift from the demonization of the monstrous to "positive resignifications" that "act as a rallying cry for all those [who] feel themselves abjected by the current politico-economic order" (94). While Schmid alludes to the solidarity of the surviving human community, I argue that these series depicting humans and zombies learning to co-exist are similarly positive in their signification, similar to Donna Haraway's "fairly transgressive" world inhabited by humans and cyborgs (the unhuman) that constitutes a "rich topography of combinatorial possibility" (328).

No longer invaders, these television zombies gravitate back to their places of origin and are often met with resistance from a human community that is not in any mortal danger, but that *feels* endangered. These stories are about domestic alienation, set in isolated areas rather than the familiar urban centers featured in many postapocalyptic movies (and, to a lesser extent, television series). The wind-swept, colorless backdrop of the West Pennine Moors in Lancashire is the location for *In the Flesh*, and this is "very much in the gothic tradition, the environment as counterpart to human life" (Morgan 194). In fact, the first episode opens with the camera panning over the moors before we see habitation, hinting that the barrenness of the rugged fells dominates the populace. This local town, Roarton, suggests the turbulent relations between the living and undead, whereas Yoorana in *Glitch* is an indigenous word meaning "loving," hinting at the sentiment that unifies normal and paranormal humans. The pointedly nameless town in *The Returned* is cut off from its neighbors by the natural boundary of the mountains on one side and a dam on the other, both of which loom over characters. The desolation of the space is intensified by filming in twilight hours, creating a "tinge of a gothic aesthetic" (Heaton 146). *Glitch* exemplifies "Australian Gothic" in terms of its "sense of the alienation and strangeness associated with the uncanny nature of Australian colonial history" (Herron 87). When the returned attempt to leave *Glitch*'s

tight-knit outback town of Yoorana, they start to hemorrhage and eventually die (again) unless they return. In *The Returned*, neither the living nor the returned can leave the valley; when they attempt to, they end up back where they started, trapped as if in an Escher image (there are hints that everyone might be dead and inhabiting an afterlife). Stacey Abbott draws attention to the fact that *In the Flesh* was produced and screened during heated debates in the UK about immigration (113). This is the climate that led to the (albeit close) referendum result to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016. The dual logic that protects citizens and dehumanizes refugees resonates with extremist political rhetoric rather than humanitarian concerns. Robert Saunders contextualizes the contemporary popularity of the zombie within the geopolitical background of migratory flux and as "a reflection of the dangers of invasive alterity associated with uncontrolled spaces in the current era of globalisation" (81). *In the Flesh* uses the pejorative term "rotter" as a discriminatory word to refer to zombies, allegorizing a number of dehumanizing descriptors for members of minority groups.

Diversity and Difference in *Resurrection*'s Arcadia. Arcadia is a small and intimate Midwestern town; in some respects it is a picture-perfect backdrop, with brightly colored houses, well-frequented local businesses such as a diner, and close relationships among the populace. Yet its name evokes the Latin adage, "Et in Arcadia ego," a reminder that death will be present even in the most pastorally idyllic of settings. The local doctor who examines Jacob, the returned boy, is his first cousin, the sheriff is his uncle, and the pastor, Tom Hale, his closest boyhood friend. Despite its apparent intimacy, Arcadia is predominantly Caucasian, with the notable exception of the central character, FBI agent Martin Bellamy, an outsider who is African American and arrives to investigate. In season 2, we discover that Martin actually does hail from the town, having been adopted as a child, and his real name is Robert Thompson (S2E06 "Afflictions"). Dr. Maggie Langston, Jacob's aunt, explains that "Arcadians have a natural distrust of outsiders. Goes back to the Civil War. We were a border town in a border state, so everybody thought they knew what was best for us." The agent's reaction underscores the affinities of this attitude with historical racism: "As long as I don't get lynched" (S1E01 "The Returned"). Townsfolk do not welcome Jacob's return or the later returnees. When Jacob is playing with another child in a playground, parents abruptly pull their children away, despite one boy pleading "But we're playing!" (S1E02 "Unearth"). This recalls racially segregated recreational areas and suggests how children learn their elders' intolerance of difference. At the end of season one, when several hundred returned flood into Arcadia, the army steps in. Colonel Stone, in charge of the military personnel, observes: "you got yourself a beautiful town here. Reminds me of a different era. Simpler one" (E108). The insinuation is that this largely white and "wholesome" location is impervious to diversity and, indeed, that society was more straightforward under mechanisms of segregation. This exchange culminates in the sheriff "debriefing" the officer about the true nature of the people seeking help,

deeming them too dangerous and proposing that forces of order intervene to "protect the living instead of the dead." The returned are then held against their will by armed soldiers and thereafter sent to detention centers. They are invited to register on the pretext of receiving vaccinations and other medical and material assistance. The deceit of the authorities and the fact that many of the returned are dressed in clothes from the 1930s and 1940s creates a harrowing scene recalling mid-century totalitarian regimes.

By the end of the second season, Jacob's father, Henry, evolves from the suspicious, repressed man who lost his son and family business. He has a fraught relationship with his family, especially his wife, until he is killed by an automobile and returns from the dead. He is transformed not only through the passage from life to death to life but also in terms of his personal moral compass. In early episodes, Henry is resistant to the returned, but as a returned himself, he becomes an advocate for a largely powerless community. Henry's family owned the local manufacturing business, accumulating wealth and status over decades of profiting from a low-paid workforce. When Bellamy confirms to him that the returned boy is his son, Henry walks to the cemetery and sits in front of the Langston family mausoleum. We do not see the tomb until Bellamy, the agent, walks up from behind and remarks that is "impressive," to which Henry retorts: "It's damn gaudy. Like everything I did back then" (S1E01). The shot reverses as he says this to show Henry from the rear on the left, the stone vault in the middle of the shot, and the derelict Langston factory in the background to the right; a water tower above the building directs the viewer's line of sight toward it. The name Langston is carved above the tomb's entrance and also appears on the water tower. The shot is brief but symbolically frames a profiteering past—that Henry regrets—with mortality and the misery of others, compounded by a later shot from further behind in which the factory fills almost half of the screen, dwarfing the two men. Even in death and in this place of repose, the town's hierarchical structures are present. The confirmation of Jacob's genetic identity signals that this order is about to be undermined and the scene foreshadows Henry's imminent accidental death.

While Henry becomes progressively more sympathetic over the two seasons, the same cannot be said of his brother, Sheriff Fred Langston. Early in the second season, Fred blocks Bellamy from exhuming and testing Jacob's remains, using his personal influence to interfere in a matter that directly concerns him. When he encounters Bellamy, he vituperatively comments: "Oh, and I made some calls. You're nothing but a desk jockey. A glorified chauffeur who shuttles immigrants from one airport to another. And you have been for years. So, don't pretend to be something you're not." The racist undertones of this demeaning intervention are compounded by the *mise-en-scène*: Fred and Judge Daley, white officials, descend a staircase, having taken care of business behind the scenes. Bellamy interacts with a receptionist at the front desk: these two African American characters stand in the liminal entry space as passive observers of the systemic corruption of local government. Fred clasps the justice's arm as he warmly shakes his hand. We see Bellamy entering the building from behind the front desk, intimating that there will

always be a barrier for some sections of the populace. At the end of the second episode, Bellamy secures a federal order to unearth Jacob's remains. When he arrives at the Langston vault, he hands the order to a police officer who is waiting in front of the crypt with two graveyard workers, who are also among the few characters of color in the series. This impression is compounded by the lone figure of Henry Langston, who watches from across the graveyard, a reversal of the previous episode when Bellamy came to Henry.

Another scene dramatizing Arcadia's underlying racial codes occurs when Bellamy walks on a rural riverside trail with Maggie after they both visited the spot where Jacob and Maggie's mother drowned. Maggie comments, "So about a mile up that way is the site of a famous Civil War battle where two rivers merge, and they say the river turned red with blood. And not far downstream, a flood destroyed an entire Osage village" (S1E03 "Two Rivers"). This is a reminder of the ambiguous history of the town: it displaced Osage Nation territory and profited from slavery; the latter is presumably linked to the Bellamy family's pre-eminence. Moreover, the Osage tribe, whose homeland centered on the Missourian Ozarks, was especially divided by the Civil War, with four hundred warriors fighting for the Union and two hundred and fifty men serving in the Confederate forces (Burns 258-65). This legacy is brought home in a particularly abrupt way when they hear gunshots and Bellamy draws his service weapon. Three Caucasian hunters step out of the adjacent trees and continue on their way only when they recognize Maggie and she explains that Bellamy is a federal agent. The three men are dressed in camouflage and stand together brandishing rifles on an incline, whereas Bellamy is in a defensive position with his gun out. It is all too obvious that the brusque interrogation, with "friend" enunciated in a particularly sarcastic tone, has been provoked by the sight of a white woman in an isolated area with a black man. The hunters reluctantly leave but on a note of malice: "Well, don't get yourself in any trouble," pointedly referring to Maggie in the singular and failing to apologize for their intrusive intervention. This skirmish encapsulates the disproportionate targeting of African American males by legal agencies and vigilantes that would lead to unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, only a few months after the screening of this episode. In one sense, the scene is a microcosm of the realities of racial politics in contemporary American society.

In the second season, conversing over coffee in the town's diner, Fred asks his brother about a new bill in Congress concerning the returned. Henry replies: "It's a joke. The Senate will kill it." Fred insists: "It's progress." This provokes a fierce response from Henry: "Says the man who still has all his rights. I mean, answer me this. What kind of sense does it make that I should still be paying taxes even though I can't vote?" (S2E13 "Love in Return"). This, the most overtly political comment from a character in the series, invites the viewer to associate the plight of the returned with the issue of voter suppression in the US. This particular episode aired in January 2015 in a lead-up to an election that provided wide discussions about disenfranchisement; fourteen states enacted new voting restrictions by the 2016 presidential election, actions that disproportionately affected low-income and minority

voters.[7] In the following scene, Bellamy, talking of riots and uprisings against the returned across the globe, declares that "The world's not perfect. It never was. Tolerance is not gonna come overnight," connecting the status of the return to issues of integration. This arc is introduced in the show's opening scene when Jacob wakes up in a paddy field in rural China. He wanders to a nearby market and is geographically and linguistically lost before, to the astonishment of onlookers, he collapses; many of them are wearing traditional workers' clothes and caps, reminding the viewer of the ideological distance between China and the US. This place remains unnamed, simply "a village in rural China.... Nothing but farms and rice paddies for hundreds of miles." Jacob is returned to the US, assigned to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency as someone with no ID and no passport, in what is referred to as a repatriation. Jacob thus migrates not only from death to life but also from China back to the US.

Ostracism and the Outback in *Glitch*. The success of *Glitch* is striking in light of what Steven Allen calls the "paucity of zombie films" in Australian culture (73). Allen cites the troubled history of the nation and affirms that "it is to the colonial past of injustices, their lingering presence, and the mismatch between settler and indigenous beliefs about the dead that we must look for the avoidance of zombie narratives" (75). *Glitch* deals with Australia's ghosts of institutionalized racism and aggressive hypermasculinity through the literal ghosts of two of the undead characters.[8] Paddy Fitzgerald is chronologically the oldest of the resurrected, an Irish settler who was the first mayor of the town until his death in 1864. At first it appears that he shares some nineteenth-century preconceptions of the Aboriginal community when he encounters 16-year-old Beau Cooper. He asks Beau to take him to a pub called the Royal: it is boarded up and the teenager explains, "Can't get in, though," to which Paddy exclaims, "Well, of course you can't, if you're a native." Beau counters, "What? No, you fucking racist. It's because it's closed" (S1E01). These initial impressions are readjusted over the first season as we learn that the plain-speaking Paddy was murdered by his own family because of his romantic liaison with his Aboriginal housemaid, Kalinda. In fact, it is revealed in season 2 that this relationship began when Paddy took Kalinda outside to beat her for stealing. It is a particularly brutal scene, and by this point the viewer has become used to a softer, changed man. In a flashback, we see him dragging Kalinda by her hair across a lawn to a tree while she screams and struggles. When they reach the tree, Paddy unfastens his belt and begins to beat her, while she is on her hands and knees. Suddenly, he is bitten by a snake and their positions reverse: now he is on the ground writhing in agony and she towers over him. She runs off, but soon returns with some plant leaves to extract the venom, saving his life. They exchange names and Paddy is transformed. He sees Kalinda for who she really is, not just a servant, when he learns her authentic name. Her knowledge of the locality and native flora is salvific, an impression gleaned not only from her actions but also in the flashback's subtle allusions to the Garden of Eden. Beau turns out to be

Paddy's descendant from this relationship. The racial legacy of these distant events endures: the Fitzgeralds, like the Langstons in *Resurrection*, enjoy inherited wealth and widespread respect. Beau and his family live in squalid conditions.

The returned individuals faced unhappiness leading up to their deaths generally as a result of societal expectations or their failure to conform to social codes. Maria Massola is an Italian immigrant to Australia who faces her husband's jealous wrath when he discovers she has taken driving lessons with a young man in exchange for her giving him piano lessons. It is noteworthy that her uxorial disobedience relates to her learning to drive, an endeavor asserting her independence.[9] Charlie Thompson was a WWI soldier who died after returning home in 1922. He strikes up a friendship with local-history enthusiast Russell, who bartends at the Royal, a pub Charlie frequented while alive. When Russell makes a sexual advance to Charlie, at first welcome and then roughly rebuffed, Charlie has a flashback about his fellow soldier and great love, George, and it is implied that Charlie died in a fight related to this secret affair (later we learn he committed suicide). Suicide is also how Kieran dies in *In the Flesh*, a stark reminder that suicide rates are statistically high among LGBTQI youth (McDermott 2-4). Charlie's behavior is not merely ancient history. William Blackburn cannot at first remember who he was, the only clue being that his grave was outside the graveyard, meaning he was either a murderer or a suicide. In fact, he was an escaped prisoner who killed people while on the run and was hanged for this crime. He is remorseful when he discovers his identity. Another resurrected man, Carlo Nico, was an Italian prisoner-of-war during World War II who committed suicide because he and other foreigners were used as slave laborers in their internment camp. These four characters share a sense of liminality: Anna an immigrant confined to a role as a homemaker; Charlie a gay man in an ultra-masculine subculture; William an outlaw who is executed; and Carlo an enemy alien barely able to communicate in English. Their return, therefore, is an opportunity to face the prejudice that has marginalized them, not only in a distant past but also in the present, an indicator of the innovative nature of the show.

> The scriptwriters for *The Glitch* knew they were dealing with uncomfortable, if not alienating, subject matter. The series is daring in its confrontation of Australia's cultural history, whether it is actual humans returning from the dead, a man discovering that his wife has returned from the dead when he has remarried his wife's best friend, or an Irish drunk who was once the mayor of the town but who also has had children with a local Aboriginal woman. (Herron 86)

The show's frank and uncomfortable lingering on the legacy of institutionalized intolerance uses apparently one-dimensional stereotypical characters who give way to more nuanced multi-perspectives. Beau Cooper's indigenous family lives in poverty while the Fitzgeralds are affluent and entitled, treating the former with undisguised disdain. As the show progresses, Beau demonstrates reserves of stoic altruism while the Fitzgeralds' seeming unity reveals itself to be a veneer covering distrust, unhappiness, and turmoil. Paddy is killed in the

second season (S2E05) and in the following episode, Beau's family is offered two million dollars by Adeline Fitzgerald, suggesting that Paddy's short-lived second chance brings a snippet of closure, in the form of financial restitution, to a division spanning several generations of the two clans. Paddy Fitzpatrick is murdered in the nineteenth century and in the twenty-first century because he rejects social, deeply racialized, codes. The fundamental injustice of the segregation of indigenous peoples from mainstream Australian society is clearly conveyed. It is only the degree of mistreatment that appears to have changed between Paddy Fitzgerald's two deaths, 151 years apart.

The third and final season brings back Paddy in an unusual way: we encounter a younger version of the character through the flashbacks of another newly resurrected character, Tam Chi Wai. It is gradually revealed that this young man left his wife and son in China and emigrated to Australia to work in the gold mines, enduring deplorable conditions, with Caucasian miners looking down on the small number of Chinese immigrants as "Fucking Celestials" (S3E04 "Perfectly Safe"). Paddy uses Chi's links to China to secure opium and establishes a drug-dealing network, creating a double layer of exploitation for Chi as laborer and drug mule. Like other returned, Chi eventually remembers the traumatic circumstances of his death: after surviving a slaughter of Chinese laborers by xenophobic Australian workers high on opium (S3E05 "The Enemy"), Chi was killed by Paddy who was jealous of the obvious chemistry existing between Chi and Molly, Paddy's companion. The Irishman also wants to prevent Chi from contacting the police to intervene in the massacre of his compatriots. When he learns that Chi is seeking assistance, Paddy suddenly and ruthlessly cuts his throat and pushes him down a shaft, exclaiming: "I have a reputation to uphold. One day, I'm gonna be the fucking mayor." In this final episode, Paddy symbolizes the unpleasant truths behind the forging of Australia's identity during the nineteenth century. The goldfields of the Eureka rush were notorious for the widespread mistreatment of minority workers (Cahir 1-5) and "had a severe impact on natural landscapes" (Lawrence and Davies 147). The unethical research program led by Noregard disturbed the universe's harmony since it undermined the processes of life. It is restored by the returned characters sacrificing themselves at the end, led by James, but only after they have come to terms with the injustices they faced or perpetuated during their lives. The show is a sustained metaphor of the environmental disasters facing the planet as a result of human mercenary activities. Paddy's subsequent fortune is based on profiteering, drugs, and abusive employment. Paradoxically, his redemption is only possible through his resurrection, as he witnesses a nation that has become more multicultural and equitable, although it never transcends the underlying tensions embodied in the statue of Paddy Fitzgerald that dominates the town.

Metaphysicality in the Series. The issues raised by the return of people who have died are profoundly imbued with the metaphysical, reinventing the predictable mold into which zombies had been recently cast, leading one scholar to complain that the zombie genre "is plagued by repetition and cliché"

(Harris 68).[10] The entire premise of the dead coming back to life echoes the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and these sympathetic zombie shows draw overtly on this symbolism. Season 2 of *In the Flesh* introduces the Undead Prophet, who leads a cult promoting the second rising. Some scenes are set in the local graveyard, including Kieron's flashbacks to the night he rose from the dead. *Glitch*'s first few minutes show the undead characters crawling from their graves and the first episode is entitled "The Risen." *In the Flesh*, *The Returned*, and *Resurrection* afford prominent roles to local clergy, though the Anglican clergyman in the British show, Vicar Oddie, is an unsympathetic extremist with close ties to the Human Volunteer Force or HVF, a former civilian militia that helped defeat the uprising of the undead. It is he who provokes Bill to kill Maggie, an elderly neighbor of Kieren, the central undead figure. We never see this clergyman perform any priestly duties, with the exception of leading a service of commemoration for the victims of the Rising on its anniversary. His religious beliefs are always defined by his antipathy to the returned, using scripture and services for this purpose. While his congregation and standing within Roarton are both boosted by the extraordinary events, his influence later dwindles, and he dies of a heart attack after denouncing the horrors to come of a Second Rising (S2E01). In contrast to Vicar Oddie, the Catholic priest in *The Returned*, Father Jean-François, enjoys respect from his community and provides thoughtful and sensitive guidance when his advice is sought out by his flock, including by some of the returned, notably Simon, a brooding young man who committed suicide on the same day as his wedding and a recurring character in the show. In the same show, Pierre begins to assume the ambivalent role of cult leader, the dangers of which are apparent to the audience who know of his criminal past and involvement in a triple homicide. These shows are infused with an "apocalyptic sensibility" common to the zombie genre and exemplify "not only how religious themes are explored in SF, but how *all* SF is religious" (McKee 249).

Vincent Paris charts how the undead, despite their sinister atmosphere and gory appearance, reflect the concerns of contemporary society and can offer a better world than our own (151), a comment that draws attention to the difference marked by these shows. A crucial consequence of representations of humanized undead is neutralizing the fear that zombies typically cause because, in Kyle William Bishop's words, "you couldn't reason with zombies, you couldn't frighten zombies, you couldn't bribe zombies. They just came and came and came until you were dead, dismembered, or one of them" (2). Now endowed with reason, zombies can achieve a level of integration back into society. This agency means that zombies can embark on the full gamut of human endeavors, including work, recreation, and love. In terms of the latter, this includes not only romance between zombies but also relationships with human partners. *In the Flesh* depicts a fetish subculture of human-undead relations with one human patron, the initially unsympathetic and apparently fanatical character, Philip Wilson, who falls in love with a zombie (S2E04). Adèle becomes pregnant after an encounter with the resurrected Simon in *The*

Returned. One of the Risen in *Glitch*, Kate, provokes an uneasy love triangle between her husband, James, and his new wife (and her best friend) Sarah. James unwittingly becomes involved with two undead characters as Sarah appears to die briefly and come back to life during a complicated childbirth ("There Must Be Rules" S1E06). Kate later becomes involved in a passionate relationship with a handsome human, Owen (S2E01 "The Rare Bird"). A similar situation occurs in *Resurrection,* where married pastor Tom Hale is confronted with the return of his first, true love and discovers that she was—and is—carrying their child. The zombies in all four shows are therefore as capable of love, desire, and sexuality as they were in their previous lives and, in some cases, in a more intense manner given the losses they have experienced.

The three shows which are the most path-breaking in presenting humanized zombies are non-American, raising the possibility that they may challenge a hegemonic American hold on the imagination. They respectively contain elements that are distinctly British, Australian, and French. They also embrace and incorporate the specificities of their respective geographical locations, which in and of itself de-anchors deep-rooted popular associations between the living dead and US cities, towns, or shopping malls. In *Glitch*, for example, shot in the Victorian city of Castlemaine, this regional locale prompts new associations with the zombie for "Australian viewers [who] are practiced at identifying with American backdrops as a default" (Lin). There are certainly many allusions to American zombie culture throughout these shows, such as the frequently used American Diner and the Lake Pub in *The Returned*, which remind viewers of the crucial differences between these shows and their American counterparts. In short, the distinctive localities undermine the notion that zombie narratives are primarily American.

Bearers of Cogitation rather than Contagion. Characters who return from the afterlife are inherently introspective and speculative in these humanized zombie series. These new zombies reflect on the human condition, on death and life, with their unique perspective of having experienced this transition in reverse. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller hold that "every culture and age creat[es] the vampire and zombie it needs" (10). In coming to grips with the migrant crisis and resurgence of neo-fascist movements experienced by Western countries during the past decade, these shows' zombies represent a timely and topical variation of the walking dead, one which dehumanizes vitriolic reactions to difference and humanizes those willing to bridge that alienation. Elizabeth Aiossa's judgment on zombie films is relevant here:

> The overt connection between the living and the undead reveals how the finest examples of zombie films grapple with complex issues of marginalization and otherness. They're us—yet we fear them for their otherness—and their differences are strange and terrifying…. The very uncanny-ness of the zombies prompts both characters and audiences to examine their own values, morals, and ethics, as well as to rethink their assumptions regarding the individual

> versus the communal, the line demarcating self and everyone else, and how this solipsistic gap must be bridged in our efforts to secure survival and then advance positive social change. (9)

Because these shows revolve around zombie protagonists, the viewer is obliged to consider events from the perception of these interlopers. Unlike most zombie narratives, these characters are distinct personalities, not simply the lone zombie separated from a horde who is "ineffective, comical rather than frightening" (Jones and McGlotten 4). The audience is attached to these televisual zombies to a degree that has hitherto not been dramatized and "we are challenged to see the world from both sides and question any assumptions that we make about the foreign 'other'" (Abbott 176). These shows' returned integrate into communities and hint at dimorphic humanity rather than a lack of humanity.[11] Rather than avenging colonizers bent on taking everything that humans possess (homes, belongings, families, lives), the undead of these television shows return under mysterious circumstances and oblige the living to reflect on and evolve their attitudes and behavior. These humanized zombies bring cogitation rather than contagion—they are no longer catatonic creatures but rather eloquent entities. They raise the question of whether monstrosity is embodied in zombies or in humans, given the darkness of the bigotry, self-interest, and hatred many humans display. In this, zombies "mak[e] visible the threatening and unspeakable monstrousness that is encountered in the world, in society, and within the self" (Wright 6). The mob mentality of vigilantes in Roarton (*In the Flesh*), of medical research without ethical parameters (*Glitch*), of a close-minded community mobilizing itself to extremes (incarceration, torture, and murder) against outsiders (*Resurrection*), and of an extremist cult (*The Returned*) are considerably more disconcerting than the undead. While conventional zombies leave casualties in their wake, these shows' zombies are victims. The new humanized zombies exemplify, far more than their antecedents, human potential and, above all, "They don't just reflect who we are; they illuminate what we can become" (Olney 141). The contested space at the center of these shows is thus not territorial geographies but the space of the mind.

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NOTES

1. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 51 (Tablet VI, lines 96-100; p. 51). In *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), the White Walkers feature from S1E01 through S8E03.

2. In this context, *iZombie* (2015-2019) and *Santa Clarita Diet* (USA, Netflix, 2017-2019) are worth mentioning since their central female characters are humane zombies and form part of this wave of neo-zombie incarnations in television; they will not be discussed here since they belong to a distinct comic zombie tradition. For the implications of this subgenre, see Payne, 211-24.

3. Commenting on *Night of the Living Dead*, Jamie Russell insists that "Romero never lets us forget that this is a film about the body. Or, to be more accurate, the horror of the body" (67).

4. Aquinas writes that "A miracle properly so called is when something is done outside the order of nature" (Vol. 1, 452).

5. "Zombies are in direct opposition to the living. They embody physical corruption, thus reminding us of our own mortality" (Boon 34).

6. Masahiro Mori's article, with its accompanying illustrations, has been widely reproduced since its publication in 1970. I used the unabridged version available here: <https://spectrum.ieee.org/automaton/robotics/humanoids/the-uncanny-valley>.

7. See Fraga, 193-206.

8. "Zombie-themed movies and TV series of the oughts threaten to topple the hierarchies of horror representation by making male bodies as vulnerable as female bodies crucial to the genre and by foregrounding males as, principally, bodies" (Greven 16).

9. Female motorists were not stigmatized in Australia in the same way as in the US and UK, but were often associated with the nation-building project, with its subtext of white appropriation of native lands (Clarsen 105-107).

10. Jessica L. Williams comments that the very predictability of horror-related material also accounts for its appeal (49).

11. Many zombies in *The Returned* end up homeless in the second season, after failing to be reincorporated back into their previous lives, but they "remain resolutely committed to deterritorialization," taking over an abandoned, inaccessible neighborhood (Olney 131).

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ABSTRACT

The figure of the zombie is as versatile as it is enduring, and this article analyses two recent television shows featuring versions of the undead that belong to a worldwide wave of conscious, sentient zombies. The returned of *Resurrection* (US, 2014-2015) and *Glitch* (Australia, 2015-2019) are humane, ostracized figures who encounter prejudice and suspicion from localized communities in rural Missouri and in the Victorian outback. In their respective reconfigurations of the classic zombie narrative of menacing invaders, these shows cast the undead as sympathetic protagonists who stand as powerful metaphors for socioeconomic migration and marginalization.